

June 6, 2016

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
911 NE 11th Ave.  
Portland, OR 97232

RE: Zylstra Lake

Dear USFWS Reviewer,

The University of Washington strongly supports efforts by the San Juan County Land Bank and the San Juan Preservation Trust to preserve the Zylstra Lake property on San Juan Island. This property is key to restoring the False Bay watershed, providing the opportunity to improve and maintain water quality in a sensitive and critical habitat. Ideally it will lead to restoration of year-round flow in False Bay Creek.

The UW Friday Harbor Laboratories (FHL) has long acted to protect the integrity of False Bay Biological Preserve and the tidally-influenced estuary at the mouth of False Bay Creek. The University of Washington owns False Bay (~300 acres of tidelands) purchased in 1974. False Bay has since been managed as a biological reserve. In addition, FHL pushed to have it designated one of the five Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) fisheries preserves. This biological preserve has the overarching goal of maintaining and restoring native biodiversity and ecosystem function, and facilitating education and research that is consistent with these goals.

False Bay is the site of field research by multiple marine scientists, and it is one of our most valuable field sites for marine courses and field trips. False Bay also: provides important nursery areas for crabs and other commercial species; protects natural processes by providing areas where organisms and their environment can interact in the ways for which they evolved, such as connectivity between terrestrial and marine habitats; and provides a baseline against which to measure the effects of activities outside them.

In sum, this is a sensitive and critical habitat and one that FHL has strong interest in keeping as pristine as possible. In the past year we have spent considerable staff time and effort warding off two potential threats to the health of the bay: 1) a proposed dock near the mouth of the bay that could lead to toxins being released into the bay- for now, the proponent of this project has withdrawn its application; 2) a proposed reclassification by the County of the uplands surrounding the bay in ways that would have reduced the protection of the land just above the shoreline, e.g. by permitting previously disallowed development in the shoreline like boat launches and marine railways. The County ended up withdrawing this proposal. These examples are just to illustrate how strongly UW feels about the protection and health of this unique marine area.

One of the key actions taken by the University of Washington as part of its stewardship of False Bay was the purchase of a 22-acre property at the mouth of False Bay Creek along with all the tidelands in False Bay. The uplands property has roughly 1,400 feet of shoreline on False Bay and 1,200 feet of riparian shoreline on both sides of the tidally-influenced False Bay Creek.

We understand that in order to for the Land Bank and Preservation Trust to secure a grant from the Coastal Wetland Program, they need a "match" for the project, from owners of tidally-influenced

property connected to the project upstream. In an effort to support this project, the University of Washington intends to enter into a Notice of Federal Participation on both the tidelands and the uplands property if the grant is awarded to the Land Bank and SJPT, subject to review and approval of specific restrictions as may be included in the grant. Under that Notice, the University intends to manage the parcels according to the terms and conditions of the grant, if awarded, unless and until the Zylstra Lake preservation project that is the purpose of the grant is no longer active. The commitment to enter into the Notice of Federal Participation is also subject to additional internal UW review and approval. Our estimate of value for this match is \$750,000, which reflects the restrictions likely imposed under the grant terms. It is our understanding that the Land Bank will order an appraisal to confirm this value.

In exchange for UW signing the Notice of Federal Participation, Friday Harbor Labs expects to be granted access to the Zylstra Lake property for research purposes, and to be included in any planning and implementation for restoration activities on False Bay Creek.

The University of Washington is pleased to partner in this effort and eagerly anticipates a successful conclusion to the purchase of Zylstra Lake by the San Juan County Land Bank and San Juan Preservation trust. We appreciate USFWS's consideration of providing a National Coastal Wetland Grant toward that goal.

Sincerely,



Jeanette Henderson  
Executive Director, UW Real Estate