

From: [Jackie Canterbury](#)
To: [Public Comments](#)
Subject: Short Farm Comments
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Attachments: [Short Farm.docx](#)

Dear Port Commissioners,

Thank you for asking for public comments about Short Farm. I am delighted to share my recent experience there and I also attach my past comments.

During bird migration this past week many of us went to the farm to view birds. The experience was 'world class'. During our visit we observed a Solitary Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitchers and 37 other species. I mention the Solitary Sandpiper because this bird winters in Central and South America around the Amazon Basin; flying thousands of miles to breed in Alaska and 'stopped-over' to refuel at the Short Farm. Sandpipers, ducks, geese, and our songbirds need and use the Short Farm as a wintering area, a stopover site as they travel north or south, and as a breeding area to produce their young and maintain healthy populations.

Please protect this resource that we all share and love.

Thank-you and regards, Jackie

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COMMENTS ON THE SHORT FARM PROPERTY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MIGRATORY AND RESIDENT BIRDS, BIRDING, AND HABITAT CONSIDERATIONS

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I. Introduction

As a resident of Jefferson County and professional ornithologist and educator with years of experience, I am very concerned that Trumpeter Swans, resident and migratory birds, and wetlands were not duly considered in your analyses of the Short Farm property. I do thank-you for the time spent on your current analysis and your consideration of resident comments.

II. Trumpeter Swans

Short's Farm is a very important stop-over site for Trumpeter Swans, Tundra Swans, and other migratory birds. More than half of all North American Trumpeter Swans nest, breed, or winter in our coastal region. In 2015, there were about 26,800 Trumpeter Swans. Most of these swans winter into western Washington and southern British Columbia. Washington state is a critical swan stopover or winter site and Short's Farm is one of those critical areas providing the habitat and necessary food resources during winter. The stopover sites are critical because they enable birds to gain the necessary energy reserves for the long flight north. They migrate north each spring and the majority breed in Alaska, the remaining in western Yukon and northwestern British Columbia (Northwest Swan Conservation Association, 2024)

The Trumpeter Swan is identified as a *Priority Species* under WDFW's [Priority Habitat and Species Program](#).

"Priority species require protective measures for their survival due to their population status, sensitivity to habitat alteration, and/or recreational, commercial, or tribal importance."

The word recreational importance is noted here. When Short's Farm was for sale, myself and others hoped it would be purchased by the Trumpeter Swan Society to protect and preserve this population of swans. Now it falls to this body. To my knowledge there has been no mention of the critical importance of the Short Farm for Trumpeter Swans, Tundra Swans or migratory birds.

III. Peatland and Climate Change

Short's Farm has significant wetlands with deep peat deposits. These wetlands are unique and rare in Western Washington because of these underlying deep peat deposits, and are part of a large wetland in the Center Valley (K. Lee, personal communication, February 20, 2024). These peatlands have their own design and character but form a diverse landscape and are slow in formation. The alteration and destruction of peatlands has been historically fast. I am sure other parties have written about their significance. I will address the correlation between peatlands and climate change.

Peatlands were formed by waters that have contact with mineral soils flowing from higher ground. They often are deep and support reeds and marsh grasses. Peatlands form a major store of soil carbon(C) by accumulating it for thousands of years beneath the surface, and in the case of the Short Farm into the very deep deposits. In contrast, grasses, shrubs, and trees die and the CO₂ is immediately released into the atmosphere. However, peatlands do not decay as long as left alone; peatlands essentially hold CO₂ and methane. But peatlands that were drained and plowed continue to release CO₂ into our atmosphere, contributing to the imbalance (Proulx, 2022, Strack, 2008). And peatlands that are tilled now will shift the C balance that has continued for millennia.

The maintenance of stores of C in peatlands should be a consideration and a priority when deciding the future management of the Short's Farm. Agriculture, forestry, and the removal of peat are described as sources of peatland loss and all contributors to global climate change.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to thank-you for your continued efforts to develop a comprehensive plan that preserves and protects this peat landscape and the waters that are embedded within it.

I end stressing the importance of the non-consumptive use of the land by birders and naturalists. My idea for the land would be to create an upland viewing platform where people could view the swans, waterfowl, and migratory and resident birds. I quote from my favorite birding source: *The Demographics of Birding*, 2016, a review of birding conducted by the USFWS.

“In 2016, there were 45 million birdwatchers (birders), 16 years of age and older, in the United States – about 18 percent of the population. “ With the trip and equipment expenditures for birding of \$38,178,525.000. Birding is an important component of the recreational opportunities in Washington state.

Current research into the cognitive value of birding is also entering the forefront in neuroscience. Bird watching and listening is good for the brain. All the issues mentioned leads one to the importance of protecting land for the future and offering opportunities to get out into nature

References

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