Westport Golf Course Comments

I am writing about the recent news about Westport Light State Park in Westport. I am appalled that developers want to build a golf course at this location. The Westport Light State Park is the only park without vehicle access on the beach. I have visited the park several years ago and found it to be a beautiful beach with outstanding sunset and sunset views of the ocean. I especially would like to save the park from development for it’s wilderness value for wildlife and wildlife connectivity.

There were no other alternatives proposed other than the Westport Golf Course . There was no alternative of “no action” which should have been offered.

I do not believe that building a golf course will provide the natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, and interpretive experience that all Washingtonians enjoy on public lands, as golfing is only enjoyed by 8% of the population, with 77% male and 22% female. Furthermore, the sport draws in an older crowd, as the median age is 54 years in the US.

The Westport Golf Links Course is proposed as a public course which would, presumably, be open to the public. The research does not support the plan to provide job and income growth for the city of Westport. As far as providing the jobs and income that is currently being espoused, research indicates that golf professionals are 87% more likely to work at private companies in comparison to public companies, which would not be the case for the proposed Westport Golf Course.

The idea of erosion was introduced at the public meeting and the concern is valid. Taking out trees which may block golf shots will increase erosion and continued flooding during spring times. Furthermore, the driftwood which is increasingly sparce along the beach and dunes area creates habitat for species like sand fleas and other arthropods which are important food for fishes, cetaceans, shore birds, and shrimp. Removing driftwood impacts an entire ecosystem and should not be permitted.

The parcel of land sited for the golf course contains valuable wetland habitat. Wetlands provide a variety of experiences for visitors, as well as for the community, and also sequesters large amounts of carbon.

 I have concerns about erosion and sea level rise along the coast. In watching your recorded meeting of December 8, 2022, it was mentioned that hydrologists were considering the impact of 100 year impacts of sea level rise and climate change. Recent research from NOAA and NASA using new satellite data and climate models along with improved evaluations of historic data from tide gauges dating back more than 100 years indicates that Americans, on average, can expect sea levels on their coasts to climb 10 to 12 inches in the next thirty years and 2 feet by the end of the century. These are conservative estimates, according to the researchers. “A profound increase in coastal flooding with storms or heavy rainfall with high tide flooding” is to be expected, according to Nicole LeBoeuf, director of NOAA’s National Ocean Service. Please see the report here: https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/hazards/sealevelrise/sealevelrise-tech-report.html Furthermore, along some coasts, natural features like dunes and marshes may be holding back the sea a bit, but once the sea rises about those berms, it can spread inland. Hydrologists need to consider the impact of 500 year sea level rise, as opposed to only 100 year level rises in considering the feasibility of this huge economic project. It would be devastating for the community of Westport to lose the parcel of land on which the proposed site stands. How the mitigation from sea level rise will be demonstrated?

If this land is developed into a golf course, the site will not be accessible to many users, particularly to minorities and BIPOC, and many users will not be afforded the natural experience that are currently available to them when they visit Westport Light and Westhaven.

Another of my concerns is related to the use of the golf course during winter months. I spent 3 years living in Long Beach, Washington and golfed regularly at a par 3 course on the peninsula. I agree that golfing was and is a great sport with many benefits; however, I would like to know how many golfers, especially women and minorities actually golf in rainy, cold, and wet winters along the coast. I rarely would golf during these times when I resided along the coast. I doubt that it would get much use during the November through March months.

The Golf Links project is a huge economic undertaking for the community which would be devastating if lost due to the aforementioned reasons. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.