

PSC-DCP Hearing: Testimony from David Red Thunder, West Hayden Island

I am David Douglas Red Thunder, an American Indian, member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, and am named after the great Scottish botanist, David Douglas, who's honored by the conifer species, Douglas Fir, that bears his name.

After years of expert testimony before this Commission, the facts are well established that West Hayden Island will not succeed economically as a marine industrial development. And the Port agrees; it said it was just too expensive to build there, and withdrew its proposal to the city for annexation and re-zoning.

That Commission testimony also established that West Hayden Island is a high-value urban natural wildlife habitat. Along with its 81 bird species, nine different mammals, four kinds of amphibians, and important forest areas, it also is a critically important river shallows for juvenile salmon and other migrating fish.

For me as an American Indian, I practice Animism as my spiritual tradition. We believe that non-human entities – animals, birds, plants, rocks, trees, sands, waters, as well as humans – all possess spiritual essence, and I embrace the Judeo-Christian tenets of faith as well. For me, West Hayden Island is my sanctuary, my place of worship, a place where the spirits teach me more righteous ways.

My tribal brothers and sisters of the Yakama and Grand Ronde Federations share these traditions with me. And for us, the Columbia River's conditions surrounding West Hayden Island support us spiritually and physically through our ancient fishing practices, protected by treaty with the United States.

Many argue WHI must be developed for more jobs and greater world trade, while others argue development will degrade livability for all islanders, and the environment. For me and mine, it is a spiritual place, one of the very few left for us to practice our faith in communion with the full range of our spiritual teachers.

Over the next several months, as you consider how the Draft Comprehensive Plan categorically excludes your carefully researched and written requirements, have the courage of your wisdom, and re-affirm that any development of West Hayden Island must also include all mitigations you recommended last year, or it must be completely removed from the DCP's industrial lands inventory.

Come next spring, when you are writing your decisions again, please remember me, David Douglas Red Thunder, and know that West Hayden Island is my sanctuary. It can and should be a sanctuary for us all.

Thank you.

David Douglas Red Thunder