

## **Preserving Edmonds Marsh is a top priority in planning for Harbor Square**

By Bob McChesney, Executive Director, the Port of Edmonds

As the Port begins the public planning process for Harbor Square redevelopment, we have a particular sensitivity to how this project may impact the Edmonds Marsh.

The marsh is our neighbor, with many friends in the community. The Port of Edmonds is committed to the promise that the unique and delicate values of the Edmonds Marsh will not be harmed. Indeed, with excellent design and due care, the Edmonds Marsh can benefit.

Redevelopment and urban wetland restoration are not incompatible.

When it comes to wetlands, the Port of Edmonds is far from unique. Marine ports typically have a marsh or some form of wetland associated with them. Since they are principally located at the mouths of one or more estuaries, the ongoing mixing of saltwater and fresh water, and the years of tidal action and sediment buildup, combine to create marshy areas. It is part of the natural dynamics of our location.

Over many years of port development, the industry has learned a lot about how to develop while causing the least amount of intrusion on wetlands. We have found that it is, in fact, possible to develop and restore at the same time.

At the Port of Edmonds, environmental stewardship is a top priority. That reflects the aesthetic values of the community and respect for local ecosystem sustainability. As we plan our redevelopment we will, for example, be looking closely at ways to daylight Willows Creek, which is currently routed through an underground culvert, and return it to its natural open, meandering drainage to Puget Sound.

The Port of Edmonds is not alone in our concerns. Federal law says that there must be no net loss of wetlands nationwide. And locally, it is important to our community. The Friends of the

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Edmonds Marsh have dedicated themselves to the protection and preservation of the marsh. The success of Harbor Square redevelopment requires the most cost effective green design elements, which includes practical mitigation to improve the Edmonds Marsh and restore its brackish salt water ecological balance.

Soon we will be announcing the first of our public input sessions, where we will be asking the community to offer ideas on the future of Harbor Square. Central to our plans will be the preservation and restoration of the Edmonds Marsh. Already there are good procedures and good science for improving the marsh, including the buffers for public access.

As we move forward into the first stages of planning, be assured that the Port of Edmonds is very much committed to protecting and—in every way we can—improving the Edmonds Marsh.

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