Outlook

LUBA Public Comment Nov 5, 2026

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Columbia County Commissioners and/or Port:

HISTORY OF BEAVER ISLAND/Port Westward
About 100 years ago, several islands in the Columbia River were designated to be used for grazing or farming during summer months. The islands flooded at high tides, during spring snowmelt and run-off from the Coast Range and the Cascades. Wet winters forced farmers to remove cattle and sheep to prevent drowning.

A man I will call Grandpa Magruder, urged the Federal government to allow dikes or levees to be built to extend farm use. The farms still flooded, so the Feds allowed drainage ditches to be dug. My grandparents were allotted 25 acres if they would dig ditches and maintain them, build a home and farm it. Because of the complexity of maintaining thousands of acres of floodplain, Drainage Districts were formed to regulate internal water levels.

Managing the water levels to ensure irrigation waters to all farms in summer and preventing some farms from flooding in winter is a very technical and difficult task. Every year is different due to varied weather locally. Nobody can prevent the heavy snows or rainy years from causing flood events.

A misnomer as a 100 year flood plain has proven to be erroneous. My family evacuated their home and farm in Johns District adjacent to Beaver Island in the 1962 Flood. I think they evacuated in 1948 (before I was born) when the City of VanPort near Portland flooded the entire floodplain and city residents. VanPort was never rebuilt.

In 1996 I evacuated my home on Midland Island west of Beaver Island along with horses, dog, cat and some personal items. I had "boils" in my front yard which are holes in the toe of the dike, allowing fresh Columbia River waters

to flow unchecked inside the dike. The dike or levee itself was so saturated it began to collapse or slump. Very scary. Life threatening to animals and residents.

In 1996 I was the one who notified resident Warren Nakela, the dike was collapsing adjacent to Beaver Slough on the south side. Local residents (Lammi and Kynsi Rock) quickly acted to provide tons of rock to stop the collapse. Meanwhile several other areas were eroding and numerous loads of rocks were dumped to minimize flood waters encroachment.

A survey of Beaver dike elevations proved the dike had settled below safe levels. Although the dike was repaired in about 2000, it continues to sink or subside below acceptable levels to prevent flooding. Beaver dike is not stable and never will be. That is why it was zoned "Farm use" only.

WORLD WAR 11 - The Federal Government declared an Emergency and seized private lands from the Poysky Blueberry Farm and others. The land was to be returned to local farmers after the war. What happened? Long story, short version: Our County government stepped in and claimed the lands against local owners protests.

FAST FORWARD - The Columbia County Port Commission has repeatedly ignored residents' protests based upon some of these same issues. Our County Government is acting stupidly and selfishly by trying a 4th re-zoning of these delicate, fertile soils. This is FARMLAND. The soils liquify during wet spells but are especially vulnerable to EARTHQUAKES, which are occurring.
STOP BEATING A DEAD HORSE. DENY THE RE-ZONE FOREVER.
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