

Mike Russel, Columbia County Director of Public Works.
Hayden Richardson, Columbia County Planning Department Director
Columbia County Planning Commission

Subj: Opposition to a development of 8 house lots above the Peterson's residence

Dear Sirs and Madams,

My name is Lowell Norbom. I live at 33783 Tide Creek Rd, Deer Island, OR 97054, along with my daughter, Teresa Norbom. Our property is the first one on the right, as one drives up Tide Creek Road from Highway 30. Our driveway is just a short distance below Butler Road. We have approximately 11 acres, starting at Highway 30, and going up the hill to Butler Road (excluding the government easements, of course). My wife and I purchased and developed this property over 25 years ago. My daughter joined us in 2001. My wife has since passed away.

First, we want to be clear on one point - we absolutely believe that property owners should be free to develop their properties as they choose, with only limited interference from government or neighbors, related to adherence to general safety and building regulations. However, we do not believe that property owners have the right to cause significant or material damage (financial or otherwise) to property owned by others, public lands and roads, or the environment.

In the time we've lived on this property, there are several changes we've noted to date:

Current - Tide Creek Road

- When we moved to our property on Tide Creek Road, just below Butler Road the road was smooth and level.
- Several years ago there was a crack across the road exactly opposite our driveway. That crack has been patched multiple times, starting with a fairly thin patch. Each time, the crack returns after the patch. The patch used to last for several months. The time from patch to new crack had shortened. For instance, about a month ago there was a patch of about 2 inches in depth placed - that patch lasted two weeks. Then they put a patch that is 4 to 5 inches high, and they smoothed the patch on both sides so that it looks like a regular piece of the road. You can see the elevated piece of road in front of my driveway.
 - Our amazing road department smooths out the driveway so that our cars have a more gentle drop. A couple of years ago we had to have our driveway apron paved over with more asphalt, to more closely match the new height of Tide Creek Road. Due to the new height of our driveway and the road, compared to the ditch alongside the road, we've had to mark our driveway approach with garbage cans, to be sure that we and our guests stay in the central part of our driveway to avoid getting trapped in the drop of more than 12 inches.
 - If anyone is interested, there is a very small section of the original berm showing. The current road is 12 higher than the original berm. The hill is slipping, and I question how long the current patch will hold.
- One of the fault lines on the hillside runs through Tide Creek Road, right where our driveway is
 - This fault line is the one causing the cracks in Tide Creek Road that keep getting patched by the road department
- Century Link has a fiber optic cable running along Tide Creek Road, on the opposite side of the road from our property

- This summer, Century Link had to dig up their cable just opposite our driveway, and downhill a very short way, to replace a portion of the cable that had been torn apart by the earth movements around the road
- On Tide Creek Road, between our driveway and Highway 30, the road has become like a roller coaster in recent years.
 - There are hills and depressions in the road, that make driving on it feel like being on a roller coaster
 - Neither my daughter or I are road engineers, but it appears clear to us that the road is becoming more unstable.
 - Our assumption is that the hill is moving, creating depressions, that the road then follows
 - If one stands on Tide Creek at our driveway, the waves in the road are very obvious
- As of the writing of this letter, there are 9 cracks across Tide Creek Road, between our driveway, and Highway 30

Current - Our Well

- Our original well was placed when my wife and I first moved to our property
 - Due to the size and shape of our property, the well is placed approximately 50 feet from Tide Creek Road
 - That well had no problems until a few years ago, when we noticed that the well shed was starting to slant sideways, towards Tide Creek Road
 - Upon inspection, we were told that the well casing was very close to cracking, due to movements in the ground
 - The well is in the general area of the fault line that runs through Tide Creek Road – we were unaware of the fault line when our well was placed
- Two years ago, we had a new well placed
 - The well is 150 feet deep
 - Due to the configuration of our property, the new well is only a short distance from the old well, less than 12 feet further into our property
 - The new well is also in the general area of the fault line
- Until this year, just a few months ago, we did not experience any problems with our new well, or the output thereof
 - Our water needs are fairly minimal
 - Our well only needs to support the two of us living on our property
 - We have no farm animals, or farmland, to support
 - We do not even have a grass yard that needs to be watered
 - In the most recent couple of months, we have started to experience issues with the output of our well
 - We have not yet had any official well readings taken
 - Anecdotally, we are noticing drops in pressure when we use water for normal purposes, such as a normal length shower, or washing dishes
 - To compensate, we have put ourselves on a mild water rationing regimen
- While it seems clear that the aquifer has dropped, we were unclear as to why
 - We've had long periods of little or no rainfall in prior years, with no impact to our well output
 - Therefore, we don't believe that the recent period of little or no rainfall was the culprit, or at least not the only culprit
- We have learned of a deep well fairly recently placed on the hill above us, at 33470 Tide Creek Road

- This well is 400 feet deep
- A deep well like the one recently placed on the hill directly above our property is a likely contributor to the lowering of the aquifer

Current - The Hillside

- Our property, like many others, is on the hill
- Our house and well are placed on a small plateau, about 20 to 30 yards downhill from Butler Road
- The placement of the house, well, etc, were all approved by the county inspector
- In recent years, we have noticed that the portion of the hill between our house and Butler Road has been moving, sliding downhill just enough to cause a few issues
- We've noticed this in the well shed, as well as our fenceline and other signs
- To date, this shifting in the hillside has not been overly dramatic or concerning
- However, the fault line on the road leads right to our driveway, and towards our well

Given what we've already seen in recent years, we have some grave concerns about the development being requested at the Peterson's property. We believe that there is a significant risk to the aquifer level, as well as Tide Creek Road, and the hillside itself. Here are our specific concerns:

Water

- Unless there is a survey from a qualified and certified Geohydrologist to prove otherwise, we do not believe that the aquifer can support 8 new residences, with their accompanying water usage - wells, septic fields, etc,
- Our property has already seen a decrease in well output in recent months, for the first time in over 25 years
- If the aquifer continues to lower, our well will, at some point, fail
 - At that point, our ability to sustain our own fairly minimal water needs will property value will be quite limited, and require external water tanks
 - Our property value will also be severely damaged, likely an irreversible drop in value
- Just as concerning as the drop in the aquifer, will be the drastic increase in sewage water from the septic fields
 - As our property is downhill from the proposed subdivision, that is a major concern

Tide Creek Road

- With the construction of a subdivision, comes an exponential increase in heavy vehicle traffic on Tide Creek Road, for at least a couple of years (concrete trucks, construction vehicles, trailers hauling construction supplies)
- We believe that the increase in traffic on the road from heavy vehicles during construction, plus the increase due to occupation of the proposed subdivision, will have a negative impact on Tide Creek Road
- We urge the TIA to include the road itself, all the way from the area of the Peterson's property, down to Highway 30 - not just intersections or driveways
 - Additionally, at the Tide Creek Road and Highway 30 intersection, we urge review of the lack of a left turn lane onto Tide Creek Road from Highway 30. This is a very dangerous turn off of

Highway 30, and we fear that increased traffic on Tide Creek Road may result in more accidents at this point if a left turn lane is not re-evaluated.

- The potential damage to Tide Creek Road is a major concern for locals in our area, who use the road to access our homes, and know the changes to the road better than anyone

The Hillside

- As outlined above, we have seen some signs that the hillside above us is not completely stable
- We are extremely concerned that the addition of a pod of new residences will have a significant negative impact on it's stability
- According to the US Geological Survey (USGS), depletion of the aquifer leads to ground subsidence
 - Subsidence would cause irrevocable damage to the stability of our property, and that of our neighbors
 - Depletion of the aquifer is a likely and foreseeable effect of drawing a large amount more water from the ground using wells
- We also urge an official evaluation by the state, of the state's geotechnical monitoring information, to determine the impact on the hillside of the development of a small subdivision
 - One of the monitoring stations was placed on the hillside, close to Highway 30, 2 or 3 years ago – that station happens to be on our property, or the edge thereof

In conclusion, we are opposed to the addition of a subdivision of houses on the Peterson property. The negative impacts to our property and the environment are likely and foreseeable, as well as significant and material.

Thank you,

Lowell Norbom

Lowell Norbom

[Lowell Norbom \(Oct 16, 2023 22:50 PDT\)](#)

Teresa Norbom

Teresa Norbom

[Teresa Norbom \(Oct 16, 2023 22:40 PDT\)](#)








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