

May 18, 2016

John Servais  
NW Citizen  
PO Box 4234  
Bellingham WA 98227

RE: Post Point Heron Colony Protection

Dear John,

Recently you contacted me regarding the status of the Post Point Heron Colony and presented possible scenarios for permanently protecting the heron colony buffer land which is privately owned. As we discussed, the colony has been located at Post Point since 2000 and its current status is excellent, as it is growing and successfully fledging young. This year the colony is doing well with 28 active nests, and the rearing of young is underway.

The property the Post Point colony occupies is City owned, however a portion of the upland buffer area next to the colony is privately owned. Based on the 2003 Post Point Heron Management Plan, buffers around the heron colony included a colony core area containing the nest trees, a 100 ft. no entry buffer, a 250 ft non-disturbance buffer and a 250 meter minimum recommended buffer (WDFW 2000). The buffer recommendations were intended to protect the colony from disturbances which could cause abandonment, and to allow for the colony's growth and movement within the nest stand. At the time the management plan was written there were only 7 active nests and that number rapidly grew to 37 nests in 4 years, 2007. The management plan was never formally adopted by the City of Bellingham, nor was it updated, however it contains useful information, much of which remains applicable and valid today.

In 2012, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) revised their management recommendations for the Great Blue Heron, and I was asked to advise in that process. Based on the best available science and input from Biologists specializing in herons, a list of recommended buffers was developed. From that list, the year-round buffer for urban heron colonies is 197 feet. That recommendation is based on sites with a 50% or greater development density within ¼ mile of the colony. For sites with less density, the buffer jumps to 656 feet or more. The document is available online: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01371/wdfw01371.pdf>

The WDFW guidelines also recommend that each colony be evaluated individually to determine appropriate protective buffers and other measures based on site qualities, such as vegetation/screening, land use, etc. Other considerations include topography, wind protection and proximity to feeding grounds. In addition to protecting active colonies, the identification and protection of suitable habitat areas of 10 acres or more is also recommended for future colony establishment or colony relocation.

Based on current conditions, the colony location and considering the fact that the Post Point colony is growing, there is a need to protect as much of the upland forest buffer as possible. The dense vegetation and tall trees to the west and south of the colony provide critical wind and weather protection for the colony. It also provides screening from nearby residential development. The potential for more development upslope from the colony not only removes the screening and sheltering effects of the forest, but also creates an added stress to the herons by placing human development at or

above the nest level, and in direct line-of-sight of the nests. Further evaluation could provide greater detail and descriptions of impacts.

Without a detailed on-site assessment and evaluation of the site development plans it is difficult for me to modify my buffer recommendations from those provided in the 2003 Post Point Heron Management Plan. Further, considering what I know about the Post Point heron colony and site conditions, together with the updated (2012) WDFW management recommendations for an urban colony, which suggest 197 feet as an adequate buffer for areas with 50% or more development density, and that the area around the Post Point colony is likely less than 50% developed, I would stand by the 2003 management plan recommendation of a 250 feet non-disturbance buffer as a minimum buffer around the heron colony. Please refer to the attached map from the 2003 report.

However, in the event that a conservation plan could be brokered, permanently protecting most of the privately owned buffer area above the heron colony, I would support a modified buffer. For my support of this plan, the conservation area for the heron colony would need to include Lots 2, 3, and 4 of the Shorewood Tract A Short Plat, while allowing residential development on Lot 1 with timing restrictions on the construction window to limit disturbance to the herons.

I hope this addresses your questions and provides you with enough information to move forward. Let me know if you have any additional questions.

Thank you for your interest and concern for the Post Point Great Blue Heron colony.

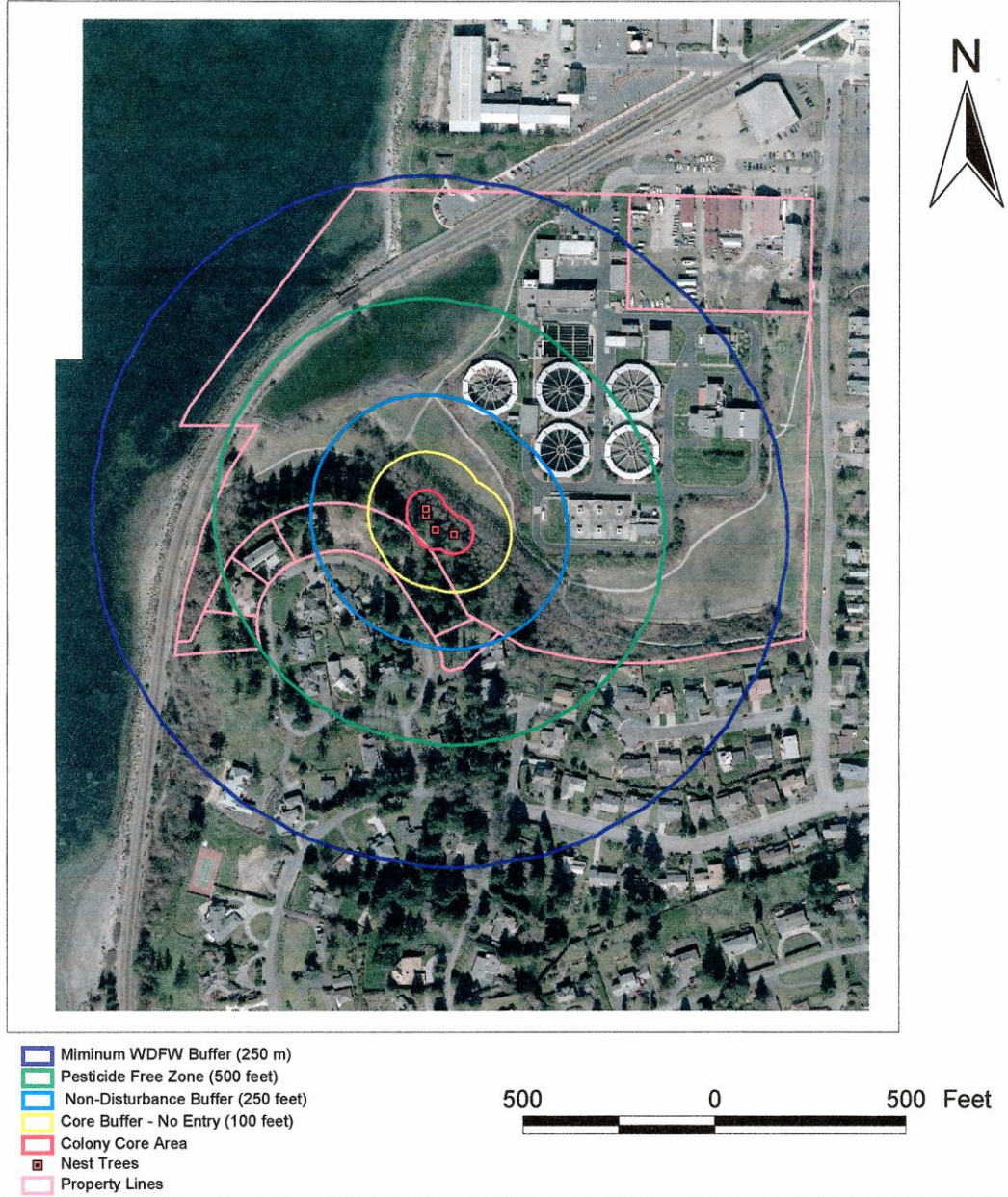
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Eissinger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "E".

Ann Eissinger, Wildlife Biologist  
Nahkeeta Northwest  
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Corvallis OR 97339  
[nahkeetanw@gmail.com](mailto:nahkeetanw@gmail.com)

# Post Point Heron Management Plan

## Figure 6: Nest Area with Buffers



**NAHKEETA NORTHWEST  
WILDLIFE SERVICES**

Map by Jean Olson

City of Bellingham  
Department of Public Works

April 10, 2003

