

## Birch Bay & Wolf Bauer in 1975

What Wolf Bauer found and what he thought of what he found in Birch Bay in the early 1970's and that still exists today, May 2012.

The following excerpts are from “**Birch Bay Shore Resource Analysis, 1975**” by Wolf Bauer, P.E., Coastal Hydrology Consultant. These words provide, quite eloquently I think, the inspiration that motivates our community to want to restore our shoreline by implementing the “Birch Bay Drive and Pedestrian Project.” -kb

“STUDY PURPOSE: The bayscape of Birch Bay, once possessing an extensive and unique array of Class I dry berm beaches along most if its shoreline retains, it has been determined, options for partial rehabilitation and/or enhancement of some of these former beach and backshore environments. It is a purpose of this shore resource evaluation study to place before the community and the County the nature of the present beach-loss problems, and recommend approaches and solutions that are technically feasible for partially restoring the primary resource for highest recreational, esthetic, and economic benefits. It has been a further objective to provide a condensed educational background for proper understanding of natural shore process systems to the end that efficient and compatible shore utilization policies may be instituted.” *(This study was appropriated for Section 305 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972.)*

“...At this point in time, the Birch Bay Community occupies, so to speak, a front-row seat to a melodrama that has been playing the shoreline circuit to surprised audiences all over the land. The drama is titled ‘It Can’t Happen Here,’ and while the players and stage setting always differ, the plot and ending are predictable and tragic – the local resident waking up, one morning, with the realization that what he came for no longer exists, and that it’s too late to reverse the trend, or find greener pastures elsewhere. ...this realization ... is a direct outcome of lack of community understanding of how to identify, preserve, enhance, and to cash in on the special quality or uniqueness of its local landscape heritage. Thus a community must continuously remind itself that if it is not a part of the solution, it is part of the problems.”

“... Conservation and development need not be viewed as conflicting goals, as they can be designed to reinforce one another. They will invariably conflict, however, if applied independently of each other.”

“Any shore resource may be “exploited’ by the local community on either a sustained-yield, or a consumptive basis... Siting and building roads, parking lots, houses, or other structures on, or over the backshore or foreshore of a beach constitutes consumptive use, especially when such intrusions into the active zone of the Shore-Process Corridor precipitates defense measures such as bulkheading, groining, riprapping, and other forms of resource burial and destruction. The ability of a community to cash in on the recreational, esthetic, functional, and economic value of its shorelands requires some hard-nosed economic analysis of what benefit spin-off effects will accrue to each local resident with implementation of a comprehensive shore preservation, restoration, and management program.”

“THE LOCAL EQUATION: The developing mix of residential, recreational, and commercial occupancy and activities along Birch Bay shorelands was a natural and gradual process which, up to this point, could assimilate indiscriminate private enterprise, and take expansion in stride. ...If the seasonal pattern of beach-oriented activities and people influx is to continue as an acceptable economic fact or way of life, then facilities must be developed, and activities controlled to cater to such seasonal surges without sustaining further losses on local livability.”

“The bayscape planning entity encompasses several distinct physiographic shore environments, as well as a shoreland fringe made up of bluffs, low-sloping uplands, marshes and lowlands. Shores may be functional resources in terms of habitat and recreational open space, or they may exert their greatest economic influence as scenic and esthetic attractions.”

#### “CONCLUSIONS:

The Birch Bay shore environment is one of varied character, use, and resource values. To whatever degree it has been intruded and altered, there still remain a number of options that can restore and enhance, rather than further downgrade this focal resource of the community.”

“Unlike the spit-protected, estuarine lagoon of Drayton Harbor, with its soft-mud bio-process habitat, open-vista Birch Bay with its sandy foreshore and proposed backshore berm-beaches represents a recreational habitat.”

“Nature has provided Birch Bay with a broad storm-buffer foreshore that severely limits motor boat access to its shores. Rather than trying to change the ‘disadvantage,’ such a circumstance may well be viewed as a blessing in disguise, for it provides this bayscape with the opportunity to be different, and to increasingly cash in on the appreciation trend for an uncluttered, people-oriented shore environment, especially in terms of much economic spinoff effects on the land values and tax base of the adjacent shorelands.”

“This evaluation has attempted to sharpen focus on the shore as the primary resource.

**It should be apparent that those values which people of the future will prize most highly, namely those found in the natural scene, are yet retrievable here by giving nature a second chance.”**