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**SJC Planning Commission Public Hearing
General Section of the proposed Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO),
Wednesday, August 10, 8:45 a.m.
Grange, 152 N. First Street, Friday Harbor
Please pass this notice to your friends and neighbors**

Dear San Juan County Neighbors and Friends ~

We hear from many of you that you do not understand the implications of the proposed Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) to your property and to you. Clearly, the County has done a poor job of educating the public. Even though CSA has been immersed in the CAO proceedings for more than two years, we wrestle with how to clearly answer your questions in simple terms. I hope that what follows will be helpful to you.

In accordance with state law San Juan County is in the process of reviewing its Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) and updating its Shoreline Management Program (SMP).

Pursuant to developing new regulations, County officials propose designating areas of the county as "Critical Areas." Shorelines, suspected streams and wetlands, frequently flooded areas, geologic hazards, and aquifer recharge areas have been so designated and may require large buffers (no touch zones) or setbacks for their protection. In complying with the state review requirements, and at some significant expense to the taxpayers, the County has retained environmental consultants to prepare a listing of Best Available Science (BAS) and to review our current Sensitive Area Ordinance. Throughout the BAS preparation and throughout the review proceedings, the Common Sense Alliance has requested/demanded that County officials identify environmental problem(s) caused by property owners. So far the County has produced no scientific evidence showing that individual residences are causing harm to the environment. Nonetheless, the County is developing new regulations that will impose even more restrictions on property owners. Many parcels will be designated

as having multiple Critical Areas, and those property owners will be surprised to discover what the County believes to be a stream or wetland on their property. If you live in these County-designated areas, your property is likely to be subject to ongoing and expensive government review and control--forever.

Furthermore, building, replacement, or remodeling activities, whether they involve a permit or not, may be severely restricted or prohibited. Your current and future activities on your property may be curtailed via a clause titled "Reasonable Use." Such things as gardening, mowing, pruning or the planting of any non-native vegetation for any purpose in a buffer may be affected depending upon how successful property owners are in standing up for their rights.

Moreover, a new enforcement code, if adopted, will empower the County to enter your property at any time without your permission. They (it) may levy fines and penalties, due and payable immediately, and prior to appeal. As the proposed enforcement ordinance stands today, no due process would be required to penalize you.

We suggest that if you find the above summary of what is going on in San Juan County to be of concern to you, that you attend the public hearings scheduled throughout the fall, write letters to the [Planning Commission and the County Council](#), [newspaper editors](#), speak at public meetings and let your voice be heard. If you have difficulty finding contact information and schedules please feel free to call me at 360-370-5056. Finally, I recognize that this is a complicated subject, requiring some considerable background. Watch for a future Newsletter from Common Sense Alliance explaining where you will be able to see more information.

Thank you for your support and your persistence in asking important questions.

Best regards,

David Cable
Executive Director
Common Sense Alliance

Common Sense Alliance

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