

Subject: camp fires

Date: Friday, December 9, 2022 at 6:11:36 PM Pacific Standard Time

From: Jo Bott

To: Dan Nelson



4:25 PM (1 hour ago)

to me ▼

That is a terrible idea. Air quality has never been worse in Western Wa and you don't need more burning at any time of year since the forests are already on fire for 4 months out of the year.

;

Juanita Bott

Tumwater,WA

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#2

Campfire burning

P portia

To: Dan Nelson



Fri 12/9/2022 11:44 AM

The criminal druggies should NOT be allowed to burn a campfire either!!!! Boohoo. STOP LETTING THE CRIMINALS AND DRUGGIES BREAK ALL OF THE LAWS!!!!!!

I will burn a campfire in my fucking back yard WHEN I WANT TO!!!!!!

STOP SCREWING THE TAX PAYING CITIZENS AND START LOCKING UP THE SCUM!!!!!!

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 Reply

 Forward

Subject: Comment re outdoor fires

Date: Sunday, December 11, 2022 at 11:18:44 AM Pacific Standard Time

To: Dan Nelson

I personally have been grateful for our cities' limits on fires. I have asthma and also live surrounded by areas of dry grass and trees and are vulnerable to sparks during drought.

If we allow personal campfires and large wood burn piles, who is going to prevent folks from returning to the old practices burning garbage?

Gay Gorden

Olympia, WA 98501

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Subject: Recreational burn ban

Date: Sunday, December 11, 2022 at 7:32:41 PM Pacific Standard Time

From: Joanne

To: Dan Nelson

Mr. Nelson,

I am opposed to lifting the ban on recreational burning in Olympia. There is a house in my Olympia SE neighborhood that uses a wood burning stove. When it is in use I can smell and breathe in the particulate matter. It makes being in my own yard repulsive. Lifting the ban would make this occur more frequently. I thought Olympia was supposed to be pro clean air and water. Lifting the ban would put us on the path to poor air quality again. We already have to deal with smoke from forest fires every year. The detrimental health effects of air pollution are well known, shouldn't that be the number one concern?

Joanne

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Subject: Comment on proposed campfire change

Date: Monday, December 12, 2022 at 11:58:04 AM Pacific Standard Time

From: Keith Edgerton

To: Dan Nelson

Hello Dan,

I am a resident of Olympia who lives in the city limits. I implore ORCAA to not make this change to our clean air regulations to allow for campfires in the city limits. While it's great to hear our overall air quality has improved, I believe smoke from campfires (and wood stoves) is detrimental to public health.

We are constantly impacted in the winter by residents burning wood poorly (white smoke) or burning wood in an older wood stove. In the summer we are fairly regularly impacted by illegal camp fires at neighbors' houses which means we are unable to leave our windows open. Not being able to cool down our house in the evening by opening our windows is really a negative impact to our family.

There is more and more evidence of the negative health impact of PM2.5 and PM 10 particulates and we are almost guaranteed to have several weeks of forest fire smoke each summer in Western Washington. I don't know why would we would want to add another source of poor air quality to our city? I would hope there would be another way to address 'survival' fires by homeless encampments.

Thank you for considering my comments when deciding on this potential new rule.

Cheers,
Keith Edgerton

Olympia, WA 98506

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Subject: Public Comment on Recreational Burning Changes

Date: Monday, December 12, 2022 at 1:42:27 PM Pacific Standard Time

From: GREG FISHER

To: Dan Nelson

I would like to comment on why your proposed changes in Recreational Burning are a bad idea for a number of reasons. I have extended personal experience with this situation.

In early summer 2021, the home next to me was sold. The new owner established a "fire pit" and commenced having recreational fires about 3 times per week throughout the summers of 2021 and 2022. I did not know these fires were illegal until late summer 2022. I informed the owner the fires were illegal and asked him to stop. He refused until he was notified by your agency. My negative experience with these fires are:

1. When water rates were raised a couple of years ago, many homeowners (and I mean many) ceased planting gardens and taking care of their yards. By June these unkempt yards are filled with tall dry grass and many are now overgrown with blackberry, Scotch broom, and other weeds and brush. These areas are tinder boxes just waiting to ignite and destroy our homes and outbuildings and endanger our lives. At sundown even during the heat spell in both summers, this neighbor would go out and start a large fire until about midnight with sparks floating off with the smoke. Once he got sleepy, he would simply go inside to bed without any concern for the raging fire he left burning in his back yard near to the overgrown dry vegetation. I would lie awake at night worrying that a fire would start and become a major problem before anyone would discover it burning in the wee hours of the morning. The threat to our homes and lives from wildfire is an unacceptable danger so that someone can enjoy a recreational fire. I am sure this proposed change is viewed as a nightmare by the various local fire responders.
2. I have asthma and we have no air conditioning in our house. Our only hope of remaining somewhat cool in the hot summer months is to open all of our windows to let the cool night air in. My neighbors fire pit is due SW of my home and we are the recipients for all of his smoke which during hot weather moves close to the ground. Even with dry firewood the smoke is unbearable. Even with my windows closed, the smoke triggers asthma attacks. I don't think I could live here if I opened my windows while he is burning. Therefore, half the nights during the summer we are trapped inside a house that has no way of allowing the cool night air to enter. The health implications of allowing recreational burning are huge, even to people without existing respiratory problems.
3. To think people are only going to burn dry firewood is naive. I have seen this neighbor burn construction debris, yard waste, and household garbage like dirty diapers. Who is going to police these people to insure that only dry firewood is being burned.
4. I have lived in my house for 44 years. Prior to about 20 years ago, the air quality in my part of Lacey was often so bad that a person avoided going outside for any reason especially during the clear cold days when high pressure cells were present. The poor air quality was due to the many people burning wood for home heating and outdoor burning of yard and other waste. The air quality in-town has improved so much during the past 20 years. Why are you now willing to sacrifice this??

5. The big picture reason that this change is a bad idea is that we are in the midst of trying to combat human-caused climate change. Why in the world would you not consider this a big mistake when on so many other fronts we are trying to make progress against polluting our environment. How can a Clear Air Agency even think of implementing such a gross step backwards??

To summarize, this proposal should not be implemented because: it endangers our homes and lives by igniting nearby flammable material; it worsens public health especially for people with existing pulmonary conditions; it will result in people burning all sorts of toxic materials; it will worsen the air quality which we have worked to improve over the past couple of decades; and it is in direct violation of the efforts being made to combat global climate change. Perhaps the other cities in western Washington should adopt our existing regulation instead of us regressing to theirs!!

Respectfully submitted,

Greg & Amy Fisher
Lacey Washington
December 12, 2022

ATTENTION: This email came from outside of ORCAA's system. Use caution when replying, or when opening attachments unless you know the sender *and* were expecting the attachment.

Subject: Comment for proposed rule change of recreational fires in Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater

Date: Sunday, December 11, 2022 at 8:01:51 PM Pacific Standard Time

From: Greg

To: Dan Nelson

I am a homeowner near downtown olympia. I wanted to make a comment on the rule change.

I don't think recreational fires should be allowed at all. Smoke from wood is toxic, and is proven to cause cancer:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5744698/>

<https://www.lung.org/clean-air/at-home/indoor-air-pollutants/residential-wood-burning#:~:text=Wood%2DBurning%20Emissions%20Threaten%20Lung,death%2C%20among%20other%20health%20effects.&text=Many%20of%20these%20pollutants%20can,Particle%20pollution.>

It should be our goal to eliminate all wood burning entirely, not restrict the laws already in place to allow **recreation which is toxic to everyone in the immediate area**. I moved here partially because of the **green mentality** of Olympia and the surrounding areas. To allow recreational fires is a step backwards in the middle of a climate crisis.

In the summertime, recreational fires will be used. As most people here don't have air conditioning, they have no choice but to be exposed to toxic smoke from neighbors. I have experienced this multiple times from two different neighbors who repeatedly violated the burn laws with both wood and trash. One of which was attempting to hide the smoke using a large tent, underneath a row of massive pine trees which sit next to a power line - the one that runs up Boulevard Rd.

If it **is allowed**, I believe there should be a property size requirement. Similar to regulations regarding the amount of chickens and other animals on a property, I believe a property should need to be at least .25 acres in order to have a recreational fire. This would provide a large enough barrier to prevent the unnecessary toxic transmission of smoke and other particulates to unwilling people. It would also eliminate many vacation "Air BNB" rental homes from causing a nuisance. We are in the largest housing crisis ever recorded, and our homes are already close together. We do not need the burden of a neighbors toxic smoke and inability to fully comprehend both fire safety and the law.

I strongly urge everyone involved in this decision to maintain the ban on recreational fires. We are living in the year 2022 - recreational fires are unnecessary and toxic.

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Subject: Fire regulations

Date: Saturday, December 10, 2022 at 6:26:17 AM Pacific Standard Time

From: Camille Kettel

To: Dan Nelson

No, no, no. I respectfully oppose lifting the ban on campfires in Olympia, Tumwater and Lacey. These communities are all about clean air.

Why allow pollution into the atmosphere? We have worked hard to maintain high standards. Totally wrong to relax those standards now.

Why move to electric vehicles to keep our air clean, then pollute it with smoke and debris from campfires? Very bad policy. Very much in opposition to this change

Thank you for opening to public comment.

Camille Kettel
Olympia, WA 98502

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Subject: Small camp fires fires

Date: Monday, December 12, 2022 at 6:18:31 AM Pacific Standard Time

From: Paul Longwell

To: Dan Nelson

I strongly support the rule change to allow small camp fires. They are a strong family relationship building experience. For a long time we have enjoyed the family reunion with a campfire.

Paul Longwell
Olympia growth boundary.

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Subject: Backyard fires

Date: Monday, December 12, 2022 at 11:43:36 AM Pacific Standard Time

From: Carol Middleton

To: Dan Nelson

Dear Sir,

I live in Olympia, and have asthma. I also do not have air conditioning in my home. So I rely on open windows for air movement. Neighbors fires impact my ability to live comfortably when they have fires. Even with burn ban in place lots of neighbors still have fires. If this ban removal is put in place my management of breathing will be more difficult.

This may be a topic the American Lung Association would be interested in.

Sincerely

Carol Middleton

Sent from my iPad, Carol Middleton

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Subject: On proposed rule change regarding recreational fires in Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater

Date: Monday, December 12, 2022 at 4:59:10 PM Pacific Standard Time

From: Bob Clark

To: Dan Nelson

I object to allowing recreational fires on people back yards in Olympia. We moved to Olympia because there was the ban on burning on peoples property.

We have a medical condition that is dangerous for us to breath smoke of any kind. If this ban is changed and our neighbors start burning we will be forced have to move.

Robert (Bob) Clark

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Subject: Burn ban

Date: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 at 11:47:45 AM Pacific Standard Time

To: Dan Nelson

Dan,

With regards to the burn ban proposal, I'm sure there is logic for the timing of this decision but given our current situation with the homeless it seems the county is opening the door for potential fire hazards to the community. The homeless have proven to disobey existing laws, I can't imagine having to worry about whether their "legal" camp fires are manageable and kept from affecting homes & businesses. This seems like an issue that should be delayed until we have better control of our current issue, thank you for your time.

Jeremy Ruse

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Subject: Comments on proposed rule change regarding recreational fires in Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater
Date: Saturday, December 24, 2022 at 4:41:52 PM Pacific Standard Time
From: Jim Oberlander
To: Dan Nelson

ORCAA,

We strongly oppose the proposed rule change about recreational fires in Lacey-Olympia-Tumwater. Our increased population, increased housing density, and climate change prompt stronger regulations, not looser (no) regulations. These factors increase urban/suburban fire danger as well as decreased air quality.

How will someone prevent campfire smoke from impacting their neighbors? They won't. They'll just burn their fire and leave it to smolder all night. We know because we have a few of those neighbors. We have spoken to these neighbors repeatedly and their behavior hasn't changed. They want to burn, so they do. Plastic and other illegal burning "ingredients" end up in the fire as well. In the summer, people have their windows open. That means more campfire smoke gets into other people's homes. As you know, smoke doesn't stay in one place. A campfire in Vail is far different than a campfire in Tumwater.

Consistency across ORCAA's jurisdiction isn't a reason to throw out the rules.

Your job is to protect air quality – and human health. Making the rules consistent across your six counties isn't making air quality a priority.

Lead. Let's have stronger regulations to protect human health.

Respectfully,
Jim Oberlander and M. Duerr
Tumwater, WA

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Subject: Regarding removing the ban on campfires

Date: Saturday, December 24, 2022 at 10:44:30 AM Pacific Standard Time

From: Allison Hanelt

To: Dan Nelson

Dan Nelson

Thank you for considering the future of recreational burning or campfires in the cities of Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater. I support removing the ban, and allowing backyard fire pits, recreational fires and campfires, with limitations or occasional bans while the fire hazard is extremely high or air quality is very poor.

People have gathered around campfires for years, generations, really forever. It provides a sense of community. It brings people outside and together.

Growing up in Arizona, we knew the fire danger was high, so we gathered around backyard chiminea fire pits to keep off the night chill while enjoying the company of friends.

We bought a propane fueled fire table over the summer and it's been absolutely amazing, for 4 people max. A backyard fire pit would allow more people to gather comfortably in the mild, 3 season gray of Washington and would have the bonus of being multi-use - in addition to the warmth and ambiance, we could cook on it!

Please remove the ban on recreational fires and allow backyard fire pits and campfires!

Thank you for your time and service.

Allison Hanelt

Tuwamater resident

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From: Janis K Orton

Sent: Thursday, December 29, 2022 1:12 PM

Subject: City of Lacey executive principal who ORCAA presented the Revising Recreational Fire Rules to the Lacey City Council Work Session 12/8/2022?

December 29, 2022

Bill Orton, City of Lacey resident, Property Owner

ATTENTION: Jeff Johnston, Executive Director, ORCAA

RE: Revising Recreational Fire Rules for Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, Presentation to Lacey City Council Work Session, December 8, 2022

I found your document today, "Revising Recreational Fire Rules for Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, Presentation to Lacey City Council Work Session, December 8, 2022," on the ORCAA website.

Since I live in Lacey, can you please tell me who the principals are for the Lacey City Council whom ORCAA briefed concerning this matter, December 8, 2022? I want to send them my comments regarding this proposed Rules Change.

Please advise me if my understanding of the 'Rules change' is wrong; my understanding is that it would allow campfires in high density Lacey subdivisions, the homeless residing on

heavily forested Meridian Lacey Park and Thurston County School District properties, directly behind my home; with the potential of creating a public micro-environment air quality hazards and fire dangers. The homeless have been burning items laden with unknown chemicals (origin of which cannot be determined, but the odor is acrid when the burning is going on).

I was injured by a “campfire burn” from my next-door neighbor (who was issued a Notice of Violation and was fined). He did his burning during the night (9:30 PM) that caused me a lung injury from the smoke entering my home, their ‘burn pit’ is very close to my home. The air in the burn pit area is "dead still” and prevents air from circulating, making it nearly impossible for the air circulate and remove heavy wood smoke by a public tree line.

Additionally, I have asthma and this event exacerbated my symptoms. As I reported to ORCAA, at that time; I am on supplemental oxygen as a result of this ‘camp fire’ burn.

I have owned and lived in my Lacey home for 30 years, so I am quite vested in the outcome of the proposed Rules Change.

Sincerely,

Bill Orton

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Subject: Public Comment in Support of Proposed Rule 6.2.7 and 6.2.8 Revisions

Date: Sunday, January 8, 2023 at 6:48:45 PM Pacific Standard Time

From: Grace Fletcher

To: Dan Nelson

Dear ORCAA Board of Directors,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed rule change to Regulations, Rules 6.2.7 and 6.2.8. As a concerned citizen living in the City of Olympia, I strongly believe that this change is necessary and long overdue.

Allowing recreational burning within the city limits of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater will not only bring these cities in line with all other cities in ORCAA's six-county jurisdiction, but it will also allow residents to enjoy a small piece of the traditional outdoor experience. Campfires are an integral part of outdoor recreation, and their ban has been a source of frustration for many in our community.

I understand that there are concerns about air quality and safety, but I believe that these can be adequately addressed through responsible burning practices and education. We should trust that our community members are capable of following guidelines and using common sense when it comes to recreational fires.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly support the proposed rule change to Regulations, Rules 6.2.7 and 6.2.8 and urge ORCAA to consider the benefits it will bring to our community.

Sincerely,

--

Grace A. Fletcher, MPA, CSSGB
Olympia, WA

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Subject: RE: Proposed Rules Revisions/Recreational Burning

Date: Monday, January 9, 2023 at 3:27:13 AM Pacific Standard Time

From: Carol Swiderski

To: Dan Nelson

Dear Mr. Nelson,

I'm a lifelong WA resident and have owned a home in the city of Olympia since 2008. I moved from the Boston Harbor area to Olympia specifically to escape the negative effects of rural outdoor burning on my health.

I adamantly oppose the proposed rules revisions. Permitting recreational fires in densely populated residential areas is frivolous and dangerous.

There's no good reason to amend the current ban on recreational fires.

I have a cardiac arrhythmia and asthma. My asthma attacks are often caused by wood smoke. ORCAA is aware how many Washingtonians suffer from medical conditions such as mine, and that wood smoke greatly exacerbates the conditions. I've been to the ER several times in the past three years owing to wood smoke inhalation.

ORCAA is also aware that Washington's climate is changing dramatically. Intense, noxious wildfire smoke from WA, OR, CA and Canada is the new norm in the Puget Sound region from summer to fall.

Washington frequently enjoys the dubious distinction of having the worst air quality in the world. If there's one thing Washingtonians don't need, it's more smoke.

Recreational fire policy is bad policy that creates a hostile neighborhood environment, pitting neighbor against neighbor.

Please read the following West Seattle Blog comments regarding recreational fires.

<https://westseattleblog.com/forums-2/topic/recreational-fires/>

Rather than sanction/encourage wood smoke in Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater ORCAA should be working to rid all our urban neighborhoods of recreational burning.

As it stands, ORCAA is working to ensure that those of us who are most vulnerable to harmful wood smoke effects have no escape route. I can't even escape smoke inside my house unless I shut down the Heat Recovery Ventilation system in my attic.

In case ORCAA has forgotten or blocked;



**U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AGENCY**

Wood Smoke and Your Health | US EPA

Health effects from wood smoke.

www.epa.gov

<https://www.epa.gov/burnwise/wood-smoke-and-your-health>

Sincerely,
Carol Swiderski

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Subject: Public Comment in Support of Proposed Rule 6.2.7 and 6.2.8 Revisions

Date: Sunday, January 8, 2023 at 7:01:03 PM Pacific Standard Time

From: Marcella V

To: Dan Nelson

Dear ORCAA Board of Directors,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed rule change to remove the ban on recreational burning within the city limits of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater. As a recent newcomer to Olympia, I was disappointed to find out that recreational fires were not permitted in the city. I had always enjoyed the tradition of having a campfire in Tacoma and was looking forward to continuing this tradition in my new home.

I understand that the proposed rule change only removes language that sets up the special burn restrictions for these three cities, allowing them to be consistent with the rest of ORCAA's six-county jurisdiction and throughout western Washington. I strongly support this change as it will allow residents of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater to enjoy the same rights and privileges as those living in other cities within the agency's jurisdiction.

Furthermore, continuing to uphold the ban on recreational burning in these cities could potentially impact people's decision to move to the area. Had I been aware of this restriction prior to closing on my home, I may have thought twice about moving to Olympia. I believe that removing the ban will not only benefit current residents, but also encourage more people to move to these cities and make them their home.

Overall, I am in full support of the proposed rule change to remove the ban on recreational burning within the city limits of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater. I believe it is important to allow residents to enjoy this traditional and enjoyable activity, and I hope to see this change implemented soon.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Marcella Volpintesta

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#19



Address: 701 Franklin St SE

Olympia, WA 98501

Phone: 360-515-3202

Email: contact@olympa.org

ORCAA and ORCAA Board of Directors,

This letter is submitted on behalf of Olympia Mutual Aid Partners (OlyMAP), a Thurston County-based homeless services organization that provides outreach-based services for people living unsheltered. The intention of this letter is to convey our organizations' enthusiastic support for the proposed rule change to ORCAA's Regulations, Rules 6.2.7 and 6.2.8, regarding the removal of the ban on recreational burning (i.e. "campfires") within the city limits of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater.

OlyMAP has provided outreach-based social service support for people living unsheltered in unsanctioned camp communities throughout Thurston County for many years. Part of our work involves collaborating with people living in the camps, residential and business neighbors and other community stakeholders to address challenges and broader community impacts associated with the camps we work with.

Some of the most difficult challenges we have worked to navigate with these communities are those associated with hazardous burning. Most often associated with survival needs and trying to remove accumulated garbage, unsafe burning practices have serious impacts on those who live at the camps and the broader community. Though great efforts have and are being made, our community is currently lacking the effective tools needed to adequately address these issues. Considering all burning is currently banned with no separation between survival and recreational fires, one factor that has contributed to the lack of effective tools are the limits that current regulations place on the ability of even ready and willing stakeholders to pursue more promising responses to these challenges.

OlyMAP believes this proposed rule change will have positive impacts on the broad Thurston County community, including in ways not at all related to homelessness. However, the main reason OlyMAP supports this proposed rule change is because we believe that it would immediately remove barriers to pursuing practical and promising efforts that may more effectively address challenges related to unsafe burning practices at camps.

For example, thanks to the graciousness of the Regional Housing Council and the great collaboration and work that has taken place between OlyMAP and ORCAA in recent months, OlyMAP is currently working to launch a new outreach program dedicated entirely to addressing smoke and fire concerns at specific camps in Thurston County. Understanding that people living unsheltered may find themselves needing to use fire for survival in the absence of other alternatives, regional Fire Officials have shared interest in collaborating with OlyMAP to provide education and skills building opportunities for people living unsheltered to learn how to use fire for warmth and cooking in the safest ways possible. However, the current regulations present barriers to this sort of safety training being provided by regional departments. The proposed changes taking effect would make this a possible avenue and strategy to explore – and is just one example of how this rule change might positively impact homeless response efforts and the safety of our broader community.

Overall, this rule change would enable our community to focus limited resources on harm reduction, education, the promotion of safer practices and addressing truly problematic and hazardous burning practices.

Lastly, all of us at OlyMAP would like to express our gratitude to ORCAA and the Board of Directors for exploring and considering this rule change. No matter if the reasons are grounded in practicality, safety, equity or relevance, it is always challenging to make changes to a long-standing rule or regulation that has been such a



Address: 701 Franklin St SE

Olympia, WA 98501

Phone: 360-515-3202

Email: contact@olympa.org

significant part of a community or system. OlyMAP recognizes ORCAA's willingness to look at what may no longer be working effectively and make changes or try something different as yet another way ORCAA is leading by example in our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Respectfully,

Tye Gundel

Tye Gundel
Co-Director
Olympia Mutual Aid Partners

Subject: Rule Change -Recreational Fires

Date: Tuesday, January 10, 2023 at 11:26:24 AM Pacific Standard Time

From: Matt Leise

To: Dan Nelson

Hello Dan,

I am a resident of Tumwater. I am writing to express my strong support for the rule change to allow recreational fires. PM levels have fallen well below those which were present at the time the ban was implemented, and are now well within the air quality standards. I would very much like to enjoy outdoor time with family and friends around a fire burning local, renewable wood rather than one burning a fossil fuel such as propane.

Thank you for taking my comment.

Matt Leise
Tumwater Resident

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#21

Date: 1/9/2022

To: Olympic Regional Clean Air Agency (ORCAA) and the City of Olympia

From: Catherine Stark, City of Olympia Resident

Regarding: Opposition to Lifting the Permanent Burn Ban in Olympia

I oppose lifting the permanent burn ban in Olympia because clean, smoke-free air is vital to comfort and health, especially now due to COVID-19. The benefits of smoke-free air for everyone far outweigh the benefits of recreational campfires for a few.

There is no doubt that smoke is unhealthy to breathe.

According to the Washington State Department of Health's website, "Smoke is harmful to your health. Smoke is made up of gases and particles (also called particulate matter or PM) that can be dangerous if they're inhaled into your lungs. When a temperature inversion occurs, this smoke can be trapped close to the ground. Smoke can irritate your eyes, nose, and throat. It can make you wheeze, cough, and cause shortness of breath and headache. It can make existing heart and lung conditions worse."ⁱ

In addition, ORCAA's website states, "Smoke, from any source, creates problems in human lungs. Children and the elderly are particularly susceptible to problems associated with smoke. The types of problems associated with smoke exposure include lower respiratory infections, acute pneumonia, and bronchitis, as well as severe aggravation of existing conditions such as asthma and emphysema. Research evidence also suggests a strong link between wood smoke inhalation and cancer."ⁱⁱ

We should continue to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and the most vulnerable members of our community (children, elderly, and the immune-compromised) from all of these harmful effects of smoke by maintaining the current burn ban.

Due to COVID-19, it is more important than ever that our air be clean.

COVID-19 symptoms and illness are more severe when lungs are already irritated by smoke exposure. Dr. Panagis Galiatsatos, M.D., M.H.S., a pulmonologist and expert on lung disease at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical center, says, "COVID-19 often affects the lungs, where it can cause lung damage...Your lungs, which are at the forefront of your immune system, are interacting with the environment with every breath. When you inhale cigarette smoke, germs or allergens, your lungs can get irritated, and that irritation unleashes the immune system to fight that irritation. A coronavirus infection on top of that means that your symptom response is going to be amplified."ⁱⁱⁱ

COVID-19 transmission is reduced when people gather outside or inside with maximum fresh air. Neither is possible when the outside air is polluted

by smoke. Per Dr. Galiatsatos, “When surrounding air is unhealthy due to wildfires or any other air pollution, stay indoors and...recirculate air instead of drawing air from outside.”^{iv}

COVID-19 often leads to lasting lung damage, vastly increasing the number of people who are now more vulnerable to aggravation of existing conditions when exposed to smoke. In July 2022, the White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator Ashish Jha, MD, said that “more than 70% of the U.S. population has had the virus, according to the latest CDC data.”^v Per the Mayo Clinic’s website, “Research suggests that between one month and one year after having COVID-19, 1 in 5 people ages 18 to 64 has at least one medical condition that might be due to COVID-19. Among people age 65 and older, 1 in 4 has at least one medical condition that might be due to COVID-19... The most commonly reported symptoms of post-COVID-19 syndrome include... Lung (respiratory) symptoms, including difficulty breathing or shortness of breath and cough.”^{vi} Unfortunately this data shows that a large percentage of adults now suffer from lung damage from previous COVID-19 infection.

What about kids? In April 2022, the CDC released research estimating that, “Three out of every four American kids has been infected with COVID-19...But what does this widespread infection from the contagious omicron surge mean for our kids in the long-term? Experts say we simply don't know yet.”^{vii} According to Dr. Brian Chow, the attending physician for Tufts Medical Center Infectious Disease, “There are some other respiratory illnesses like RSV which do increase risk of having reactive airway diseases, or a precursor to asthma later on in life.”^{viii}

A study published in the journal Radiology found that, “Disease of the small airways in the lungs is a potential long-lasting effect of COVID-19...The study found that small airways disease occurred *independently of initial infection severity. The long-term consequences are unknown.* (Italics are my own.) ‘There is some disease happening in the small airways independent of the severity of COVID-19,’ said study senior author Alejandro P. Comellas, M.D., professor of internal medicine and faculty in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at the Carver College of Medicine, University of Iowa in Iowa City. ‘We need to investigate further to see whether it is transient or more permanent.’”^{ix}

Anecdotally, almost everyone I know has had COVID-19 and many have been told by their doctors that the lingering cough or progression to bronchitis or pneumonia from otherwise mild colds is due to their lung damage from previous COVID-19 infection. Until more research is available on the long-term lung damage from COVID-19, it seems wise to keep our air as clean as possible.

Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater are healthier and more desirable places to live, work and recreate because they are differentiated as the only cities in Western Washington with a permanent burn ban.

ORCAA said, “Removing this ban would make these cities the same as all the other cities and urban areas within ORCAA’s jurisdiction.”^x Simply being the same as other cities is a dubious goal but even if consistency of the burn ban rules is indeed a priority, why not bring the other cities up to our healthier standard instead of lowering ours to theirs? As a former resident of one of those other cities that allows campfires, I can attest to vastly preferring to live in a city with a permanent burn ban and clean, fresh air. In fact, when we were buying our house here, Olympia’s burn ban was one reason we chose to live in the city over the county.

Allowing recreational campfires primarily benefits typically higher income people living in single family homes and disproportionately harms typically lower income people living in denser housing.

My husband and I moved to Olympia from a city with no campfire ban. There, we lived in a condo with the bedroom windows facing the backyard of a single family home. Like most apartment and condominium buildings, we had no safe place to have a legal fire pit. However, our neighbors with the large private yard frequently enjoyed a legal campfire that filled all of the homes in our building and the other neighboring condominium buildings with smoke. It was miserable and unhealthy. Like many homes in Western Washington, we did not have air conditioning and relied on opening our windows at night to cool the house down. There were many nights where we had to choose between keeping our windows closed to try to keep the smoke out and opening our windows to cool the house but let the smoke in.

Legalizing recreational campfires primarily benefits higher income households that have a large enough yard for a safe, legal fire. Lower income households are less likely to have the space for a legal campfire of their own and they are less likely to have air conditioning to filter smoke coming from other people’s fires into their homes. Higher density housing is also more likely to be closer to multiple sources of campfire smoke, increasing the frequency of experiencing smoke pollution at their home. Thus, legalizing campfires primarily benefits higher income households and primarily harms lower income households.

Recreational campfires are bad for climate change.

Fires obviously create carbon dioxide that contributes to climate change. Furthermore, increasing housing density and decreasing air conditioning usage are both climate change mitigation strategies that will be less desirable with more backyard campfires. No one likes breathing smoke from someone else’s campfire. If they are legal, people will want to live farther from their neighbors

(and potential sources of smoke) or be forced to get AC to protect their indoor air quality. I know that if the permanent burn ban is lifted, my family will be adding AC to our house instead of continuing to rely on opening our windows for cooling and fresh air. We are lucky that we can afford this mitigation strategy to protect our comfort and health inside our home, although it comes at a cost for climate change and does nothing to address the smoke that will prevent us from enjoying the outdoors on our own property.

Nuisance smoke laws are not adequate protection against smoke pollution.

Smoke travels far and wide so it is often difficult to locate or prove the source of nuisance smoke. Recreational campfires are intermittent and usually outside normal working hours, making detection and enforcement by regulatory agencies an expensive challenge. A quick search of Next Door, Facebook, comments on the various websites covering this potential change to the burn ban rules, and even ORCAA's Google reviews shows that this is a contentious issue. No one wants to breathe someone else's smoke but complaints cause strong disagreements amongst neighbors. Informing a neighbor that all campfires are illegal creates a lot less conflict than telling them that their particular fire is bothering you so they should stop.

Legalizing campfires does nothing to help the houseless or their housed neighbors and, in fact, harms both.

The houseless crisis in our region is complicated and has no easy answers. Some people have reacted to the houseless camps with hyperbole like, "If the houseless can have survival fires, then we should all be able to have campfires in our yards! If tax payers have to pay for cleaning up the mess created at the camps, then we should all stop paying for garbage pick-up, dump our garbage on the sidewalk, and the city can deal with it! Why should I pay my sewer bill if they get free porta-potties? No one should pay their mortgage or property taxes because they get to live there for free! If drug use is allowed in the camps, then all drug laws should be unenforceable! In fact, we should all do whatever we want, wherever we want!"

These are exaggerations said out of frustration. I don't think any of this is meant to be taken literally and nor should it. None of us would want to live in a city that looked like that. It does not help the houseless or the housed to eliminate the rules that make for a functional and safe society, enjoyable community, and healthy environment.

Johnston of ORCAA said, "It was the communication around some of the homeless camps that led us to question the (permanent burn ban) rule...We could have clearer communication around it if we got rid of the ban on campfires, so we don't have to think of this notion of 'survival fires' and people being upset because they see people burning in encampments, but they can't do it in their

backyard.”^{xi} However, lifting the permanent burn ban won’t make survival fires subject to the same rules and communication as recreational campfires. People will still be upset about survival fires in the encampments because they are constant and concentrated, won’t have to follow the regulations, will be allowed when there are temporary burn bans, and nuisance smoke rules won’t apply.

The truth is most people don’t want to be frequently exposed to campfire smoke, no matter the source. It smells bad and is irritating and unhealthy, especially in our post-COVID world. Additional smoke from even more campfires harms both the houseless camp residents that are already subjected to high volumes of campfire smoke and the neighbors that didn’t want to smell smoke in the first place.

Less harmful alternatives to typical wood-burning campfires are available.

I oppose lifting the permanent burn ban in Olympia because, in addition to the serious negative health impacts for the most vulnerable members of our community (children, elderly, and immune-compromised), most people are annoyed and irritated, both mentally and physically, by smoke from other people’s fires. Unfortunately smoke travels far and wide, subjecting many people to the negative impacts of just one campfire.

Ironically, ORCAA is suggesting removing the permanent burn ban in response to complaints about smoke! Instead of responding to these smoke complaints about the houseless encampments by legalizing all campfires and *increasing* the amount of irritating and unhealthy campfire smoke in our community, I hope ORCAA and the Cities will consider some alternatives to address the need for cooking and heat in the houseless camps:

- Provide the camps with propane firepits and fuel to reduce pollution
- Provide the camps with “smokeless” wood-burning fire pits (like Solo) for cleaner burns
- Provide the camps with dry firewood for cleaner burns
- Provide the camps with kitchens for cooking
- Provide the camps with warming shelters

If ORCAA and the Cities proceed with legalizing recreational campfires, please consider specifying that wood burning fire pits must be “smokeless” to reduce the annoyance, irritation, and negative health impacts from the smoke air pollution.

Sincerely,
Catherine Stark
City of Olympia Resident

ⁱ <https://ecology.wa.gov/Air-Climate/Air-quality/Smoke-fire/Health-effects>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.orcaa.org/outdoor-burning>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-smoking-vaping-wildfire-smoke-and-air-pollution>

^{iv} <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-smoking-vaping-wildfire-smoke-and-air-pollution>

^v <https://www.webmd.com/covid/news/20220802/havent-had-covid-yet-wanna-bet>

^{vi} <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coronavirus-long-term-effects/art-20490351>

^{vii} <https://www.cbsnews.com/boston/news/cdc-children-infected-covid/>

^{viii} <https://www.cbsnews.com/boston/news/cdc-children-infected-covid/>

^{ix} <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/03/220315105608.htm>

^x <https://thejoltnews.com/stories/lacey-might-lift-campfire-ban-soon,8522?>

^{xi} <https://www.msn.com/en-us/weather/topstories/olympia-lacey-and-tumwater-dont-allow-campfires-thats-about-to-change/ar-AA156cmc>