**“Glen’s Parallax Perspectives”** is a series of TV programs that offer fresh ways for people to see issues such as foreign policy, social and economic justice, governmental functioning, and so forth. We provide voices and viewpoints that are rarely heard in mainstream media.

Mainstream media, politicians, and culture see the world in conventional ways. In order to solve problems, we need to see things differently. Glen Anderson created this TV series to help people see things differently so we can solve problems at all levels from the local to the global.

This series title refers to “Parallax Perspectives.” ***Parallax*** is the view you get by looking from different perspectives. For example, put one finger in front of your nose and another finger farther away. Close one eye. Then open that eye and close the other. Your fingers will seem to move. This is called a “parallax” view. This TV series invites you to look at issues from fresh perspectives.

Each program airs three times a week (currently every Monday at 1:30 pm, every Wednesday at 5:00 pm, and every Thursday at 9:00 pm) for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for cable TV subscribers in Thurston County, Washington. You can see TCTV’s current schedule at [**www.tctv.net**](http://www.tctv.net). This is part of Thurston County Media,[**www.tcmedia.org**](http://www.tcmedia.org).

**You can also watch the program described below through your computer** at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org). All episodes of “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” are posted on that blog’s “TV Programs” part and also in one or more of the categories listed in the right side of the computer screen. Also, see much information about a variety of issues grouped by topic at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

🡪 Please invite other people to watch this video at the “TV Programs” part of [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org) and/or read this thorough summary there.

🡪 The end of this document lists some sources of further information.

**Here is this month’s program:**

**September 2018**

**“Local Governments Must Protect the Environment”**

by Glen Anderson, producer and host of the TV series “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives”

This month’s interview on “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” helps us urge our local governments to protect the environment. Environmental problems persist all the way from the global level down to the local level, even though people everywhere really do care about the environment. We can think globally and act locally. This helps you understand why local governments often fail to protect the environment – and how we can be more effective in urging them to protect it.

**Three guests help us explore this topic:**

* **Cindy Beckett** is a Washington State University Certified Master Watershed Steward. She is working toward earning that certification also from the federal Environmental Protection Agency. She works hard as a volunteer helping people protect local water resources, and she has earned a great reputation as an excellent source of expertise and inspiration for that.
* **Tye Menser** graduated with honors from Harvard with a degree in Government. He is also a lawyer who has practiced law in several specialties and several different states in the U.S. He served several years on Thurston County’s Water Conservancy Board. During the past few months he has talked with a great many people throughout Thurston County to find out what problems they see at the local level and what they want local governments to do.
* **Helen Wheatley** is well respected locally and regionally as an expert on several kinds of environmental problems. She has a strong understanding of environmental science and explains it clearly so people can understand it. She has special expertise on environmental issues in our local Thurston County area.

**Environmental problems keep getting worse.**

Glen said that he keeps seeing reliable evidence that our water, land, air, wildlife, fish, and other aspects of our environment are in extreme danger. We discussed some specific examples later in this interview, but we began with Helen summarizing the environment’s current condition and the trends underway.

Helen said that one of the basic environmental truths – that “everything is connected to everything else” – is clearly true. We see evidence all the time. Many things are changing rapidly, so local governments have difficulty coping with that. Local governments must deal with the consequences of past policies. In Washington State – more than in most other states – the role of local government is essential for protecting the environment. But nowadays it is increasingly hard to count on federal and state governments to protect the environment. This set of conditions amounts to a “perfect storm” that requires us to devise new ideas and new approaches.

Glen said that our TV interviews deal with daunting problems. But “if people are thoughtful and informed and motivated and skillful, we can devise strategies to solve the problems, so it’s always a ‘can-do’ attitude.”

**The public wants all levels of government to protect the environment.**

Glen said that overwhelmingly, the public wants the environment to be clean, healthy and sustainable. The private sector – left to its own devices – will not do that because businesses focus on short-term profits, rather than to serve the broad public interest. Therefore, governmental action seems necessary for protecting the environment. Governmental action seems necessary – all the way from the national level to the local level. Local governments are the most accessible to the general public, so we must vigorously urge local governments to protect the environment.

Tye has been talking with a great many people throughout our local community to find out what problems they see at the local level – and what people want local governments to do regarding the environment and other issues.

He said the most common problem that people express concern about is the huge amount of population growth that has been forecasted for this area. Experts expect 100,000 more people to live in Thurston County by the year 2040. People are concerned about how we can protect natural resources in light of this growth. The growth will cause development and will pressure our open spaces and our water. Tye said people are concerned about how we can handle this 40% increase in population in the next 22 years.

Tye said a second major cluster of concerns he has been hearing from the people he has been talking with are issues related to water. He said people read and learn about various water-related issues because of animals and fish, and about pharmaceuticals getting into the water. He said people are concerned about the Deschutes River, Budd Inlet, our watershed areas, and the toxic algae in Summit Lake.

He said people wonder what our government is doing about these problems.

Glen expressed appreciation for Cindy’s vigorous and extensive volunteer work. She has developed an excellent reputation as someone who thoroughly knows the laws and regulations about environmental issues – especially water. She has helped many people protect local streams and wetlands.

Cindy explained how she got into this kind of volunteer work. Her interest began when she was four years old and spent a lot of time outside looking at water, where it came from, and where it went. Later, as an adult, she saw a sign posted across the street near a very big wetland meadow across the street. The sign was a public notice that 42 houses were going to be built there. She figured if there was water there must be some laws to protect it. She and a neighbor studied up and found that whoever had told the real estate developer that it would be OK to build there were not qualified to make that kind of determination. The real estate developer tried to dissuade them from protecting that wetland. She talked with many parts of local govt and found that they did not know the law, so she had to educate them. She finally got the Army Corps of Engineers to visit the site and drill down to find out what’s below the surface. They found water flowing underground that made that property unbuildable. She and her neighbor stopped that project and protected the wetland. She continued researching the route of that waterway flowing underground. This experience empowered her to carry on.

**Environmental laws were passed in 1960s-1970s. Reality has moved beyond them, so they need updating.**

The environmental movement was strong in the late 1960s and through the 1970s. We got the federal and state governments to pass good environmental laws. But changes and realities have moved beyond those situations, so the laws from the late 1960s and the 1970s seem inadequate to solve the problems we face today.

Helen explained this further. She said those laws are very strong and very useful. The more we work on protecting the environment, the more we realize how powerful and useful those federal laws are for protecting our local environments. She said Cindy is especially skilled at using those laws at the local level.

Helen said state and local laws have been flowing from those federal laws. But these more recent laws have shifted the focus to local levels that are less vigorous than the original federal laws. This is especially relevant because local levels do not have the direct enforcement powers that the federal laws provided. Enforcement is not adequate now. (We talked further about this later in the interview.)

Helen said another problem is that those laws were passed about 50 years ago, but now the “best available science” that should be vigorously guiding us is much better informed than those old laws recognized, so those laws have not kept current with the scientific advances. This limits those laws’ usefulness in some ways. So, for example, instead of looking at a single species, we need to look at entire ecosystems.

Also, she said, those old laws were looking at “preservation,” but now we need to focus much on “restoration” to repair the environmental damages that have occurred. Those laws wanted to preserve pristine natural environments that existed at that time. Much environmental damage has occurred in the past 50 years, and now – especially with the climate crisis further disrupting ecosystems – we need to focus on “restoration” and not merely “preservation.”

Glen asked Cindy to follow up on Helen’s insight into state and local governments’ failures to adequately use federal laws and regulations to protect the environment. Cindy said that in Washington State the Growth Management Act (GMA) grants much deference to local governments but the GMA does not actually say that local governments must abide by federal laws and regulations. Unless somebody knows what the federal law specifies, a local planning office can get away with making decisions that violate federal laws.

Glen said that people used to focus on pollution by specific sources, such as individual factories and individual outfalls. After we solved a number of those specific problems, we discovered that pollution also comes from many sources that cannot be individually identified. These are called “non-point sources,” and they are crucial, but those “non-point sources” are harder to identify and deal with.

All levels of government must deal with them, but governments have not been doing enough.

Cindy said actually there are always “points,” even when we think of “non-point sources.” She said that pollution comes from the total amount of stuff that comes from all sources and flows into the water. This ends up being somewhat of a cop-out that allows governments to not take “non-point sources” seriously because they cannot identify the specific “points.” Then runoff from yards and streets, etc., continues without being corrected.

**Governments fail to adequately enforce environmental laws and regulations.**

Helen added more information about the lack of adequate enforcement of laws and regulations. She said this occurs because of a great number of reasons.

She said a great example of the problem at the local level is the Deschutes River and Capitol Lake in Olympia. In Washington State a huge amount of authority devolves down to the local level, but even so, a great many jurisdictions and agencies have various kinds of authority over Olympia’s Capitol Lake. It is very hard for an ordinary person to figure out who actually has jurisdiction over enforcing laws at a specific site or regarding a specific issue.

In Olympia, for example, we have a mixture of City land, Port land, State land, Tribal land, State tidelands, Federal water channels, and on and on. Even if you think you have figured out which agency is responsible, you might find that they have ceded responsibility to some different agency. It is a very complex maze. Within any level of government, different agencies have different roles for a given piece of land. Helen said that some lands are leased for other purposes, and so forth, so it is a very complex web. Glen said that this can result in “the buck stops nowhere.” Helen agreed with this insight.

Cindy mentioned that governments often lack the authority to enforce laws. She gave an example from Pierce County, where she lives, but she said the same situation occurs in Thurston, King, and many other counties. Local governments are responsible for protecting the resources and for enforcing laws when violations occur. Counties write “codes,” which are their local laws, and if they don’t reference the state or federal laws, the courts cannot enforce the local codes.

County planning departments have initial enforcement authority, but they often do not act, so when people appeal above that level, they can’t get enforcement at higher levels (the county executive, the county commissioners or council, etc.), either. Every level says they are powerless. If you contact a state or federal office, they say they can’t help either, because the county codes do not reference state or federal laws, so courts can’t enforce state or federal laws at the local level.

Helen added that enforcement mechanisms are inadequate. She said that even if you can figure out who has jurisdiction, it’s likely that they lack enforcement powers. For example, suppose you are concerned about a proposed development’s damage to a stream that is used by federally endangered Chinook salmon. It can be hard to figure out how to legally protect it. Perhaps you could take formal action to oppose a stormwater permit, but enforcement power is fuzzy.

Sometimes an action is referred to a hearings examiner, but hearings examiners often reject such appeals because the person does not have legal “standing” [enough personal stake in the matter in order to justify filing the appeal]. It is hard for ordinary people to figure out how to function in such a system. Also, local governments might fear legal liability if they stick their necks out and enforce environmental laws.

Tye said that any time you have separate legal systems interacting, you get complexities. Tye said those complexities open the doors to multiple legal arguments and litigation. Trying to interpret the interactions among different legal systems so you can enforce a law or rule can become very expensive for the citizens or the jurisdictions involved – even if you have what seems like a great case and a great legal argument.

**What is the Growth Management Act (GMA)? What is its origin?
What are the GMA’s limitations and other problems?**

Washington State has a law called the Growth Management Act (GMA) that affects the environment in many ways. Cindy said that when she started doing her work she wondered how it came into being and what it does, so she researched its origin and its functioning. She could not get good answers from officials but finally discovered that the Master Builders of America had promoted such laws nationwide, but Washington and Florida are the only two states that passed GMA laws. All of the other states turned down the builders’ proposed GMA laws. Cindy said the GMA promotes what the real estate development and building companies want states to do in their “development” to accommodate incoming populations, and so forth.

Glen said he has read much about the GMA, which the Legislature passed in 1990, and discovered that it has many, many parts. He asked Tye to summarize what the GMA does.

Tye said the GMA gives local governments some tools for managing growth and sets up requirements for county planning policies. It requires inventorying critical areas, natural resource lands (including agricultural, forestry and mineral lands), and managing those responsibly, even while population grows. It includes shoreline planning.

Tye said the GMA also includes a “concurrency” requirement that requires capital expenditures for infrastructure to keep pace with growth.

Tye said the GMA requires “urban growth boundaries” that are designed to contain the next 20 years of growth in appropriate locations near existing urban areas rather than allow it to sprawl outward. He said the GMA tries to distinguish between urban and non-urban growth, but he said that distinction is murky and has exceptions. What it tries to do is prevent “urban” kinds of growth from occurring outside of the “urban growth boundaries.”

He said the GMA allows for a Growth Management Hearings Board to hear disputes and provide enforcement.

He said that the GMA’s incentives for local governments to update their comprehensive plans are rather weak.

Cindy said the GMA has been “an abysmal failure,” especially when comparing Washington and Florida with states that rejected the builders’ proposed legislation. Too much growth has been promoted for Washington and the GMA forces us to accommodate it.

Helen asked Tye whether he thinks the GMA is “too piecemeal.” She said that people keep thinking the state should do more to protect the environment. Other states do more, but in Washington too much power was devolved to local governments that adopted “growth management” policies, and they are failing to enforce environmental quality in a number of ways.

Tye said the GMA had tried to strike a balance between establishing principles statewide and then allowing local jurisdictions to work out the details.

Tye said the Shoreline Master Program requirements took that approach too. The state required every county that has shoreline to create policies, so that requirement is statewide even while the specific policies may differ from county to county.

He acknowledged that these are “piecemeal,” but he also said these attempts at balance reflect the preference of our state’s people for “not too much top-down control.”

Glen said it would be interesting to find out how other states handle these matters.

**Confusion about jurisdictions, overlap, gaps, etc., is inhibiting effective
environmental protection.**

Glen said that when we were preparing for this interview, both Cindy and Helen told me that governments are not adequately protecting the environment because of confusion about who is responsible for something. Various jurisdictions and various agencies have confusing gaps and overlaps in responsibility. Glen said that such confusion prevents meaningful actions from being taken.

Helen agreed and said that this pertains to Puget Sound’s problems too. The orcas there are in crisis, so people are concerned now. Various kinds of regional boards are part of the complexity of environmental matters, including taking care of Puget Sound. She said that a basic principle of the environment is that everything is connected with everything else, but we try to fix problems at a very micro level. She said that weird regional bodies that are not the state government and not local governments are part of the complexity. These regional councils, commissions, boards, and so forth are players. But where do they get their power? Who chooses them? Ordinary people vote for elected officials who have positions on issues, but other regional bodies end up setting the actual policies within these layers and layers of government.

Glen agreed with Helen and said that although they have representatives from various cities and counties and other jurisdictions, there is no clear organizational chart, so there is no real accountability. Each entity should be accountable to the people. The system has been muddied in many ways.

Tye said he moved here more than a decade ago from the state of Alaska, which operates in a very different way. Alaska had only 660,000 people in that huge area, but everything is done at the state level. Alaska does not have counties, but they have “boroughs” with limited power. He said that in many ways doing more things at the state level works very well. “You know where to go. You know who is making the decision. You get consistency in every community in the state.” He said that when he moved to Washington he was bewildered by the complexity that Helen has been describing. It is hard to figure out how decisions are made here.

**Scientific knowledge is lacking among elected officials, planning agency
employees, hearings examiners, etc.**

Glen said that when we were preparing for this interview, both Cindy and Helen identified as one source of the problem the fact that elected officials, the staff of local planning agencies, hearings examiners, and other key decision-makers lack the scientific knowledge to make scientifically competent decisions. Without solid grounding in scientific knowledge, these officials are easily swayed by special interests.

Cindy said the hearings examiner in her county is an exceptionally nice man but his legal background does not include any training specifically in water law, and he does not know the science. When real estate developers tell him that they did the right procedural steps in their applications, he does not have the scientific background to see the flaws in their proposed projects. She said this happens among the county staff who give permission to do things that are not scientifically appropriate because they do not have the scientific degrees or the licenses to make valid scientific decisions about the things that they are approving.

Glen noted that her first example was about a hearings examiner who does not know enough about water law, and her second example is about people who do not know the water science. Both are important.

Helen said that a developer who sees a wetland where he wants to build goes online to find the “SEPA checklist” and hires someone (who might or might not have adequate credentials) to go through the items so the developer submits it as part of the permitting process. She said there is a major disconnect between what the community sees and what the planner sees. The community knows there is a wetland and hears the frogs singing. But the “SEPA checklist” that the developer contracted with someone to fill out is a procedural paperwork process, so the local planning department tends to go along with that because the staff lacks scientific expertise to recognize what’s wrong. Glen said that the person hired by the developer is accountable to the person that pays him or her, not accountable to honest science or the natural ecosystem, so there is a conflict of interest.

Glen said that he titled his July 2018 TV interview “Base Public Policy on Honest Science.” The guests were two local scientists who discussed the problems from the federal level on down to the local level. In addition to the problems we have been discussing, some governmental decisions are being made by science “deniers.” People can watch the interview on their computers by visiting [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org). Click either “TV Programs” or “Science,” and click the program title, “Base Public Policy on Honest Science.”

Cindy added that many people in local planning departments really do not understand the term “best available science.” Helen added that although the state has devolved much responsibility to the local level, local governments do not have the resources to get the “best available science” for which they are responsible.

**The Water Conservancy Board hears cases but does not make policy.**

Also, some governmental entities perform important functions but do not have the power to make policy.

Tye served as a volunteer on the county’s Water Conservancy Board from 2010 to 2013. He used his skills as an attorney, and he studied very much on water-related matters, so he could hear water-related cases and make competent decisions. Glen thanked Tye for acting responsibly and performing his role at a professional level of quality, which differs significantly from the problems that Helen and Cindy have been discussing.

Our county’s Water Conservancy Board decided the cases that came before it, but the Board’s **role** did not include making policy, even though Tye had studied up significantly to prepare him for serving on the Board. Glen asked Tye about the Water Conservancy Board.

Tye said that he was looking for ways to get involved with local government, so he visited our county’s website and considered the various county boards, commissions, and so forth. He saw that Thurston County has a Water Conservancy Board, so that appealed to him. He was hoping to strengthen and promote water conservation practices. Unfortunately, that is not really the Board’s mission. County-level boards were created throughout Washington State because farmers in Eastern Washington and elsewhere were frustrated that our state’s Department of Ecology had a huge backlog of cases related to transferring water rights, so county-level boards were created to deal with those cases. The state legislature passed laws to empower some citizens to function as quasi-DoE employees to hear those cases and decide them. They dealt with transferring water rights but not creating new ones, and not at all with strengthening and promoting water conservation practices.

Glen expressed appreciation that Tye actually studied the background of Washington’s water supply, and Tye studied hydrology, hydrology reports, and more, so he could help the Board make competent and fair decisions. Glen thanked Tye for studying up so he would have the technical knowledge to perform that volunteer role at a professional level of quality. As an attorney, Tye was able to understand water law, but he was concerned that other volunteers for their county-level boards would not have the legal background that he did. Glen said that – with so many other boards, commissions, and quasi-governmental entities – it would be good if more of those volunteers acted as responsibly as Tye did to really study up to a professional level of quality.

**Washington State Supreme Court’s 2016 “Hirst Decision” dealt with water sources and building permits.**

Glen asked Tye about a water-related issue that the Washington State Supreme Court decided in 2016. The court decision changed how counties decide to approve or deny building permits that would use wells for water sources. In the *Whatcom County vs. Hirst, Futurewise, et al.* decision (often referred to as the "Hirst decision"), the court ruled that the county failed to comply with the Growth Management Act requirements to protect water resources. The ruling required the county to make an independent decision about legal water availability.

Tye said the Hirst Decision is another example of two different legal systems interacting with the result of different legal requirements. Washington State’s water law has allowed for a well to be drilled without getting a formal legal water right if you meet certain criteria. Many new housing developments are built using this method for “permit-exempt wells,” so they are not required to get formal legal water rights.

In contrast, Tye said, the Growth Management Act has an overlaying requirement that local growth-related decisions pay attention to natural resources, including water. He said Washington State’s Supreme Court decided that the GMA did not allow counties to issue development permits based on “permit-exempt wells.” The Supreme Court ruled that counties must make sure there is a legal and physical availability of water supply before issuing building permits.

Some people strongly opposed this decision. This became a political controversy in the State Legislature, where one faction held the state budget hostage pending a legislative decision on the matter. Those people really wanted to “get around” the Hirst Decision rather than abide by it. The Legislature allowed counties to go back to the old way of doing things while adding some additional watershed planning and some additional water to be spent on water restoration projects and prioritizing water projects.

Tye pointed out that this legislation does not really solve the problem of water availability. He said that he is not sure that county commissions [or councils] are the right entities to decide water matters, but the responsibility must be clearly established somewhere.

Glen reinforced the environmental concept that everything is interconnected, so we need clarity about this complexity.

Helen added that the different layers of the law and concerns about adequate water raise the issue of streams and water for salmon. This brings up other areas of law, including tribal rights.

Glen mentioned that water tables keep dropping, so there is not enough water to go around, but everybody wants enough water to meet their own needs. When somebody builds a new house and drills a well, their neighbors’ water table is likely to drop. Somehow as a civilized society, we must find ways to figure out how to solve these problems. Instead we get a patchwork of temporary fixes that “slap some tape on this and hope it will hold.”

Tye pointed out that information is key. We need to clearly understand how much water resource is where, but some people oppose accurate information.

Glen said this is another case where we need honest science instead of denialism. We need to prevent one person’s private economic interest from exploiting a resource unfairly and squeezing out other people’s needs. “We need to function better as a community that appreciates everybody.”

**Water pollution is a problem here.**

Water is a crucial part of our environment, so Glen asked Cindy for more information and insights, based on her extensive knowledge and her extensive volunteer experience helping people protect water in streams and wetlands throughout the Puget Sound region and beyond. When we were preparing for this interview, Cindy told Glen that the public sees the surface of Puget Sound’s water but does not pay attention to what is under the water’s surface – and also does not pay enough attention to what flows into Puget Sound. The public tends to assume that somebody has taken responsibility to protect Puget Sound from dangerous effluents flowing into it.

Cindy said that people do not know what is under the surface of the waters. She lives in Pierce County and says that whatever flows into Puget Sound from Pierce County – which has been polluted for a century – flows down into Budd Inlet and Olympia. Tacoma’s ASARCO smelter polluted the air for almost a hundred years, and all of those toxic pollutants rained down upon our region. When they fell into the waters, those sediments fell to the bottom. It is impossible to dredge all of that out. Those toxic sediments flow back and forth along the bottom of the southern end of Puget Sound. We just don’t see it.

Cindy said that sewage treatment plants also dump their effluents into Puget Sound. Even after “treatment,” the water emerging from sewage treatment plants is not really “clean.” We don’t see this either, but pollution is there. She gave the example of dropping an aspirin into a glass of water. It dissolves so we don’t see it, but if we were to drink the water we would taste the aspirin in it.

Glen said that when we were on the phone preparing for this interview, one of the guests had mentioned pharmaceuticals flowing through our sewer pipes into Puget Sound. He didn’t know whether anyone is paying attention to that. Helen said that our regional sewage treatment agency “LOTT” (Lacey Olympia Tumwater Thurston) is paying attention to it, and she said LOTT might be doing some good research on it. Cindy said no sewage treatment plants have equipment that can effectively remove pharmaceuticals from sewage.

**Cindy’s first-hand experience led her to start working to protect water and the
environment. She developed great expertise, strategies and effectiveness.
Now she helps other people do that too.**

Early in this interview Cindy mentioned how she started studying up on water quality and how to protect waters and our environment. Since then she has developed a lot of expertise and strategies. Now many people contact her for help protecting their own local streams, wetlands and other waters they care about.

Cindy says she does this by teaching people about the relevant laws and how to use them to fight back and protect the local water environments that they care about. She finds that the momentum increases when several neighbors work together to protect a nearby stream, for example, that is threatened by a proposed housing development. She explains the laws and how to use them, so if these neighbors bring other neighbors together to protect their local stream, they can win. Very often people do succeed in protecting their local environment, so this feels very good.

Cindy shared a success story in which she helped her grandson (aged 9 or 10 then) in British Columbia, Canada, save a local creek there. When she was visiting there, he brought her to see a creek where garbage and other problems had accumulated. Her grandson and his young friends cared about the creek and were restoring it to good condition so it would flow well again. They were proud of themselves for what they had accomplished. He also told Cindy that she needed to walk upstream with him and his friends so they could show her the problems upstream. She made a phone call to report the problem. She said that the authorities there responded more quickly and more decisively than authorities in the U.S. do. The authorities took prompt and effective action, so in the next spring the water was flowing much better and fish had returned to it!

Cindy also told a success story of stopping the dumping of sewage (“bio-solids” that were really not very solid) into the Hancock Forest near Snoqualmie. She said a scientist with a different area of expertise noticed the problem and took many photographs. Every day tanker trucks were going into the forest and blowing the sewage out of the tanker trucks and all over the forest. The scientist contacted her help in solving the problem. She phoned King County’s sewage treatment authorities who said that their ecology department said it was OK, so next she phoned their ecology department and asked for copies of two specific documents published by the federal Environmental Protection Agency that governed this dumping of “bio-solids.” The person there said they use only one of those two documents, but Cindy told that person that they must obey the requirements of both documents, not just the easier one. Cindy explained the science behind her reasoning that King County was breaking federal law and abusing the forest. Finally she did more research and prepared documentation and sent this information to the owners of the Hancock Forest explaining to them that their forest was being contaminated, and that there was no way to remove the contamination. This would endanger their loggers and anyone else who entered the site. This promptly forced King County to stop contaminating that forest.

**Helen works on Olympia’s Moxlie Creek and the proposed Westman Mill project.**

Glen said that Helen has benefited from Cindy’s advice regarding Olympia’s Moxlie Creek and the Westman Mill project that would hurt Moxlie Creek. Helen explained that the Westman Mill project is proposed for some property owned by the Port of Olympia just north of State Avenue near Cherry Street downtown. She became concerned because she lives near Moxlie Creek elsewhere in Olympia, and she knows that the project’s site used to be the estuary for Moxlie Creek.

Helen did not know how to challenge that proposed development. She went to the Port Commission. That was her entry point to discovering “the layers upon layers” that pertain to local environmental sites. She and other environmentalists could not get the local hearings examiner to really hear what he should have heard.

When Helen was trying to figure out how to proceed, Cindy helped her discover the federal dimensions that were relevant because Moxlie Creek has been a salmon stream. Helen said that Cindy encouraged her to phone scientists at the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and talk with them about fish. She also phoned the federal Fish and Wildlife people. This local example was really part of a larger conceptual and legal field that Cindy helped Helen to discover and deal with.

**Implementation of some attempted remedies (*e.g*., GMA and Sustainable Thurston) fall short.**

Federal, state, and local governments have passed various laws, adopted various regulations, created local government advisory boards, and done other things to address environmental issues. Some of these efforts have worked better than others. Some (*e.g.*, the GMA) have fallen far short of what we need.

**Sustainable Thurston** was good but needed more implementation. Glen asked Tye to help us understand our county’s **Sustainable Thurston** plan. Tye said that a few years ago a huge amount of effort, money, public participation, and so forth were invested in devising a comprehensive plan that would guide many aspects of our county’s future. It was grounded in principles of sustainability and identified policies that the public wanted to guide our future. It contains a lot of good information and is powerful, but Tye is disappointed that people do not refer to it enough when making decisions. He said it sits on a shelf collecting dust, when we should be using it because so much good information and wisdom – and our community’s values – went into creating it.

**What does the public want?**

Tye has been talking with a great many people throughout our county in recent months to find out what problems they see at the local level. Earlier in this interview he mentioned some things that the public has been telling him. Glen invited Tye to add any further insights about the public’s views on environmental or governmental problems and what solutions they want.

Tye said people want balance in various ways. He said Thurston County’s northern part is more urban, and the southern part is more rural. This rural-urban divide is interesting and is more evenly split than any of the nearby counties. Tye said that with the huge increase of population that is projected for our county, we will have to work very hard to protect Thurston County’s balance between urban and rural.

He also expressed interest in achieving an additional kind of balance. People want to be individually free to do what they want to do, but we also need governmental protection of our natural resources. Therefore, we need to make sure all voices are heard, and make sure there is significant public input into governmental processes. People keep telling him about these needs.

Tye said he agrees with much of what Helen and Cindy have said about making sure the government has enough tools and resources to protect our environment and our laws.

Glen said that – whatever issues we might discuss – it’s important to ground ourselves in positive values and valid principles instead of the cynical approach of grabbing whatever we can for our own selfish benefit even if it hurts other people or the environment. Nowadays there is too much of that selfishness in our nation. We need a sense of community and the recognition that we’re all in this together for the broad public interest. We all benefit from clean water and safe air.

Tye said this is why he encourages people to go back to the Sustainable Thurston document. He said it reflects those broad values.

**Sources of information:**

**Three of Glen’s previous TV interviews are relevant. Watch them through your computer at the “Environment” part of my blog,** [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)**. Each of these three blog links includes a link to watch the interview and a different link to read a thorough summary of what we said in the interview:**

* Anyone who wants to learn more about how current residents and current taxpayers get stuck subsidizing new real estate developments can use a computer to watch my interview with Bob Jacobs and Jim Lazar in the May 2018 episode of this series. Visit [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), click “TV programs,” and click “Hidden Costs of Local Population Growth.”

**“Hidden Costs of Local Population Growth” (May 2018)** has this direct link:

[**http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-hidden-costs-of-local-population-growth**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-hidden-costs-of-local-population-growth)

* The July 2018 episode of “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” helps us understand how science works. It also pushes governments to use honest science as a basis for smart and wise public policies. Governments should make decisions based on what is actually true, not corrupted by financial greed or ideological pressures. Two local scientists – Sarah Cabbage and Ann Heitkemper – provide interesting information.

**“Base Public Policy on Honest Science” (July 2018)** has this direct link:

[**http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-base-public-policy-on-honest-science**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-base-public-policy-on-honest-science)

* Helen Wheatley and Dave Peeler were guests for the December 2014 TV interview about Olympia’s Capital Lake, which is not really a lake. They explained the scientific and other reasons to remove the 5th Avenue dam so the Deschutes River and flow again through the natural estuary that used to be where the 5th Avenue Dam and the so-called “lake” are now. Visit [**www.olympiafor.org**](http://www.olympiafor.org), click “TV Programs,” and scroll down to December 2014. Click the program title – “Restoring the Deschutes Estuary to its Natural Flow” – to watch the interview, and/or click the links next to it to read my summary in Word or .pdf format.

**“Restoring the Deschutes Estuary to its Natural Flow” (December 2014)** has this direct link:

Visit [**http://www.olympiafor.org/tv\_programs.htm**](http://www.olympiafor.org/tv_programs.htm) and scroll down to December 2014.

**Here are two additional information sources:**

* Tye Menser mentioned Sustainable Thurston great process and document. You can read much information about it at [**https://www.trpc.org/259/Sustainable-Thurston**](https://www.trpc.org/259/Sustainable-Thurston)
* Some good non-profit organizations exist. The Thurston Climate Action Team is one example of people organizing to prod local governments to take meaningful and effective actions to protect our climate. See their information at [**www.thurstonclimateaction.org**](http://www.thurstonclimateaction.org)

**Glen thanked our guests and our viewers – and offered closing encouragement.**

I thanked our three expert guests: **Cindy Beckett, Tye Menser, and Helen Wheatley**, and I thanked the people who have been watching this interview.

Environmental problems are serious – and in many cases getting worse – at the global, national and local levels. **We can indeed “think globally and act locally.” If we equip ourselves with solid information and smart grassroots strategies, we can solve problems. All three of our guests have been doing that.**

I encourage you to connect with the many excellent environmental organizations that exist, including some at the local level.

I also encourage you to use your computers to visit my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org) to watch the interviews I’ve mention on the page immediately above and/or to read the thorough summary of what those programs’ guests said. Those summaries end with links to more sources of information. Also, other information is posted on the blog’s “Environment” category.

You can get information about a wide variety of issues related to peace, social justice and nonviolence through my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)or by phoning me at
(360) 491-9093 or e-mailing me at **glenanderson@integra.net**

**We're all one human family, and we all share one planet.**

**We can create a better world, but we all have to work at it.**

**The world needs whatever you can do to help!**