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Town of Durham

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Planning, Zoning  
and Assessing

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September 19, 2025

Michael Behrendt  
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Planning Committee  
8 Newmarket Road  
Durham, NH 03824

To the planning committee:

I'd like to make some initial comments based on the 8/27 presentation about the proposed shoreline and wetlands regulations consolidation, which I attended.

I think other than consolidating two similar documents to eliminate redundancy my takeaway *and* the takeaway of numerous neighbors, is that there doesn't seem to be a real problem that needs addressing. As it is, the bay is improving, there are stripers where there weren't before; there are seals, oysters are thriving. Making the setbacks and buffers more restrictive just doesn't strike me as necessary. It's all based on projections. I didn't hear anything pointing out real environmental problems, only hypothetical concerns.

I think this is largely a case of overreach – far too much control over our homes and property. Isn't our motto "live free or die"? Telling us whether we can plant certain trees, cut down certain trees, plant certain things in our gardens, HAVE a garden, mow our lawns, what fertilizers we can use within what distances, what to do with stumps, fences – the opportunities for town government and neighborly overreach are great.

I don't see the need for our town to worry about wildlife. Sorry, I just don't. Sure, it is nice to occasionally see a deer or bald eagle, but neither of them is endangered in our area. But are we going to have to worry about coyotes, ground hogs, black bears, skunks, raccoons, mosquitoes, ticks and wasps?

I think the idea that there is even language about fences being an issue for wildlife migration is outrageous and actually a bit hysterical. Is this really a problem Durham needs to confront? I am 100% positive townsfolk will use these regulations to harass neighbors about fences and vegetation that they don't like. It is already happening in our small neighborhood.

I think it is entirely reasonable to have a debate on climate change, as I have seen more scientific articles debunking the arguments than otherwise (I have an undergraduate minor in Zoology and a masters in Zoology). Nonetheless, if the town has bought into it, I still think it

stretches credibility that by moving our buffers to 330 feet we can mitigate the global effects of sea level rise.

None of us want foul water or air but having grown up in the 70's when we had the Cuyahoga river ignite, when the Hudson and Passaic rivers had no fish, and when my home state of NJ was always shrouded in a brown cloud of smog, I think we've accomplished enough that enacting more stringent regulations so that our kids 50 years from now won't have to suffer the vagaries of our failure to act, is specious.

Many of us have encountered the frustration of these kinds of regulations, from having the State DES called by an angry neighbor to enforce nonexistent sewage and runoff issues, to borderline insane restrictions about small "wetlands" next to a house, to penalties and restrictions on cutting certain types of trees. We don't need any more of that impacting our lives. We all want clean air and water but the unanticipated consequences of this type of regulation will more than likely pit town vs citizen and neighbor vs neighbor and, I am willing to wager, will have no or minimal demonstrable benefit for any of us or the land and waterways you hope to protect. Sorry, but that is 50 years of experience watching promises fall short of reality.

Sincerely,



Joe Ullman