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December 11, 2025

Ms. Molly McGuire
Senior Planner
City of Mercer Island
9611 SE 36th Street
Mercer Island, WA 98040

Sent via: Mercer Island Permit Submittal Portal and Email

Subject: City of Mercer Island Sub-Basin 46a.3 Watercourse Stabilization (Mercer Island File No. SEP25-005, Ecology SEPA No. 202501236) – Responses to SEPA Comment 2nd Review

Dear Ms. McGuire:

Thank you for your review and assistance with the City of Mercer Island’s (City) Sub-Basin 46a.3 Watercourse Stabilization project. On behalf of the City and the Capital Projects project team, RH2 Engineering, Inc., (RH2) is responding to the second round of comments received during the City’s processing of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review for this project. The City issued additional comments via the Mercer Island Permit Submittal Portal and letter dated, November 24, 2025. Review comments in this second round of comments involved the City’s Planning Department and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology). Comments are listed below in **bold** font, followed by RH2’s responses in normal font.

- 1. Comment regarding response to Ecology's comment is pending. I will notify the applicant if additional information is necessary regarding the response to this comment. In email dated December 2, 2025, the City forwarded additional detail from Ecology regarding the potential for soil sampling, summarized below:**

The intent of Ecology’s SEPA comment is to recommend soil sampling for arsenic and lead for upland areas of the project that involve soil movement. Ecology does not expect to find arsenic or lead contamination from the Asarco smelter within the stream channel.

WASHINGTON LOCATIONS

Bellingham
Bellevue
Bothell (Corporate)
East Wenatchee
Richland
Tacoma

OREGON LOCATIONS

Medford
Portland

IDAHO LOCATIONS

Nampa



If a project involves upland soil movement, such as excavation, hauling soil, or other means that could create an exposure pathway to the potential soil

contamination, we recommend sampling. If no upland areas of the project include soil movement, we do not recommend soil sampling.

RH2's SEPA Comment Response email dated August 11, 2025, indicates soil disturbance will be limited to a small area within the stream channel. If no upland soil will be moved, we do not recommend soil sampling.

Ecology's interpretation of the soil movement planned for this project is correct. This project has been designed to avoid clearing and grading, tree removal, and general disturbance in the SE 53rd Place Open Space area maximally. The project will focus on bank stabilization improvements within the Subbasin 46a.3 stream channel. To this end, design plans identify planned upland staging areas and a likely access route to convey large woody debris, coir logs, rock, native plants, and other construction materials from SE 53rd Place down into the stream ravine and lower staging area. Excavation of upland soils, soil hauling, or major work in upland soils is not proposed or planned for this project.

- 2. I cannot approve a plan set that is not suitable for construction. How do you anticipate the proposed schedule work? If I approve this plan set, it would be authorizing construction based on a plan set that is not finished.**

RH2 and the City's project team understand the Planning Department would like a bid-ready construction plan set for Building Permit issuance for this project. Our team will provide this following state and federal permit submittals and issuance, anticipated in spring 2026. We understand the City will process and issue a SEPA determination for the project to facilitate our team's state permit applications, but that determination will be separate from the issuance of building approval for this project.

- 3. The lower staging areas do not appear to be gravel unvegetated. Please clarify which staging areas will be restored and to what condition. (In regard to the Planting Plan)**

Notes have been modified on the revised **Planting Plan** to clarify how the upper and lower staging areas will be restored.

- 4. I understand the reasoning for providing planting zones and species lists to be finalized following construction based on consultation with the City, however, I cannot approve the tree removals without the associated replacement trees and proposed locations of at least these trees.**

Please confirm species, size, and location of the replacement trees associated with the removed trees consistent with MICC 19.10.070. The reason I am asking for this plan now, is because this code section outlines specific preferred locations for replacement trees. Again, this plan can be limited to only those replacement trees required by the code.

The proposed project will remove five (5) trees between 6- and 8-inch diameter at breast height, four (4) deciduous trees and one conifer. MICC 19.10.070 requires 1:1 replacement



for trees removed that are less than 10-inch diameter; therefore, this project needs to replace five (5) trees to meet City Code. The revised **Planting Plan** and **Planting Schedule and Notes** sheets have been revised to show these proposed replacement tree locations.

This letter and attachments should address the second round of comments and allow the issuance of the SEPA Determination for this project. Our team will provide the bid-ready plan set for the final building-related City approvals, anticipated in spring 2026. If you have any other questions or needs, please email me at apettibone@rh2.com or call me at (425) 466-6727.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'alicia pettibone'. The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style and is followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line that extends to the right.

Alicia Pettibone

Senior Ecologist

AP/sp/am

cc: Clint Morris, Capital Division Manager, City of Mercer Island
Lauren Kumle, Utilities Engineer, City of Mercer Island
Dan Heckendorf, PE, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants

Attachments: Planting Plan Sheets (L101 through L103) – dated 12/11/25
Design Plans with revised Planting Plans
Critical Areas Study – Revised with updated Planting Plan sheets