

# Skagit Valley Herald

## Let's go ahead with fluoridation for dental health

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by Dawn Hagerman

There can be no more excuses for the Skagit County Public Utility District not to proceed with the fluoridation of its water supplies as a measure to improve the dental health of its customers.

Attorney General Rob McKenna has said that the county commissioners, acting as the Board of Health, did have the authority to order the PUD to fluoridate, even if the order was dependent upon funding from a third party.

In the PUD's case, the Washington Dental Service Foundation has offered to pay up to \$1.2 million to install the systems needed to fluoridate the water.

While McKenna's opinion, issued a few days ago, is nonbinding, it should be clear to the PUD that the county would prevail should the matter go to court. It shouldn't come to that.

We would hope that the PUD board is not made timid by the ferocity of the anti-fluoride forces, some of whom have rather bizarre theories about the motives behind well-meaning efforts to reduce dental disease in the community.

The order to the PUD was issued in June, after a 2-1 vote of the county commissioners. Sharon Dillon, who voted against the measure, now says that the issue should be considered settled and the order to fluoridate carried out.

It took the county commissioners long enough to get to the point of issuing the order. The advisory vote taken within the PUD boundaries reflecting only 53 percent approval of the fluoridation proposal didn't offer the commissioners as much comfort as they would have liked.

But proceed they did — only to have to buck resistance from the PUD board. Now, the state's attorney general has issued an opinion addressing every question the PUD officials had, and all the answers supported the county's right to order fluoridation.

The objections of the anti-fluoride groups notwithstanding, if the advice of the American Dental Association can't be believed, whose can? And the ADA says fluoride in the proper amounts has reduced tooth decay in many communities by as much as 40 percent.

Some commenters on the goskagit.com stories about the water-quality contest held Thursday at Skagit PUD suggested that the taste of local water would suffer by comparison to other areas should the agency fluoridate.

Skagit PUD, which took first place in the competition last year, failed to finish in the top three after a panel of tasters sampled the water of seven different purveyors. The winner — the city of Everett with its fluoridated water system.

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