

Lands commish says no to lease

By GREG SKINNER

Public Lands Commissioner Peter Goldmark said he will not accept the lease terms in a proposed trespassing settlement with Taylor Shellfish signed by his predecessor.

Goldmark announced his intentions earlier this month while simultaneously arranging a meeting with Taylor Shellfish's president Bill Taylor to discuss the issue.

"The public was shut out of this process," Goldmark said in a press release. "It is my intention to renegotiate the settlement for the trespass on public land as a separate issue from the lease."

Goldmark promised to include the "public" in the bidding process to access the estimated 300,000 geo-

ducks Taylor Shellfish planted on the 17 acres of tideland in question.

The same release finished by saying that a meeting was arranged with Taylor "to discuss the issue."

Taylor spokesman Bill Dewey said when company president Bill Taylor arrived at Goldmark's office the newly minted commissioner was not prepared to discuss the proposed lease.

Dewey said Taylor called four days prior to reconfirm the meeting regarding the settlement and separating the lease.

At stake is more than \$4 million in geoduck planted by Taylor Shellfish. Taylor said it was done by mistake.

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Goldmark failed to discuss issue with Taylor

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Goldmark is still investigating possibilities of trespassing and has all but rejected the original \$800,000 settlement deal signed by outgoing Lands Commissioner Doug Sutherland at the last minute. The lease granted Taylor access to the geoduck it planted on state tideland in Totten Inlet. A final decision is due February 27.

Dewey said Taylor asked for the meeting to discuss the "Totten issue."

"From what I heard it was a cordial and productive meeting," Aaron Toso, DNR director of communications,

said.

Goldmark never intended to discuss the proposed lease issue or negotiate with Bill Taylor, Toso said. They were told our lawyers wouldn't be there, Toso said.

"Generally, it's best to have your lawyers around

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when discussing legal issues, Toso said.

Goldmark didn't return a call seeking comment and Toso, who was not in the room during the meeting,

said the commissioner would not be available to comment on the intent or content of the February 9 meeting before February 19.

Toso said there was no intention of misleading Taylor and that the meeting was not arranged for political reasons.

"The commissioner knows that shellfish is important to the state," Toso said.

Regarding Goldmark's public commitment to reject the lease, Dewey said, "We have to assume that's his position at this point."