

**WHATCOM COUNTY**  
Planning & Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive,  
Bellingham, WA 98226-9097  
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**David Stalheim**  
Director

**J.E. "Sam" Ryan**  
Assistant Director

May 8, 2009

Dear Interested Citizen/Agency Representative:

Attached is a copy of the Whatcom County 10-Year Urban Growth Area (UGA) Review Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS), prepared in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The proposed action is the 10-Year UGA Review of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan as required by the Washington Growth Management Act (GMA). This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) considers two No Action alternatives and two Action alternatives. A No Action alternative is required by SEPA and provides a baseline for comparison of impacts with the Action alternatives. The Action alternatives test the differing growth patterns, including scenarios that redirect rural growth to the urban areas and shift growth away from the Bellingham UGA to the smaller urban communities. Each alternative is briefly described below.

**No Action Current Comprehensive Plan Alternative**

The No Action Current Comprehensive Plan Alternative assumes growth similar to the adopted comprehensive plan.

**No Action Trends Alternative**

The No Action Trends Alternative assumes future growth that matches the historic pattern of urban and rural growth.

**Action Alternative X**

Action Alternative X would shift future growth from the rural areas and resource lands into the UGAs and would continue to focus on Bellingham as the primary employment and population center in the County. Action Alternative X would emphasize infill development in the existing UGAs and assumes that planned densities would be achieved.

**Action Alternative Y**

Action Alternative Y would shift rural future growth from the rural areas and resource lands into the UGAs to a lesser degree than Action Alternative X or the adopted comprehensive plan. Growth would be shifted away from Bellingham to other small urban areas. Densities would be similar to the patterns achieved in the last 5 years.

For a range of natural resource and built environment topics, the attached Draft EIS addresses potential impacts of the four alternatives at a non-project, programmatic level of analysis:

- Earth
- Air Quality
- Water Resources (Surface and Ground)
- Plants and Animals
- Land and Shoreline Use
- Plans and Policies
- Population and Employment
- Cultural Resources
- Transportation
- Public Services and Utilities

Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the Draft EIS. A 45-day comment period is established. Written comments on the Draft EIS are due by **4:30 p.m., Monday, June 22, 2009**. Comments should be sent to:

David Stalheim, Director  
Whatcom County SEPA Official  
Planning and Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226  
Fax: (360) 738-2525  
Email: [PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us)

Following the public comment period, the County will prepare and issue a Final EIS that will include responses to the comments received during the public comment period, and which may address a Preferred Alternative combining elements of one or more of the alternatives.

Please see the County's website for more information about the 10-Year UGA Review project and public meetings: <http://www.whatcomcounty.us/pds/2031/>.

If you have any questions or desire clarification of the above, please contact Matt Aamot, Senior Planner, at (360) 676-6907, [PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us). Thank you for your interest in Whatcom County.

Sincerely,



David Stalheim, Director  
Whatcom County SEPA Official