

Chapter 4. Affected Environment, Significant Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

This chapter of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) evaluates, at a programmatic level, the current conditions and potential impacts of development that may occur under each of the alternatives described in Chapter 2. This chapter addresses general or cumulative impacts on natural or constructed resources related to potential increased urbanization and growth that could result from each alternative for the following topics:

- 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

At the appropriate programmatic level, this Draft EIS reviews cumulative impacts of growth alternatives in the County Planning Area, Urban Growth Areas (UGAs), Rural Areas, and the Suitability Analysis Area, defined in Chapter 2. Although this Draft EIS is programmatic and addresses issues cumulatively, it is important to note

that environmental review and/or land use permitting, will be required in the future for site-specific development and capital facility proposals in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the Whatcom County Code (WCC).

It is reasonable to assume that the potential for impacts to the natural environment or built environment would increase as the potential density, intensity, or amount of development increases. While the impact analysis in this Draft EIS addresses the general or typical cases, it is important to recognize that conclusions are not absolutes. For example, large parcel residential developments—depending on layout, landscaping, impervious surface, etc.—may create a greater impact on environmental features than higher-density developments in an environmentally responsive pattern of development such as clustering. Additionally, the Draft EIS also considers the mitigating effects of numerous current policies and regulations as well as proposed policy concepts that are part of one or more alternatives.