



# Determination of Significance & Scoping Notice

WHATCOM 2031 ■ Comprehensive Plan Update ■ January 2009

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## Request for Comments on Scope of the: Whatcom County 10-Year Urban Growth Area Review Environmental Impact Statement

**Description of Proposal.** Whatcom County has initiated a multi-year project to update its Comprehensive Plan by 2011, as required by the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). The update will represent the county's vision for the next twenty years. The GMA has two distinct requirements for Comprehensive Plan review and update:

- RCW 36.70A.130(3) requires the County to review, at least every ten years, its urban growth areas, and the densities permitted within. This review will be completed in 2009.
- RCW 36.70A.130(4) requires review and update of the comprehensive plan and development regulations every seven years. Whatcom County was required to complete this review in 2004 and will be required to complete another review and update in 2011.

The current proposal that is the subject of this scoping notice involves the 10-year urban growth area (UGA) review. As part of the UGA review, the County will consider: growth forecasts and allocations, urban growth area boundaries, and the future land use map including land uses patterns. As a result of the UGA review, the County may consider amendments to countywide planning policies, county comprehensive plan goals, policies, and maps and development regulations such as zoning. It is anticipated that the 2009 UGA Review will lay the foundation for the 2011 Comprehensive Plan Update.

**Location of Proposal.** The proposal encompasses all of Whatcom County with a particular emphasis on unincorporated lands.

**Proponent, Lead Agency & Contact Person.** The proponent and lead agency of the proposal is Whatcom County.

The contact person is:

Matt Aamot, Senior Planner  
Whatcom County  
Planning & Development Services  
5280 Northwest Dr.

Bellingham, WA 98226

Phone: 360-676-6907

Fax: 360-738-2525

[PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us)

**EIS Required.** The lead agency has determined this proposal is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is required under RCW 43.21C.030

(2)(c) and will be prepared. Copies of a scoping document indicating potential environmental issues and topics can be reviewed at the lead agency office, 5280 Northwest Dr., Bellingham, WA or at <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/2031/index.jsp>.

**Elements of the Environment to Be Addressed.** The lead agency has identified the following areas for discussion in the EIS: earth, air quality, water resources, plants and animals, land and shoreline use, plans and policies, population and employment, cultural resources, transportation, and public services and utilities.

**Conceptual Alternatives.** A comparative evaluation of alternative courses of action (e.g. alternative urban and rural land use patterns and urban growth area boundaries) will be included in the EIS. Alternatives are anticipated to include: No Action as required by SEPA – a continuation of the adopted Comprehensive Plan extended to 2031, and two action alternatives. The action alternatives are anticipated to vary the location and type of growth in the County to accommodate projected growth to the year 2031. Public meetings are scheduled to ask for public comment on potential alternatives and study areas to be considered. (See Scoping Comments below.)

**Level of Environmental Analysis.** Current environmental conditions, impacts, mitigation measures, and impacts that cannot be mitigated will be identified in the EIS at a level of detail appropriate to the comprehensive and general nature of the non-project proposal. Environmental review for the proposal is being phased pursuant to WAC 197-11 to focus on broad land use and policy actions prior to the consideration of more detailed actions. The EIS will consider potential countywide impacts associated with elements of the environment listed above.

**Scoping Comments.** Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the EIS. You may comment on alternatives, mitigation measures, probable significant adverse impacts, and licenses or other approvals that may be required. The methods and deadline for giving us your comments are:

- **Written Comments:** Provide written comments to the Lead Agency contact person no later than **5:00 p.m. February 18, 2009**.
- Attend public meetings to provide comments on the range of EIS alternatives scheduled for:

**Public Open House** – Tuesday February 17, 2009, noon to 7:00 p.m. held in the Whatcom County Courthouse, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham.

**Joint Hearing** – Whatcom County Planning Commission and County Council, Tuesday February 17, 2009, 7:00 p.m. in the County Council Chambers at the Whatcom County Courthouse, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham.

## Responsible Official

Date Issued: David Stalheim, Director, Whatcom County, Planning & Development Services  
January 28, 2009

**Appeal.** You may appeal this determination of significance (the determination to prepare an EIS) no later than 5 p.m., February 9, 2009 pursuant to Whatcom County Code 16,08.170.A. Appeal forms are available at Whatcom County Planning & Development Services, 5280 Northwest Dr., Bellingham, WA 98226. You may contact the lead agency contact person above to read or ask about the procedures for SEPA appeals.