

**WHATCOM COUNTY
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

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Dear Reader:

We are pleased to issue the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Foothills Subarea Plan. The Final SEIS responds to public and agency comments and incorporates appropriate modifications into the SEIS.

The next step in the process is a Planning Commission hearing on the Draft Foothills Subarea Plan, which will be held at:

6:30 p.m.
Thursday, January 15, 2009
Whatcom County Council Chambers
311 Grand Ave.
Bellingham, WA 98225

The Foothills Subarea Plan is considered a "non-project" action under the State Environmental Policy Act. The Final SEIS has less detailed information on the environmental impacts because there is less information available on the impact of a planning document than there is on a site-specific project proposal. The SEIS emphasizes alternatives, including the proposed action of the Foothills Plan recommended by a citizen advisory committee. The information within this document evaluates the comparative merits of these alternatives for consideration by the Whatcom County Planning Commission and County Council.

The Final SEIS is written based on the requirements of the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21C), SEPA Rules (WAC 197-11) and Whatcom County SEPA procedures (WCC 16.08). The SEIS supplements the Environmental Impact Statement for the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan (1994-96).

The Final SEIS for the Foothills Subarea Plan presents information relating to land use, transportation, public schools, fire protection/EMS, law enforcement, water & sewer facilities, parks, trails, activity centers, water quantity and water quality. The SEIS examines the existing conditions, environmental impacts and potential mitigation measures. Only significant environmental impacts must be addressed in the SEIS, although other impacts may be discussed.

The Draft Foothills Subarea Plan is available for review at Whatcom County Planning and Development Services, or on the website at <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/planning/FoothillsSubareaPlanUpdate.htm>.

Key environmental issues and options facing decision makers include consideration of impacts and mitigation relating to land use, transportation, public facilities & services, water quantity and water quality and selection of a land use alternative. The SEIS addresses three alternatives:

1. The Draft Foothills Subarea Plan (Oct. 2007), with a modified planning horizon year.
2. The No Action Alternative, which would maintain existing land use designations.
3. The Rural/Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRD) alternative. This alternative would remove the Columbia Valley UGA and designate LAMIRDS under the provisions of the Growth Management Act.

The Whatcom County Planning Commission and County Council are not ultimately required to pick one of the three alternatives. However, adopted plans and regulations must be within the range of alternatives discussed within the Final SEIS unless additional analysis is completed.

We invite you to read the Final SEIS, attend the January 15 hearing, and provide oral and/or written comments on the Draft Foothills Subarea Plan.

Sincerely,



David Stalheim
Whatcom County Planning & Development Services Director
SEPA Responsible Official