

# Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan

## 2017 Update



## Acknowledgements

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## Foreword

On November 1, 1976 the Cowlitz County Board of Commissioners adopted the County's first Comprehensive Plan. In the years following that adoption the shape of Cowlitz County changed, quite literally, with the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980 and the resulting flooding and sediment deposits, and in more subtle ways as the incorporated cities of Kalama and Woodland in the southwestern edge of the County experienced a doubling in population.

Despite those changes and regardless of the passage of time, now nearly 40 years since its adoption the words captured in the Foreword of that original Comprehensive Plan still ring true today:

*Our expanding social, environmental, and economic needs have grown with an increasing force, to the point where we now realize that we do not have unlimited room or resources. We are beginning to see that many of our social, economic, and environmental problems stem from the same source; lack of comprehensive growth management. The consequences are inefficient use of human and physical resources, as well as economic hardship. We no longer live in a time when we can insulate ourselves from the impacts we visit upon the earth and its inhabitants, as the natural resources we once regarded to be so endlessly available and expandable, are now becoming increasingly scarce. It is therefore essential that sound growth management, which accommodates our wide diversity of values and concerns, be vigorously pursued as a means to direct and judicious use of our resources, and as a means to maintain a high quality of life.*

Now, as it did in 1976, the updated Comprehensive Plan reflects a review of human activities and environmental demands as they relate to the County's resources. This plan is a product of an extensive public planning process that began with community-wide visioning, saw the seating of a Steering Committee appointed by the Board of Commissioners, the shift from an outside consultant preparing the plan to its development by an in-house team made up of staff from the Department of Building and Planning.

Ultimately, the Plan benefitted from the policy direction and oversight of the Planning Commission. After over 40 years there were many revisions needed to meet State and Federal requirements and further the local vision. The final document is a true reflection of the dedication of the volunteers and staff involved.

## **Introduction**

### ***The Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan***

A Comprehensive Plan is an official document that is adopted by the Board of County Commissioners to guide policy decisions related to the physical, social, and economic growth of the County. The Plan provides a framework for decision-making for future growth and development. The Plan will serve as a guide for growth and development over the next 20 years in Cowlitz County. The Plan is designed to incorporate annual amendments that will keep the document valid and progressive.

The Plan provides direction through a framework of goals and policies that the County intends to use to improve citizen's quality of life, leverage the community's assets, and promote Cowlitz County as a safe, attractive and prosperous place to live, work and play now and into the coming decades. The Comprehensive Plan is not in itself a regulatory document, but is intended to provide guidance that informs development regulations and future planning efforts.

### ***Adoption Process***

The update process for the 2017 Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan began with a community visioning process, led by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The results of that effort is the Vision under which the Comprehensive Plan is constructed, and the Guiding Principles that aided in the identification of goals and policies found within each Plan element.

The draft plan went through many revisions, first under the management of a consultant, then under the management of the Department of Building and Planning. Both efforts resulted in documents that garnered a significant amount of public comment during many hours of public workshops with both the Steering Committee and the Planning Commission.

In March 2014, Department staff presented the final draft to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission led that draft through over 60 hours of workshops that included open houses and staff presentations in Longview, Toutle, Kalama and Woodland. At the completion of the workshop process, the Planning Commission began public hearings in March, 2015.

After considering public input, the Planning Commission sent their recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners on December 16, 2015. The Board heard public testimony at nine Board meetings. Following contributions from the public, the Board gave final approval, adopting the Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan in July 2017.

# Vision and Guiding Principles

## *Vision of Our Future*

*In 2037 Cowlitz County is a great place to live, work and play. We value our strengths, including a history that combines rural and small town heritage with big industry tradition and a natural environment – with an abundance of clean air and water along with mountains, forests, lakes, rivers and streams that provide habitat for multiple species along with commercial forestry, agriculture, modern manufacturing, affordable hydroelectricity and deep-water ports. Conservation of these features contributes to our economic well-being, sense of place and relationship with nature.*

*We continue to work together to improve our quality of life by growing our local economy, making our communities healthy, safe and secure, and enhancing our community services. We accomplish this through strong local and regional leadership, public and private partnerships, and an involved and engaged citizenry. We take pride in shaping our destiny and are active, visionary, and constructive partners in achieving a healthy, prosperous and vibrant future.*

## **Guiding Principles to Achieve the Vision**

- ❖ **Support individual and property rights** by reinforcing the vision of Cowlitz County as a strong community that values common-sense regulation and an involved and informed electorate of citizens who are active in their own governance. Advance the voice of a vibrant and engaged citizenry on local and regional issues by encouraging public participation and ongoing citizen involvement.
- ❖ **Maintain and strengthen Cowlitz County's unique qualities** by protecting and promoting our historic small communities and rural environment, and at the same time allowing an adequate supply of affordable housing. This will create an attractive location for residents to enjoy outdoor recreation, allowing access to natural and urban areas, while maintaining and strengthening business and bringing visitors to our area.
- ❖ **Support a diverse and growing economy** through a broad range of economic activities that include well-maintained infrastructure serving traditional employment centers; expanded educational opportunities that provide a well-trained workforce that is beneficial for creating new and retaining current business and tourism.
- ❖ **Advocate for water** rights and the use of existing and new permit-exempt wells as needed to support the land use classifications identified in this Plan.
- ❖ **Prioritize our commitment to public safety** across jurisdictional lines by ensuring multi-agency coordination; joint-use facilities; and active programs to promote preparedness for disasters.
- ❖ **Facilitate recreational access to natural areas** on the abundant land available for a variety of outdoor activities taking into account the need to protect natural, scenic,

and environmentally sensitive areas. Encourage creative funding and management techniques through cooperative agreements and partnerships.

- ❖ ***Extend parks and recreational opportunities for a range of ages and needs*** through funding for park maintenance and recreation programs, which would include securing regional involvement in parks and recreation, and the coordination and promotion of shared programs and multiple use of facilities.
- ❖ ***Provide County services in an efficient and timely manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan***, including knowledgeable guidance on regulatory requirements, recognition of public interests, respect of private property rights, and internal and interagency cooperation for planning, permitting and service delivery.
- ❖ ***Promote a multi-modal transportation network***, including routes for commuting, recreation and tourism. Prioritize road maintenance and transportation improvements while maximizing local and regional transit services. For economic development, pursue freight and workforce mobility that could include the expansion of rail, marine, ground and air transportation networks.

# **Chapter 1: Natural Environment and Resources Element**

## ***Introduction***

Air, water, land, and living things– the fundamental components that make up our natural environment – are resources that are critical to the existence of humans. The health of our natural environment directly affects the quality of life in Cowlitz County and conversely, human actions and the built environment directly and indirectly affect the natural environment.

To maintain the environment in Cowlitz County, the County encourages strong economic and environmentally-sensible development. Therefore, the County will make its land use plans and major land use decisions with understanding of the natural environment. Special attention will be given to development near critical areas such as wetlands, fish and wildlife conservation areas, floodplains, aquifer recharge areas, and geologically hazardous areas as well as shoreline areas. The policies found at the end of this chapter are intended to help shape future updates of existing ordinances and to inform new regulations.

Cowlitz County citizens value their natural environment in many ways. Historically, the local economy has relied largely on the harvest of the County’s vast forests and abundant mineral lands. Natural resources such as fish, big and small game, and agricultural lands also have been important elements of the economy. Additionally, the County has become known for its natural scenic beauty. The County’s Comprehensive Plan recognizes and fosters the continued use of our natural resources in a manner consistent with federal, state and local laws that protect sensitive or critical areas and shorelines, and that conserve prime agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands.

The Natural Environment and Resources Element of the Comprehensive Plan provides a policy framework and a resource database reference for an appropriate level of use, protection and enhancement of Cowlitz County’s natural environment while fostering a framework of ecologically sensible construction and development practices implemented through environmental regulatory controls. The intention of these environmental policies is to provide specific environmental goals and requirements as the basis for development regulations and general goals for land use planning within the unincorporated area of Cowlitz County. This chapter includes recommendations for various environmental policies that apply to land development throughout Cowlitz County that, if administered appropriately, will result in development practices that either preserve, protect, or mitigate, rather than degrade, significant natural features and conditions of the land in Cowlitz County. Cowlitz County will strive to balance the policies and goals in all Comprehensive Plan elements and achieve protection of the environment while encouraging development and redevelopment. It is vital that the Natural Environment and Resources Element be considered in relation to other Comprehensive Plan elements; one chapter’s goals or policies should not be pursued to the exclusion of those in other chapters.

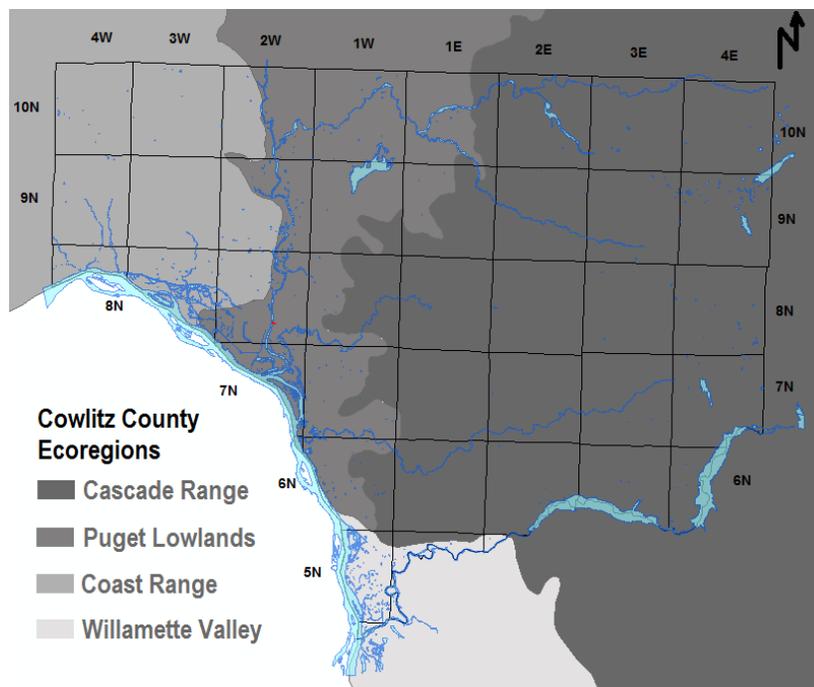
## ***Topography and Climate of Cowlitz County***

The County has several different spatial frameworks available for planning and managing natural resource environments such as watersheds, hydrologic units, and ecoregions. This Plan takes information from many of them to describe Cowlitz County's natural environment.

### ***Topography***

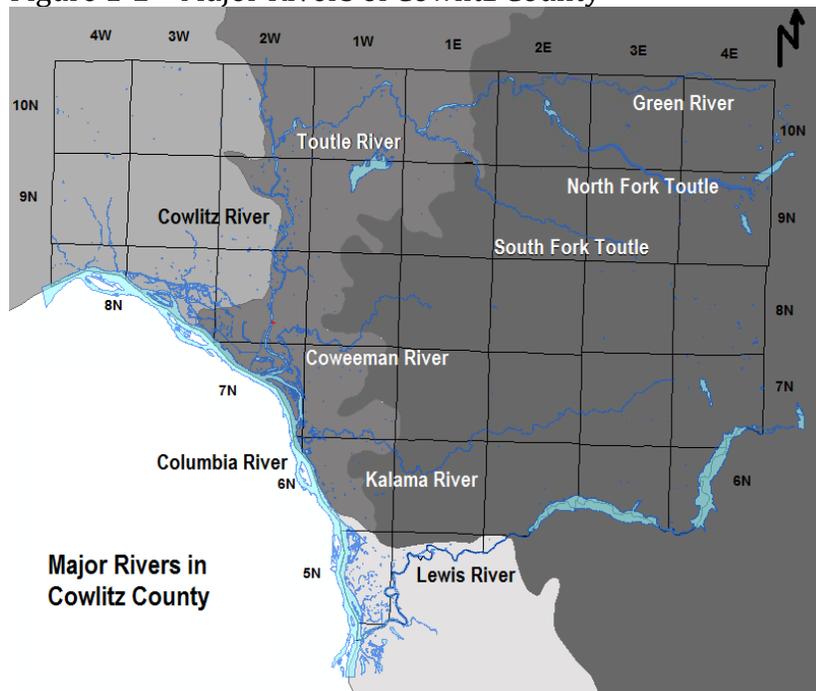
The topography and climate of Cowlitz County are varied and unique. The County is divided into four ecoregions. Ecoregions are a way to combine physiography, climate, landform, soil, hydrology and habitat in order to look at broad ecological patterns occurring on the landscape. These boundaries are generally used to define areas that have similar types, qualities, and quantities of vegetation, animal life, geology, soils, water quality, climate and human land use. The boundaries of an ecoregion are not truly fixed, but rather encompass an area within which important ecological processes strongly interact. The map below shows the County's four ecoregions. The Coast Range, Puget Lowlands, Cascade Range, and the Willamette Valley.

Figure 1-1 – Ecoregions of Cowlitz County



Mountains, hills, valleys, and waterways give Cowlitz County its distinctive character. Semi-rugged mountainous hills abound throughout the County. Amid those hills, seven major rivers - the Columbia, Coweeman, Cowlitz, Green, Kalama, Lewis, and Toutle - carve their way through the county in all directions creating valleys and lowlands where the majority of the citizens of Cowlitz County have settled.

Figure 1-2 – Major Rivers of Cowlitz County



The largest river in the County, the Columbia, runs from southeast to northwest and forms much of the western/southwestern county boundary. The Columbia River is a major commercial waterway through which international commerce is conducted. Three of Cowlitz County’s largest port areas are located along the Columbia River near the cities of Woodland, Kalama and Longview. Each of these port areas includes both public and private enterprises that currently or potentially could import and export commodities via the Columbia River. The Columbia has a wide floodplain that has been diked and systematically ditched for drainage in several areas creating dry uplands that have successfully allowed, and continue to support, urban and rural development as well as agricultural activities. Two of the remaining most fertile and active agricultural areas in Cowlitz County are located along the Columbia River – the Woodland Bottoms, to the west of Woodland, and Willow Grove, to the west of Longview.

The Cowlitz River bisects the County, flowing from north to south. It runs through a relatively large valley which forms the southern tip of the Puget Lowlands and empties into the Columbia River after passing through the cities of Kelso and Longview. As with most valleys that have major rivers running through them, the Cowlitz Valley is a magnet for residential and commercial development and also serves a vital role in interstate commerce as Interstate Highway 5 (I-5) and the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad mainline both run south and north through the valley. The Cowlitz River also has a wide floodplain in which many flood protection levees are located. The City of Castle Rock is also located further upstream on the Cowlitz River, as is the unincorporated town of Lexington. Both also benefit from the flood control that the levees provide. The valley also has a few remaining scattered pockets of agricultural land.

The North Fork of the Lewis River runs from east to west and forms the southern boundary between Cowlitz County and Clark County; it runs through the City of Woodland and empties

into the Columbia River at the southern tip of the Woodland Bottoms. The Woodland Bottoms, the historic floodplain associated with this confluence of the Columbia and North Fork of the Lewis Rivers, has also been diked and drained and is now the most productive agricultural land in the county. The North Fork of the Lewis River is interrupted by a series of hydroelectric projects that have created three reservoirs: Lake Merwin, Yale Lake, both in Cowlitz County, and Swift Reservoir in Skamania County are popular local recreation spots. The hydroelectric projects, managed and owned by PacifiCorp and the Cowlitz County Public Utility District, provide relatively clean and inexpensive energy for distribution to the power market in the Pacific Northwest.

The Kalama, Coweeman, Toutle and Green Rivers also run east to west. The Kalama River empties into the Columbia River just north of the City of Kalama. The majority of the Kalama River is constrained by the mountains and hills through which it meanders, but it has a wide floodplain near its mouth on the Columbia River.

The Coweeman River is also constrained through the hills and is channelized and diked as it runs through the City of Kelso on its way to its confluence with the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers. It is this confluence that gives the area its nickname "Three Rivers."

The Toutle River, which is comprised of a north fork and south fork – both in Cowlitz County - was severely affected by the May 18, 1980 volcanic eruption of Mount St. Helens and the resulting mud flows. Millions of tons of silt, ash, rock, and other debris were deposited into the North Fork Toutle during and after the eruption, and the river is still recovering. Given the staggering amount of sediment and debris left in the Toutle River system, the river has a large floodplain that can be unpredictable in many places. The Toutle empties into the Cowlitz River just north of Castle Rock.

The Cowlitz River, from below the mouth of the Toutle to where it empties into the Columbia, shares the same sediment problems as the Toutle, but the floodplain is generally more predictable. The majority of the Cowlitz, at least near the more urbanized areas, has been diked for flood control purposes, both pre and post-eruption.

The eruption of Mount St. Helens produced ecological disruptions far away from the volcano. Chief among these was choking of the Toutle, Cowlitz, Green and Columbia Rivers with sediment deposited by lahars. Some 140 million tons of sediment entered the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers in the first four months after the eruption. The on-going sediment load of the Cowlitz and Columbia is estimated at 10 to 40 million tons per year. This sediment poses problems for navigation and flooding as the channels continuously fill in with sand, ash and silt.

The solution to these issues has come in the form of an ongoing three-pronged plan developed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers along with State and local governments, which include:

1. Installation of a sediment retention structure (SRS) on the North Fork of the Toutle;

2. The construction and maintenance of a series of dikes and levees along the Cowlitz to provide flood protection for the heavily developed areas; and
3. The continuous dredging of the river channels and deposition of the dredge spoils along river bank areas.

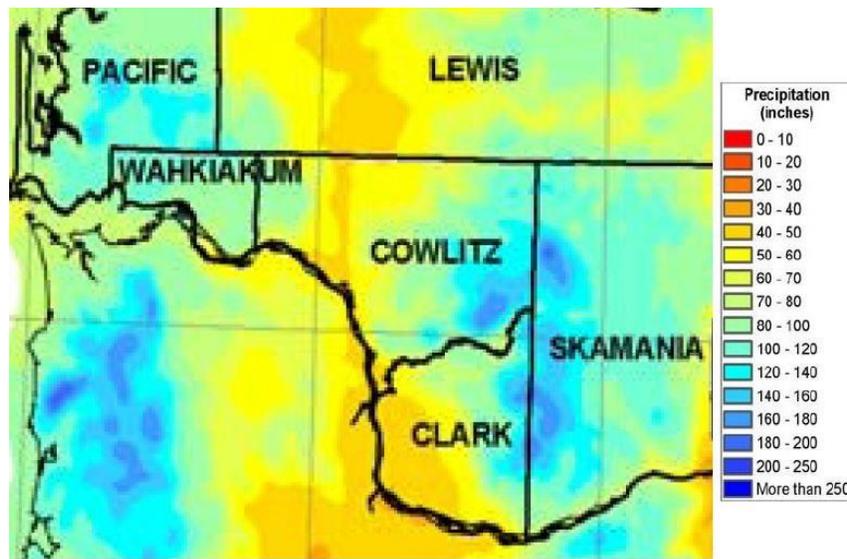
The frequency of dredging in the Cowlitz has slowed down over the past 10 years, but sediment continues to come the river system daily and dredging is expected to be needed in the future. The Corps of Engineers initially expected the basin behind the SRS to be filled by 2035 with an estimated 258 million cubic yards of sediment. However, additional debris flows from Mount St. Helens plus sediment from storm-related erosion, have filled the basin more quickly than the Corps had expected. By 2012 the basin was full, and large amounts of sediment are currently overflowing the SRS and entering the river system. During the past 10 years the Corps has initiated a series of pilot projects above the SRS aimed at slowing the sediment flow, but the projects have had mixed results. Recently, the Corps initiated a \$4.5 million project that will raise the SRS spillway by seven feet. When completed, the Corps expects to have capacity for up to two million cubic yards of captured sediment. The sediment will cover approximately 900 acres.

The river furthest north in the County, the Green River, is located in the northeast corner of the County and empties into the North Fork of the Toutle. The Green River is surrounded by privately-owned and publicly-owned forest land and is only accessible via undeveloped roads. Because of its remote location, it is unlikely that the land surrounding the Green River will become an attractive area for new development.

### ***Climate***

The climate of Cowlitz County is temperate and strongly influenced by topography. It is characterized by mildly warm to hot, dry summers, and mild, moist winters. Along the Columbia and Cowlitz Rivers annual rainfall varies from 50 to 60 inches in the valleys to more than 90 inches in the foothills of the Southern Cascade Mountain Range on the eastern side of the County and the Willapa Hills of the Coast Range in the west. Precipitation generally increases and temperatures lower as elevations rise away from the many river valleys that run throughout Cowlitz County.

Figure 1-3 – Precipitation in Cowlitz County



Map prepared with the PRISM climate modeling system by the Spatial Climate Analysis Service, Oregon State University. <http://www.ocs.oregonstate.edu/prism/>

Elevation ranges from near sea level along the Columbia River up to 4,965 feet at the summit of Goat Mountain, located southwest of Mount St. Helens. Along the Columbia River from the mouth of the Lewis to the western tip of Willow Grove and along the entire length of the Cowlitz River, the land is formed in low terraces. West of Willow Grove, and in a relatively small area north of Kalama, the land rises in a series of steep rocky bluffs, primarily basalt rock formations, resistant to erosion, with level to rolling benches at the summits. To the east and west of the Cowlitz River valley, mountainous uplands extend away from the river in each direction. A significant portion of Cowlitz County’s topography is primitive, rugged and mountainous, and not accessible by public roads.

***Critical Areas and Best Available Science***

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the protection of the five “critical areas” in the state; wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, frequently flooded areas, and geologically hazardous areas. Although Cowlitz County is not required to fully plan under the GMA, the County is required to use Best Available Science (BAS) to justify future regulation of critical areas and regulation updates. This statutory obligation is in place to protect the functions and values of critical areas and to give special consideration to conservation and protection measures to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries. Protecting critical areas creates benefits that range from providing wildlife or vegetative ecosystem habitat to limiting or mitigating human impacts such as water pollution, landslides or flood damage.

Unlike residential, commercial or industrial uses, critical areas do not typically constitute a separate Comprehensive Plan or zoning designation. Policies and programs used to protect and conserve these areas involve a range of federal, state, and local agencies. Most policies used to address critical areas are regulatory or incentive-based in nature and are applied to both privately and publicly-held lands. Limitations on structural development are one way to provide critical area protection.

Cowlitz County adopted its first critical areas ordinance (CAO) in June of 1996. In May 2009, and again in December, 2016, the CAO, Title 19.15 of the Cowlitz County Code, was updated to include BAS. BAS is required to be used to support the adoption of future critical areas regulations and to guide future regulation updates and project reviews as appropriate. Critical areas are fully described in Title 19.15 of the Cowlitz County Code.

### ***The Shoreline Management Act and Cowlitz County***

In 1971, the state legislature passed the Shoreline Management Act (SMA) (RCW 90.58). Through the SMA, the legislature recognized that the shorelines of the state are among the most valuable and fragile of its natural resources and there was great concern throughout the state relating to their utilization, protection, restoration, and preservation.

Much of the shorelines of the state and the adjacent uplands were, and still are, in private ownership. The legislature found that unrestricted construction on privately-owned or publicly-owned shorelines of the state is not in the best public interest; and therefore, coordinated planning was necessary in order to protect the public interest associated with the shorelines of the state while, at the same time, recognizing and protecting private property rights consistent with the public interest. They concluded there was a clear and urgent demand for a planned, rational, and concerted effort, jointly performed by federal, state, and local governments, to prevent harm inherent in an uncoordinated and piecemeal development of the state's shorelines.

It is now the law of the state to manage the shorelines of the state by planning for and fostering all reasonable and appropriate uses. The SMA is designed to ensure the development of these shorelines, while allowing for limited reduction of rights of the public in the navigable waters. It is intended to promote and enhance the public interest.

In 1977 Cowlitz County adopted its first, and so far only, Shoreline Management Master Program (SMP). An SMP gives local jurisdictions throughout the state limited local control over the implementation of the SMA, reflecting the vision of its citizens. As mandated by statute, any SMP updates will need to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the CAO and the SMA. Conversely, this update of the Comprehensive Plan is consistent with the current SMP's goals and policies.

### ***Other Natural Environment and Resources Concerns***

#### ***Stormwater Management***

Cowlitz County has an abundance of streams, and development influences the biological health of those streams. Before forests were cleared for farms and towns, rainfall was largely absorbed into the ground, later replenishing streams via springs and seeps. As human settlement occurs, trees are removed and replaced by buildings and roads. This means that instead of soaking into the ground and returning to streams slowly, rainwater runs off the ground surface rapidly and greatly increases stream channel erosion and degrades stream habitat.

Development has the potential to affect stream flows and introduce pollutants to surface water and groundwater. Some methods to mitigate increased stormwater runoff are engineered stormwater controls, such as retention/detention ponds that slowly meter out stormwater runoff at pre-development levels and vegetated swales and other vegetative buffers used to trap pollutants. Other methods include retaining vegetation and soil on site by minimizing clearing area during land development.

### ***Air Quality***

The County is a member of the Southwest Clean Air Agency (SWCAA), a multicounty authority that includes Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Skamania, and Wahkiakum Counties, which adopts regulatory controls in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Clean Air Act. In addition to the five counties, the Authority includes the cities and towns within their boundaries. SWCAA is responsible for enforcing federal, state and local outdoor air quality standards and regulations in Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties of southwest Washington State. Their overarching mission is to preserve and enhance air quality in southwest Washington.

### ***Natural Environment and Resources Goals and Policies***

The natural environment contributes to Cowlitz County's livability. Protective measures will ensure that valuable resource bases such as the County's extensive publicly- and privately-owned timberlands remain accessible and available for sustainable resource use. By intelligently integrating the natural and built environments, Cowlitz County can also preserve and enhance a high quality of life for its residents, with clean water, habitat for fish and wildlife, and safe and secure places for people to live, work and play. Cowlitz County is committed to protecting and enhancing the natural environment at the same time that it meets all other goals in the Comprehensive Plan.

The following goals and policies reflect Cowlitz County's commitment to protecting the environment in the county. Development regulations implement the goals and policies listed below.

**Goal NER.1:** Manage the natural environment to protect critical areas and sufficient land, air, water, and energy resources.

***Policy NER 1.1*** Assist landowners, upon their request, in identifying critical areas. Explore unique and mutually beneficial opportunities for preservation or mitigation of impacts, where applicable.

***Policy NER 1.2*** Minimize unnecessary loss of native vegetation and soils.

***Policy NER 1.3*** Minimize stream channel erosion, degradation of stream habitat, and promote healthy stream recharge.

***Policy NER 1.4*** Avoid clearing of native vegetation that maintains slope stability, reduces erosion, shades shorelines, buffers wetlands and stream corridors, and provides wildlife and aquatic habitat.

**Policy NER 1.5** Encourage the use of Northwest native plants in landscaping, particularly adjacent to critical areas.

**Policy NER 1.6** Encourage the removal of invasive plants species through non-mechanical and non-herbicidal means, especially within critical areas and associated buffers.

**Policy NER 1.7** Ensure prompt restoration of land after grading and vegetation removal through phased clearing and grading, replanting requirements, and other appropriate re-vegetation and engineering techniques.

**Policy NER 1.8** Encourage development of interlocal agreements between the County and cities addressing critical areas.

**Goal NER.2:** Maintain good water quality and flood storage capacity.

**Policy NER 2.1** Promote enhancement or restoration of degraded wetlands and riparian corridors to maintain or improve ecological functions.

**Policy NER 2.2** Encourage the establishment of wetland mitigation banks, conservation easements, natural area dedications, or other innovative ways to create, enhance or protect critical areas.

**Policy NER 2.3** Promote low-impact development techniques and applications that allow for infiltration and recharge of stormwater runoff.

**Policy NER 2.4** Advocate for water rights and the use of existing and new permit-exempt wells as needed to support the land use classifications identified in this Plan.

**Goal NER.3:** Minimize the loss of life and property from landslides, seismic, volcanic, or other naturally occurring events, and minimize or eliminate, whenever possible, land use impacts on geologically hazardous areas.

**Policy NER 3.1** Ensure public safety, and promote conformity with natural constraints.

**Policy NER 3.2** Work with State and local government and agencies to address the unique challenges to those rivers in Cowlitz County impacted by the eruption of Mount St. Helens.

**Goal NER.4:** Protect the human environment and fish and wildlife habitats, including salmon habitat, by preserving, restoring, and enhancing critical areas; and linking habitat within ecosystems.

**Policy NER 4.1** Develop strategies for preserving, protecting or restoring important habitats and corridors, particularly if they are at risk of degradation. Some strategies may include public acquisition of habitat; linking habitats using open space areas, riparian corridors, and other natural features; encouraging the use of conservation easements for long-term habitat protection; promoting land use plans and developments that avoid

impacts on habitat, and encouraging management and control of non-native invasive plants, including aquatic plants.

***Policy NER 4.2*** Encourage consistency among Cowlitz County and its cities regarding methods of critical area definition, mapping and mitigation strategies.

***Policy NER 4.3*** Coordinate with local jurisdictions and State agencies to protect environmentally critical habitats, particularly ecosystems and watersheds that span jurisdictional boundaries.

***Policy NER 4.4*** Evaluate opportunities to create a nomination process for habitats of local importance – private or public – that might benefit from protection under the Cowlitz County Critical Areas Ordinance, or create other protection program(s) that could benefit any habitats of local importance.

***Policy NER 4.5*** Encourage recreational and multi-modal transportation uses to be located in appropriate areas of private and public land outside of critical and sensitive areas.

***Policy NER 4.6*** Encourage and promote natural resource industries that, with implementation of best management practices, continue to protect fish and wildlife habitat.

## **Chapter 2: LAND USE ELEMENT**

### ***Introduction***

The patterns of development in Cowlitz County are extremely diverse. There are large uninhabited forest and open space areas. There are also extensive areas with scattered rural homes, marked with occasional small farms and rural community centers. The rural landscape is in sharp contrast to the intense urban activity of the County's cities. Each area's character is defined by how the land is used. Planning for the future of the County's land resources requires a system of classification to preserve and further this character.

Most of the County's land base is under private ownership. Land use must be planned in order to provide the maximum benefit for the landowners and current and future citizens of Cowlitz County. The economic success of the County depends on the informed and planned use of its land resource. Classification of land provides predictability for property owners and individuals.

Land use classification is the method used to realize localized and regional benefits in terms of economic development and community identity. It also creates costs borne by the entire County in the form of infrastructure investment and recurring financial obligations for road improvements, utility extensions, and on-going maintenance programs. As public and private fiscal resources are limited, the long-term implications of land use planning must be carefully considered. Roads, police, and fire protection, as well as other potential public services such as water and sewer must be taken into consideration when designating land for development. Citizen involvement can be beneficial in establishing detailed planning goals.

### ***Land Use Categories***

The Land Use Element of the Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan provides a policy framework for the future use of land throughout the unincorporated areas of the County. The Comprehensive Plan provides the overall vision, goals and policies for future development of Cowlitz County. Specific details and standards, such as permitted uses and performance standards are found in the Cowlitz County Land Use Ordinance, as well as other County regulations where applicable.

The Comprehensive Plan Land Use Categories have been developed to serve as a method to structure development patterns of the County. Density expectations have been established based on current patterns in place, with the goal of providing guidance for a balance of working and living priorities and protection of the County's resource lands, while recognizing and protecting private property rights.

### ***Land Use Goals and Policies***

#### ***Urban Land Use Category***

The Urban area is intended to provide for efficient land use in areas where public services are either currently available or planned. The Urban area contains existing dense industrial, commercial and residential development and is intended to allow further growth. The Urban area has a well-developed level of utility services, and fire protection is available. The area is

near existing or planned job centers. The transportation system is well developed and able to accommodate high-volume usage. Limitations to development are fewest in the Urban area. The guideline for the minimum lot size for single family residential dwellings in the Urban area is 6,000 square feet and minimum lot width is 60 feet.

**Goal LU-1:** Support concentrated growth within or adjacent to existing communities where public facilities and services exist or can be extended in a cost effective manner.

***Policy LU 1.1*** Urban areas are located near existing communities.

***Policy LU 1.2*** New development within the Urban land classification is served by public water and sewer services.

**Goal LU 2:** Provide for a variety of compact, urban-scale development types, offering diverse employment opportunities, a range of residential densities and housing types, public services and recreation opportunities.

***Policy LU 2.1*** Accommodate the need for certain amenities in urban areas, including housing, commercial activities, employment centers, and parks, trails and other public facilities.

***Policy LU 2.2*** Provide incentives and bonuses for high density development such as mixed-use neighborhoods and multi-family dwellings.

***Policy LU 2.3*** Promote development of housing near services such as transportation networks, public facilities and commercial areas.

***Policy LU 2.4*** Create incentives for development to preserve open space, protect natural resources, provide recreational opportunities, and ensure access to natural areas.

***Policy LU 2.5*** Encourage gardening as a recreational use on public land and within private development.

***Policy LU 2.6*** Encourage design features for new development that promote compatibility with existing neighborhoods, and will protect quality of life and property values.

***Policy LU 2.7*** Encourage and support continued localized land use planning efforts.

***Policy LU 2.8*** Update land use regulations to remove obsolete or unnecessary restrictions that contribute to the lack of affordable housing stock.

**Goal LU 3:** Ensure that development within Urban areas has satisfactory related infrastructure and urban-level service.

**Policy LU 3.1** Encourage technology and conservation techniques to minimize demands on natural and developed resources.

**Policy LU 3.2** Evaluate land use proposals for potential impacts to infrastructure and public services, and require applicants to provide mitigation as necessary to moderate these impacts.

**Policy LU 3.3** Explore opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian circulation improvements as part of the development review process.

**Policy LU 3.4** Support land use strategies that minimize transportation demand, such as mixed-use development, transit-oriented development and infill development.

**Policy LU 3.5** Encourage multi-modal accessibility to land uses including access for transporting the disadvantaged and mobility-challenged.

**Policy LU 3.6** Coordinate with transit providers during review of development proposals to ensure transit needs are considered.

**Goal LU 4:** Encourage economic development.

**Policy LU 4.1** Ensure economic development needs are supported in all plans and policies.

**Policy LU 4.2** Where compatible with the character of existing surrounding land uses, encourage retention, development and redevelopment of commercial and industrial land uses in Urban areas.

**Policy LU 4.3** Encourage non-industrial uses that serve or benefit from proximity to industrial activity to locate near existing industrial uses.

**Goal LU 5:** Recognize commercial agriculture and forest management as an allowable interim land use in urban areas.

**Policy LU 5.1** Allow agriculture and forest management, along with on-site processing, sale and distribution facilities, on parcels within Urban areas.

**Policy LU 5.2** Adopt and maintain a Right-to-Farm Ordinance.

**Policy LU 5.3** Require all subdivisions, short subdivisions, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities in Urban areas within five hundred (500) feet of lands used for agriculture or forest management to contain a notice stating that, "The subject property is within or near agricultural land or forest land on which a variety of commercial activities may occur that are not compatible with residential development for certain periods of limited duration. Commercial natural resource activities performed in accordance with county, state and federal laws are not subject or legal action as public nuisances. (RCW 7.48.305)."

**Policy LU 5.4** Consider compatibility issues and seek to reduce conflict during review of development proposals adjacent to urban lands currently being used for agricultural or timber management activities.

**Policy LU 5.5** Encourage innovative techniques for preservation and enhancement of agricultural and forest management activities within Urban areas.

### ***Suburban Land Use Category***

Suburban areas are transitional areas between urban and rural areas where growth is expected to occur. Suburban areas are desirable for development because of their proximity to existing urban services

The intensity of suburban development can be variable, depending on the availability of sewer and water service, and fire flow. Where water supply is individual or shared well and sewage is treated onsite, the guideline for lots is to have a minimum size of two acres. Where public water is available, but infrastructure is not presently adequate to supply fire service water as documented by the water purveyor and verified by the County Building Official and Fire Marshal, the guideline for lots is to have a minimum size of not less than one acre. Where public water is available, but public sewer is not, the guideline for lots is to have a minimum size of not less than one-half acre. Where public water and sewer are both available, the guideline for lots is to have a minimum size of not less than 15,000 square feet. The guideline for all lots is to have a minimum lot width of 60 feet.

**Goal LU 6:** Provide orderly and efficient transition from urban to rural areas.

**Policy LU 6.1** Density in suburban areas is established based on availability of public services.

**Goal LU 7:** Anticipate and accommodate long-term intensification of land use within suburban areas to avoid development pressure on adjoining areas.

**Policy LU 7.1** Development in Suburban areas should be served by public roadways.

**Policy LU 7.2** Explore opportunities for interim clustering of development activity in areas where public sewer service is planned, but not yet available.

**Policy LU 7.3** In areas of planned future public sewer or public water service, ensure new development make provisions for connection to such services as they become available.

**Policy LU 7.4** Encourage and support continued localized land use planning efforts.

**Policy LU 7.5** Encourage design features for new development that promote compatibility with, and that will protect quality of life and property values in, existing and developing neighborhoods.

**Goal LU 8:** Ensure that development within suburban areas has commensurate infrastructure and service investment.

***Policy LU 8.1*** Create incentives for development to preserve open space, protect natural resources, provide recreational opportunities, and ensure access to natural areas.

***Policy LU 8.2*** Encourage technology and conservation techniques to minimize demands of land uses on natural and developed resources.

***Policy LU 8.3*** Evaluate land use proposals for potential significant impacts to infrastructure and public services, and require the applicant to provide mitigation as necessary to alleviate these impacts.

***Policy LU 8.4*** Explore opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian circulation improvements as part of the development review process.

***Policy LU 8.5*** Support land use strategies that reduce the need for vehicular trips, such as mixed-use development, transit-oriented development and infill development.

***Policy LU 8.6*** Encourage multi-modal accessibility to land uses including access for the transportation disadvantaged and mobility challenged.

***Policy LU 8.7*** Coordinate with transit providers during review of development proposals.

**Goal LU 9:** Recognize commercial agriculture and forest management as an interim land use in suburban areas.

***Policy LU 9.1*** Allow agricultural and forest management activities, along with on-site processing, sale and distribution facilities, on parcels within Suburban areas.

***Policy LU 9.2*** Support crop production on Suburban land.

***Policy LU 9.3*** Adopt and maintain a Right-to-Farm Ordinance.

***Policy LU 9.4*** Require all subdivisions, short subdivisions, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities in suburban areas within five hundred (500) feet of lands used for agriculture or forest management contain a notice stating, "The subject property is within or near agricultural land or forest land on which a variety of commercial activities may occur that are not compatible with residential development for certain periods of limited duration. Commercial natural resource activities performed in accordance with county, state and federal laws are not subject to legal action as public nuisances. (RCW 7.48.305)."

**Policy LU 9.5** Consider compatibility issues and seek to reduce conflicting resource management activities and more intensive development during review of development proposals adjacent to lands used for agriculture or timber management.

**Policy LU 9.6** Encourage innovative techniques to promote small farms, gardens, agricultural activities and forest management within Suburban areas.

### ***Rural Land Use Category***

Rural areas are intended to provide for independent and private rural living without significant encroachment on lands used for commercial timber or agricultural production. The Rural area provides a buffer between higher intensity uses associated with urban and suburban areas and lower intensity uses in more remote areas.

Rural areas are characterized by low density residential uses compatible with natural land potential, small-scale commercial and industrial uses, tourism opportunities, community facilities, along with timber management and agriculture. Development takes place in a manner consistent with the rural settlement pattern unique to Cowlitz County. The guideline is for lots to have a two acre minimum lot size and minimum lot width of 100 feet. Clustered development, including residential resorts and master planned communities are encouraged to locate where able to utilize land and infrastructure needed to serve development and maximize resource conservation. Public water and sewer service are generally not available. Privately owned community water services may exist. Fire protection is available. Rural areas are served primarily by lower classification public roadways and private roads.

**Goal LU 10:** Preserve rural character while respecting the interests of property owners.

**Policy LU 10.1** Support and encourage uses within rural areas which sustain and are compatible with rural character and level of available public services and facilities.

**Policy LU 10.2** Encourage and support economic development projects in rural areas, particularly those which focuses on the natural environment and economic resource lands.

**Policy LU 10.3** Discourage extension of sewer service into rural areas except where needed to correct existing health hazards and where other means of regulation or treatment have been determined not feasible.

**Policy LU 10.4** Advocate for availability of water rights and the use of permit-exempt wells for rural land uses.

**Goal LU 11:** Recognize agricultural and forest management activities as important economic activities in rural areas.

**Policy LU 11.1** Allow agriculture and forest management on parcels within Rural areas, including ancillary uses associated with resource production and distribution.

**Policy LU 11.2** Adopt and maintain a “right to farm and forestry” ordinance.

**Policy LU 11.3** Require all subdivisions, short subdivisions, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities in rural areas within five hundred (500) feet of lands used for agriculture or forest management to contain a notice stating that, “The subject property is within or near agricultural land or forest land on which a variety of commercial activities may occur that are not compatible with residential development for certain periods of limited duration. Commercial natural resource activities performed in accordance with county, state and federal laws are not subject to legal action as public nuisances. (RCW 7.48.305).”

**Policy LU 11.4** Consider compatibility issues and seek to reduce conflict during review of development proposals adjacent to lands used for agriculture or timber management.

**Policy LU 11.5** Encourage innovative techniques for promotion of agricultural and forest management activities within Rural Areas.

### ***Smallholding Land Use Category***

Smallholding areas are intended to provide for self-sustaining lifestyle choices, with the opportunity for management of natural resources for the creation of economic benefit. The guideline is for lots to have a minimum lot size of five acres and lot width of 100 feet. Minimum lot configuration must provide adequate area for on-site sewage system and domestic well, in addition to any required buffering from adjacent uses. The Smallholding area is intended to minimize conflicts between resource management and residential activities. Clustered development is encouraged to efficiently utilize land and infrastructure needed to serve development and maximize resource conservation.

Smallholding lands can provide a transition from more urbanized areas to those that are classified as remote, with limited development potential, or economic resource land utilized for commercial or industrial resource management. Public water and sewer service is generally not available. Privately owned community water services may exist. Smallholding areas are within a fire district. Access may be provided via lower classification public roadways and private roads. The Smallholding classification also includes areas otherwise fitting the Rural Category, but where natural land features limits development.

**Goal LU 12:** Provide areas that support self-sustaining lifestyles.

**Policy LU 12.1** As clustered development provides for flexible parcel sizing, utilizing provisions of the Cowlitz County Planned Unit Development Ordinance and/or the Optional Incentives found in the Cowlitz County Critical Areas Ordinance is encouraged as a means of efficiently utilizing land and minimizing infrastructure costs associated with development.

**Policy LU 12.2** New development within the Smallholding classification should be served by individual wells and on-site sewage systems on individual lots.

**Policy LU 12.3** Lands within the Smallholding classification are served by maintained public or private roadways, or those roadways to which improvements can be made by the project proponent at the time of development to bring roadways into compliance with adopted regulations.

**Policy LU 12.4** Lands within the Smallholding classification are to be located within a fire district.

**Goal LU 13:** Provide opportunities for management of natural resources to create economic benefit in Smallholding areas.

**Policy LU 13.1** Allow agriculture and forest management on parcels within Smallholding areas, including ancillary uses associated with resource production and distribution.

**Policy LU 13.2** Provide flexibility for a variety of uses to locate in Smallholding areas, if appropriate in character and scale to the environment.

**Policy LU 13.3** Adopt and maintain a “right to farm and forestry” ordinance.

**Policy LU 13.4** Require all subdivisions, short subdivisions, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities within five hundred (500) feet of lands used for agriculture or forest management to contain a notice stating, “The subject property is within or near agricultural land or forest land on which a variety of commercial activities may occur that are not compatible with residential development for certain periods of limited duration. Commercial natural resource activities performed in accordance with county, state and federal laws are not subject to legal action as public nuisances. (RCW 7.48.305).”

**Policy LU 13.5** Consider compatibility issues during review of development proposals adjacent to lands used for agriculture or timber management.

**Policy LU 13.6** Encourage innovative techniques to promote agricultural and forest management activities within Smallholding Areas.

### ***Remote Land Use Category***

Remote areas are characterized by natural features that are not conducive to intense development. These areas lack transportation and utility infrastructure improvements, and the cost of extending roads and services to these areas may be prohibitive given topography, geologic hazards, flooding characteristics, or other natural barriers.

Remote lands may be located outside of fire districts and beyond service of an adequately maintained public roadways or private roadways permitted since the adoption of the Cowlitz County Private Roadways Ordinance (Ord. 99-207) or as hereafter amended. Remote areas may also include lands associated with preservation of public values, such as public lands, shorelines of the state and critical areas. Predominant land uses are resource management

and extraction activities, informal recreational activities, and dispersed residential use. The guideline is for lots to have a minimum size of ten acres and minimum lot width of 100 feet.

**Goal LU 14:** Provide for limited development of remote areas consistent with environmental constraints and public services availability.

**Policy LU 14.1** New development within the Remote classification should be served by individual wells and on-site sewage systems.

**Policy LU 14.2** Cowlitz County should not extend County roads to those lands within the Remote classification.

**Policy LU 14.3** Public sewer should not be extended into Remote areas except to remedy hazards to public health, safety or welfare impacting pre-existing development.

**Policy LU 14.4** Explore opportunities to notify permit applicants of service limitations in Remote areas at the time of development review.

**Goal LU 15:** Recognize agriculture and forest management as important economic activities in remote areas.

**Policy LU 15.1** Allow agriculture and forest management on parcels within Remote areas, including ancillary uses associated with resource production and distribution.

**Policy LU 15.2** Adopt and maintain a “right to farm and forestry” ordinance.

**Policy LU 15.3** Require all subdivisions, short subdivisions, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities in remote areas within five hundred (500) feet of lands used for agriculture or forest management to contain a notice stating, “The subject property is within or near agricultural land or forest land on which a variety of commercial activities may occur that are not compatible with residential development for certain periods of limited duration. Commercial natural resource activities performed in accordance with county, state and federal laws are not subject to legal action as public nuisances. (RCW 7.48.305).”

**Policy LU 15.4** Consider compatibility issues and seek to reduce conflict during review of development proposals adjacent to lands used for agriculture or timber management.

### ***Economic Resource Land Use Category***

Economic Resource Land, including Industrial Land, Forest Resource Land, Agricultural Resource Land and Mineral Resource Land, have a significant role in the long-term economic viability of Cowlitz County. It is physically and economically challenging to reclaim these lands once they are converted to other uses. Economic Resource Land merits additional protection from development pressures. The County will actively seek to prevent conversion of existing Economic Resource Land to non-compatible uses. The objective of the Economic

Resource Land Use Category is to retain the viability of Economic Resource Land for present and future generations. The guideline is for a minimum lot size of 38 acres and minimum lot width of 100 feet.

### ***Economic Resource Land – Industrial Use***

A sustained regional economy relies on industry. The County will strive to provide for a balanced distribution of land for industrial activities to accommodate economic growth. Development of industrial sites, however, can require balancing many interests and needs. The County will seek to protect sites for industry, while at the same time considering potential impacts to the public.

#### **Goal LU 16: Identify Industrial Land**

***Policy LU 16.1*** Encourage industrial development in areas with few environmental constraints and in areas where development can be made compatible with the environment.

***Policy LU 16.2*** Ensure industrial areas have access to communication networks, as well as major transportation routes, such as truck routes, highways, railroads, waterways, and air terminals.

***Policy LU 16.3*** Industrial lands at minimum are to include existing land identified in the Land Use Ordinance as industrial, as well as all Port property excluding those locations owned by Ports as off-site environmental mitigation areas.

***Policy LU 16.4*** Industrial lands are located within a fire district or are served by a local fire district through formal agreement. They have fire protection available, or the ability to ensure fire protection is available prior to development approval.

#### **Goal LU 17: Protect Industrial Land**

***Policy LU 17.1*** Utilize the Cowlitz County Commercial and Industrial Binding Site Plan Code (Chapter 18.64) to provide for the subdivision of Industrial property into smaller parcels than otherwise permitted in the Economic Resource Land classification.

***Policy LU 17.2*** Review development proposals for potential impacts on subject or surrounding Industrial land, and services needed to support industry.

***Policy LU 17.3*** Protect Industrial Land from incompatible uses that could have the potential to prevent or substantially restrict industrial activity.

***Policy LU 17.4*** Ensure meaningful opportunity for public involvement is provided during any permitting process associated with development of industrial land.

***Policy LU 17.5*** Impacts associated with Industrial development should be mitigated consistent with state, federal and local regulations and plans.

## ***Economic Resource Land - Forest Resource Land***

Forestry has been and remains integral to the economy of Cowlitz County. According to the Natural Resource Conservation Service, fertile soils and favorable climate make Cowlitz County one of the best timber-growing areas in North America. Douglas fir, western hemlock, western red cedar, noble fir, grand fir, red alder and cottonwood are commercially significant forest resources. The County recognizes the public benefits provided by forestlands and where possible will encourage and support uses and incentives to maximize these benefits.

### **Goal LU 18: Identify Forest Resource Land (FRL)**

***Policy LU 18.1*** In classifying Forest Resource Land of Long-Term Commercial Significance, at a minimum one of the following criteria apply: a) Land area is five acres or larger, and taxed as timber land under RCW 84.33 and 84.34; b) Land is owned by the State or Federal government and managed for timber production.

### **Goal LU 19: Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including timber industries.**

***Policy LU 19.1*** Land use activities within or adjacent to designated FRL should minimize conflicts with forestry practices and ancillary uses.

***Policy LU 19.2*** Support the maintenance of forest lands in timber and current use property tax classifications consistent with RCW 84.33 and 84.34.

***Policy LU 19.3*** Ensure forestry and related activities regulated by Cowlitz County are conducted in a manner that will minimize their adverse impacts on water quality, habitat, and other environmentally sensitive areas pursuant to county and state regulations.

***Policy LU 19.4*** Provide for resource use, particularly agricultural and timber uses, in rural, smallholding and remote areas.

***Policy LU 19.5*** Discourage extension of public sewer and water services to lands designated FRL.

***Policy LU 19.6*** Ensure that the uses of adjacent lands do not interfere with the continued use of lands designated for the production of timber.

***Policy LU 19.7*** Encourage local and regional infrastructure and/or manufacturing facilities that use or support forest products in proximity to FRL.

***Policy LU 19.8*** Consider creation of a “right to farm and forestry” ordinance to protect forestry uses.

***Policy LU 19.9*** Buffer residential development adjacent to FRL to minimize land use conflicts.

**Policy LU 19.10** Encourage innovative tools, such as limited subdivision of clustered small lots and conservation easements that enable families to plan for succession of their resource-based business.

**Policy LU 19.11** Require all new subdivisions, short subdivisions, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities within five hundred (500) feet of lands designated FRL contain a notice stating, “The subject property is within or near designated Forest Resource Land on which a variety of commercial activities and mineral operations may occur that are not compatible with residential development for certain periods of limited duration. Commercial natural resource activities performed in accordance with county, state and federal laws are not subject to legal action as public nuisances. (RCW 7.48.305).

**Goal LU 20:** Recognize the public benefits of forestlands including environmental, recreational, scenic beauty, habitat protection, and quality of life.

**Policy LU 20.1** Accept multiple-use management of forestland to promote the primary use and provide for other compatible uses including but not limited to tourism, recreation, and preservation of open space.

**Policy LU 20.2** Identify and plan for access to areas of environmental, recreational, aesthetic, and cultural or historic importance.

**Policy LU 20.3** Work with state and federal agencies to improve recreational access on public lands.

**Policy LU 20.4** Seek incentives and coordinate opportunities with owners of large industrial forest lands to allow access for recreation.

**Policy LU 20.5** Consider impacts to the timber industry when reviewing proposed recreation facilities near FRL.

**Policy LU 20.6** Lots less than thirty-eight (38) acres in size may be created on Forest Resource Land through the Small Lot Provision process found in Section 18.10.547 of the Cowlitz County Land Use Ordinance, or as revised, subject to the conditions provided in that section.

### ***Economic Resource Land - Agricultural Resource Land***

Agriculture is an important economic resource in Cowlitz County. The 2007 USDA Census of Agriculture ranked the County as having the second largest broiler chicken inventory in the State, and the sixth highest acreage planted with berries. Other crops include corn, peas, carrots and flower bulbs. The retention of productive Agricultural Resource Land fosters economic development opportunities.

**Goal LU 21:** Identify Agricultural Resource Land (ARL)

**Policy LU 21.1** Designate agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance (ARL) for agricultural production.

**Policy LU 21.2** At minimum, agricultural resource lands of long term commercial significance are identified in the Land Use Ordinance as Agriculture-38, and meet one of the following criteria: a) Land which is taxed as agricultural land under RCW 84.34; or b) Land primarily devoted to the commercial production of horticultural, viticultural, floricultural, dairy, apiary, vegetable, or animal products or of berries, grain, hay, straw, turf, seed, Christmas trees not subject to the excise tax imposed by RCW 84.33.100 through 84.33.140, finfish in upland hatcheries, or livestock, and that has long-term commercial significance for agricultural production; or c) Land identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Soil Conservation Service with a soil classified as Prime Farmland, and which has long-term commercial significance for agricultural production.

**Policy LU 21.3** Ensure agricultural resource lands of long-term commercial significance are designated to provide the commodities needed for economic development in Cowlitz County and the surrounding region.

**Policy LU 21.4** Ensure land appropriate for accessory activities associated with agriculture is available in proximity to agricultural lands and transportation corridors.

## **Goal LU 22: Protect and support agriculture**

**Policy LU 22.1** Create a Strategic Plan for Agriculture in Cowlitz County.

**Policy LU 22.2** Support the maintenance of resource lands in agriculture and current use property tax classifications consistent with RCW 84.34.

**Policy LU 22.3** Review land use activities within or adjacent to designated ARL to minimize conflicts with agriculture.

**Policy LU 22.4** Consider creation of a “right to farm and forestry” ordinance to protect agricultural uses.

**Policy LU 22.5** Ensure land appropriate for activities associated with agricultural production and distribution are available in proximity to agricultural lands and transportation corridors.

**Policy LU 22.6** Foster maintenance and development of agricultural product processing facilities.

**Policy LU 22.7** Minimize the amount of agricultural resource land converted from agricultural use to accommodate permitted non-farm development.

**Policy LU 22.8** Allow resource use, particularly agricultural and timber uses, in all land use classifications.

**Policy LU 22.9** Allow non-soil-dependent agricultural activities.

**Goal LU 23:** Encourage the conservation of productive agricultural lands and discourage incompatible uses on and adjacent to these lands.

**Policy LU 23.1** Ensure the uses of adjacent lands do not interfere with the continued use of lands designated for agricultural production.

**Policy LU 23.2** Buffer residential development proposals adjacent to agricultural resource land to minimize land use conflicts.

**Policy LU 23.3** Require all new subdivisions, short subdivisions, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities within five hundred (500) feet of lands designated ARL to contain a notice stating, "The subject property is within or near designated Agricultural Resource Land on which a variety of commercial activities and mineral operations may occur that are not compatible with residential development for certain periods of limited duration. Commercial natural resource activities performed in accordance with county, state and federal laws are not subject to legal action as public nuisances. (RCW 7.48.305).

**Policy LU 23.4** Analyze and address potential regulatory barriers that may limit the viability of agricultural production.

**Policy LU 23.5** Protect the interests of landowners who wish to continue the practice and management of agriculture.

**Policy LU 23.6** Develop strategies to incentivize local agricultural producers to utilize voluntary stewardship programs for protection of critical areas.

**Policy LU 23.7** Allow compatible accessory uses that promote continued use of agricultural lands, including value-added products, to increase resource land earnings.

**Policy LU 23.8** Seek to develop innovative strategies and methods to allow agricultural production of the land to continue from generation to generation.

**Policy LU 23.9** Seek to develop a County policy that advocates for the prioritization of allocated water rights for agricultural land uses.

**Policy LU 23.10** Lots of less than thirty-eight (38) acres in size may be created on Agricultural Resource Land through the Small Lot Provision process found in Section 18.10.547 of the Cowlitz County Land Use Ordinance, or as revised, subject to the conditions provided in that section.

## ***Economic Resource Land - Mineral Resource Land***

Mineral Resources have long been important to Cowlitz County. For example, the first discovery of coal in the State of Washington occurred in Cowlitz County in 1833. In 2016, the primary mineral resources in the County are sand, gravel and basalt rock formations.

Mineral extraction is essential for new development and roadway improvements. Development of mineral resource sites, however, can be controversial due to the nature of extraction activities. Protection of resource sites for economically-viable extraction needs to, at the same time, protect the public from long term potential impacts.

To protect mineral resources for the present and future generations, and to maximize opportunities for economic development, the County will identify lands for mineral resource extraction and temporary placement of dredge spoils. Limited information is available on mineral resources in the County. The bulk of extraction activity in Cowlitz County is currently sand, gravel, and basalt, but the County recognizes that there may be other mineral resources of significance.

### **Goal LU 24: Identify Mineral Resource Land (MRL)**

***Policy LU 24.1*** At a minimum, mineral resource lands meet the following criteria a) land which has known or potential reserves of extractable minerals in commercial quantities; b) lands that are not already characterized by urban growth as defined by RCW 36.70A.030.

***Policy LU 24.3*** Consider development of a Mineral Resource Task Force, to create a comprehensive Mineral Resource Inventory of commercially viable mineral resource and dredge spoil disposal sites in the County.

***Policy LU 24.4*** Ensure designation of mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance to provide for economic development in Cowlitz County and the surrounding region.

***Policy LU 24.5*** Ensure land appropriate for accessory activities associated with mineral extraction is available in proximity to extraction sites and transportation corridors.

### **Goal LU 25: Protect mineral resource land.**

***Policy LU 25.1*** Review development proposals for impacts they may have on subject or surrounding Mineral Resource Lands.

***Policy LU 25.2*** Ensure development permit applicants and property owners are provided notice of adjacent existing and/or potential future mineral resource extraction activities during permitting process.

**Policy LU 25.3** Protect designated Mineral Resource Land of Long-Term Commercial Significance from incompatible uses that could have the potential to prevent or substantially restrict resource extraction.

**Policy LU 25.4** Evaluate and update existing County regulations providing performance, operational and environmental standards for the extraction and processing of mineral resources.

**Policy LU 25.5** Provide for mineral resource extraction activities within other designated resource lands of long-term commercial significance, so long as the activity is compatible with adjacent land uses.

**Policy LU 25.6** Ensure opportunity for public involvement is provided during any permitting process associated with development of a mineral resource extraction or dredge spoil deposit site.

**Goal LU 26:** Recognize mineral resource extraction as an interim land use.

**Policy LU 26.1** Encourage development of mineral resources in accordance with conservation and reclamation practices for all mining operations, including but not limited to, those outlined in County, State and Federal regulations.

**Policy LU 26.2** Review Mineral Resource Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance in terms of their post-extraction potential for conversion to other land uses.

**Policy LU 26.3** Provide for reclassification of Mineral Resource Land upon determination that a resource has been exhausted and a new land use will be compatible with and not limit availability of the mineral resource.

**Policy LU 26.4** Promote innovative, adaptive re-use of extraction sites, and proactive reclamation planning.

**Policy LU 26.5** Encourage mineral resource extraction and dredge disposal activities that further other Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies.

**Goal LU 27:** Restore dredge disposal sites along the Toutle and Cowlitz Rivers which prior to eruption of Mount St. Helens were wetlands.

**Policy LU 27.1** Evaluate potential restoration projects based on likelihood of successful restoration of prior wetland, habitat and/or floodplain functions.

**Policy LU 27.2** Encourage restoration efforts on dredge disposal sites that previously provided a high level of wetland, habitat and/or floodplain function.

**Policy LU 27.3** Consider development incentives to restore dredge disposal sites that previously provided a high level of wetland, habitat and/or floodplain function.

***Policy LU 27.4*** Promote temporary use of potential dredge disposal sites and prompt reclamation and remediation of sites which originally included wetlands.

## Chapter 3: Parks, Trails and Recreation Element

### *Introduction*

Cowlitz County benefits from an abundance of natural recreational opportunities, including water-focused activities along the Columbia, Cowlitz, Lewis and Coweeman Rivers, and on Silver Lake; as well as hiking, camping and other land-based activities in the County's interior.

While much of the recreational interest in the County lies in its accessibility to Mount St. Helens, offering hiking, biking, and other outdoor activities, there are also many parks near the County's urbanized areas. Outdoor recreation in Cowlitz County generally benefits from a climate that is user-friendly year-round.

The County has 224.9 acres set aside for parks<sup>1</sup> including:

- Riverside Park
- Woodbrook Park
- Harry Gardner Park
- Coal Creek Boat Launch
- Catlin Cemetery
- Finn Hall Wayside
- Cougar Wayside
- Cook Ferry
- LT-1 – Site of the Cowlitz Game & Anglers Public Shooting Range
- Coweeman Ranch Site

Additional parks, recreation and trail opportunities in unincorporated areas of Cowlitz County include:

- Willow Grove Park and Boat Launch – Operated by the Port of Longview, the 60-acre park provides beach access, picnicking trails, boat launch facilities and restrooms.
- Seaquest Park – Campground operated by the State of Washington with close access to Silver Lake and the Silver Lake Mount St. Helens Visitor's Center
- Merrill Lake Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA) – a 114 acre catch-and-release lake and small, seasonal campground
- Portions of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

Other places identified as special interest natural or cultural areas within Cowlitz County:

- Elk Rock - one of the westernmost areas of the Cascade Range in Cowlitz County offers a unique view of three volcanoes and has consistent snow pack
- High Lakes - including, Fawn Lake, Coweeman Lake, Elk and Forest Lake which are all significant natural lakes within the County

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<sup>1</sup> 2016. Cowlitz County Park and Recreation Advisory Board. Cowlitz County Comprehensive Parks Plan Update. (December).

- Silver Lake - particularly the South Shore and its adjoining old-growth forest area, with heron and eagle habitat, old growth forest and associated wetlands
- Hollywood Gorge - a canyon along the Toutle River that affords a scenic rafting route and access to a unique plant community

Approximately 80% of the County’s 1,140 square miles is dedicated to timber production and open space. Access onto private timberlands for hunting and outdoor recreation is tightly controlled and access may be restricted during the fire season and active timber operations. Some portions of the County’s public lands, particularly in proximity to Mount St. Helens and the National Volcanic Monument, may be challenging to access without crossing privately held timberlands.

***Existing Plans and Documents:***

Cowlitz County has benefitted from a thoughtful and dedicated effort to formalize, preserve and update adopted park-planning documents. The Parks and Trails Element of the Comprehensive Plan supports the goals and policies within both the Comprehensive Park Plan Update and the Regional Trails Plan

***Parks, Trails and Recreation Goals and Policies***

**Goal PTR 1:** Provide access to a variety of parks and recreation facilities that serve to benefit the broadest range of age and skill-levels, and social and economic groups.

***Policy PTR 1.1*** Support the development of new parks and recreation facilities consistent with the Cowlitz County Comprehensive Parks Plan.

***Policy PTR 1.2*** Locate parks to provide for a wide variety of outdoor activities and to preserve and protect important habitat areas, corridors and linkages, natural amenities such wetlands and shoreline areas, unique landscape features and places of cultural value.

**Goal PTR 2:** Provide transportation range of access opportunities to parks, trails and recreational activities.

***Policy PTR 2.1*** Locate parks to provide ease of access for bicycles, pedestrians, handicapped persons, autos and public transit.

***Policy PTR 2.2*** Maintain established public access over private land to publicly owned land; where such public access will not be substantially detrimental to the use of the private land involved.

***Policy PTR 2.3*** Encourage federal, state, and private forest landowners to allow outdoor recreational opportunities under the multiple-use concept where recreation is deemed a suitable use and is compatible with other resources.

**Goal PTR 3.** Promote community pride by identifying and mapping distinctive areas, sites, structures and objects that have historic, cultural, architectural and archaeological significance.

***Policy PTR 3.1*** Encourage preservation and enhancement of identified distinctive areas, sites, structures and objects of historic, cultural, architectural and archaeological significance.

***Policy PTR 3.2*** Seek compatibility between existing and proposed uses during development review on or adjacent to identified areas, sites, structures and objects of historic, cultural, architectural and archaeological significance.

# **Chapter 4: Transportation and Circulation Element**

## ***Introduction***

The Transportation and Circulation Element is intended to:

- Define the relationship of transportation facilities with planned land uses and other major developments, and
- Establish overall concepts guiding the development of the transportation system within the unincorporated portion of Cowlitz County.

An efficient and accessible transportation system is required to effectively move people, goods and freight throughout the County. This connectivity encourages economic activity and promotes livability.

## ***Existing Conditions***

### **Federal Highway**

The Federal Interstate Highway System serves interstate and intrastate travel. Interstate Highway 5 (I-5) is the only highway in this classification in Cowlitz County.

### **State Highways**

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) maintains a system of urban and rural highways throughout Cowlitz County. These roadways are subject to regulation and control by the State, such as access restrictions, turning movements, and parking. State Highways serve interstate and intrastate traffic. They provide through trips between major traffic generators and connect with the Interstate Highway system.

### **County Roadways**

The Cowlitz County Department of Public Works manages all County roadways. The Cowlitz County Road and Street Design Standards provides a functional classification system for new and reconstructed County roadways.

### **Private Roadways**

New private roadways and improvements to existing private roadways are subject to the Cowlitz County Private Roadways Ordinance.

### **Transit**

RiverCities Transit of the Cowlitz Transit Authority provides fixed-route service to the cities of Longview and Kelso. Connecting service to surrounding counties is available from regional providers. Various human service entities also provide transit services to residents of Cowlitz County.

### **Freight Mobility**

Cowlitz County benefits from access to global markets via the I-5 Corridor, the Columbia River, and BNSF Class I mainline railroad. Internal rail systems within industrial areas

provide access to the mainline railroad. Three port districts – Woodland, Kalama, and Longview – provide an economic backbone for the County. These districts depend on continual development of freight mobility options. The Southwest Washington Regional Airport, a Regional Service Airport, is located in the City of Kelso. The Woodland State Municipal Airport serves the southern portion of the County. When planning for freight movement, public safety, neighborhood compatibility and efficiency of the transportation system must be considered.

### ***Transportation Goals and Policies***

**Goal TC 1:** Achieve consistency in planning to address transportation needs of Cowlitz County.

***Policy TC 1.1*** Collaborate during planning efforts and development review with all transportation providers and interests as appropriate.

**Goal TC 2:** Meet the transportation needs of residents, visitors and the economy.

***Policy TC 2.1*** Develop a complete and connected transportation network.

***Policy TC 2.2*** Ensure mobility for all segments of the population, especially those with limited travel options, including youth, elderly and disabled.

***Policy TC 2.3*** Consider freight mobility needs within and through the County.

***Policy TC 2.4*** Promote connection of parks, open spaces, water and other recreation areas to areas generating users for these amenities.

***Policy TC 2.5*** Support development of recreational opportunities along existing transportation network.

***Policy TC 2.6*** Support preservation and expansion of transportation services that support and foster economic activity.

***Policy TC 2.7*** Support land use strategies that reduce demand for vehicular trips, such as mixed-use development, transit-oriented development and infill development.

**Goal TC 3:** Balance transportation needs in the context of the natural and built environment.

***Policy TC 3.1*** Encourage design elements of transportation projects that retain natural processes and habitat corridors, limit impervious surfaces and preserve open space.

***Policy TC 3.2*** Encourage removal of invasive plant species along roadways and replacement with native plants.

***Policy TC 3.3*** Evaluate land use compatibility and community livability issues with transportation network improvement projects.

***Policy TC 3.4*** Develop and implement location-specific and context-specific street standards.

***Policy TC 3.5*** Allow for flexibility in design in order to maintain sensitivity to unique local community needs.

**Goal TC 4:** Promote safety for those using the transportation system.

***Policy TC 4.1*** Prioritize safety when evaluating improvements to the transportation system.

***Policy TC 4.2*** Evaluate potential hazards created by freight movement with development proposals.

***Policy TC 4.3*** Facilitate and participate in awareness and educational campaigns for street safety in partnership with regional organizations.

***Policy TC 4.4*** Encourage development of safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian facilities along with improvements to the transportation system and during development review.

***Policy TC 4.5*** Encourage traffic calming during review of transportation improvement projects where this would benefit the community.

***Policy TC 4.6*** Advocate for and seek funding for safety improvements.

# Chapter 5: Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities Element

## ***Introduction***

Cowlitz County residents rely on facilities and services to help define their quality of life. Services, Facilities and Utilities range from public buildings to fire and police protection to electric, water and sewer service. As Cowlitz County grows and develops, it is essential that planning efforts coordinate, identify and locate services and facilities in a manner that is consistent with the vision for growth of the community.

Existing facilities and services must be maintained while looking at improvements necessary to be able to support future demand. A combination of county, city, state, and federal agencies, along with service districts provide services to residents. Planning for utilities and facilities will allow the County to develop as intended.

Identifying locations where utilities and facilities are and, or should be located, as well as identifying current and future service needs, consistent with land use designations and development patterns will assist the County in developing in an orderly fashion, protect natural resources and conserve County financial resources.

## ***General Goals and Policies***

**Goal PSFU 1:** Site facilities and utilities consistent with the long range planning objectives set forth in the Land Use Element of this plan.

***Policy PSFU 1.1*** Public services, facilities and utilities may be permitted in all land use zones when and where utility franchises exist and if they are in compliance with related codes and standards.

***Policy PSFU 1.2*** Ensure adequate infrastructure to promote economic development.

***Policy PSFU 1.3*** Recognize and advocate for the continued permit and water-right exempt use of well water for purposes identified in State law.

**Goal PSFU 2:** Establish and/or assess inter-local agreements with municipalities and other entities to coordinate efficient provision of public facilities.

***Policy PSFU 2.1*** Coordinate infrastructure and service planning with local jurisdictions to be consistent with city and county Service Areas and proposed Urban Growth Areas identified by cities within Cowlitz County.

***Policy PSFU 2.2*** The Department of Public Works and the Department of Building and Planning should coordinate infrastructure planning to meet County development goals.

***Policy PSFU 2.3*** Encourage joint planning for construction of linear infrastructure such as transportation, water, sewer, power, and telecommunications.

**Policy PSFU 2.4** Encourage utility facilities within or adjacent to public rights-of-way and encourage undergrounding of distribution lines in accordance with state rules and regulations.

**Goal PSFU 3:** Provide utility infrastructure improvements that are consistent with and available to support land use policies.

**Policy PSFU 3.1** Explore establishment of a capital facilities improvements program to facilitate the efficient delivery of utility services.

**Policy PSFU 3.2** Protect existing utility corridors to permit maintenance access and future expansion.

**Policy PSFU 3.3** Encourage the joint use of utility corridors and facilities by multiple utility service providers, provided such joint use is consistent with applicable law and prudent utility practice.

### ***Domestic Water Systems Goals and Policies***

**Goal PSFU 4:** Coordinate private and public water system planning to promote efficient service, protect water resources to ensure water availability for development consistent with County planning objectives.

**Policy PFSU 4.1** Review, develop, and amend as needed, existing or future inter-local agreements with the cities and water suppliers in the coordination of water service.

**Policy PFSU 4.2** Encourage the continued cooperation and coordination between water purveyors to achieve greater efficiency in the delivery of water services.

**Policy PFSU 4.3** Ensure water supply and delivery system plans are consistent with anticipated economic development activities and population growth patterns.

**Policy PFSU 4.4** Ensure water systems for developments include supply and distribution systems for domestic use and fire protection per local, state and federal plans, policies and regulations.

### ***Solid Waste Goals and Policies***

**Goal PFSU 5:** Protect environmental quality and public health through effective solid waste management practices, education, regulations, and economic incentives.

**Policy PFSU 5.1** Coordinate and create consistency between Land Use regulations and Cowlitz County Department of Health - Environmental Health Unit's regulations relating to solid waste handling and treatment.

**Policy PFSU 5.2** Ensure adequate capacity and treatment provisions are put in place for solid waste disposal at the time of project development.

## ***Sanitary Sewer Goals and Policies***

**Goal PFSU 6:** Encourage public sanitary sewer services consistent with land use classifications.

***Policy PFSU 6.1*** Ensure sanitary sewer treatment plant capacity and transmission infrastructure is able to meet anticipated population growth.

***Policy PFSU 6.2*** Review, develop, and amend as needed, existing or future interlocal agreements with the cities and water and sewer suppliers to coordinate the provision of sanitary sewer service.

## ***Fire Protection Goals and Policies***

**Goal PFSU 7:** Provide fire and emergency medical services efficiently and cost effectively to residents, businesses and visitors of Cowlitz County

***Policy PFSU 7.1*** Identify and implement cooperation strategies between the fire districts in the County and the Department of Building and Planning permit processing to ensure development secures fire protection based on applicable code requirements.

***Policy PFSU 7.2*** Encourage inter-jurisdictional cooperation among fire districts, including the sharing of equipment and facilities.

***Policy PFSU 7.3*** Work with the Department of Emergency Management to identify and develop planning efforts that reduce risk and increase resiliency.

***Policy PFSU 7.4*** Maintain and enhance Wildland-Urban Interface fire protection options.

## ***Public Buildings Goals and Policies (Schools/Libraries/Community Centers)***

**Goal PFSU 8:** Encourage multiple uses of public buildings.

***Policy PFSU 8.1*** Identify buildings and locations where multiple uses of County assets could best serve the community.

**Goal PFSU 9:** Promote library service and access for all county residents.

***Policy PFSU 9.1*** Coordinate with libraries to explore opportunities for expanding and creating access to library resources.

***Policy PFSU 9.2*** Encourage cooperation and coordination between school libraries and public libraries to offer expanded service to local citizens.

**Goal PFSU 10:** Locate public buildings, schools and community centers where adequate roads and utilities are available, and where there is the least vulnerability to flooding, earthquakes and other natural disasters.

***Policy PFSU 10.1*** Encourage cooperation and planning between school districts, community groups, cities and the county to identify appropriate locations.

### ***Stormwater Goals and Policies***

**Goal PFSU 11:** Develop stormwater facilities and related management programs designed to protect surface and groundwater quality and habitat, prevent chronic flooding from stormwater, maintain natural stream hydrology and protect aquatic resources.

***Policy PFSU 11.2*** Coordinate with the Department of Public Works to update and implement Low Impact Development (LID) standards into County Stormwater regulations for both urbanized and rural areas to meet state and federal requirements.

### ***Electrical Facilities Goals and Policies***

**Goal PFSU 12:** Encourage the placement of new Electrical Facilities to best serve developing areas.

***Policy PSFU 12.1*** Cowlitz PUD planning should be coordinated with the County's long-range plans.

***Policy PSFU 12.2*** Encourage the location of power substations in non-residential areas and those least susceptible to flooding, earthquake damage and other natural hazards.

***Policy PSFU 12.3*** Encourage the undergrounding of existing and proposed electrical facilities at the time of new development.

### ***Flood Control Goals and Policies***

**Goal PFSU 13:** Ensure safety through appropriate flood control facilities.

***Policy PSFU 13.1*** Flood control facilities are allowed in all land use classifications.

***Policy PSFU 13.2*** Coordinate with diking districts during long-range planning efforts and development review where projects are in proximity to flood control facilities.

***Policy PSFU 13.3*** Land use planning and permitting activity should account for frequently flooded areas and the need for maintenance of integrity of flood control infrastructure.

## Chapter 6: Implementation

### *Introduction*

The Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan provides a framework for decisions about land use in the unincorporated areas of Cowlitz County. The plan is intended to help property owners, community groups, developers, Cowlitz County officials, other government agencies in making land use decisions that may have impacts on the quality of life in Cowlitz County. While the Comprehensive Plan itself does not carry the regulatory authority of an ordinance or law, it provides the necessary framework to create, amend and interpret such codes.

The Plan provides goals for achieving the vision of Cowlitz County's future and policies to help those goals become reality. The ability to effectively understand how those policies help to achieve the goals of the Plan is directly linked to an understanding of several key characteristics of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Community Vision: The plan is a statement of the community's vision and expectations for future growth and development. The goals and policies in this document are intended to reflect this community vision and guide the intent of more specific land use and development regulations.
- Public Facilities and Services: Providing the necessary public facilities and services is a key component of economic and community development. By integrating land use, infrastructure, and human service needs, the Comprehensive Plan provides a context for decisions about public facilities and services.
- Consistency: The Plan provides the framework to achieve consistency between the County and other public agencies in regards to land use, infrastructure, and policy direction.
- Citizen Participation: The Plan encourages citizen participation and involvement by providing for citizen outreach efforts, and effectively notifying neighbors of nearby development applications.
- Evolving Document: The Comprehensive Plan is an evolving document and as regulations, goals, and community visions change, so will this document. It is critical that the Plan be periodically reviewed and updated in response to the changing goals and visions of the community.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the techniques and strategies necessary to bring the goals and policies in this document to life. It will identify ways in which the County can foster public involvement, increase inter-jurisdictional coordination, and describe a consistent, predictable process in which the Plan may be updated to stay current with the ever-evolving vision and goals of the community. Ultimately, successful implementation of the Plan will require specific regulations and more detailed examination of local conditions.

### *Community Outreach and Citizen Participation*

Individual citizens and stakeholders play a critical role in determining how development takes place in the county. At a minimum, citizens affect the trajectory of land use issues

simply by participating in the election of their representative in the local government. Just as impactful is the participation of citizens on local boards and committees, and at public meetings and hearings. People *should* be concerned about development and land use issues, particularly when these issues may have an effect on their immediate environment.

One of the greatest challenges in government is fostering this public involvement in local land use processes, committees, and workshops. In this regard, the level of citizen participation is directly related to the community outreach efforts of the county. Community outreach can take many forms:

- Educating citizens on land use and permitting processes
- Establishing convenient meeting times and places for public hearings and workshops
- Working with citizens on a localized scale to better address local circumstances
- Notifying neighbors of significant land use applications in their area
- Fully utilize technological innovation and applications to disseminate information to the general public
- Receiving feedback from citizens, stakeholders, and other groups regarding county land use ordinances, processes, and policies

The ultimate goal of outreach is for the county to establish a culture that values education, knowledge, and citizen participation. When citizens participate, it establishes government as a partnership, and encourages ordinances and policies that reflect the values of the community as a whole, not just a small group of individuals.

It is up to the county to make every effort to establish a culture that values citizen participation, and puts information in the hands of the general public. The goals and policies identified later in this chapter will serve to guide the county as it explores ways to effectively inform citizens and receive feedback regarding land use issues.

## **Zoning**

As of 2014, only about 10% of Cowlitz County is classified and subject to the land use requirements of the County's Land Use Ordinance, CCC 18.10. The Land Use Ordinance provides both restrictions and protections for property owners; it creates standards for development, and helps ensure compatibility between proposed and existing land uses. Areas that are zoned include those surrounding Longview and Kelso, Lexington, as well as Ryderwood. Zoning was established for the Woodland Bottoms in 1980 for the specific purpose of protecting agricultural, forest, and industrial lands from encroachment of incompatible uses and activities.

While the Comprehensive Plan is a guiding document for many land use decisions in the County, it does not carry the force of law in terms of regulating land use. For example, the designation of an area as "Rural" under the Comprehensive Plan would not preclude the placement of commercial or industrial uses that are decidedly not rural in nature. However, the Comprehensive Plan does set a general framework of land use designations

that may guide more specific zoning designations.

### ***Annual Review and Update of the Plan***

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be an evolving document; to grow and change along with the County it serves. Over time, legal requirements, population trends, public perspectives, physical conditions and economic conditions may change. Thus it is critical that the Plan be open for review and amendment, to the extent possible, in order to keep up with evolving community goals. Amending the Comprehensive Plan may take many forms. For example, it may include changing a property's designation, the creation of new goals and policies, or changes to existing goals and policies.

The original Comprehensive Plan included little direction regarding a Plan review and amendment process. As a result amendments were accepted on an as-needed basis year round. This method did not lend itself to consistency, expediency, or citizen involvement, nor did it encourage an effective and comprehensive review of proposed changes. The alternative method is an annual amendment cycle. Annual review and amendment cycles provide for a consistent process that encourages public involvement, creates a predictable timeline, and allows for a more comprehensive review of proposed amendments.

The Comprehensive Plan will be amended on a regular schedule. Amendments can be proposed by the County, individual citizens, community organizations or other entities. Amendments may be necessary to ensure consistency with development regulations, supporting plans, or address changing circumstances in the community. Amendments may also be necessary to address changes in local circumstances, rebalance existing land use designations for individual or groups of parcels, and to incorporate new data as it becomes available.

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan fall into two basic categories:

- Annual Review and Update Amendments
- Public Initiated Amendments

The Annual Review and Update Amendment is a County initiated update of the Comprehensive Plan that occurs once a year. The amendments may include changes to the adopted map, the text of the Plan, or to the goals and policies of the Plan. The timeline for this type of amendment will follow the docketing cycle identified in Figure 6.2 in this chapter. The proposed schedule of the Annual Review and Update encourages ongoing maintenance of the Plan, and maximizes public notification, involvement, through the use of a predictable scheduling process. The schedule also coordinates with the annual report on progress made towards the Comprehensive Plan presented to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) as required by RCW 36.70.460.

Public Initiated Amendments are changes proposed to the Comprehensive Plan based on requests made by individuals or entities, other agencies such as cities and service

districts, or community groups. As with the Annual Review and Update amendments, these amendments can be made to the adopted map, the text of the Plan, or to the goals and policies contained therein. Following the adoption of this plan, Public Initiated Amendments will be considered three times during the year, according to the docketing cycle identified in Figure 6.2. This schedule strikes a balance between accessibility and predictability for the public, and allows for a comprehensive review by the County of the cumulative impacts of all proposed changes.

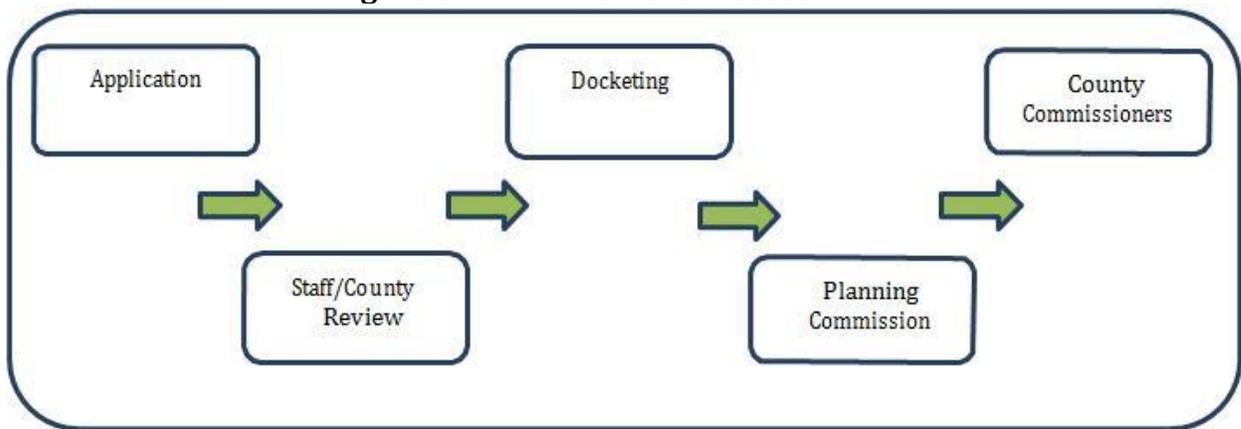
***Amendment Process and Docketing Cycle***

The docketing cycle for amendments to the Plan is initiated by a public notice that specifies the requirements for public participation, submittal requirements, and required timelines for submittal and review. Comprehensive Plan amendments will be considered several times during the year based on the type of proposed amendment as identified in Figure 6.2 with the exception that the County may consider adopting amendments more frequently if a declared emergency exists.

An emergency amendment may be considered if the Board of County Commissioners determines that such an amendment is necessary to address an immediate condition of federal, state, or local concern, and the situation cannot be adequately addressed by waiting until the annual docketing cycle.

Figure 6.1 outlines the basic process for the amendment of the Plan, which is described in more detail below.

**Figure 6.1 – Amendment Process**



**Application:** The petitioner shall submit a written application to the Building and Planning Department, on forms provided by the department, containing the proposed amendatory language and if applicable, maps showing the area(s) of proposed change. The application shall also include written justification for the proposed change addressing how the proposal is consistent with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan and/or land use designation criteria. In order to be considered for the current quarter’s amendment cycle, a fully completed

application must be submitted no later than the application deadline identified in Figure 6.2. Should the application deadline date fall on a day in which the Department of Building and Planning is not open, the deadline shall be extended to the next business day. Applications received after this date will be considered during the next available amendment cycle.

**Staff/County Review:** After all requests for amendment have been submitted, the Department will review the application for completeness, consistency with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, and compliance with other land use regulations, and will identify if amendments to other policies or regulations may be required. Review of any special environmental reports necessary under the Critical Areas Ordinance will also take place at this time. Upon satisfaction of these criteria, the Department will then commence review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), and make the appropriate threshold determination on the proposed amendment(s).

**Figure 6.2 – Docketing Cycle**

<b>Amendment Type</b>	<b>Application Deadline</b>	<b>Staff Review Period</b>	<b>Planning Commission</b>	<b>County Commissioners</b>
Public Initiated - 1st Quarter	January 1st	Jan-Feb	March	April
Public Initiated - 2nd Quarter	April 1st	Apr-May	June	July
Public Initiated - 3rd Quarter	July 1st	Jul-Aug	September	October
Annual Review and Update Cycle	October 1st	Nov-Dec	December	January

**Docketing:** Applications for amendments received prior to the deadline and deemed complete will be docketed for the first Planning Commission meeting in that docketing cycle (Figure 6.2). Should issues raised during departmental review cause hearing by the Planning Commission be delayed, the application may be docketed for the next Planning Commission meeting during the following docketing cycle.

**Planning Commission Hearing:** The Department shall prepare a report identifying findings supporting or not supporting the proposed application, and transmit the Department’s recommendation to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission shall hear the application in an open record hearing, and

may recommend approval, denial, or approval with conditions, or remand the application for changes or further review. This recommendation shall then be transmitted to the Board of County Commissioners for final review.

**Board of County Commissioners:** Final decisions on Comprehensive Plan amendments will be made by the Board of County Commissioners. If approved, the amended sections will be adopted into the Comprehensive Plan and/or Comprehensive Plan map.

### ***Ordinance Review***

An ongoing need stemming from the update of the Comprehensive Plan concerns the revision of current land use ordinances and development of new ordinances as needed. As community circumstances change and legal mandates arise, it will be necessary to update existing ordinances or construct new ones.

The goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan will guide formulation of the details of new ordinances. While a new ordinance mandated by a change in state law may require adoption of new regulations, it is up to local jurisdictions to ensure that the new code accurately reflects the community vision and goals. By using the Comprehensive Plan as a guide, the County can ensure consistency with legal mandates while maintaining the character of the community.

Revision of existing ordinances will influence the success of the Comprehensive Planning process and the future of the community. As land use regulations change, the County must update its ordinances to best serve the residents of the County. Whereas many ordinance updates are brought on by changes in state law, an equal number are necessary due to the outdated nature of the ordinance or changing circumstances within a community. In the case of Cowlitz County, many of the land use ordinances currently in effect were enacted decades ago, with few revisions made to ensure consistency with the values and goals of a changing community.

As this Comprehensive Plan represents the goals and vision of the community in 2017 it is vital that the ordinances currently in effect be reviewed for consistency with this Plan. Upon adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the County should seek to review its land use ordinances, and make changes where appropriate to more accurately reflect the goals and visions expressed in this plan. Priority will be given to those ordinances most out-of-date and those that are used the most on a day-to-day basis. While public interest may vary with each ordinance, the County will maximize public involvement during each ordinance update process. The County will continuously monitor changing local circumstances, new legal mandates, and changes to applicable planning documents that may necessitate updates.

### ***Implementation Goals and Policies***

**Goal I 1:** Increase citizen involvement by implementing a variety of opportunities and strategies for citizens to participate in government on both a county-wide level and also a

smaller, more localized level.

***Policy I 1.1*** Identify existing communities both incorporated and unincorporated within the County, along with any specific cultural or topographical issues that may face them.

***Policy I 1.2*** Create contacts and partnerships with stakeholders in the local community and encourage networking between citizens and the county. Use these connections to receive feedback on county ordinances, policies, and processes.

***Policy I 1.3*** Explore multi-platform methods of notifying citizens of proposed policy decisions, land use regulation amendments, and development applications.

***Policy I 1.4*** Ensure adequate opportunities for the community voice to be heard during the establishment or update of land use regulations or policies.

**Goal I 2:** Establish educational programs to enable early and ongoing citizen involvement in the development of land use regulations. Make every effort to incorporate those comments into the planning process.

***Policy I 2.1*** Foster the establishment of citizen groups to make recommendations on, infrastructure improvement priorities, specific land use goals and policies, and other land use related issues.

***Policy I 2.2*** Conduct public outreach to help inform citizens of land use issues and how they relate to the development of the community. Use education as a tool to raise awareness of land use issues and increase public participation in land use processes.

***Policy I 2.3*** Establish educational programs both on a county-wide and a smaller, localized scale to help inform citizens of land use issues within the County and state-wide.

***Policy I 2.4*** Participate in established community forums, tradeshow, and meetings as a way to convey information to citizens and other stakeholders.

**Goal I 3:** Ensure that the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan are reflected in the County's land use ordinances, both existing and new, while maintaining consistency with state law and legal mandates. Maintain a level of land use regulation that protects private property rights while also regulating development to protect public health, safety, and welfare.

***Policy I 3.1*** Continually review land use ordinances, and make changes where

appropriate to reflect the goals and vision of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan and its subsequent amendments. Ordinances shall also be amended as necessary when found to be out of date, not in compliance with State or Federal requirements, or are inconsistent with County adopted plans, policies and/or procedures. Priority review should be given to those ordinances most out-of-date or those that are used the most on a day-to-day basis.

***Policy I 3.2*** New land use ordinances should be constructed in such a way that they are consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and accurately reflect the nature of the community they serve.

***Policy I 3.4*** Ensure compatibility of land uses throughout the County by updating and adopting nuisance regulations that address sensory impacts such as sight, smell, and sound.

***Policy I 3.5*** Recognize historic and cultural resources during adoption of land use ordinances.

**Goal I 4:** Work with local jurisdictions to create as much consistency as possible across jurisdictional lines with regard to capital improvements, comprehensive plans, ordinances, and other policy documents.

***Policy I 4.1*** Strive for consistency with the adopted plans of local jurisdictions when reviewing new ordinances, updating existing ordinances, developing policy, or amending the Comprehensive Plan.

***Policy I 4.2*** Promote the establishment of inter-local agreements with other local jurisdictions, to help ensure proposed development near these jurisdictions is consistent with their planning for these areas.

***Policy I 4.3*** Encourage the development and execution of regional planning efforts, particularly in regards to transportation planning, capital improvement planning, and connectivity of services.

## Chapter 7: Mapping

## Glossary

Anadromous - means any fish that spawns and rears in freshwater and matures in the marine environment.

Apiary – means a site where hives of bees or hives are kept or found

Aquifer – means a geological formation, group of formations, or part of a formation that is capable of yielding a significant amount of water to a well, spring or natural watercourse.

Best Available Science – means current scientific information used in the process to designate, protect, or restore critical areas, that is derived from a valid scientific process as defined by WAC 365-195-900 through 365-195-925.

Conservation Easement – voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified organization in which the land owner places restrictions on the use of his or her property in order to protect values associated with the land.

Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas – those areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water as defined by WAC 365-190-030(2).

Critical Areas – includes the following areas and ecosystems: (1) wetlands; (2) areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water; (3) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas; (4) frequently flooded areas; and (5) geologically hazardous areas as defined in RCW 36.70A.030.

Development Permit – permit issued for a regulated activity involving property improvement or a change of physical character or use of a site.

Diked – provided with a wall or embankment to prevent flooding.

Docketing – list of proposals to be heard.

Dredge Spoils – unconsolidated, randomly mixed sediments composed of rock, soil, and/or shell materials extracted during dredging activities.

Dredging – the act of removing silt and other material from the bottom of bodies of water.

Easement – means a written grant by a property owner to specific individuals, corporations or to the public or its agencies to use land for specific purposes.

Ecoregions – a major ecosystem defined by distinctive geography and receiving uniform solar radiation and moisture.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas – Those areas designated in Cowlitz County Code section 19.11.050.

Erosion Hazard Areas – areas of soil type indicated as having a severe or very severe degree of erosion hazard or limitation in the most recent soil survey for the County by the National Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas – those areas designated as such in Section 19.15.130 of the Cowlitz County Critical Areas Ordinance

Flood Elevation Certificate - is an administrative tool of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). It is used to provide elevation information necessary to ensure compliance with community floodplain management ordinances, to determine the proper insurance premium rate, and to support a request for a letter of map amendment (LOMA) or letter of map revision based on fill (LOMR-F).

Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) - means the official map(s), including amendments or revisions, issued by the Federal Insurance Administration of the Federal Emergency Management Agency that delineates the areas of regulatory flood and the risk premium zones applicable to the community.

Floodplain - means the total land area adjoining a river, stream, watercourse, or lake subject to inundation by the base flood.

Floodplain Ordinance – Chapter 16.25 of the Cowlitz County Code

Floodway - means the channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land area that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the surface water elevation more than one foot.

Floricultural – activities associated with cultivation of flowers.

Geologically Hazardous Areas – means those areas susceptible to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events, which pose a threat to the health and safety of citizens when incompatible development is sited in such areas. Geologically hazardous areas in Cowlitz County are defined in CCC 19.15.150.

Habitat Conservation Areas – means areas designated as fish and wildlife conservation areas. See CCC 19.15.130 Fish and Wildlife Conservation Areas Table A, or WAC 365-190-080(5)(a).

Horticultural – activities related to growing plants that are used by people for food, medicinal purposes and for aesthetic gratification.

Hydroelectric Project – facility developed for the purpose of generating power from the force of energy of moving water.

Hydrologic Unit – area of land surrounding a hydrologic feature, such as a stream, river, or lake, and includes all of land area that drains into that feature.

Impervious Surfaces - means a hard surface area that either prevents or retards the entry of water into the soil mantle as under natural conditions prior to development. A hard surface area which causes water to run off the surface in greater quantities or at an increased rate of flow from the flow present under natural conditions prior to development. Common impervious surfaces include but are not limited to roof tops, walkways, patios, driveways, parking lots or storage areas, concrete or asphalt paving, packed gravel surfaces, packed earthen materials, and macadam or other surfaces which similarly impede the natural infiltration of stormwater. Open, uncovered retention/detention facilities shall not be considered as impervious surfaces for purposes of determining whether the thresholds for application of minimum requirements are exceeded, but shall be considered impervious surfaces for purposes of runoff modeling.

Infill Development – process of developing vacant or under-used parcels within existing urban areas that are already largely developed.

Infrastructure – basic physical and organizational structures and facilities needed for the operation of a society or enterprise.

Lahars – means mudflows and debris flows originating from the slopes of a volcano.

Landslide – means uncontrolled abrupt or gradual downslope movement of a mass of soil and/or rock.

Levees – embankment built to prevent the overflow of a body of water.

Low Impact Development (LID) – stormwater and land use management strategy that strives to mimic pre-disturbance hydrologic processes by emphasizing conservation, use of on-site natural features, site planning, and distributed stormwater management practices (BMPs) that are integrated into a project design.

Mine Hazard Areas – those areas underlain by or affected by mine workings such as adits, gangways, tunnels, drifts, or airshafts, and those areas of probable sink holes gas releases, or subsidence due to mine workings. Locations may be known or unknown, based upon best available information.

Mitigate and Mitigation – avoiding, minimizing, and/or compensating for adverse impacts induced from a plan or project.

Mixed Use – a combination of uses in one development.

Mobility – the ability to move freely and easily.

Multi-Modal Transportation – network of airports, roads, rails, transit systems and walkways that are integrated to form a system for moving people and freight.

On-Site Sewage System – means an integrated system of components, located on or nearby the property it serves, that conveys, stores, treats and/or provides subsurface soil treatment and dispersal of sewage. It consists of a collection system, a treatment component or treatment sequence, and a soil dispersal component. An on-site septic system also refers to a holding tank sewage system or other system that does not have a soil dispersal component.

Open Space – means an area that is intended to provide light and air, view, use, or passage of persons or animals which is almost entirely unobstructed by buildings, paved areas, or other human-made structures, and is designed or preserved for environmental, habitat, scenic, or recreational purposes.

Physiography - a branch of geography dealing with natural features and processes.

Plant Community – collection or association of plant species within a designated geographical unit, which forms a relatively uniform patch, distinguishable from neighboring patches of different vegetation types.

Plat – a map or representation of a subdivision showing the division of a tract or parcel of land into lots, blocks and streets or other divisions and dedications.

Potable Water – means water that is safe for human consumption.

Public Facilities - the physical structures associated with utilities and public services. These can include buildings, pipes, power poles, dikes, stormwater detention basins, and other similar infrastructure.

Public Right-of-Way – highway or roadway established and adopted by the proper authorities for the use of the general public.

Public Services - Transportation systems or facilities, water systems or facilities, wastewater systems or facilities, fire, police, and emergency systems or facilities.

Riparian Habitat Areas (RHAs) – areas adjacent to aquatic systems that contain elements of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems that mutually influence each other. The width of these areas extends to that portion of the terrestrial landscape that directly influences the aquatic ecosystem by providing shade, fine or large woody material, nutrients, organic and inorganic debris, terrestrial insects, or habitat for riparian-associated wildlife.

Sediment Retention Structure (SRS) – earthen dam on the North Fork Toutle River completed in 1989 by the United States Army Corps of Engineers to prevent sediment from

the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens from increasing flood risks along the Toutle and Cowlitz Rivers.

Seeps – a location where water emanates from the earth, often forming the source of a small stream.

Shoreline Management Master Program - The comprehensive use plan for a described area, and the use regulations together with maps, diagrams, charts, or other descriptive material and text, a statement of desired goals, and standards developed in accordance with the policies enunciated in RCW 90.58.020. As provided in RCW 36.70A.480, the goals and policies of a shoreline master program approved under RCW 90.58 shall be considered an element of the Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan.

Short Subdivision – means the division of land into four or fewer lots, tracts, sites, parcels or divisions for the purpose of sale, lease or transfer of ownership, any of which is less than five acres in size.

Silt – fine sand, clay, or other material carried by running water and deposited as a sediment, especially in a channel or harbor.

Spillway – passage for surplus water from a dam.

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) – the Washington State Environmental Policy Act, Chapter 43.21C RCW.

Swale – low tract of land, especially one that is moist or marshy, either naturally occurring on the landscape or human-created.

Surface Water – land that flows across the land surface, in channels, or is contained in depressions in the land surface.

Temperate – of, relating to, or denoting a region or climate characterized by mild temperatures.

Timber Management – activities related to production of timber and forest products, including harvesting, thinning, brush and weed control, and control efforts for fire, insects and disease.

Topography – arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area.

Traffic Calming – deliberate slowing of traffic

Unincorporated – area not governed by its own municipal corporation, but rather administered by Cowlitz County.

Upland – the land area above and landward of the ordinary high water mark or any area that does not qualify as a wetland

Urban Growth Areas - that area designated by a County pursuant to RCW 36.70A.110 or otherwise mutually agreed upon by the County and a city.

Utilities - All lines and facilities related to the provision, distribution, collection, transmission, or disposal of water, storm and sanitary sewage, oil, gas, power, information, telecommunication and telephone cable and includes facilities for the generation of electricity, use of land for the utility purposes. Utilities can be both public and private and can include a regulated agency that provides or is authorized to furnish under state or county the above referenced services.

Utility Corridors – passageway across the landscape linear in nature and of a width required to allow for utility construction and maintenance.

Viticultural – activities associated with cultivation of grapes

Volcanic Hazard Areas – areas that can be subject to pyroclastic flows, lava flows, debris avalanche, and inundation by debris flows, lahars, mudflows, or related flooding resulting from volcanic activity, as identified and mapped by the United States Geological Society.

Voluntary Stewardship Program – alternative approach for counties to address Washington State’s Growth Management Act critical area requirements on agricultural lands established by the Washington State Legislature in 2011 through Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1886.

Watersheds – area draining into a river, lake, or other waterbody.

Waterways – river, canal, or other route for travel by water.

Wetland Mitigation Bank – site where wetlands are restored, created, enhanced, or preserved expressly for the purpose of providing compensatory mitigation in advance of unavoidable impacts to wetlands or other aquatic resources.

Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) – geographical area where structures and other human development meets or intermingles with wildland or vegetative fuels.

Zoning – land use classification designating specific official controls for the administration and enforcement of use, density, and location of development

## Appendix A

### Community and Demographic Profile

RCW 36.70.330 outlines the required elements of a Comprehensive Plan for jurisdictions, such as Cowlitz County, that are planning under the Planning Enabling Act and directs us to include, “estimates of future population growth in the area covered by the comprehensive plan.” Knowledge of these trends allows community leaders to make informed decisions about future direction.

Demographic composition is a collection of population characteristics that define a community. Future policies, land use decisions, and development depend upon and affect the manner in which an area grows or declines

#### ***POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS***

In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau reported 102,410 residents in Cowlitz County. The 2016 Population estimate reports an estimated increase in the County as a whole, with a reduction in the rate of increase in total population living in the unincorporated areas of the County.

**Table A-1: Cowlitz County Population Change 1980 through 2015**

<b>Population</b>							
<b>Year</b>	<b>Castle Rock</b>	<b>Kalama</b>	<b>Kelso</b>	<b>Longview</b>	<b>Woodland</b>	<b>County (unincorporated)</b>	<b>County Total</b>
1980	2,162	1,216	11,129	31,052	2,415	31,574	79,548
1990	2,067	1,210	11,767	31,499	2,500	33,076	82,119
2000	2,130	1,783	11,895	34,660	3,780	38,700	92,948
2010	1,982	2,344	11,925	36,648	5,509	44,002	102,410
2016 <sup>2</sup>	2,212	2,484	12,047	37,337	5,952	45,128	105,160
<b>Population Increase</b>							
1980-1990			5.7%	1.4%	3.5%	4.8%	3.2%
1990-2000	3.0%	47.3%	1.1%	10.0%	51.0%	17.0%	13.2%
2000-2010		31.5%	0.3%	5.7%	5.7%	13.7%	10.2%
2010-2015	12%	6%	1%	2%	8%	3%	3%

Data Source: US Census Bureau

<sup>2</sup> 2016 population data is from the US Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016. 2016 Population Estimates.

**Table A-2: Population Shares**

<b>County/Cities Share of Population Increase</b>					
Year	Total Population	Cities Portion	County Portion	Cities Share	County Share
1980	79,548	47,974	31,574	60.3%	39.7%
1990	82,119	49,043	33,076	59.3%	40.1%
2000	92,948	54,248	38,700	58.4%	41.6%
2010	102,410	58,408	44,002	57%	43%
2016(est.)	105,160	60,032	45,128	57%	43%

Source: 2010 Census

Cowlitz County covers an area of approximately 1,140 square miles. Of the state's 39 counties, it ranks 28<sup>th</sup> in size. According to the 2010 U.S. Census approximately 32 square miles are within city boundaries and approximately another 200 square miles are federal or state owned lands, resulting in approximately 900 square miles under the County's jurisdiction. In 2010, over 80% of the County's land base was dedicated to timber and open space. A more detailed discussion of land use is provided in the Land Use Element.

### ***Annexation History***

City boundaries can increase over time with annexation of previously unincorporated lands. Since 1980, cities in Cowlitz County have annexed approximately 7.8 square miles of land, or approximately 4,972 acres.

Table 3 shows the history of annexations between 1980 and 2010.

**Table A-3: Annexation History**

	<b>Castle Rock</b>	<b>Kalama</b>	<b>Kelso</b>	<b>Longview</b>	<b>Woodland</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1980-1990</b>	77 acres	13 acres	858 acres	83 acres	179 acres	1,210
<b>1990-2000</b>	122 acres	640 acres	262 acres	1,125 acres	384 acres	2,533
<b>2000-2010</b>	109 acres	320 acres	6 acres	416 acres	378 acres	1,229
<b>Total</b>	308	973	1,126	1,624	941	<b>4,972</b>

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management, OFM Population Unit

<http://www.ofm.wa.gov/pop/annex/default.asp>

### ***Population Distribution and Density***

The number of people or housing units per square mile or acre is often calculated to describe the urban or rural character of a community. Generally, higher concentrations of people characterize urban areas whereas sparsely populated areas are considered rural. Due to the County's rough terrain, large tracts of open space, and timberland, the population density patterns in the County are uneven, with remote, rural, and urban areas dispersed throughout.

The U.S. Census classifies population areas as urban or rural. Urban areas are defined as any incorporated place (cities) or Census Designated Places (CDPs) of at least 2,500 but less than 50,000 people. There are three CDPs adjacent to one another located at the fringe of the City of Longview: Longview Heights, West Longview, and the Westside Highway (which includes Lexington). The combined area of all three covers about 8.6 square miles

and contains an estimated 11,509 residents (U.S. Census, American Consumer survey five-year estimate 2005-2009). Population estimates are not available for all three of these CDPs through the ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. The population estimates are available for Longview Heights, which saw a decrease from 3,473 in 2010 to 3,402 in 2015, and for Westside Highway (including Lexington) which saw a substantial increase from 5,212 to 5,812 from 2010 to 2015, representing an estimated 11.5% increase in population in just 5 years.

According to the 2010 Census, the County’s average density is 89.8 people per square mile, a lower density than the Washington State average of 101.2. For context, the 2010 population densities in neighboring counties are listed below in Table A-4.

**Table A-4: Regional County Population Density Comparisons**

<b>County</b>	<b>People per Square Mile</b>
Clark	550
Thurston	285
Cowlitz	89.9
Lewis	28
Wahkiakum	14
Skamania	6

Population densities in the County have been increasing since 1980. Table A-5 shows changes in population density for the cities and the County.

**Table A-5: People per Square Mile Population Densities**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Cities Combined</b>	<b>County</b> (Includes federal and state owned land)
1980	1,981	28.3
1990	1,878	29.7
2000	1,804	33.1
2010	1,825	39.7

Source: US Census, Washington State Office of Financial Management, OFM Population Unit

Overall, approximately 72% of all people in Cowlitz County live in the cities or unincorporated urbanized areas. The U.S. Census measures this by the number of housing units in the County. In 2010 of the total 43,450 housing units, 32,392 were located in urban areas and 12,508 were in rural areas.

## **Appendix B**

### **Other Plans and Documents Referenced**

The following separate documents, providing technical data, analysis, and background information are referenced in the Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan:

Shoreline Management Master Program for Cowlitz County, Washington  
Cowlitz County Comprehensive Park Plan  
Cowlitz Regional Trails Plan  
Metropolitan & Regional Transportation System Plan 2009-2029  
Toutle River View Water System Management Plan  
Toutle Water System Management Plan  
Ryderwood Water System Management Plan  
Camelot Water System Management Plan  
Woodbrook Sewer System Management Plan  
Toutle Sewer System Management Plan  
Ryderwood Sewer System Management Plan  
Camelot Sewer System Management Plan  
Port of Longview Sewer System Management Plan  
Cowlitz County Water System Umbrella Plan  
Cowlitz County Solid Waste Management Plan