



SKAGIT COUNTY GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY REPORT

County Endorses 10-Year Plan to Reduce Homelessness

Skagit County Commissioners recently signed a resolution endorsing an updated plan to end homelessness in the county within 10 years.

The plan, put together by the Skagit County Community Services Department, aims to reduce the prevalence of homelessness, the amount of time people spend in homelessness, and homeless recidivism.

The Washington State Legislature passed several bills dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness in 2005. This legislation required every county to develop a plan to document funding toward programs and strategies created to prevent or reduce homelessness. Future funding for these programs would depend on communities having coordinated systems of homeless services.

Skagit County's original plan was put together quickly and was more of a "wish list," according to Bob Hicks, operations manager for Community Services. The new plan is based on years of research and collaboration with representatives from local housing coalitions and provider agencies. It features measurable goals and input from key stakeholders throughout the community.

"It was a community effort — local people really guided the process," Hicks said. To create the plan, partners hosted events and looked at local and national research. "What is good throughout the country is not always good for our community," Hicks said. "We compared national needs to local ones and mixed and matched what works and what doesn't."

To read the plan and learn more, please visit the Community Services website at www.skagitcounty.net/communityservices.



County Moves Forward to Complete Flood Study

The Skagit River General Investigation study, led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) and Skagit County, recently reached several key milestones. The goal of the General Investigation (G.I.) is to develop a comprehensive long-range flood risk management plan for the Skagit River basin.

Earlier this year, the Corps adopted a new, more efficient planning standard. Hundreds of studies that have languished for years are now inactivated. Of the 365 remaining active studies, 68 were ongoing for greater than 10 years. Only nine of these studies were deemed eligible to continue, including the Skagit River G.I.

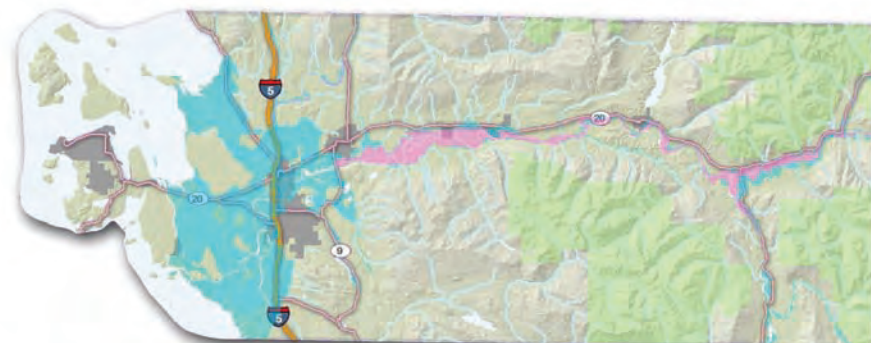
"We were in a position to complete our study due to strong community and congressional support," said Dan Berentson, Skagit County Natural Resources Division Manager. "The Skagit River G.I. was the first Corps study to go through a national planning workshop, led by Corps staff from Washington D.C., which outlined our path forward to completion."

The Skagit River G.I. Project Delivery Team conducted multiple workshops to develop six preliminary alternatives that were vetted at the national workshop. Each alternative outlines an approach to flood risk management. The county and Corps recently presented these alternatives at various community forums and received numerous comments, all of which will help rework the alternatives. The Project Delivery Team is now combining public feedback with decades of data to pull the best ideas out of the six alternatives and merge them into three new alternatives.

The team will take these three alternatives into what they call "10 percent design," which means implementing each to 10 percent of its full completion, to get an idea of the environmental and economic impacts and benefits. These three alternatives, and the costs and benefits of each, will be presented in spring 2013.

"I'd like to thank all of the citizens, cities, towns, agencies, districts, committees, tribes, and groups that provided feedback on this critical issue," said Kara Symonds, Skagit County Watershed Planner. "The team heard that the plan must consider public safety, financial burden, land use patterns, transferring risk, and ecosystem processes. We will incorporate this feedback into our next phase: developing the community-preferred project."

For more information about river levels, living in the floodplain, preparing for a flood, and to read about the Skagit River General Investigation, please visit the Flood Awareness link on Skagit County's homepage at www.skagitcounty.net.



■ Floodway
■ 100 Year Floodplain

A Message from the Commissioners

The purpose of this Community Report is to share with you updates on key projects and issues in Skagit County right now. Each article gives an overview of a topic, and where to go for more information. We encourage you to learn more and get involved, so we can work together as a community toward a vibrant future for Skagit County.

Sincerely,
Skagit County Board of Commissioners



Ron Wesen
District #1



Ken Dahlstedt
Chairman,
District #2



Sharon Dillon
District #3



Skagit County Expands Marine Recovery Area in Samish River Watershed

Skagit County Commissioners voted this May to expand the size of the Marine Recovery Area (MRA) to include almost all of the Samish River Watershed.

An MRA is designated to protect sensitive marine waters from pollution. This designation applies only to on-site sewage (septic) systems and not to other sources of fecal coliform bacteria. The Samish Watershed has struggled with high levels of fecal coliform bacteria for many years. These bacteria come from warm-blooded animals, including humans. The boundaries of the MRA have been adjusted to remove all parcels that are not likely to have an on-site sewage system.

Skagit County Public Health contacts MRA property owners with on-site sewage systems that do not have a current operations and maintenance inspection. In the past, the property owner then had approximately 3 - 4 months to meet this requirement. Failure to meet the inspection requirements may result in a \$75 per day fine.

Skagit County Public Health has some flexibility on

inspection time frames. The deadline cannot exceed State law requiring an inspection every three years for a conventional gravity system and every year for any other system. The law applies whether or not a property is in an MRA; however, Skagit County Public Health contacts only those septic system owners in an MRA.

This expansion of boundaries affects roughly 1,000 to 2,000 more septic system owners, and helps the Health Department increase its capacity to contact and work with septic system owners to make sure their systems are functioning properly.

Targeting water pollution is an essential public health function, said Director of Public Health Peter Browning. Septic system management and other pollution tracking measures are state mandates, and the county is working with local communities and other agencies through the Clean Samish Initiative to help solve the problem.

For more information on the MRA and its new boundaries, visit www.skagitcounty.net/health.

Whooping Cough Outbreak Contained Thanks To Dedicated Tracking

Statistically, Skagit County has the highest number of pertussis (whooping cough) cases in Washington State. But Director of Public Health Peter Browning says this reflects Skagit County's dedication to tracking the disease, and the outbreak now seems to be under control.

"It's not because we have the most pertussis; it's because we've done a great job tracking it," Browning said.

Other counties appear to have lower rates, but this is because they are not as aggressive at investigating and treating the disease. Successful reporting and control of pertussis reflects great relationships between Public Health, school nurses, and private health organizations, Browning said. Open conversations about testing and reporting have encouraged doctors to test and verify pertussis rather than just treating it, which leads to more accurate numbers.

The county has waived the \$25 administrative fee for the TDAP shot (which inoculates for pertussis, tetanus, and diphtheria) until the outbreak is declared officially over, which will probably happen in mid-summer if no new cases occur. The shot itself costs \$56, but may be covered by insurance at your provider's office. Skagit County Public Health can only bill Medicaid.

For more information on whooping cough, please visit www.skagitcounty.net/health.

EMS levy renewal on August 7 ballot



The Skagit County EMS Commission is asking voters to renew the levy for emergency medical service (EMS)

on the August Primary Election ballot. Proposition 1 funds EMS care for all county residents, as well as replaces ambulances and life-saving equipment that is needed to treat victims of heart attack, stroke, and other medical emergencies.

The current levy is 25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, and expires at the end of the year. The levy renewal is for six years at 37.5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. This would be the first increase to the levy in 34 years. Call volumes have increased 13.25 percent over the past seven years alone, and revenue has declined in the same time period because of falling property values and

reimbursement rates from the federal government. EMS providers are experiencing service cuts and facing longer response times, as a result.

The levy would cost the owner of a \$200,000 home approximately \$75 per year, or \$6.25 per month. The difference between the old and the new levy rate is 12.5 cents or \$25 per year for the owner of a \$200,000 home – a little over \$2 per month.

In 2011, Skagit EMS providers responded to 12,391 calls for emergency medical care.

"It is critically important that city and county residents alike have safe, responsive, and reliable ambulance service," said Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt.

Ballots must be postmarked by August 7 to count. For more information about Proposition 1, which is the EMS levy renewal, please visit www.skagitems.com.

Save Money and Resources with Skagit County Sustainability Programs

Skagit County is promoting sustainability through multiple programs for the public and for county staff and facilities.

More information on these and other programs is on their website at www.skagitcounty.net/sustainability.

Skagit County received grant funding from the Department of Energy to help reduce waste and energy use through two programs:

Are you hosting an event? Help reduce your waste with the **Zero-Waste Events program** by checking out free collapsible compost and recycling bins. Each bin holds a bag the size of a typical garbage bag and has a sign telling people which items can and can't be recycled and composted. Any Skagit County resident or organization can check out bins for an event, whether it is public or private and indoors or out. More than 150,000 pounds of waste that would have gone to a landfill has been diverted to compost and recycling since 2010. To sign up and for a free online guide on how to run a Zero-Waste Event, visit www.skagitcounty.net/zwe, call 360-419-7683, or email zwe@co.skagit.wa.us.



The Skagit Community Energy Challenge is a residential energy efficiency program that greatly reduces the cost of a home energy assessment. Home energy assessments evaluate how efficient your home is by analyzing your insulation, heating systems, and appliances. This helps homeowners increase their comfort, lower their utility bills, and reduce their carbon

footprint. Energy assessments usually cost between \$500 and \$600, but residents who join the Skagit Community Energy Challenge pay only \$95 for a 4-5 hour comprehensive assessment completed by a certified analyst. Since January 2012, the program has identified more than 360,000 kilowatt-hours of energy savings. That's equivalent to removing 31 homes from the energy grid. This program is still looking for participants who are single-family homeowners in Skagit County, so please visit the website at www.skagitcounty.net/SCEC for more information and contact SkagitCEC@co.skagit.wa.us or 360-419-7607 to sign up.

Skagit County is also making changes internally to promote sustainability.

The **GreenPrint Program** is a print-reduction and preview program that helps save paper by catching printer errors, such as deleting pages that only have a couple lines of text, and notifying the user. It also lets the user select individual photos or sections of text not to print, and easily creates Adobe PDF files. Users can even track how much paper and money they've saved by changing their printing practices. This program is installed on 200 county computers so far and has saved \$1,800 and 19,500 pages from being printed since it started in May 2011. The GreenPrint Program is currently a pilot project, and will likely pay for itself in 1.5 years. If it's deemed successful, it will be installed on all county computers. Before the **E-Discovery program**, police reports had to be printed in triplicate and physically transported to and from city police departments, the Sheriff, Public Defender, and Prosecuting Attorney offices. Using Department of Energy grant funds, the County Records Department purchased scanners and software to digitize these reports and automate distribution, saving the cities and the County gas and nearly 1 million pages of paper per year. Since 2010, the County has partnered with the State of Washington and McKinstry Essention through an **Energy Savings Performance Contract** to identify and implement energy-saving measures in county buildings such as weatherization, mechanical and lighting upgrades, and water conservation. These measures will save the county \$56,000 in utility costs in the first year, and are projected to save \$51,000 in utilities annually—allowing the county to accomplish \$750,000 worth of upgrades at a net-zero cost. Implementation began in January

2012 and will be finished by the end of August 2012. Skagit County partnered with eight other jurisdictions through the Skagit Council of Governments in 2009 to hire a **Resource Conservation Manager (RCM)** to help reduce energy use in county facilities. The manager reviews utility bills and does walkthroughs of county buildings and recommends changes in waste reduction and lighting and mechanical upgrades, such as lights with occupancy sensors that shut off when a room is empty. In 2011 alone, the county reduced its electricity use by 6 percent and saved \$39,000 in utilities. Between 2009 and 2011, this program reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 227 tons, which is equal to taking 40 passenger vehicles off the road for a year. The RCM program saved Skagit County \$118,000 in three years. In 2012, Skagit County formed a new shared RCM program with the Port of Skagit County and Skagit PUD that will continue into 2013.

150,000 Amount of waste in pounds from Skagit County events that was recycled or composted instead of going to a landfill since 2012 thanks to the Zero Waste Events program

\$95 Amount residents who join the Skagit Community Energy Challenge pay for a home energy assessment

\$500-\$600 Amount a home energy assessment usually costs

31 Number of homes you could take off the energy grid for a whole year thanks to savings from the Community Energy Challenge since January 2012

19,500 Number of pages saved from printing by Skagit County staff since May 2011

750,000 Number of pages of paper saved by county staff per year thanks to all-digital legal documents

\$51,000 Amount Skagit County is projected to save in utility costs annually with the Energy Savings Performance Contract

40 Number of passenger vehicles you could take off the road for a year to equal energy use reduced by county facilities from 2009 to 2011.

\$118,000 Amount of money the Resource Conservation Manager program saved Skagit County in 3 years

Partners Assist County in Finding Jail Solutions

In an effort to assure the needs of its partners are included in the planning of the new Public Safety Jail Facility, the county has assembled a Coordinating Council, which will meet monthly to discuss possible solutions for the overcrowded Skagit County jail.

This Coordinating Council is made up of decision makers from local cities, the Skagit County Sheriff, a Superior and District Court Judge, and the County Commissioners. The council will act as a steering committee for the public safety jail project, considering what size the jail should be, where it should be located, and how it should be funded.

The current jail was built in 1984 to house 83 inmates. It now holds more than 250. This leads to unsafe conditions for

inmates and jail staff. Fewer offenders may be arrested, and others are released early because of the lack of space, creating a public safety issue.

The council will consider whether to fund renovating the existing jail, or building a new jail at a different site. The council must also take into account that funding goes beyond construction costs: even if a new jail has 500 beds—which reflects the latest population projections 25 to 30 years from now—the cities and county would need to double what they currently spend on crime and justice to put that many people in jail.

“The goal is to have candid conversations with the cities,” said Project Manager Marc Estvold.

“We don't believe that if we build it, they will come. We need to know to what level they'll use it, so we don't build it too big.”

The cities and the county recognize these issues, and are working together to solve them.

The Coordinating Council next meets on August 6 at the Commissioners Hearing Room, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon. Meetings are open to the public, but due to time constraints, public comments should be sent to the commissioners or the mayors instead of presented at the meetings.

For more information about the public safety jail project, visit www.skagitcounty.net/jail.

Where Can I Find That? Helpful Tools on the Skagit County Website

Skagit County's website has some unique tools to help you find what you're looking for, from property records to crime rates. Here are some of the tools www.skagitcounty.net offers.

Contracts and Public Records

Many county records are available online. From the homepage, click on "Records Search" on the left navigation bar.

Choose the category you're searching for and enter information. Click on the name of a document to read a synopsis, and click on the icon at the left to download a PDF file.

One Stop

One Stop is a property information search tool that uses multiple databases. Use this to find:

- Links to the property on iMap, the county's mapping tool
- Assessor property information
- Treasurer property tax information
- Permits associated with a property
- Septic systems associated with a property
- Sales information
- Excise affidavits
- Recorded documents

Find it on the top right side of the home page under the "Popular Searches" heading.



iMap: In 2003, Skagit County released iMap, which is an Internet Map Service (IMS)

that allows interactive viewing of Skagit County geographic information. This product was designed to run from Microsoft's Internet Explorer web browser and provides a simple set of tools to quickly view map/property information. You can easily search on any address or Assessor property identification number and the system will display a map showing the parcel and other geographic information. This includes information such as assessor tax parcels, fire districts, commissioner districts, zoning and comprehensive plan designations, zip codes, voting districts, aerial photography, and much more. You can think of iMap as an "Information Portal." The best way to see what iMap can do is to give it a try. To run it, go to www.skagitcounty.net and select the iMap icon at the top right. The best way to learn to use it is by playing with it. However, if you need help you can get it by selecting the "?" symbol on the iMap tool bar.

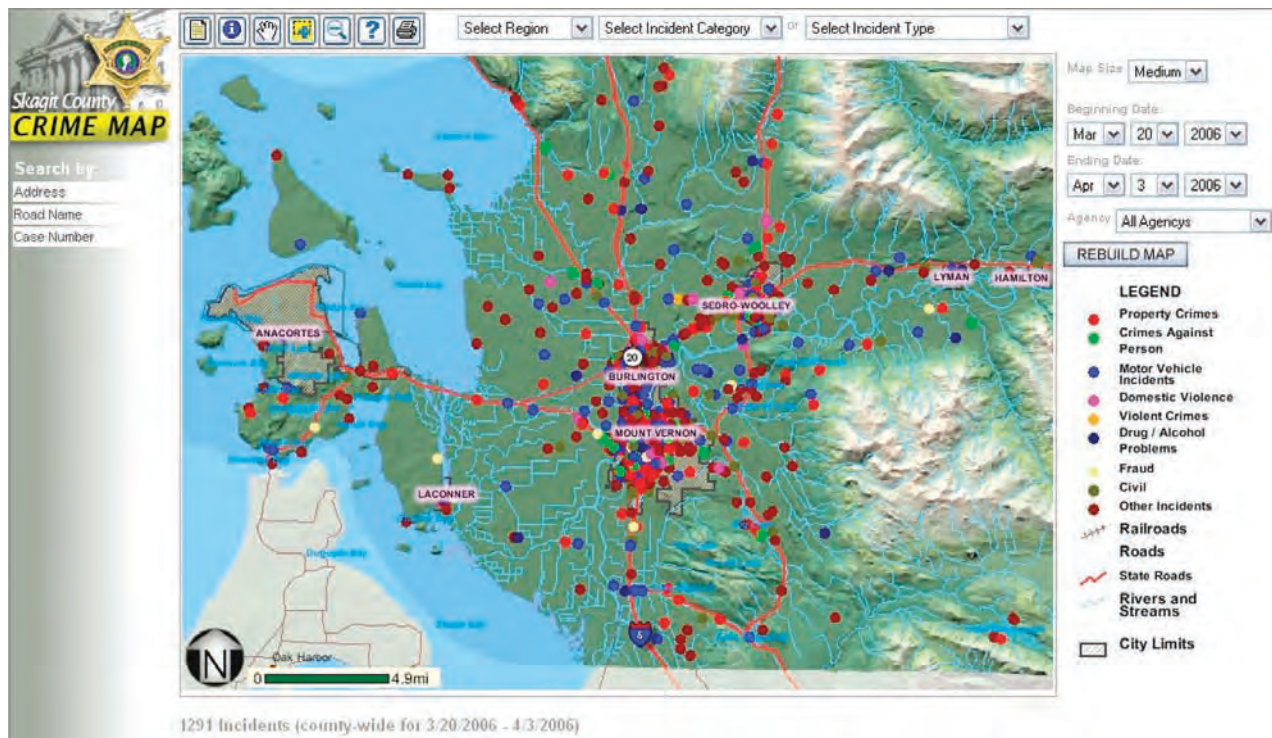
iMap was originally designed to run in Internet Explorer browsers. Skagit County is now working toward producing the next generation of iMap, which will support many other popular browsers and potentially mobile devices. Our goal is to release the new version of iMap in late 2012.



Crime Map: In 2006, Skagit County released an Internet map service called Crime Map that allows interactive mapping of 911 crime-related incidents. This product is designed to run from Microsoft's Internet Explorer web browser and provides a simple set of tools to view incident information. You can search by address, road name or case number and the system will quickly display a map showing all of the incidents that have occurred in that area. Additionally, you can filter your searches so that you can search on a specific type of crime incident, date range, agency, or incident category (registered sex offenders, property crimes, drug alcohol problems, domestic violence, or other categories). Crime-related incidents are updated every 24 hours and the data goes all the way back to January 1, 2002, so Skagit County residents can quickly know the current and

past crime trends for their neighborhoods. Its true purpose is to provide crime prevention through public awareness: a virtual "block watch" program. For example, if you are aware that there have been seven vehicle prowls in your neighborhood in the last month, you may decide to remove valuables from your car or purchase a car alarm. Crime Map also demonstrates the sheer volume of crime related activity that law enforcement agencies are faced with. It is innovative in the sense that 911 crime-related calls are actually plotted where they occur. More importantly, it is multi-jurisdictional and includes County, City, and Tribal law enforcement agencies (not available in Shelter Bay).

Crime Map was a joint effort by the County Sheriff's Office, Information Technology Department, and Geographic Information Services Department. It fostered partnerships, cost sharing, and resource sharing, and leveraged existing computer technology. The county plans to improve Crime Map by providing crime trend graphs and heat maps, and make it available on other popular browsers and potentially mobile devices. Crime Map is at the top right of the Skagit County homepage at www.skagitcounty.net.



Development Permits On The Rise

The number of development permits the county sees is slowly growing after several years of low numbers, said Planning and Development Services Director Dale Pernula. "I think it's a very good sign," Pernula said. "Things have been way down for the last few years, and they're starting to

come back." With the economic downturn, the county saw reduced requests for permits. This uptick is encouraging. By mid-2012, the number of building permits had increased 14 percent from last year at the same time, and the number of

floodplain development permits increased by 62 percent. To keep up with increased demand, the county hopes to restore some of its capacity by bringing on a new staff member. To find out more about permitting, visit www.skagitcounty.net/planningandpermit.



Farmland Legacy Program Receives Match Funds for All Properties That Applied This Year

Farmland Legacy Program successfully receives match funds for all properties that applied this year. 2012 has been a successful year so far for the Farmland Legacy Program, which anticipates funding all of the properties that applied for the latest round of grants.

The Farmland Legacy Program (FLP) is a voluntary program that allows farmers to sell the development rights to their lands while still actively farming them. A conservation easement is placed on the land, forever preserving it for agricultural use. This means the property cannot be subdivided, add more housing, or allow activities that could damage the prime agricultural soils.

The FLP wrote grant applications for the 14 properties, and all 14 received federal grant funding from the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program under the USDA. The FLP is resubmitting applications for 12 of these properties to the state Office of Recreation and Conservation (RCO) for the Farm Protection grant in an attempt to further leverage the taxpayer dollars, and should know results in October of this year. Private donations also supplement the program.

This program is a high priority for communities and Skagit County government. Money for the program comes from

property taxes through a state authorized tax called the Conservation Futures Tax, which can fund things like critical areas, open space, and farmland. Skagit County puts all of this money toward preserving farmland.

The FLP is well-known in the state and county, and received an award in May for being the top farmland preservation organization in the state. The FLP has preserved approximately 8,000 acres in the last 10 years.

The biggest obstacle the FLP faces is trying to fund all of the properties that apply. "We don't want to turn anyone away," said Program Director Kendra Smith. "We're trying to match every one of our dollars and get properties funded as soon as possible."

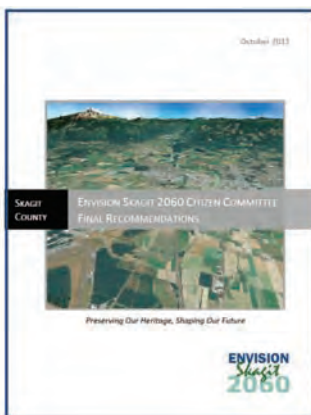
Farmers who sell their development rights can use the money for anything they would like. This could include reinvesting in the farm by buying more land or equipment, or paying for college, estate planning or debts. The Farmland Legacy Program determines the price of a property based on an appraisal that takes the before and after market value of farmland. The before value includes the associated development right, and the after is upon extinguishment of that development right. Although farmers who sell develop-

ment rights to the FLP program may not get as much as they would on an open market for their property, they retain the right to do whatever they want on their property (within the conservation easement, which is similar to the zoning regulations) and retain the ability to continue farming the land, leasing it, or even selling. The FLP program protects farmers, not just farmland, by maintaining consistent land values so that the next generation can afford to continue farming.

The FLP wishes to thank its key partners: Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland; The Nature Conservancy; Ducks Unlimited; USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service); Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Washington Wildlife Recreation Program; numerous individual donors; and the Conservation Futures Advisory Committee: Mr. Scott Degraw, Mr. Mike Hulbert, Ms. Carolyn Kelly, Mr. Alan Merritt, Dr. Keith Wiggers, and Ms. Andrea Xaver.

Applications are accepted year-round and scored twice yearly; the next scoring due date is October 31, 2012. For more information, please visit www.skagitcounty.net/farmland.

Officials Consider Recommendations for Skagit County's Future



The Envision Skagit 2060 project is moving into its final phase as elected officials and local jurisdictions consider recommendations made by the Citizen Committee. Since 2009, Skagit County government has been working with local cities and volunteer committees of citizens and experts to create a vision of what the county wants the county to look like in 50 years. This project has gone through numerous studies,

reports, and workshops and received extensive feedback from local residents and communities.

Now, elected officials from the various jurisdictions that make

up the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) are discussing the Envision Skagit Citizen Committee's recommendations. None of those jurisdictions are obligated to adopt the recommendations. But the ideas have helped stimulate valuable dialogue among the county, cities and towns, tribes, ports and other special purpose districts about common interests in maintaining a strong local economy and a high quality of life. The Envision Skagit 2060 project recently won a 2012 Governor's Smart Communities Award recognizing outstanding local planning and community development efforts from throughout the state. Envision Skagit 2060 is one of just two projects selected statewide for the Smart Vision Award category, recognizing exceptional examples of comprehensive planning.

"The County Commissioners, in cooperation with our fellow mayors, appointed the 12-member Envision Citizen Committee and charged them with looking forward 50 years and considering the challenges and opportunities we will face as a region," said Ken Dahlstedt, chairman of the Skagit County

Board of Commissioners. "Now it's time for the elected officials, and the broader citizenry of Skagit County, to continue the conversation about how we can work together to plan for and maintain a bright future for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren."

To read the report and learn more about the Envision Skagit 2060 project, please visit www.skagitcounty.net/EnvisionSkagit.



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Skagit County Parks and Recreation Facilities Guide

From Guemes and Fidalgo Islands to our west and the Cascade Foothill communities to our east, Skagit County offers a wide array of recreational opportunities. Whether you like to hike the primitive trails along the southwest shores of Sharpe Park on Fidalgo Island; or camp adjacent to the wild and scenic Skagit River at Howard Miller Steelhead Park, there are recreational opportunities for everyone. We have more than 2,300 acres of parklands, including 26 parks, and 40 miles of trails. Check out our parks grid to help you locate one of your local Skagit County parks. Adventure awaits.

Allen Community Park 9101 Avon Allen Rd., Bow	17 acres										
Ann Wolford Park 8508 Robinson Road, Sedro-Woolley	33 acres										
Big Rock Park No Public Access 15050 SR 9, Mount Vernon	13 acres										
Cascade Trail 24700 SR 20, Sedro-Woolley	23 miles										
Centennial Trail HWY 9, South of Lake McMurray	5 miles										
Clear Lake Beach 12925 South Front St., Clear Lake	1 acre										
Cleveland Park 1401 Cleveland Ave., Mount Vernon	1 acre										
Conway Boat Launch (day use only) Below South Fork Bridge, Conway	3 acres										
Conway Park 18445 Spruce St., Conway	4 acres										
Donovan Park 3494 Friday Creek Rd., Burlington	3 acres										
Frailley Mountain Park Adjacent DNR Forest Lands unincorporated SE Skagit Co.	400 acres										
Grandy Lake Campground 43200 Baker Lake Rd., Concrete	22 acres										
Howard Miller Steelhead Park 52804 Rockport Park Rd., Rockport	110 acres										
Northern State Recreation Area Helmick Rd., Sedro Woolley	726 acres										
Padilla Bay Shore Trail 11404 BayView-Edison Rd., Mount Vernon	2.1 miles										
Pomona Grange Park & Interpretive Trail 5625 Old HWY 99 North Rd., Burlington	15 acres										
Presentin Park 60060 SR 20, Marblemount	55 acres										
Samish Beach Access 4670 Wharf Street, Samish Island	2 acres										
Samish Island Park 10836 Halloran Rd., Samish Island	2 acres										
Sauk Campground 54569 Concrete-Sauk Valley Rd., Concrete	30 acres										
School House Park 5554 Edens Rd., Guemes Island	4 acres										
Sharpe Park - Montgomery Duban Headlands 14692 Rosario Rd., Anacortes	112 acres										
Skagit Valley Playfields 2700 Martin Rd., Mount Vernon	30 acres										
Squires Lake Park & Trail Old HWY 99 North Rd., Between South Lake Samish & Alger	4 miles										
Swinomish Channel Boat Launch SR 20 under Berentson Bridge, Mount Vernon	3 acres										
Young's Park 4243 Guemes Island Rd., Guemes Island	13 acres										

Restrooms	Bike Trails	Fishing	Nature Area	Soccer	Tennis	Picnic Shelter	Frisbee Golf
ADA Accessible	Horse Trails	Boat Launch	Hiking Trails	Baseball	BBQ Barbeque	Reservations	Shellfishing
Leash Pets	Swim Area	Picnic Area	Camping	Basketball	Playground	Showers	Organically Maintained

Clean Samish Initiative Continues Work to Reduce Pollution in Samish Basin

Skagit County continues to work with state agencies and local communities to reduce pollution in the Samish River basin. Increased water testing and outreach led to lower levels of fecal coliform this winter, and the county and other partners in the Clean Samish Initiative are stepping up efforts to bring those levels back down after a series of shellfish bed closures this spring.

A fecal coliform is a group of bacteria commonly found in the intestines of humans and other animals. Although some of these bacteria do not pose a risk to humans, many other bacteria and viruses that typically live with them can make people and other animals very sick. Scientists look for fecal coliform in water because the test is quick, easy, and inexpensive. Higher levels of fecal coliform mean higher levels of potential pathogens, increasing health risks and impacts on ecosystems.

Above-normal precipitation this spring has increased runoff into the Samish River basin, leading to multiple closures of Samish Bay to recreational and commercial shellfish harvesting. Higher levels of fecal coliform also make the Samish River unsafe for contact recreation surrounding moderate to heavy rain events. More organic materials in the water also disrupt ecosystems: as the amount of nutrients increases, more algae grows, which decreases the amount of oxygen, making it more difficult for fish and other animals to survive.

Many citizens have already stepped up and improved their properties, on their own or with assistance from the Conservation District. This has led to lower fecal coliform levels



overall. However, sources of fecal coliform throughout the county are still polluting the river and the bay.

The major sources of polluting bacteria are:

- Residential and business onsite septic systems
- Various small and commercial farming operations with livestock
- Farming operations that spread animal manure as fertilizer
- Human recreational activities including boating, hunting, fishing, and hiking
- Marine live-aboard boats
- Waterfowl attracted to fields planted in grain mostly during the winter months
- Mishandled pet waste

What You Can Do

All of these sources, if managed properly, need not pose a threat to water quality. Livestock owners are encouraged to contact the Skagit Conservation District at (360) 428-4313 to make sure you are using appropriate management practices to keep livestock out of the waterways. Homeowners are re-



quired to ensure that their septic systems are in proper working order by having their systems inspected. Contact the Skagit County Health Department at (360) 336-9380 for more information on septic systems. Pet owners are encouraged to pick up after their pets. If you have questions about other potential sources of fecal coliform pollution, please contact the Skagit County Public Works Department at (360) 336-9400.

The county is relying on voluntary compliance from the community. Working together, we can ensure safe, clean water for all.

The Clean Samish Initiative is a coalition of more than 20 agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, and governments at state, federal and local levels working together toward a common goal of reducing pollution in the Samish Basin. For more information, visit www.skagitcounty.net/csi. For more information on clean water efforts in the Samish Watershed, current status of the bay (open or closed for harvest), a calendar of Samish bay shellfish bed closures to date, or to report a water quality problem, visit www.skagitcounty.net/cleanwater.

County Explores Extending Centennial Trail



The Skagit County Parks and Recreation Department is exploring acquiring a parcel of land east of Mount Vernon that would extend the Centennial Trail along an existing rail corridor.

This 33-acre parcel on the eastern outskirts of Mount Vernon would connect the communities of Big Rock and Clear Lake. This land is adjacent to Barney Lake, the largest remaining natural freshwater wetland in western Skagit County. Barney Lake serves as important habitat for amphibians, juvenile salmon, and many bird species, including the once-endangered migratory Trumpeter Swan. Skagit Land Trust already owns 100 acres of Barney Lake property, and is currently working to purchase and conserve an additional 255 acres. Skagit County is considering partnering with Skagit Land Trust to acquire the parcel near Barney Lake and extend the Centennial Trail. Filling in this “missing link” in the trail would enhance connections to communities and regional trails.

It would also provide a unique education and recreation experience and promote bird watching, wildlife photography, research, and hiking.

Cities and counties in Washington State benefit from a non-motorized gas tax that allows them to use part of what people pay at gas pumps to fund linear trail acquisition and maintenance. Skagit County can use funds from this Pathway Account to acquire new land and develop trails that connect communities and provide transportation separate from vehicle traffic.

To learn more about Skagit County Parks and Recreation, visit www.skagitcounty.net/ParksAndRecreation.



The county is widening part of Francis Road to 12-foot lanes with 8-foot paved shoulders to promote safety.



The Anacortes Ferry Dock Rehabilitation & Guemes Island Ferry Dock Repair Project was recently awarded the American Public Works Association's Public Works Project of the Year Award for 2012 in the category of Transportation projects for less than \$5 Million. This project replaced the bridges from the land to the loading ramps on both the Anacortes and Guemes Island ferry docks. The bridges were built in 1979 and had some of the worst ratings of all bridges in the County, enabling Skagit County to apply for grant funding at the state and federal levels. The County had a two-month window to repair both docks, during which time the ferry was out of service and the residents of Guemes Island relied on a passenger-only transportation service and had their supplies brought in and garbage taken out by barges. The County fully completed the project on-time and within budget in March of 2012.

To promote safety at the Alger Intersection of Old Highway 99 North, Lake Samish Road, and Alger Cain Lake Road, the County realigned the east-west roads and added "truck aprons." These stamped concrete sections of pavement look like sidewalks, but they are actually for trucks to drive upon to make smoother turns, similar to roundabout aprons. The project also installed raised curbs in the center of the intersection and converted it from a two-way to a four-way stop to help calm and regulate traffic.

Three roads will get new asphalt this summer under the Asphalt Overlay Project. Each will have access reduced to one lane at a time beginning on July 23. Work will be completed after about 30 working days depending on weather conditions.

- Chilberg Road from Chilberg Lane to the La Conner roundabout.
- Farm To Market Road from just north of the railroad tracks by SR-20 to just north of Ovenell Road.
- Fir Island Road from Pioneer Highway to the South Fork Bridge.

The Anderson/LaVenture Road Extension Project is under construction now. This partnership

between Skagit County and the City of Mount Vernon will connect Anderson Road at the intersection with Blodgett Road with the south end of LaVenture Road, as well as improve Anderson Road from Cedardale Road to Blodgett Road, creating 1.5 miles of new roadway with bike lanes, sidewalks, and three stream crossings to improve fish passage. This connection is projected to alleviate peak flow congestion on College Way and Kincaid Street by as much as 20 percent. The intersection of Blodgett and Anderson roads will be closed until August 31, and access to Anderson Road (east of Blodgett) will be from Blackburn Road and the newly aligned LaVenture Road during this time.

To improve safety and plan for future travel east of Mount Vernon, the county is widening a portion of Francis Road to include 12-foot lanes with 8-foot paved shoulders. Three curves on Francis Road between Francis Lane and Debay's Isle Road are identified as high-accident locations, which qualified for a number of grants. Federal grant funding is paying to modify one curve, state funding will pay for the other two, and county road funds will cover the straight section between them. The project is scheduled to begin around the end of August and be completed within 45 working days.

Samish River Prairie Road will be closed through August 31 for a project to remove the top several inches of bridge deck over the Samish River and replace it with a high-strength epoxy concrete. The project will also add new railings and guardrails to upgrade the bridge to current safety standards.

Run-Off-Road and Intersection Safety are safety improvement projects to help keep vehicles on the road and improve various intersections. The intersections of Josh Wilson and Farm To Market Roads and Josh Wilson Road and Higgins Airport Way will receive added turning lanes, and stretches of Best Road and Pioneer Highway will be the first to benefit from new striping, rumble strips, signs, and guardrails. The intersection of Josh Wilson and Pulver Roads will also receive two new stop signs with red solar-powered flashing lights. The county is also partnering with

Skagit PUD #1. While PUD installs five miles of 18-inch waterline on Josh Wilson Road, Skagit County will fix a section of Josh Wilson Road just west of Pulver Road that has been an ongoing maintenance issue for years due to settling of the roadway.

The Skagit County Transfer and Recycling Station upgrade is nearly complete and features a new building five times the size of the old one, a larger recycling facility, and more efficient traffic patterns that separate commercial and residential garbage. Collaboration and unanimous approval by all local jurisdictions was critical in moving this project toward completion.



Elected officials and funding partners celebrate the success of dock rehabilitation and repair for the Anacortes and Guemes Island ferry, a project that was recently named the Public Works Project of the Year by the American Public Works Association.