

Multi-Jurisdictional Community Profile

Geography

Skagit County is situated in northwestern Washington approximately 60 miles north of the city of Seattle. Whatcom County lies to the north, Snohomish County to the south, the waters of Puget Sound to the west, and the crest of the Cascades with Chelan County and Okanogan County to the east. With a geographical area of 1,735 square miles (approximately 95 miles west to east and 24 miles north to south) Skagit County ranks a modest 21st in size among Washington's 39 counties. The City of Mount Vernon is the county seat.

Skagit County is one of marked contrasts ranging from broad, flat floodplain to jagged exposed rock peaks and elevations ranging from sea level to 8,966 feet above sea level at the summit of Mount Logan. The western one-third of the county includes a broad delta and flood plain that extend inland through the rich and fertile Skagit flats. The rugged and heavily forested mountains of the Cascade Range dominate the eastern two thirds of the county.

At its western extreme, the county's boundary envelops some of the islands located on the leeward edge of the San Juan Archipelago including Sinclair Island, Cypress Island, Guemes Island, and Fidalgo Island. In addition to the waters of Puget Sound, there are 89 named lakes, 6 rivers (the Baker, Cascade, Samish, Sauk, Skagit, and Suiattle) and numerous small streams located within Skagit County.

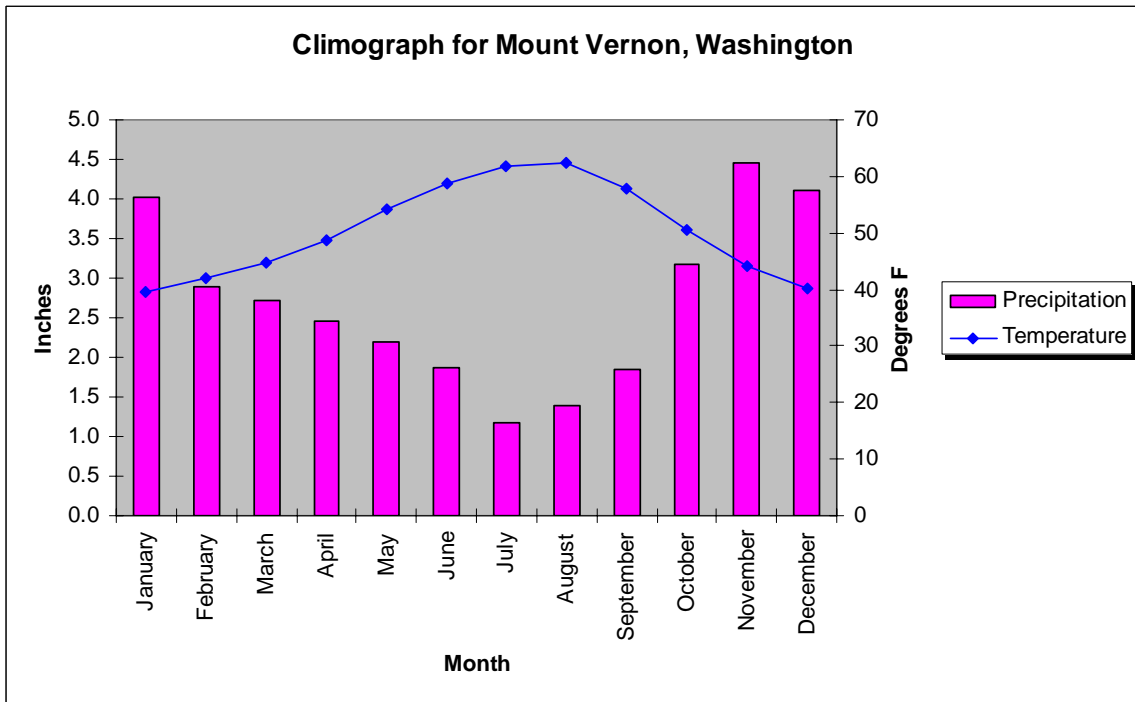
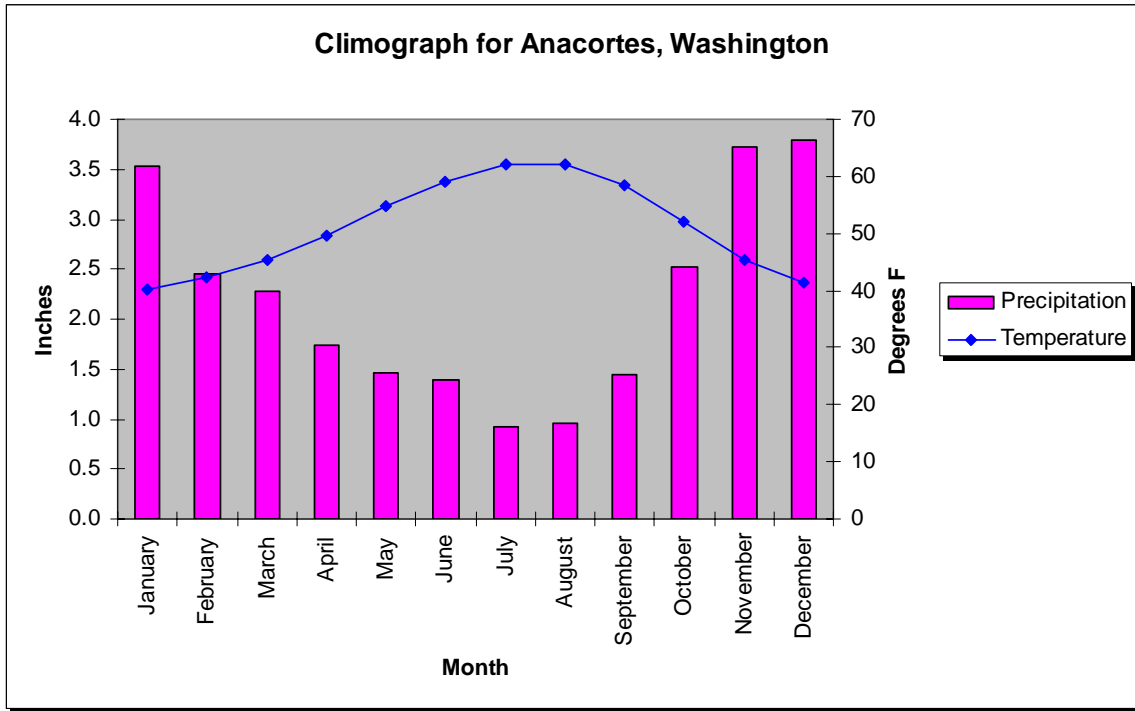
From its source in Canada, the Skagit River flows 135 miles and empties into Skagit Bay. The river drains an area of approximately 3,115 square miles. Based on discharge flows of rivers that empty into salt-water, the Skagit River is the third largest river system on the West Coast of the contiguous United States with only the Columbia River and the Sacramento River being larger.

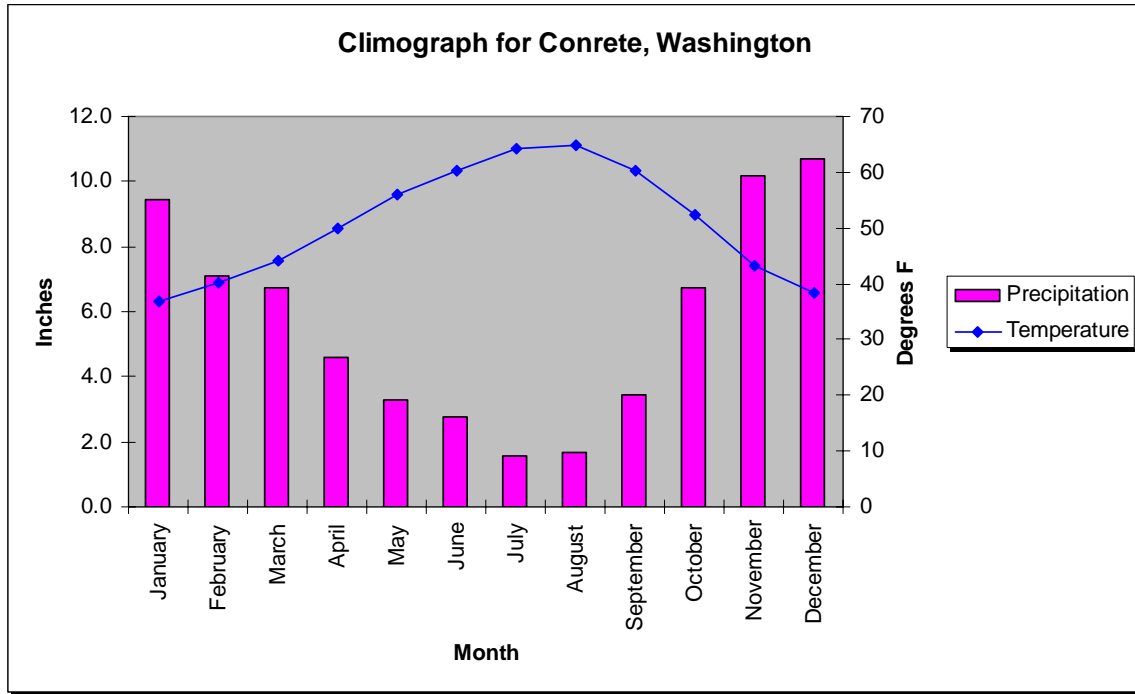
The Skagit River touches the lives of every resident of Skagit County. The Skagit provides natural beauty, abundant wildlife, and varied recreational opportunities. The Skagit River is a source of electrical power and drinking water and has generated economic growth and promoted quality of life for many generations of county residents. Portions of the Skagit River, as well as portions of the Sauk River, the Suiattle River, and the Cascade River have been designated by the federal government as *WILD AND SCENIC*.

Climate

Skagit County enjoys a mild, maritime climate with moderate temperatures. The ocean currents that flow along Washington State's coast and the Pacific westerlies (also known as the jet stream or storm track) significantly influence Skagit County's climate. Rainfall is sparse during the summer months and increases during the fall months with moderate to heavy rains occurring from November through January.

Summer highs can often be in the 80's to low 90's and winter lows may dip as low as 10°. The annual average temperature is 50°; the summer 24-hour average temperature is 64° and the frost-free growing season averages 193 days. Snowfall is seldom heavy and varies greatly from year to year.





Soils and Geology

The underlying bedrock of Skagit County is comprised of a variety of sedimentary, volcanic, and metamorphic rocks; much of this bedrock is overlaid with glacial deposits. Much of the lower valley is comprised glacial fill deposits, Glacier Peak ash and lahar deposits, and sediments deposited by the Skagit River and Samish River. It has been estimated that these deposits cover the underlying bedrock as much as 1,000 feet in depth throughout most of the lower Skagit floodplain.

Skagit County, like the rest of the Pacific Northwest, lies near the Cascadia Subduction Zone where the Juan de Fuca Plate (moving east) subducts under the overriding North American Plate (moving west) as they collide off the coast of Washington. The volcanic mountains of the Cascade Range were formed over the centuries as the buoyant, melted rock of the subducted Juan de Fuca Plate rose to the surface as magma.

Skagit County is home to many faults, most of which are inactive. However, according to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources Geology Division, the Devils Mountain Fault that runs generally east to west through the central part of the county has recently been determined to be active. There are many other fault lines that have been identified in Skagit County including The Bellingham Bay—Lake Chaplain Fault, the Ross Lake Fault and the Hamilton Fault, which may or may not be active. (Source: Alternative Interpretations of the Seismic and Geologic Hazards to the Skagit Nuclear Power Site, Eric Cheeney, 1977)

Population

The Washington State Office of Financial Management estimated Skagit County's population at 102,979 in 2000. Skagit County's population density is approximately 60 people per square mile, making it the 13th most densely populated county in Washington. From 1988 to 1999, Skagit County averaged an annual growth rate of 3.0%, surpassing the state's 2.1% average annual population increase during this time period.

From 1990 to 2000, Skagit County gained 22,755 residents. Of that number, 4,755 were the result of natural population increase and 18,000 were the result of migration.

The following table shows 2000 population data for Skagit County and also includes the 2025 recommended population allocation as recommended by the Skagit Council of Governments Planners Committee acting as the technical committee to the Growth Management Act Steering Committee.

NOTE: 2025 population allocation numbers have been rounded to the nearest 50 for all municipalities and county urban growth areas.

The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community is classified as a separate county urban growth area; however, the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe is not classified as such. Therefore, the population numbers for the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe are included in the rural population figures.

Skagit County Population Data		
Jurisdiction (Cities and Urban Growth Areas)	2000 Population	2025 Population Allocation
Anacortes	14,557	18,300
Burlington	6,757	12,000
Concrete	790	1,350
Hamilton	309	450
La Conner	761	950
Lyman	409	550
Mount Vernon	26,232	47,900
Sedro-Woolley	8,658	15,000
Subtotal – Cities and U.G.A.'s	64,504	96,500
Swinomish Indian Tribal Community	2,664	3,650
Bayview	1,700	5,600
Subtotal – County U.G.A.'s	4,364	9,250
TOTAL – URBAN	68,868	105,750
TOTAL – RURAL	34,111	43,330
TOTAL – SKAGIT COUNTY	102,979	149,080

The countywide Growth Management Act Steering committee has adopted the official 2025 population forecast for Skagit County and allocated population to each jurisdiction and their Urban Growth Area as applicable. The countywide population in 2000 was 102,979 with 68,868 in urban areas and 34,111 in rural areas. The overall forecast for growth for 2025 is 149,080

with a rural forecast of 43,330 and an urban population forecast of 105, 750. The Countywide Planning Policies provide the forum for allocating future population growth along with space for commercial and industrial development.

Transportation

Skagit County is accessible by several modes of transportation. Major highways, railroads, marine ports, and airports are located in the area. Interstate 5, the primary north-south highway connects the county with major markets to the north and south. State Route 20 runs west to east through the middle of the county and connects most of the county's larger cities.

There are five airfields in Skagit County (three public and two private). The Skagit Regional Airport has two runways, one being 5,475 feet in length and the other being 3,000 feet in length. The Anacortes Municipal Airport, operated by the Port of Anacortes, has a 3,015-foot runway and the Concrete Municipal Airport has a 2,600-foot runway.

The Port of Anacortes, in addition to servicing ships, has two deep-water berths to handle cargo such as logs, steel, lumber, and dry bulk commodities. The Port of Anacortes also has two slips for barge service.

The Washington State Department of Transportation owns and operates a major ferry terminal in the City of Anacortes that serves as the primary transportation connection between the San Juan Islands and the mainland as well as providing international service to Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. In addition, Skagit County own and operates a ferry terminal, also located in the City of Anacortes, to serve the transportation needs of the residents of Guemes Island.

Burlington Northern-Sante Fe Railroad owns and operates 20 active spur lines within Skagit County in addition to the main north-south rail line that serves the entire west coast of the United States and connects with east-west rail approximately 30 miles south of Mount Vernon in Everett, Washington.

Business and Industry

For many years the local economy of Skagit County revolved around the agricultural, timber, and fishing industries and for the most part, these industries are still present in the county today.

Skagit County is home to over 700 farms and approximately 8% or 93,000 acres (almost 2/3 of which is located in the Skagit River floodplain) of the land in the county is utilized for farming purposes; 70% of which is used for crops, 29% for pasture and grazing, and 1% for orchards. Skagit County ranks first in the State of Washington in terms of nursery and greenhouse crop production, and is the number four producer of dairy and poultry products. Skagit County farms also produce seed crops as well as potatoes, corn, hay, green peas, wheat, and a variety of other vegetable and fruit crops.

The rich soils and mild climate of the valley provide one of the best locations in the world for flower bulb production. The total amount of acreage devoted to bulb and flower growing in the Skagit Valley has increased greatly over the years, although it is now threatened by constantly

encroaching development. In 1945, just 325 acres were planted with a value of approximately \$300,000. Today, over 700 acres are utilized for bulb farming, with a value of approximately \$42 million.

A large portion of Skagit County is comprised of commercial forest with 131,870 acres of State Trust Land utilized as commercial forest land under DNR Management oversight with an additional 236,150 acres commercial forest land owned by private companies. Although the large lumber, plywood, wood pulp, and cedar shake mills have mostly vanished from the local landscape, the timber industry in Skagit County still remains a viable and active industry.

While the local fishing industry is no longer as viable as it was 20 or 30 years ago, there are still a large number of Alaska fishers that home-port in Anacortes and La Conner. In order to meet the needs of the fishing industry (as well as recreational boaters) a large number of marine suppliers, repair facilities and custom boat builders are located within Skagit County.

As the population of the county has increased over the past 20 years, a greater percentage of the local economy has shifted toward service-based companies. Shopping malls, motels, and restaurants have replaced lumber and plywood mills and heavy manufacturing facilities.