

**WHATCOM COUNTY**

Planning & Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226-9097  
360-778-5900, TTY 800-833-6384  
360-778-5901 Fax



**Mark Personius, AICP**  
Director

SEPA Distribution List  
SEP2020-00077  
Date of Issuance: August 28, 2020

Please review this determination. If you have further comments or questions, phone the responsible official at (360) 778-5900. Please submit your response by the comment date noted on the attached notice of determination.

WA State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation via email  
Stephanie Jolivette, [stephanie.jolivette@dahp.wa.gov](mailto:stephanie.jolivette@dahp.wa.gov)  
[SEPA@dahp.wa.gov](mailto:SEPA@dahp.wa.gov)

SEPA Unit, WA State Department of Ecology, Olympia via email  
[sepaunit@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:sepaunit@ecy.wa.gov)

WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Wendy D. Cole via email [wendy.cole@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:wendy.cole@dfw.wa.gov)

WA State Department of Natural Resources via email  
Rochelle Goss, [sepacenter@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:sepacenter@dnr.wa.gov)  
Brenda Werden, [Brenda.werden@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:Brenda.werden@dnr.wa.gov)

SEPA Unit, WA State Department of Transportation, Burlington via email  
Roland Storme, [stormer@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:stormer@wsdot.wa.gov)  
Judy Johnson, [JohnsJu@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:JohnsJu@wsdot.wa.gov)

Lummi Nation Natural Resources  
Merle Jefferson, Sr. via email - [merlej@lummi-nsn.gov](mailto:merlej@lummi-nsn.gov)  
Tamela Smart - [tamelas@lummi-nsn.gov](mailto:tamelas@lummi-nsn.gov)

Nooksack Indian Tribe  
George Swanaset, JR via email - [george.swanasetjr@nooksack-nsn.gov](mailto:george.swanasetjr@nooksack-nsn.gov)  
Trevor Delgado via email - [tdelgado@nooksack-nsn.gov](mailto:tdelgado@nooksack-nsn.gov)

Whatcom County  
Mark Personius via email - [mpersoni@whatcomcounty.us](mailto:mpersoni@whatcomcounty.us)  
Ryan Ericson via email - [rericson@whatcomcounty.us](mailto:rericson@whatcomcounty.us)

City of Bellingham  
Kurt Nabbeffeld via email - [knabbefeld@cob.org](mailto:knabbefeld@cob.org)  
Brent Baldwin via email - [bbaldwin@cob.org](mailto:bbaldwin@cob.org)  
Clare Fogelsong via email - [cfogelsong@cob.org](mailto:cfogelsong@cob.org)

City of Blaine  
Stacie Pratschner, AICP via email - [spatcher@cityofblaine.com](mailto:spatcher@cityofblaine.com)

City of Everson

Rollin Harper via email - [rollinh@sehome.com](mailto:rollinh@sehome.com)

City of Ferndale

Haylie Miller via email - [hayliemiller@cityofferndale.org](mailto:hayliemiller@cityofferndale.org)

City of Lynden

Heidi Solano via email - [solanoh@lyndenwa.org](mailto:solanoh@lyndenwa.org)

City of Nooksack

Rollin Harper via email - [rollinh@sehome.com](mailto:rollinh@sehome.com)

City of Sumas

Rollin Harper via email - [rollinh@sehome.com](mailto:rollinh@sehome.com)

Point Roberts

All Point Bulletin via email - [editor@allpointbulletin.com](mailto:editor@allpointbulletin.com)

Puget Sound Energy

Jeff McMeekin via email - [jeff.mcmeekin@pse.com](mailto:jeff.mcmeekin@pse.com)

Raelynn Asah via email - [raelynn.asah@pse.com](mailto:raelynn.asah@pse.com)

Northwest Clean Air Agency

Agata McIntyre, P.E. via email - [agatam@nwcleanairwa.gov](mailto:agatam@nwcleanairwa.gov)

Applicant

Whatcom County c/o Matt Aamot via email - [maamot@whatcomcounty.us](mailto:maamot@whatcomcounty.us)



## SEPA Determination of Nonsignificance (DNS)

**File:** SEP2020-00077

**Project Description:** Adopting the new Six-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for Whatcom County Facilities 2021-2026 (Appendix F of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan). The CIP addresses parks & recreation, maintenance & operations, general government buildings and sites, Sheriff's office facilities, emergency management, adult corrections, juvenile detention, transportation, and stormwater projects. Repealing the existing Six-Year Capital Improvement Program for Whatcom County Facilities 2019-2024.

**Proponent:** Whatcom County

**Address and Parcel #:** Various locations throughout the County

**Lead Agency:** Whatcom County Planning & Development Services

**Zoning:** County-wide **Comp Plan:** County-wide **Shoreline Jurisdiction:** County-wide

The lead agency for this proposal has determined that with proper mitigation, no significant adverse environmental impacts are likely. Pursuant to RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c), an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required. This decision was made following review of a completed SEPA environmental checklist and other information on file with the lead agency. This information is available to the public on request.

There is no comment period for this DNS.

Pursuant to WAC 197-11-340(2), the lead agency will not act on this proposal for 14 days from the date of issuance indicated below. Comments must be received by 4:00 p.m. on September 11, 2020 and should be sent to: Matt Aamot [maamot@whatcomcounty.us](mailto:maamot@whatcomcounty.us).

**Responsible Official:** Mark Personius, [mpersoni@whatcomcounty.us](mailto:mpersoni@whatcomcounty.us)

**Title:** Director

**Telephone:** 360-778-5900

**Address:** 5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226

**Date of Issuance:** August 28, 2020

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Personius", is written over a horizontal line.

An aggrieved agency or person may appeal this determination to the Whatcom County Hearing Examiner. Application for appeal must be filed on a form provided by and submitted to the Whatcom County Current Planning Division located at 5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226, during the ten days following the comment period, concluding September 21, 2020.

You should be prepared to make a specific factual objection. Contact Whatcom County Current Planning Division for information about the procedures for SEPA appeals.

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**Mark Personius, AICP**  
Director

SEPA Determination of Nonsignificance (DNS)  
Legal Notice

To be published one time only on: **August 28, 2020**

CHARGE TO: Whatcom County Planning & Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, Washington 98226  
**Acct #451232**

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**WHATCOM COUNTY GIVES PUBLIC NOTICE THAT THE FOLLOWING SEPA  
THRESHOLD DETERMINATION OF NON-SIGNIFICANCE (DNS) HAS BEEN  
ISSUED TODAY SUBJECT TO THE 14 DAY COMMENT PERIOD  
CONCLUDING ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2020.**

**File:** SEP2020-00077

**Project Description:** Adopting the new Six-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for Whatcom County Facilities 2021-2026 (Appendix F of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan). The CIP addresses parks & recreation, maintenance & operations, general government buildings and sites, Sheriff's office facilities, emergency management, adult corrections, juvenile detention, transportation, and stormwater projects. Repealing the existing Six-Year Capital Improvement Program for Whatcom County Facilities 2019-2024.

**Proponent:** Whatcom County

**Address and Parcel #:** Various locations throughout the County

**Lead Agency:** Whatcom County Planning & Development Services

**Zoning:** County-wide **Comp Plan:** County-wide **Shoreline Jurisdiction:** County-wide

**ANY PERSON OR AGENCY MAY APPEAL THE COUNTY'S COMPLIANCE WITH WAC 197-11 BY FILING AN APPEAL WITH THE WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES LOCATED AT 5280 NORTHWEST DRIVE, BELLINGHAM, WA 98226. APPEALS MUST BE MADE WITHIN 10 DAYS AFTER THE END OF THE COMMENT PERIOD.**

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**Mark Personius**  
Director

SEP 2020 - 00077

**SEPA Environmental Checklist**

**A. Background**

1. Name of proposed project, if applicable: Capital Facilities Planning
2. Name of applicant: Whatcom County  
Applicant phone number: (360) 778-5900  
Applicant address: 5280 Northwest Dr.  
City, State, Zip or Postal Code: Bellingham, WA 98226  
Applicant Email address:
3. Contact name: Matt Aamot  
Contact phone number: Same as above  
Contact address:  
City, State, Zip or Postal Code:  
Contact Email address:
4. Date checklist prepared: August 2020
5. Agency requesting checklist: Whatcom County Planning & Development
6. Proposed timing or schedule (including phasing, if applicable):



Planning Commission hearing anticipated in September of 2020. Adoption by the County Council anticipated in November of 2020 (along with the budget).

7. Do you have any plans for future additions, expansion, or further activity related to or connected with this proposal? Yes  No

Yes. The six-year CIP is updated every other year. Projects in the CIP are implemented throughout the planning period. Other provisions of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan's capital facilities element are updated from time to time.

8. List any environmental information you know about that has been prepared, or will be prepared, directly related to this proposal:
  - Draft Whatcom County Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program.
  - Whatcom County Fourteen-Year Ferry Capital Program.
  - Whatcom County Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.

9. Do you know whether applications are pending for governmental approvals of other proposals directly affecting the property covered by your proposal?

Yes  No

There may be individual land use and building permit applications pending in areas of the County affected by the proposal.

10. List any government approvals or permits that will be needed for your proposal, if known.

Whatcom County Council adoption of the proposed amendments, after considering the recommendations of the Planning Commission. Various permits and, as applicable, further environmental review will be required prior to implementation of specific capital facility projects.

11. Give brief, complete description of your proposal, including the proposed uses and the size of the project and site. *There are several questions later in this checklist that ask you to describe certain aspects of your proposal. You do not need to repeat those answers on this page.* (Lead agencies may modify this form to include additional specific information on project description.)

The proposal includes:

- Adopting the new Six-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for Whatcom County Facilities 2021-2026 (Appendix F of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan). The CIP addresses parks & recreation, maintenance & operations, general government buildings and sites, Sheriff's office facilities, emergency management, adult corrections, juvenile detention, transportation, and stormwater projects.
- Repealing the existing Six-Year Capital Improvement Program for Whatcom County Facilities 2019-2024.

The draft amendments are attached.

12. Location of the proposal. Give sufficient information for a person to understand the precise location of your proposed project, including a street address, if any, and section, township, and range, if known. If a proposal would occur over a range of area, provide the range or boundaries of the site(s). Provide a legal description, site plan, vicinity map, and topographic map, if reasonably available. While you should submit any plans required by the agency, you are not required to duplicate maps or detailed plans submitted with any permit applications related to this checklist.

See attached Six-Year CIP for locations of proposed County capital facilities.

## B. Environmental Elements

***NOTE: Part B below will only be filled out for this non-project action if the SEPA Official determines that it would aid SEPA review (Per WAC 197-11-315(1)) and Planning and Development Services Policy PL1-83-001Z).***

Applicable for all of  
section B. NAS

1. Earth

a. General description of the site:

- Flat
- Rolling
- Hilly
- Steep Slopes
- Mountainous
- Other

b. What is the steepest slope on the site (approximate percent slope)?

c. What general types of soils are found on the site (for example, clay, sand, gravel, peat, muck)? If you know the classification of agricultural soils, specify them and note any agricultural land of long-term commercial significance and whether the proposal results in removing any of these soils.

d. Are there surface indications or history of unstable soils in the immediate vicinity?  
Yes  No

If so, describe.

e. Describe the purpose, type, total area, approximate quantities and total affected area of any filling excavation or grading proposed.

Indicate source of fill:

Indicate where excavation material is going:

f. Could erosion occur as a result of clearing, construction, or use?

Yes  No

If so, generally describe.

g. About what percent of the site will be covered with impervious surfaces after project construction (for example, asphalt or buildings)?

h. Proposed measures to reduce or control erosion, or other impacts to the earth, if any:

2. Air

a. What types of emissions to the air would result from the proposal during construction, operation and maintenance when the project is completed (i.e., dust, automobile, odors, or industrial wood smoke)?

If any, generally describe and give approximate quantities if known.

- b. Are there any off-site sources of emissions or odor that may affect your proposal?

Yes  No

If so, generally describe.

- c. Proposed measures to reduce or control emissions or other impacts to air, if any:

3. Water

a. Surface:

- (1) Is there any surface water body on or in the immediate vicinity of the site (including year-round and seasonal streams, saltwater, lakes, ponds, wetlands)? Yes  No

If yes, describe type and provide names. If appropriate, state what stream or river it flows into.

- (2) Will the project require any work over, in, or adjacent to (within 200 feet) the described waters? Yes  No

If yes, please describe and attach available plans.

- (3) Estimate the amount of fill and dredge material that would be placed in or removed from surface water or wetlands and indicate the area of the site that would be affected.

Indicate the source of fill material.

- (4) Will the proposal require surface water withdrawals or diversions?

Yes  No

Give general description, purpose, and approximate quantities if known.

Does the proposal lie within a 100-year floodplain?

Yes  No

If so, note location on the site plan.

- (5) Does the proposal involve any discharges of waste materials to surface waters?

Yes  No

If so, describe the type of waste and anticipated volume of discharge



b. Ground Water:

- (1) Will ground water be withdrawn from a well for drinking water or other purposes? Yes  No

If so, give a general description of the well, proposed uses and approximate quantities withdrawn from the well. Will water be discharged to groundwater? Give general description, purpose, and approximate quantities if known.

- (2) Describe waste material that will be discharged into the ground from septic tanks or other sources, if any (for example: Domestic sewage; industrial, containing the following chemicals.....; agricultural; etc.). Describe the general size of the system, the number of houses to be served (if applicable), or the number of animals or humans the system(s) are expected to serve.

c. Water runoff (including stormwater):

- (1) Describe the source of runoff (including storm water) and method of collection and disposal, if any (include quantities, if known).

Where will this water flow?

Will this water flow into other waters? Yes  No

If so, describe.

- (2) Could waste materials enter ground or surface waters?

Yes  No

If so, generally describe.

- (3) Does the proposal alter or otherwise affect drainage patterns in the vicinity of the site: Yes  No

If so, describe.

d. Proposed measures to reduce or control surface, ground, and runoff water impacts, if any:

4. Plants

a. Check types of vegetation found on the site:

- Deciduous tree: alder, maple, aspen, other
- Evergreen tree: fir, cedar, pine, other
- Shrubs
- Grass
- Pasture
- Crop or grain
- Orchards, vineyards or other permanent crops
- Wet soil plants: cattail, buttercup, bullrush, skunk cabbage, other
- Water plants: water lily, eelgrass, milfoil, other
- Other types of vegetation

b. What kind and amount of vegetation will be removed or altered?

c. List threatened or endangered species known to be on or near the site.

d. Proposed landscaping, use of native plants, or other measures to preserve or enhance vegetation on the site, if any:

e. List all noxious weeds and invasive species known to be on or near the site.

5. Animals

a. Check any birds and animals, which have been observed on or near the site or are known to be on or near the site:

Birds:

- |                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hawk,  | <input type="checkbox"/> Heron,     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eagle, | <input type="checkbox"/> Songbirds; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |                                     |

Mammals:

- |                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deer,  | <input type="checkbox"/> Bear,   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elk,   | <input type="checkbox"/> Beaver; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |                                  |

Fish:

- |                                     |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bass,      | <input type="checkbox"/> Salmon,  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trout,     | <input type="checkbox"/> Herring, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shellfish; | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:   |

b. List any threatened or endangered species known to be on or near the site.

c. Is the site part of a migration route?      Yes       No

If so, explain.

d. Proposed measures to preserve or enhance wildlife, if any:

e. List any invasive species known to be on or near site.

6. Energy and Natural Resources

a. What kinds of energy (electric, natural gas, oil, wood stove, solar) will be used to meet the completed project's energy needs? Describe whether it will be used for heating, manufacturing, etc.

b. Would your project affect the potential use of solar energy by adjacent properties?  
Yes  No

If so, generally describe.

c. What kinds of energy conservation features are included in the plans of this proposal? List other proposed measures to reduce or control energy impacts, if any:

7. Environmental Health

a. Are there any environmental health hazards, including exposure to toxic chemicals, risk of fire and explosion, spill, or hazardous waste that could occur as a result of this proposal? Yes  No

If so, describe.

(1) Describe any known or possible contamination at the site from present or past uses.

(2) Describe existing hazardous chemicals/conditions that might affect project development and design. This includes underground hazardous liquid and gas transmission pipelines located within the project area and in the vicinity.

(3) Describe any toxic or hazardous chemicals that might be stored, used, or produced during the projects development or construction, or at any time during the operating life of the project.

(4) Describe special emergency services that might be required.

(5) Proposed measure to reduce or control environmental health hazards, if any:

b. Noise

- (1) What types of noise exist in the area which may affect your project (for example: traffic, equipment, operation, other)?
- (2) What types and levels of noise would be created by or associated with the project on a short-term or a long-term basis (for example: traffic, construction, operation, other)? Indicate what hours noise would come from the site.
- (3) Proposed measures to reduce or control noise impacts, if any:

8. Land and Shoreline Use

c. What is the current use of the site and adjacent properties?

Will the proposal affect current land uses on nearby or adjacent properties? Yes   
No

If so, describe.

d. Has the project site been used as working farmlands or working forest lands? Yes   
No

If so, describe.

How much agriculture or forest land of long-term commercial significance will be converted to other uses as a result of the proposal, if any?

If resource lands have not been designated, how many acres in farmland or forest land tax status will be converted to non-farm or non-forest use?

- (1) Will the proposal affect or be affected by surrounding working farm or forest land normal business operations, such as oversize equipment access, the application of pesticides, tilling and harvesting? Yes  No

If so, how:

e. Describe any structures on the site.

f. Will any structures be demolished? Yes  No

If so, what?

g. What is the current zoning classification of the site?

- h. What is the current comprehensive plan designation of the site?
- i. If applicable, what is the current shoreline master program designation of the site?
- j. Has any part of the site been classified as a critical area by the city or county?  
Yes  No   
If so, specify.
- k. Approximately how many people would reside or work in the completed project?
- l. Approximately how many people would the completed project displace?
- m. Proposed measures to avoid or reduce displacement impacts, if any:
- n. Proposed measures to ensure the proposal is compatible with existing and projected land uses and plans, if any:
- o. Proposed measures to ensure the proposal is compatible with nearby agricultural and forest lands of long-term commercial significance, if any?

9. Housing

- a. Approximately how many units would be provided, if any? Indicate whether high, middle, or low-income housing.  
 High  
 Middle  
 Low-income
- b. Approximately how many units, if any, would be eliminated? Indicate whether high, middle, or low-income housing.  
 High  
 Middle  
 Low-income
- c. Proposed measures to reduce or control housing impacts, if any:

10. Aesthetics

- a. What is the tallest height of any proposed structure(s), not including antennas; what is the principal exterior building material(s) proposed?
- b. What views in the immediate vicinity would be altered or obstructed?

- c. Proposed measures to reduce or control aesthetic impacts, if any:

11. Light and Glare

- a. What type of light or glare will the proposal produce? What time of day would it mainly occur?
- b. Could light or glare from the finished project be a safety hazard or interfere with views?
- c. What existing off-site sources of light or glare may affect your proposal?
- d. Proposed measures to reduce or control light and glare impacts, if any:

12. Recreation

- a. What designated and informal recreational opportunities are in the immediate vicinity?
- b. Would the proposed project displace any existing recreational uses? If so, describe.
- c. Proposed measures to reduce or control impacts on recreation, including recreation opportunities to be provided by the project or applicant, if any:

13. Historic and Cultural Preservation

- a. Are there any buildings, structures, or sites, located on or near the site that are over 45 years old listed in or eligible for listing in national, state or local preservation registers located on or near the site? Yes  No   
If so, specifically describe.
- b. Are there any landmarks, features, or other evidence of Indian, historic use or occupation, this may include human burials or old cemeteries?  
Yes  No   
Are there any material evidence, artifacts, or areas of cultural importance on or near the site? Yes  No   
Please list any professional studies conducted at the site to identify such resources.
- c. Describe the methods used to assess the potential impacts to cultural and historic resources on or near the project site. Examples: Include consultation with tribes and the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation, archaeological surveys, historic maps, GIS data, etc.

- d. Proposed measures to avoid, minimize, or compensate for loss, changes to, and disturbance to resources. Please include plans for the above and any permits that may be required.

#### 14. Transportation

- a. Identify public streets and highways serving the site or affected geographic area and describe proposed access to the existing street system. Show on site plan, if any.

- b. Is site or geographic area currently served by public transit?

Yes  No

If not, what is the approximate distance to the nearest transit stop?

- c. How many parking spaces would the completed project have? How many would the project eliminate?

- d. Will the proposal require any new or improvements to existing roads, streets, pedestrian, bicycle or state transportation facilities, not including driveways?

Yes  No

If so, generally describe (indicate whether public or private).

- e. Will the project use (or occur in the immediate vicinity of)

- Water,  
 Rail, or  
 Air transportation?

If so, generally describe.

- f. How many vehicular trips per day would be generated by the completed project or proposal? If known, indicate when peak volumes would occur and what percentage of the volume would be trucks (such as commercial and non-passenger vehicles). What data or transportation models were used to make these estimates?

- g. Proposed measures to reduce or control transportation impacts, if any:

#### 15. Public Services

- a. Would the project result in an increased need for public services (for example: fire protection, police protection, health care, schools, other)?

Yes  No

If so, generally describe.

b. Proposed measures to reduce or control direct impacts on public services, if any.

16. Utilities

a. Check utilities currently available at the site:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electricity,   | <input type="checkbox"/> Natural gas,    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water,         | <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse service, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone,     | <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitary sewer, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Septic system, | <input type="checkbox"/> Other           |

b. Describe the utilities that are proposed for the project, the utility providing the service, and the general construction activities on the site or in the immediate vicinity which might be needed.

**Signature**

The above answers are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that the lead agency is relying on them to make its decision.

Signature:     Matt Aamot    

Date Submitted:     August 21, 2020    

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**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

Reviewed by Whatcom County Planning & Development Services Staff



Staff Signature

08/21/2020

Date



### C. Supplemental Sheet for Non-project Actions

*(It is not necessary to use this sheet for project actions)*

Because these questions are very general, it may be helpful to read them in conjunction with the list of the elements of the environment. When answering these questions, be aware of the extent the proposal or the types of activities likely to result from the proposal, would affect the item at a greater intensity or at a faster rate than if the proposal were not implemented. Respond briefly and in general terms.

1. How would the proposal be likely to increase discharge to water; emissions to air; production, storage, or release of toxic or hazardous substances; or production of noise?

The adoption of the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments would not increase such discharges. However, construction of projects to implement the Comprehensive Plan will cause air emissions and noise from equipment & motor vehicles and additional runoff from impervious surfaces.

Proposed measures to avoid or reduce such increases are:

Specific projects will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis under the applicable SEPA rules and stormwater management regulations/standards. Additionally, the proposed CIP includes stormwater projects to address water quality/quantity issues.

2. How would the proposal be likely to affect plants, animals, fish, or marine life?

The adoption of the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments would not increase impacts to plants, animals, fish or marine life.

Proposed measures to protect or conserve plants, animals, fish, or marine life are:

Construction projects association with implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will have to comply with the critical areas ordinance and shoreline regulations, as applicable. Some road construction projects may require a biological assessment under federal rules.

3. How would the proposal be likely to deplete energy or natural resources?

The adoption of the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments would not deplete energy or natural resources.

Proposed measures to protect or conserve energy and natural resources are:

Future construction of new buildings that are set forth in the Comprehensive Plan would, as applicable, be required to comply with the Washington State Energy Code. Future projects would be required, as applicable, to comply with County regulations, including the critical areas ordinance.

4. How would the proposal be likely to use or affect environmentally sensitive areas or areas designated (or eligible or under study) for governmental protection; such as parks, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, threatened or endangered species habitat, historic or cultural sites, wetlands, floodplains, or prime farmlands?

The adoption of the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments would not impact environmentally sensitive areas.

Proposed measures to protect such resources or to avoid or reduce impacts are:

The proposal includes planning for parks and trail improvements to serve Whatcom County residents. Additionally, construction projects associated with implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will have to comply, as applicable, with the critical areas ordinance, shoreline management program, flood regulations, and zoning rules.

5. How would the proposal be likely to affect land and shoreline use, including whether it would allow or encourage land or shoreline uses incompatible with existing plans?

The proposal includes plans for a series of parks and recreation, maintenance & operations, general government buildings and sites, Sheriff's Office, adult corrections, transportation and stormwater projects to serve the people of Whatcom County.

Proposed measures to avoid or reduce shoreline and land use impacts are:

Prior to construction of any given project, the County will have to obtain all appropriate land use and shoreline permits to ensure consistency with applicable regulations.

6. How would the proposal be likely to increase demands on transportation or public services and utilities?

The adoption of the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments would not increase demands on transportation or public services and utilities.

Proposed measures to reduce or respond to such demand(s) are:

Prior to construction of any given project, the County would ensure that any needed utilities are adequate to serve the proposal, if required by applicable permitting processes. It should be noted that projects proposed in the six-year CIP are intended to improve transportation and other facilities to serve the people of Whatcom County.

7. Identify, if possible, whether the proposal may conflict with local, state, or federal laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

No such conflicts have been identified. The intent of the proposal is to comply with the state Growth Management Act. Notice of the proposal will be transmitted to the state in accordance with RCW 36.70A.106.