

Keeping it RURAL Whatcom County Style

Think our rural areas are growing too quickly? You're not alone. And quite frankly, you're right. Between 1990 and 2008, more people moved to the rural areas of Whatcom County than any part except Bellingham. And sixty-two percent of respondents to the Whatcom County Values & Beliefs survey agreed that our rural areas have grown too fast over the past ten years!

the problem:

Whatcom County's rural lands are under increasing threat from sprawl and residential development. Under current zoning, nearly 7,000 more lots can be created on our rural lands – with almost 4,000 of them small lots in areas like Nugents Corner or Wiser Lake, that when built out, make rural Whatcom County less like the country and more like the suburbs!

the solution:

*County staff, officials and Futurewise are now working to protect our rural areas rather than promote their overdevelopment through a process called **the 'Rural Element Update.'** We're looking at all the most dense areas around the county that aren't within existing cities and deciding how to contain their development, maintain rural character, protect water quality, and preserve our quality of life...*

WHATCOM COUNTY NEEDS YOUR HELP!

If done right, the Rural Element Update will provide many important benefits to our communities:

- **Increased protection for working farms and forests.** Many small family farms and family tree farms located in rural areas are being threatened by development pressures.
- **Less surface and ground water pollution.** Overdevelopment of our rural areas pollutes rivers and streams as impervious surfaces increase, septic systems fail, and polluted runoff accumulates in our bodies of water.
- **Increased protection for senior water rights holders.** Most recent rural development is taking place on 'exempt wells' that draw water from rivers and streams, which reduces the water available to senior water rights holders like farms and dairies.
- **Increased protection for Puget Sound.** The Puget Sound Partnership reminds us that protecting Puget Sound, including salmon, requires us to focus growth within our existing cities and towns and to protect rural areas from over development.
- **Reduced taxes.** Less rural development will decrease future costs to tax payers and utility ratepayers, instead of subsidizing sprawl, which costs more to serve than it generates in taxes.
- **Growth will be consistent with community values and preferences.** Reducing the capacity for the overdevelopment of our rural lands will better match future growth and development patterns with characteristics our community envisions.
- **Reduced traffic congestion and climate impacts.** Minimizing overdevelopment in rural areas will reduce pressure on existing roads and arterials and concentrate future growth in areas with more transit options.

TELL WHATCOM COUNTY LEADERS TO 'KEEP IT RURAL!'

SPEAK UP at the Planning Commission hearing on **Thursday, July 9th @ 6:30pm**
Northwest Annex Conference Room, 5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham



For more information please contact Cathy Lehman, Chapter Director of Futurewise Whatcom at 360-224-8877 or cathy@futurewise.org

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