



WHITMAN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

UPDATED FEBRUARY 2022 - DRAFT

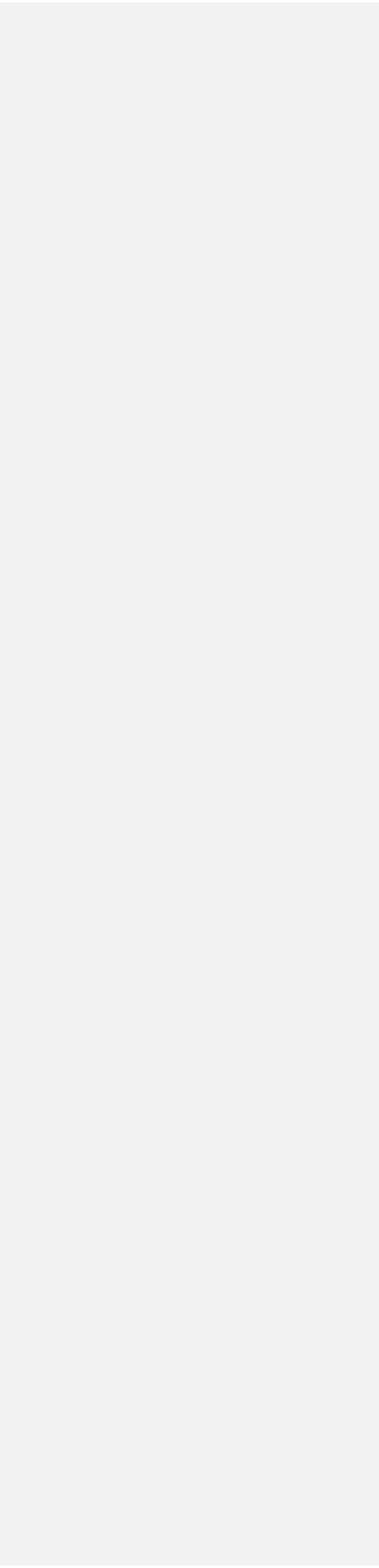


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Cover Photo Source: Mark Storey (used with permission)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Whitman County County at a Glance

Whitman County, located in the southeastern portion of the State of Washington, bordered by seven other counties (Spokane, Lincoln, Adams, Franklin, Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin), and with Idaho abutting its eastern border, is home to over 50,000 residents. Founded in 1871 and named after Marcus Whitman, it has historically been and remains today one of Washington’s most agriculturally important counties. Many residents have lived in Whitman County for generations and enjoy the rural environment that southeastern Washington offers.

The dominant geographic feature of Whitman County is the Palouse, a distinct landscape that encompasses almost all of Whitman County and a portion of north-central Idaho. The Palouse is characterized by gentle rolling hills formed over tens of thousands of years by wind-blown silt and dust, called “loess.” The deep loess soil of

the Palouse is sown in many areas with wheat, other grains, and pulse crops and is considered one of the most highly productive agricultural areas in the world.

Other notable landscapes include a portion of the Channeled Scablands in the County’s west and northwest, formed when Ice Age-era floods scoured topsoil and basalt bedrock and created features like Palouse Falls, and the Snake River, which forms the County’s southern border.



Source: CC0 1.0 Universal – Public Domain

Whitman County is home to two major cities – Pullman, home to almost 32,000 residents including Washington State University, and Colfax, the County Seat with nearly 3,000 residents. Large land ownerships and agricultural land uses dominate the County outside Pullman, Colfax, and fourteen other small cities and towns along with several unincorporated rural communities.



Source: CC0 1.0 Universal – Public Domain

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Population and Demographics

The 2020 Decennial Census's redistricting data lists Whitman County as having a population of 47,973. Washington State's Office of Financial Management (OFM) estimates that Whitman County's population in 2021 was 44,600. This discrepancy results from a drop in student population during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, we are using the 2020 Census figure as the base value for 2020. Eighty-nine percent of this population growth occurred in the City of Pullman. The 1978 comprehensive plan notes that population growth in Whitman County is strongly

linked to Washington State University specifically and Pullman more broadly. The existing plan noted that consolidation of farms and decline of small-town populations meant that growth pressures outside of the Pullman area would be minimal over the planning period (1978-1985). These observations are no less true in 2022. Pullman's population decreased in the decade between 1980 and 1990 and grew only modestly between 1990 and 2000, coinciding with stagnant enrollment at Washington State University. This contributed to overall flat County population counts between 1980 and 2000.

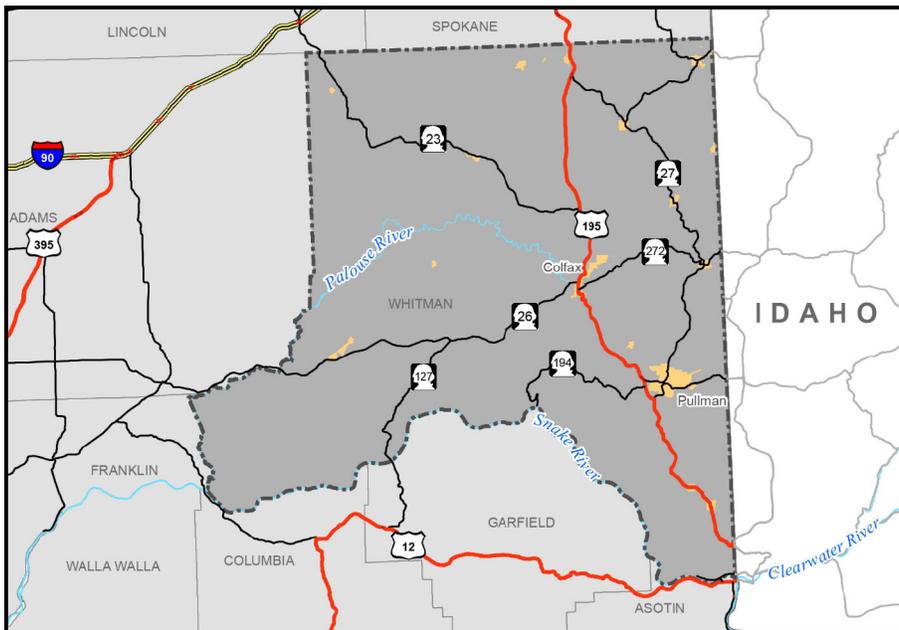


Figure 1. Map of Whitman County, LDC, Inc.

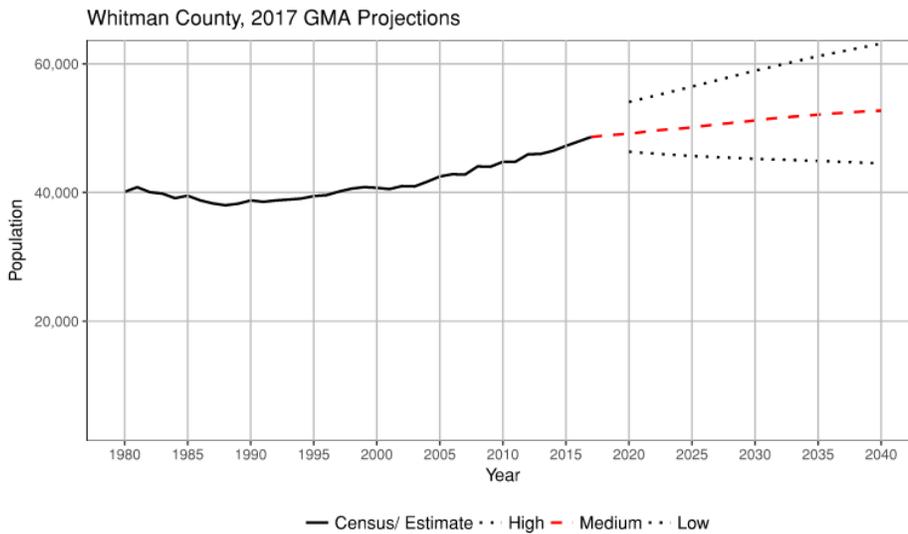


Figure 2. Whitman County 2017 GMA Projections (2017-2040) Source: WA Office of Financial Management

The OFM produces county-level population projections with high, medium, and low ranges as part of its Growth Management Act data services. Figure 2 (above) shows Whitman County’s population since 1980 (roughly since the last major plan update) and high, medium, and low series projections to 2040 from the OFM’s 2017 growth projections. While there is much uncertainty, the medium projection calls for under 2,300 additional residents between 2020 and 2040. The City of Pullman expects to grow at a somewhat quicker pace, from roughly 34,000 in 2020 to around 40,000 in 2040. These projections anticipate relatively stable or very slow growth in the County outside Pullman’s urban growth area.

In the limited data released from the 2020 Decennial Census thus far, Whitman County’s 2020 population was 47,973. This puts the County ahead of pace per the 2017 growth projections. In the 2019 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey, Whitman County was home to nearly 18,000 households, for an average of 2.3 persons per household. 4.1 percent of County residents were under 5 years old, 15 percent were under 18 years old, and 10.7 percent were 65 years old or over. It is important to note that countywide data are substantially influenced by the student population of Washington State University in the 20 to 24 age bracket (see Figure 3, next page).

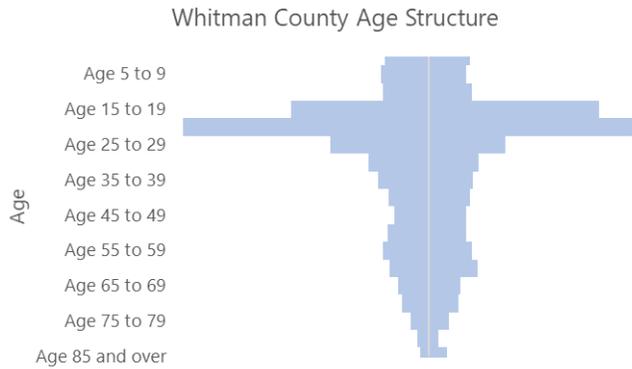


Figure 3. Whitman County Age Pyramid. Source: 2015-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S0101

Race and Ethnicity

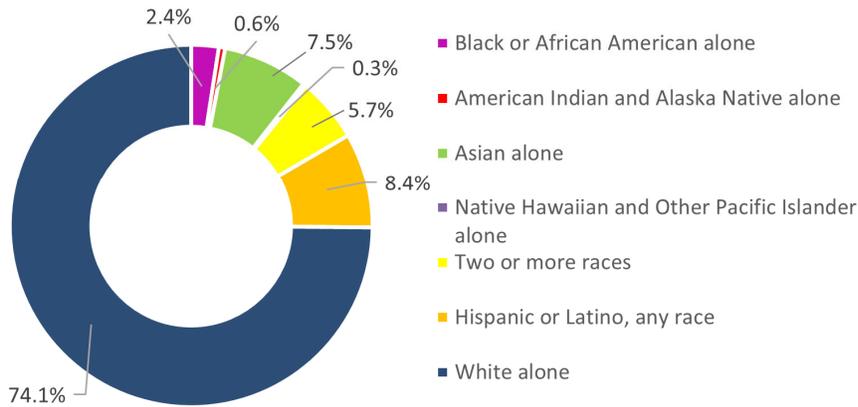


Figure 4. Whitman County Race and Ethnicity. Source: 2020 Decennial Census Redistricting Data, Table P2

Around 74 percent of the County identified as white alone, not Hispanic or Latino and 7.5 percent identified as Asian alone; Hispanic or Latino persons of any race

composed 8.4 percent of the County's population. (Again, these data include all households in the County, including incorporated cities.)

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About the Comprehensive Plan

Reason for Update

The Whitman County Comprehensive Plan, originally adopted in 1960, was a document consisting of a few simple statements. The Plan was updated in 1970 to address major changes, including Pullman's rapid growth at the time, development of industrial and commercial sites along the Snake River, and the creation of new County parks. In 1978, the Plan saw a more thorough update, assessing issues and adopting policies in three broad categories: land use, transportation, and coordination and plan implementation.

Since 1978, the Plan has received minor amendments over the years but has not seen a major update to reflect current issues, goals, and vision for the future. The 2022 revision of the Comprehensive Plan serves as an opportunity to respond to recognized trends and anticipated changes and to produce a more accurate depiction of current conditions and assessment of service-related needs for residents. This Plan includes updated goals and policies as well as changes to the techniques used to implement the goals and policies.

Plan Purpose and Objectives

The Whitman County Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that serves as a guide for countywide decision making over the next twenty years. In coordination with other local comprehensive plans, the fundamental purpose of this plan is **to establish goals and policies to guide growth, land use, capital facility and transportation**

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investment, and environmental planning.

Additionally, the Plan **expresses community goals and desires**, informing decision making and guiding coordination between agencies and jurisdictions.

The Comprehensive Plan serves a wide variety of functions, including:

- Formalized goals and policies.
- Identification of countywide and community-centric values.
- Promotion of public health, safety, and welfare.
- Encouragement of regional and local agencies and organizations.
- Coordinated implementation of governmental policies; and
- Protection and conservation of critical environmental areas and natural resources and mitigation of adverse impacts.

Compliance with State Law

The Comprehensive Plan has been developed pursuant to Chapter 36.70 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), the purpose of which is to authorize and describe how counties in Washington are to engage in planning activities. Specifically, this chapter, known as the "Planning Enabling Act," states:

The purpose and intent of this chapter is to provide the authority for, and the procedures to be followed in, guiding and regulating the physical development of a county or region

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through correlating both public and private projects and coordinating their execution with respect to all subject matters utilized in developing and servicing land, all to the end of assuring the highest standards of environment for living, and the operation of commerce, industry, agriculture and recreation, and assuring maximum economies and conserving the highest degree of public health, safety, morals and welfare. RCW 36.70.010

City and County planning in Washington is also governed by RCW 36.70A, known as the Growth Management Act (GMA). This law outlines planning requirements for all jurisdictions to coordinate development and growth, protect resources and the environment, and lay the groundwork for sustainable economic development and quality of life. Only some counties and the cities within those counties are required to “fully plan” under the GMA.

Whitman County, which is largely rural and has experienced modest population growth, is identified as a “Partially Planning County” by the State of Washington. This means the County is **not** required to fully plan under the GMA. However, the GMA does require all counties (including Whitman County) to identify and protect resource lands and critical areas. Additionally, all counties must have development regulations (zoning and subdivision codes) that are consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan.

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Plan Characteristics

The Whitman County Comprehensive Plan is the primary policy document of the County, which decision-makers use to guide critical decisions on the overall operations, maintenance, and future development of the County.

The Comprehensive Plan can be described by the following characteristics:

Long Range – The Plan shall evaluate past, present, and future conditions to enable the County to define overall goals and opportunities over the next twenty years.

Responsive – The Plan shall respond to changing conditions as well as residents’ needs, values, concerns, and preferences.

Comprehensive – The Plan shall provide an overall assessment of the provision of County services, the use and development of lands within the County, transportation infrastructure and services, capital facilities and utilities, parks and recreational facilities, natural resources, economic development, and environmental quality.

Achievable – The Plan shall be implementable. This means the adopted goals and policies of the Plan, both short-term and long-term, must be realistic and reasonable for the County.

Consistency – The Plan shall be consistent with the County’s development regulations, as adopted in Title 19 of the Whitman County Code.

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Using the Plan

Plan Elements

The Whitman County Comprehensive Plan is organized into the following elements:

- [Land Use, Natural Resources & Agricultural Conservation](#)
- [Transportation](#)
- [Parks, Recreation & Trails](#)
- [Economic Development](#)
- [Environmental Protection and Climate Change](#)
- [Facilities and Utilities](#)

These six elements are vital to the function of Whitman County. Each element contains a purpose statement and introduction, followed by findings and broadly defined goals that will help bring the Plan's vision statement into focus. Each element also contains specific policies that will be used to guide the development or modification of standards and procedures that implement the Plan in Titles 9, 18, and 19 of the Whitman County Code.

Appendices provide additional detail and supporting materials, as follows:

- [Appendix A: Plan Maps](#)
- [Appendix B: Public Survey Report](#)

Maps developed for this Comprehensive Plan update are intended to depict current conditions in the County. Maps included as part of this plan update are as follows and are integrated into their respective chapters and reproduced in [Appendix A](#) in total.

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Other historical maps and information may be found on file at the County Clerk's office in Colfax.

Related Plans and Other Community Documents

The following related plans are incorporated by reference as amended:

[Whitman County Shoreline Master Program](#) (2015)

[City of Pullman Comprehensive Plan](#)

Whitman County Code – [Title 9](#) (Environment), [Title 18](#) (Subdivisions), [Title 19](#) (Zoning)

[Port of Whitman County 2021-2025 Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Plan of Harbor Improvements](#)

Navigating This Plan

This Plan has been designed to be navigable in paper or digital format. The header of each page contains the Chapter and a link to the Plan's table of contents in digital format. The footer contains the page number and a linked banner to allow the reader to navigate within the individual sections of the current chapter.



Source: Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories

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Regional Values and Framework Goals

Through the public outreach and participation methods described in the Public Engagement section of this Chapter, the residents of Whitman County expressed what they value as a community. It is this input that has aided the County with the development of framework goals that outline the desired vision for the future of Whitman County. The following framework goals are not listed in any specific order or rank but should be considered co-equal.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROTECTION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

All policies and decisions made by the County, and as guided by the Comprehensive Plan, will strive to protect fundamental private property rights of individuals, and ensure that Whitman County land use policies and regulations balance the private property rights of all landowners when practical and feasible.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PRESERVE FARMS AND AGRICULTURAL CHARACTER

Preserve and protect the County's rural character, which includes productive agricultural lands, large open spaces, and sweeping views of the Palouse hills. The protection of rural character and farm operations shall include the County's scenic beauty as well as protection and sustainability of rural ways of life, providing opportunities for employment, income, and

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Source: PhotoHound.com (Joe Becker)

a tax base while also encouraging growth in rural unincorporated communities and near urban centers.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES

Through innovative planning approaches, interagency coordination, and responsible fiscal policy, provide for effective, supportive, and well-planned services across the County.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS AND COUNTYWIDE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Develop land use planning approaches that support local business while also supporting countywide economic growth through partnerships and collaboration with business, civic and other local government leaders, and agencies.

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FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROTECT ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Anticipate and respond to impacts related to climate change by exploring and adopting land use strategies that foster the protection of clean air and water, fish and wildlife habitats, and healthy and productive ecosystems.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROMOTE AND IMPROVE MOBILITY OPTIONS

Provide for a safe and reliable multi-modal transportation network that enables residents, workers, commerce, and tourists to efficiently travel within and across rural Whitman County and its communities. Continue to explore and improve upon a variety of mobility options that include but are not limited to automobiles, public and private transit, bicycles, and pedestrian.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – EFFECTIVE LAND USE PLANNING

Develop goals and policies that promote effective and consistent land use decisions that are responsive to local growth but also protect the unique rural character of Whitman County.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – ONGOING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Whitman County residents and property owners shall be continually informed and provided ongoing opportunities for public involvement.

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FRAMEWORK GOAL – SUPPORT RECREATION AND ACCESS TO NATURAL AREAS

Support County residents in their ability to access outdoor recreation and natural areas throughout Whitman County through collaboration and partnerships, while recognizing the need to protect natural, scenic and environmentally sensitive areas, while protecting property rights.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PRESERVE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF WHITMAN COUNTY

Recognize the value and importance of Whitman County's heritage, protecting important prehistoric and historic sites, local historic districts and areas and buildings, both commercial and residential, of local, state, and federal historic significance.

Relationship Between Plan Elements

Each of the Comprehensive Plan Elements are considered individually based on their specific topic (i.e., Land Use, Transportation, Economic Development). However, each element is intrinsically linked to each other, and the policies identified in each element should be considered in conjunction with policies in the other plan elements. Additionally, goals and policies in each element should be considered equally important and share a balanced relationship with other elements in the Comprehensive Plan.

For example, preserving productive agricultural land and the protection of

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working farms is highly valued, while recognizing that decisions regarding land use changes will affect housing availability, housing affordability, and property values. Growth affects transportation demand and function, as well as how effectively the County will be able to maintain and accommodate future transportation facility improvements. Future growth also affects economic development choices and direction. Policies may either promote or suppress economic growth, and the policy direction can have a direct effect on local business and industries.

Plan Update Process

The Whitman County Comprehensive Plan update followed the process outlined in Figure 5 below.



Figure 5: Plan Update Process Diagram. LDC, Inc.

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Public Engagement

Public engagement is a cornerstone of any long-range comprehensive planning project, including any comprehensive plan update. While Whitman County is not a fully planning county as defined by the GMA, the County is deeply interested in a public involvement process that engages and collects feedback from County residents, community leaders, business owners, local organizations, volunteer groups, environmental and property rights activists, peer governmental agencies, and local schools and universities.

The following engagement methods were used to engage the community:

- **Resident Survey.** In early 2021, a survey of County residents was conducted digitally to help identify residents' priorities for the future. Over three hundred responses were received, providing valuable data for the 2022 Plan update. Please see [Appendix B](#) for a complete report of feedback provided through the survey.
- **Virtual Public Meetings.** Virtual public board meetings were held at Board of County Commissioner and Planning Commission meetings as well as individual meetings that provided the County with valuable discussion and input.

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Three virtual “open house” meetings were held on June 2, 16, and 30, 2021. These meetings, completed during COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, were intended not only to present work completed and obtain feedback, but also to connect with County residents and hear directly from them on their questions and concerns and what they value most about Whitman County.

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Source: Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories

CHAPTER 2: LAND USE, NATURAL RESOURCES & AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION ELEMENT

Purpose

The purpose of the Land Use Element is to describe existing land uses in Whitman County, analyze land use trends over time, and provide goals and policies that guide the future of regulation of land uses and changes through the Whitman County Code. This includes designation of agricultural and mineral resource lands in accordance with requirements for partially planning counties under RCW 36.70A.040. The Land Use Element can be considered the “driver” of the Comprehensive Plan. Each of the other elements of this Plan is interrelated with the Land Use Element.

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Whitman County remains primarily rural and agricultural with pockets of developed areas, much as was the case in 1978. The primarily rural-agricultural hub has largely stayed the same as smaller towns and cities have grown slowly, maintained a steady population, or in some cases lost a small amount of population. The Pullman area has experienced more significant growth, with the city itself adding more than 5,000 residents over the past 10 years and more than 11,000 since the last major plan update in 1978. The County seeks to maintain its rural agricultural charm and maintain prime agricultural land and opportunities for rural and cluster residential uses in rural locations and near urban areas. This Plan also

increases opportunities for business development in rural areas and along the Pullman-Moscow corridor. Finding this balance is vital to maintaining a thriving and diverse growth environment in the County, which will continue to be productive, profitable, and practical.

The Land Use Element is used to guide land use decisions related to residential growth, preservation of prime agricultural land and other natural resources, in balance with economic development opportunities.

Findings

Summary

In 2019, Whitman County was home to just over one million acres of agricultural land, or around 1,623 square miles (three quarters of all land in the County). The County’s sixteen cities contain roughly sixteen thousand acres, or around twenty-five square miles, of land devoted to residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses. An additional 1,023 acres (1.6 square miles) are considered “developed” but outside city limits. This includes rural residential homesites and agricultural business operations. Map 2 at the end of this element shows agricultural and developed land uses in Whitman County provided by the Washington State Department of Agriculture that were used to produce these estimates.

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Further, around 9,946 acres (roughly 15.5 square miles) are covered by state parks or trail corridors, and 711 acres (slightly over one square mile) of commercial and industrial uses are located on five different Port of Whitman County sites. The remainder of the land in Whitman County is rangeland and Channeled Scablands.

Whitman County is home to sixteen incorporated communities, totaling 44,040 people, or 87 percent of the County’s total population:

Albion	550
Colfax	2,840
Colton	445
Endicott	295
Farmington	155
Garfield	600
LaCrosse	310
Lamont	80
Malden	200
Oakesdale	425
Palouse	1,090
Pullman	34,850
Rosalia	560
St. John	515
Tekoa	770
Uniontown	355

Unincorporated communities subject to Whitman County development regulations are defined as:

Diamond	Lancaster
Dusty	Pine City
Ewan	Steptoe
Hay	Sunset
Hooper	Thornton
Johnson	Winona

Agricultural Land

According to the Census of Agriculture through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Whitman County in 2017 was home to 1,039 farms covering 1,287,978 acres (around 2,012 square miles). The median farm size was 310 acres, while the average (arithmetic mean) farm size was 1,240 acres. By comparison, in the 1978 Agricultural Census, Whitman County was home to 1,298 farms (259 more than in 2017), covering 1,414,715 acres (127,000 more than in 2017) with an average farm size of 1,090 acres. Compared to 1978, agriculture in the county today occurs on larger, fewer farms covering fewer acres.

The most common type of soil geography in Whitman County is very deep loess soils on uplands. These soils range in elevation from 1,200 to 3,000 feet and are mostly used for dryland farming. This group of soil associations makes up 64 percent of the County’s land area.

Very deep loess soils found in valleys are found in and alongside major drainageways. This soil association, known as the Palouse-Athena association, is composed of well drained, moderately permeable silt loams and makes up around 14 percent of the County.

Very deep to moderately deep loess and colluvium sediment soils are found on buttes at higher elevations. These soils are usually used for dryland farming, rangeland, woodland, and wildlife habitat and make up around 3 percent of the County.

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In the Channeled Scablands landscape found in western and northwestern Whitman County, very shallow to moderately deep soils in loess and glacial outwash make up around 12 percent of the County and are used primarily for rangeland and wildlife habitat.

The last major soil group, composed of shallow to very deep soils formed in eroded basalt and found in the Snake River canyon, is 7 percent of the County and is used mainly for rangeland and wildlife habitat.

Designation of Agricultural Land

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires all counties and cities, including partially planning jurisdictions like Whitman County, to designate, where appropriate, agricultural lands not already characterized by urban growth that have long-term commercial significance RCW 36.70A.170(1)(a).

Designation of agricultural land in Whitman County shall be as follows:

Prime Agricultural Land: Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is as follows:

Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. [...] The soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for the soil to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when proper management, including water management, and acceptable farming

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methods are applied. In general, prime farmland has an adequate and dependable supply of moisture from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. The water supply is dependable and of adequate quality. Prime farmland is permeable to water and air. It is not excessively erodible or saturated with water for long periods, and it either is not frequently flooded during the growing season or is protected from flooding. Slope ranges mainly from 0 to 6 percent. ([NRCS Web Soil Survey – Soil Data Access Documentation](#))

Some soil units are considered prime farmland if certain constraints, like flooding hazards, are overcome onsite.

When the Whitman County Code or this Plan references prime farmland, this definition shall apply.

Farmland of Statewide Importance: Soil units considered “Farmland of Statewide Importance” do not meet all the criteria for prime farmland but are capable of producing similar yields when appropriately managed and if conditions are favorable. Farmland with this designation, while often steep in nature, is still regarded as highly productive farmland in Whitman County.

Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance: Whitman County classifies all productive agricultural land outside of the Pullman urban growth area (including all prime farmland and farmland

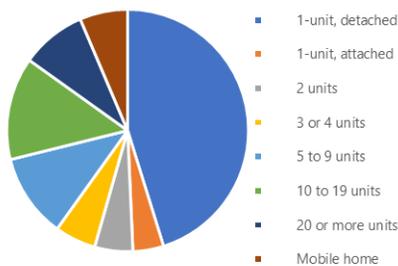
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of statewide importance) as agricultural land of long-term commercial significance. These lands are regulated by the County's Agricultural District zoning regulations.

Residential Land

Residential land uses in Whitman County include urban residential uses (including multifamily) in the cities, mostly in the Pullman and Colfax areas, rural residential homes in the vast agricultural areas of the County, and some clustered residential lots in the outskirts of Pullman.

Overall, around 45 percent of residential units in Whitman County are single-family detached homes. An additional 25 percent are in small multifamily structures with fewer than twenty units. (Note: this includes the primary population centers of Pullman and Colfax, which contain nearly all the attached housing in Whitman County. Unincorporated Whitman County has no multifamily housing units.)¹



Source: 2015-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

Figure 6: Units in Structure, Whitman County 2015-2019

¹ 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

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Cluster Residential

Land zoned for cluster residential development in accordance with Whitman County Code and the policies in this Chapter can be found both within and outside the area governed by the tax sharing agreement with the City of Pullman (see Map 2). [See definition of tax sharing agreement in the [Economic Development Element](#), page 62]. Existing cluster developments can be found mostly, though not entirely, within the tax sharing area with Pullman, whereas all the undeveloped land identified as potential future cluster residential areas is found outside the tax sharing area. New cluster residential zones are prohibited within the area defined by the Whitman County and City of Pullman's Tax Sharing Agreement dated June 29, 2015.

There are currently 384 acres of cluster development approved or developed within the tax sharing area. An additional 141 acres lie outside the tax sharing area that are available for cluster development.

Cluster residential development was a subject of public engagement during the comprehensive planning process.

Rural Communities

The twelve unincorporated communities in Whitman County (listed on page 16 of this element) are home to a mix of residential and commercial uses. The zoning is a mixture of Rural Community Residential District (RCR), Rural Community Center District (RCC-1), Rural Community Commercial District (RCC-2), and the Agricultural District.

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Commercial and Industrial Land

Commercial and industrial land uses include office parks, lands operated by the Port of Whitman, and mineral extraction operations. This includes twenty-five permitted surface mines quarrying sand and gravel or rock and stone.

Approximately 204 acres of land zoned heavy commercial and 525 acres of land zoned light industrial are located within the Pullman tax sharing area. Most of this land is adjacent to or near the airport.

The Pullman-Moscow Corridor continues to be a priority area for commercial and industrial development in unincorporated Whitman County. This Plan contains several goals and policies in this Element and in the Economic Development Element to encourage continued commercial and industrial development within the Pullman-Moscow Corridor.

The County is also home to twelve Commercial Agricultural Commodity Warehouse/storage businesses. These uses continue to play a vital role in the County's agricultural economy and are located at key points along rail and road transportation corridors. These facilities are mapped in the Transportation Element.

Heavy commercial uses in Whitman County include businesses providing sales or services related to transportation, construction, warehousing, or agriculture in locations where these uses are likely to have minimal impact on surrounding uses.

Designation of Mineral Resource Lands

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires all counties and cities, including partially planning jurisdictions like Whitman County, to designate, where appropriate, mineral resource lands not already characterized by urban growth that have long-term significance for the extraction of minerals RCW 36.70A.170(1)(c).

Mineral resources are needed in Whitman County for roads and utilities as well as for residential, commercial, and industrial development. The monetary value of mineral resources has risen, and the development of new quarries and extraction sites will be necessary to build and maintain essential infrastructure. As existing quarries and mineral mines are depleted, development of new deposits or expansion of existing operations may be detrimental to adjacent land values and do not make attractive neighbors. The resulting higher value of construction materials also means higher prices for homes, public infrastructure, and transportation. The need for sand, gravel, and rock will continue. The challenge is to protect known mineral deposits while utilizing them to serve the needs of an expanding population and future infrastructure development.

The intent of this section is to recognize and acknowledge the importance of mineral resource lands and related activities to the economic livelihood of Whitman County. It is important to preserve and encourage mineral resource uses as viable operations and to protect them from the encroachment

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of incompatible uses. This section also reflects Whitman County's compliance with the requirements of the GMA to identify and designate mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance.

All existing permitted sand and gravel extraction sites are designated as mineral lands of long-term commercial significance, shown on the "Mineral Resource Lands Map" (Map 3). These lands are approved as conditional uses or as administrative uses where waivers have been obtained from owners of any residence(s) within 1,000 feet of the boundaries of the property or zone.

Other areas where a location can be demonstrated as having a significant commercial supply and meeting the review guidelines below shall be designated as potential future mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance.

Areas can be classified as mineral resource lands based on site geology, commercial quality and volume of the resource, site topography, visual aesthetics, economic factors, compatibility with existing land uses, and land ownership patterns.

Institutional Land

Institutions, including Washington State University, play a key role in land use. The Washington State University campus takes up roughly 640 acres in the City of Pullman.

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy sources, including wind and solar power generation, are an increasingly important use of land in Whitman County. In 2012, the Palouse wind

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farm, a 105-megawatt wind project, was constructed along a series of ridgetops between SR-195 and the Town of Oakesdale, roughly parallel to Highway 271. Overall, Whitman County's wind potential is not as high as some other locations in the region, particularly along the Snake and Columbia Rivers. However, wind potential has already proven high enough (and the cost of developing wind power has come down enough) that it will likely make an economical secondary use that does not substantially interfere with agricultural uses.

Renewable energy development also includes investments aside from power generation. In particular, Whitman County supports investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure, battery storage technologies, and electrical grid improvements.

The Whitman County Comprehensive Plan supports renewable energy as an economic opportunity for landowners.

Railways and Rail-Banking

Railroads and the associated railbeds are essential transportation corridors in Whitman County. The County supports the active use of rail transportation in Whitman County, ~~and those measures needed to keep the railroads viable.~~

~~Railbanking is consistent with the Whitman County Comprehensive Plan. Should a railroad corridor be determined to no longer be a viable freight and rail transportation route, an objective evaluation must be conducted to consider the merits of abandonment versus preservation. Such~~

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~~evaluation shall protect the rights of private public interest in preservation of each individual rail corridor as to future use as a transportation or public infrastructure corridor. The County may employ any legal and ethical method to preserve essential corridors, including methods such as railbanking.~~

~~The Whitman County Comprehensive Plan supports the use of rail banking to preserve currently unused railroad corridors for future use while allowing other uses, including agricultural access and recreational trails, for example, to use those spaces on a temporary basis until such time as they are needed again for rail transport. This approach is preferable to permanent abandonment of railroad corridors.~~

Framework Goals

The following framework goals and land use goals and policies are not listed in any specific order or priorities but should be considered equally.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROTECTION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

All policies and decisions made by the County, and as guided by the Comprehensive Plan, will strive to protect

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~~property owners while also considering the fundamental private property rights of individuals and ensure that Whitman County land use policies and regulations balance the private property rights of all landowners to the degree possible.~~

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PRESERVE FARMS AND AGRICULTURAL CHARACTER

Preserve and protect the County's rural character, which includes productive agricultural lands, large open spaces, and sweeping views of the Palouse hills. This preservation of rural character shall not only include the County's scenic beauty but also the protection and sustainability of the rural way of life, providing opportunities for employment, income, and a tax base.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – EFFECTIVE LAND USE PLANNING

Develop countywide goals and policies that promote effective and consistent land use decisions that are responsive to local growth but also protect the unique character of Whitman County.

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Land Use Goals and Policies

Goal LU-1: Maintain policies that preserve productive agricultural land as a recognized, important part of Whitman County's social and economic base.

Policy LU-1.1 – The County should, to the greatest extent feasible, update the inventory of agricultural land, Prime Agricultural Land, and Farmland of Statewide Importance in the County in accordance with NRCS soil surveys.

Policy LU-1.2 – The County should encourage residential growth in designated unincorporated communities, areas adjacent to towns and cities, and those areas designated for Cluster Residential development.

Policy LU-1.3 – The County should allow residential land use on agricultural lands in the form of primary residences, secondary residential units on existing home sites, and short plats as allowed under the development regulations.

Policy LU-1.4 – The County should create a process within the development regulations to allow for additional rural residential uses, including secondary single-family structures and bunkhouses, within the footprint of existing home sites without a short plat mechanism to allow flexibility for farm residents and strengthen family farm enterprises.

Policy LU-1.5 – The County should ensure that any residential development is accessed from an improved County or State Road.

Policy LU-1.6 – The County should require that all levels of governments and their agencies consider the impact their programs and projects may have on agricultural activities and seek to minimize any impacts that threaten the viability of agriculture.

Policy LU-1.7 – The County may allow alternative forms of low-density residential development through Planned Residential Development zoning to preserve prime farmland and environmentally sensitive areas.

Policy LU-1.8 – The County should allow land in the Agricultural District to be rezoned to a different use only if it is consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan and with the criteria in the development regulations.

Goal LU-2: Allow and encourage development of compatible businesses in agricultural areas to serve farmers as well as to diversify employment opportunities in the region.

Policy LU-2.1 – The County should encourage creative, compatible, and beneficial use of resource lands other than agriculture to supplement the income of farm families. Such uses may include: tourism, mining, quarrying, boating, hunting/fishing, recreation, nursery, and renewable energy development.

Policy LU-2.2 – The County should allow and encourage home-based businesses as an accessory use in agricultural and rural

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residential areas through administrative use or conditional use permits, depending on the extent of potential impact on surrounding properties.

Policy LU-2.3 – The County should encourage the development of renewable energy facilities where appropriate and feasible.

Goal LU-3: Protect current and future mineral resource lands by minimizing conflicts between these uses and surrounding uses.

Policy LU-3.1 – The County will encourage the retention and protection of long-term mineral resource sites of commercial grade aggregate for new development, roads, and other uses.

Policy LU-3.2 – Mining and extraction operations will be sited and designed to minimize conflicts with adjacent land uses and to minimize impacts on the environment.

Policy LU-3.3 – The County should consider the current and future boundaries of proposed mineral extraction and quarry uses in determining the appropriate distance to nearby uses under the development regulations for these uses.

Policy LU-3.4 – The County should evaluate minor expansions of existing quarries of less than 10 percent of the current quarry site where the expansion does not fall within 1,000 feet of a residence as permitted under the existing conditional or administrative use permit.

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Policy LU-3.5 – Reclamation of mining and extraction sites is an integral part of mining operations and will be required and completed in a manner that will encourage future uses that are compatible with this Plan and any local comprehensive plans.

Goal LU-4: Encourage the development of new industrial and commercial uses consistent with the rural character of the County as a means of supporting the long-term economic health of communities.

Policy LU-4.1 – The County should encourage industrial and commercial uses in incorporated cities and towns or rural communities; within the Pullman-Moscow Corridor; adjacent to and within the Port of Whitman County's industrial areas; and in agricultural areas where appropriate.

Policy LU-4.2 – The County should encourage industrial and commercial development in areas already zoned and developed for those uses, including in the Pullman-Moscow Corridor and the Port of Whitman County sites.

Policy LU-4.3 – The County should require proposed industrial and commercial uses seeking a zoning change to allow said uses to locate on sites that meet the criteria below:

- With access to an improved County or State road;
- With sufficient area for large construction, parking, access, transportation infrastructure and

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storage, including snow removal and storage areas;

- With adequate area to permit protection of critical areas and archeological sites;
- With adequate access for police, fire, and emergency services;
- With an adequate water supply and sewage disposal system to serve the full development and operation of the planned uses; and
- Where the proposed zone change meets the criteria for a rezone outlined in the County's development regulations and is consistent with the other goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Goal LU-5: – Encourage cooperation and communication with economic development boards, government agencies, and interested organizations on a regular basis to coordinate commercial and industrial land use and development activities.

Policy LU-5.1 – New industrial and commercial sites developed by and/or in cooperation with the Port of Whitman County should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy LU-5.2 – The County should support the goals of the Port of Whitman County for economic diversification, opportunity, and stability county-wide.

Policy LU-5.3 – The County should support efforts by the Port of Whitman County and private broadband providers to expand availability of broadband internet service throughout Whitman County.

Policy LU-5.4 – The County should coordinate with the Port of Whitman County to ensure a balanced and economical multimodal transportation system serving agriculture, commerce, and industry for competitive industrial transport.

Goal LU-6: Provide basis for public and private decisions concerning siting of new heavy commercial land uses that may be desirable outside already developed, incorporated areas.

Policy LU-6.1 – The County should encourage heavy commercial uses within the Heavy Commercial zone in accordance with the goals and policies of this plan, including but not limited to agricultural productivity, potential for conflict with surrounding uses, and potential for impacts to environmental and cultural resources.

Goal LU-7: Promote a variety of industrial and commercial uses within the Pullman-Moscow Corridor.

Policy LU-7.1 – The County should continue supporting a mix of development for those areas zoned for commercial and industrial uses in the Pullman-Moscow Corridor, including retail, wholesale, and refined manufacturing.

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Policy LU-7.2 – The County should encourage continued public use and cooperative maintenance and improvements of the Bill Chipman Palouse Trail, including ensuring continuity of access to the trail at designated access points.

Goal LU-8: Minimize the impacts of major new facilities on adjacent uses.

Policy LU-8.1 – The County should monitor and coordinate closely with state and federal agencies in planning for major facilities, including transmission lines, highways, major transportation facilities, reservoirs and other water projects, and similar state and federal projects.

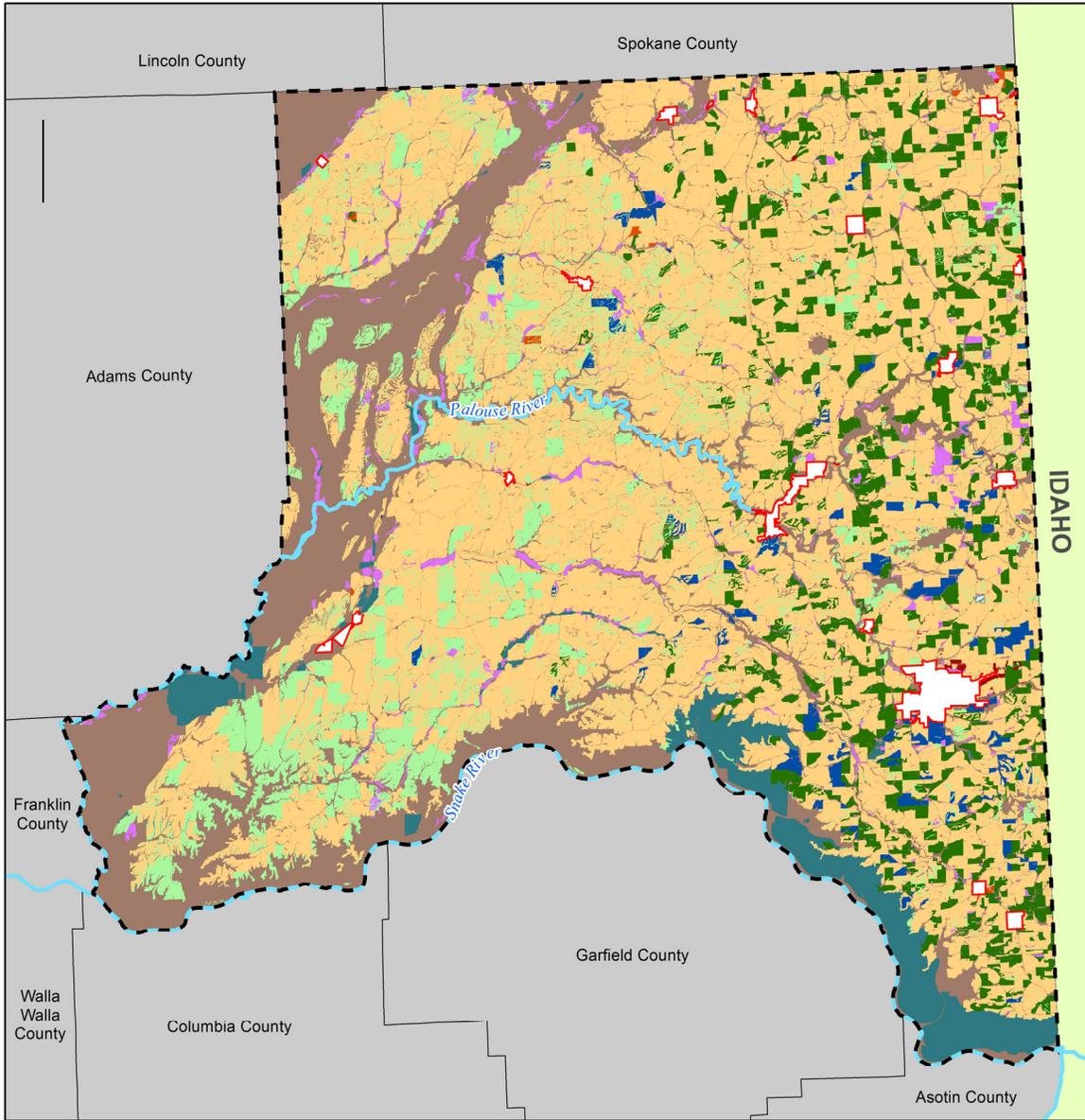
Goal LU-9: Smaller local public facilities constructed to serve local energy needs should be located to minimize impacts on adjacent uses, including agriculture and residences.

Policy LU-9.1 – The County should ensure that local facilities, including static transformers, storage facilities, and elements of the gas, power, and broadband transmission system, incorporate measures to minimize visual, noise, light, and traffic impacts when adjacent to residential uses.

Policy LU-9.2 – The County should ensure that local facilities proposed adjacent to agricultural land uses minimize impacts on farm access and practices.

Goal LU-10: Streamline permitting for communication facilities.

Policy LU-10.1 – The County should maintain its telecommunications regulations to ensure compliance with FCC regulations governing the permitting of small-cell wireless communications facilities and Fiber to the Home (FTTH) projects.

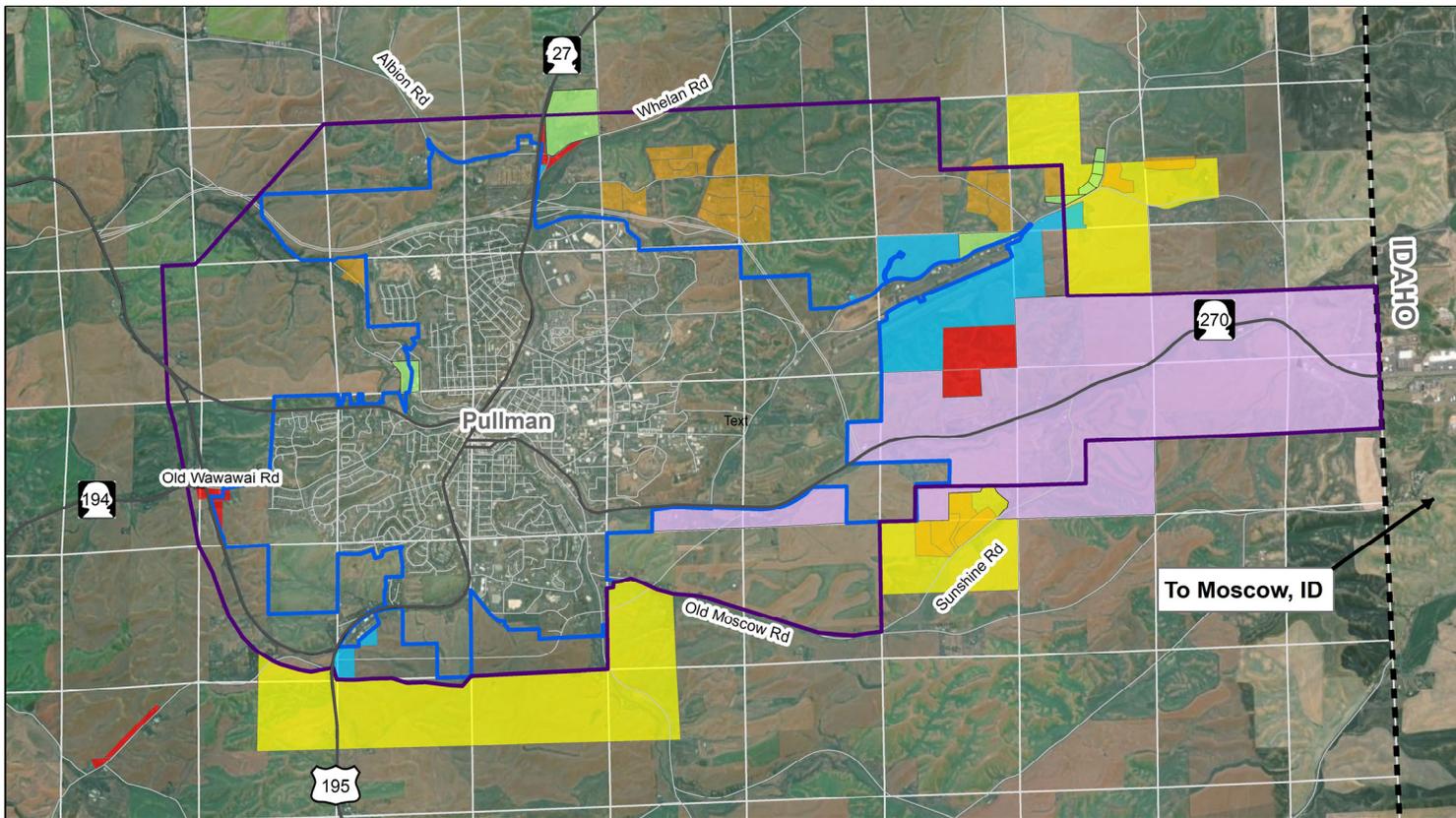


Legend

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|-----------|----------------|
| Cereal Grain | Herb | Oilseed | Vegetable | Stream/River |
| Commercial Tree | Nursery | Orchard | Vineyard | Whitman County |
| Developed | Seed | Other | Rangeland | City/Town |
| Hay/Silage | Turfgrass | Pasture | | |



Data Sources: NRAS (Natural Resource Assessment Section) Washington State Dept of Agriculture; Washington Dept of Ecology



Whitman County Zoning Map - Pullman Area

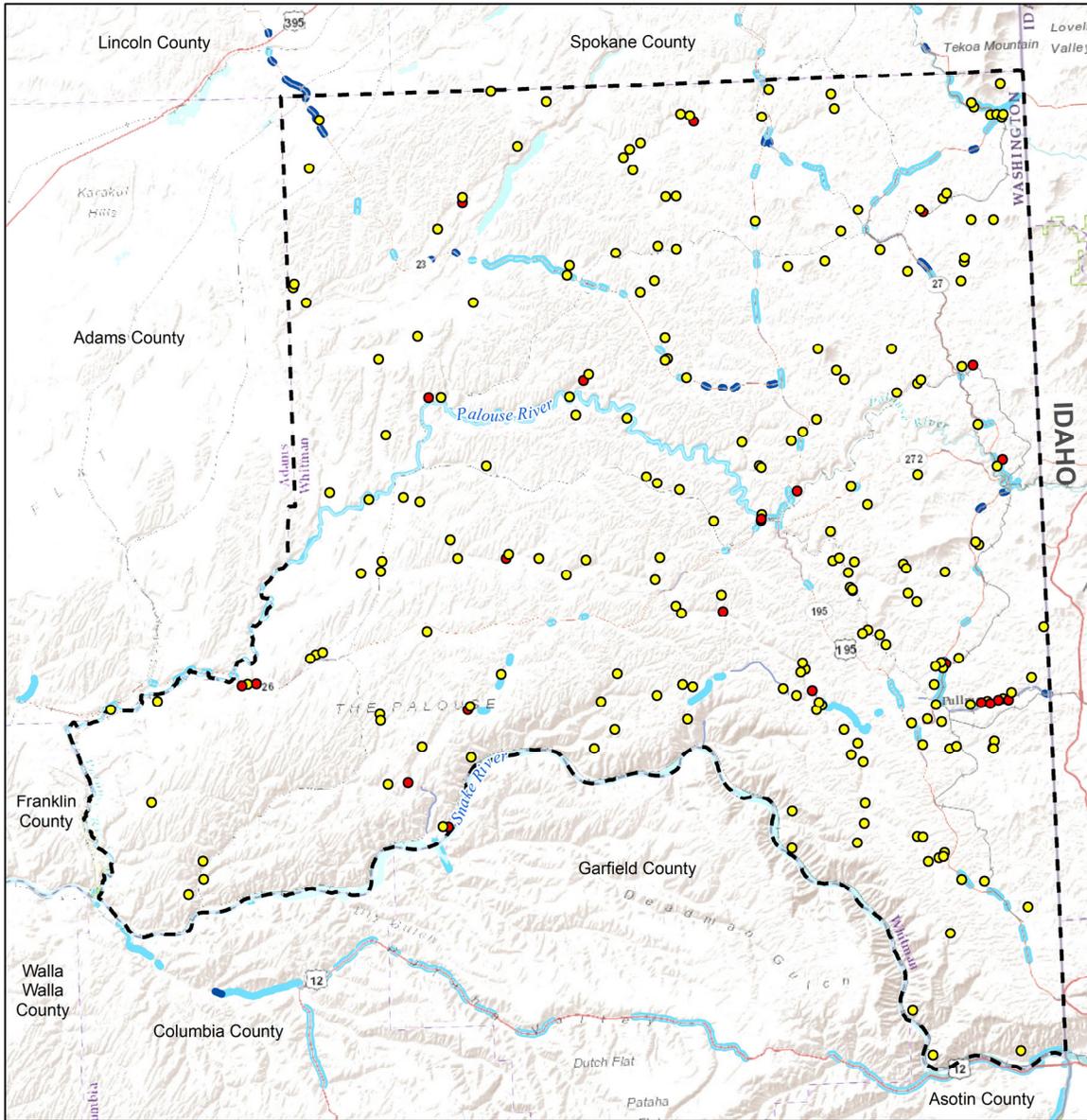


Legend

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Heavy Commercial - HC | Heavy Industrial - HI | Sections | Whitman County Boundary | State Highway |
| Light Industrial - LI | Cluster Residential Opportunity Zone | City Limit | Local Roads | US Highway |
| Cluster Residential District - CRD | Pullman Moscow Corridor | Tax Sharing Line | | |



Data Sources: Whitman County Planning Department
 (digitized by LDC, Inc.); WADNR; US Census
 Bureau TIGER Shapefiles
 Basemap: ESRI



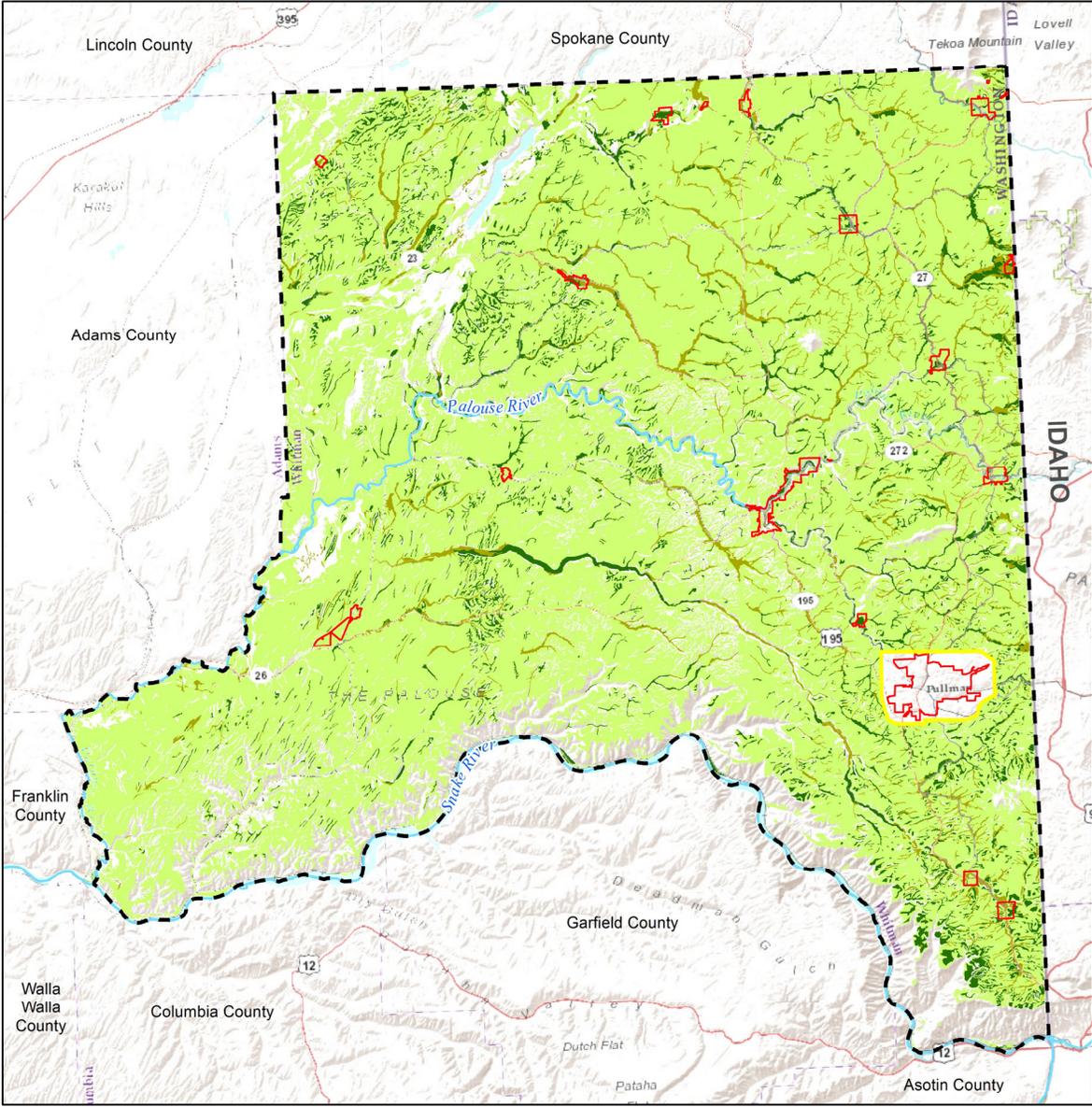
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Whitman County Critical Areas and Natural Resources

- Stream/River
- Wetland
- Whitman County
- Lake
- Mine
- Quarry

Data Sources:
 Mine and Quarry data from Whitman County CAD layer data
 Critical Areas Data from WA State DNR





Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Significance

Legend

- All prime farmland
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Prime farmland if managed
- Pullman Urban Growth Area
- City/Town
- Whitman County
- Stream/River

Sources: USDA-NRCS Web Soil Survey; Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Significance, Washington Dept of Ecology, City of Pullman Draft Comprehensive Plan digitized by LDC, Inc. Basemap: ESRI



Map 4

CHAPTER 3: TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

Purpose

As required by Washington statutes, the Transportation Element’s purpose is to document and analyze existing conditions and planned locations, functions, capacity, levels of service, environmental impacts, and mobility levels for both motorized and non-motorized travel throughout Whitman County. An additional purpose is to provide standards for reviewing the compatibility of State and local transportation investments of any kind with the Comprehensive Plan. This is done in coordination with the Washington State Department of Transportation as well as other regional planning partners and stakeholders. Lastly, this Element is the guiding document for the Board of County Commissioners linking the County’s Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), priority array, 10-year Unmet Needs Study and other similar long range transportation planning programs supporting construction, preservation and maintenance of roads, bridges, and other county transportation projects.

Introduction

The transportation infrastructure within Whitman County is a key element to providing safe and efficient travel for residents and commerce. It is essential that the County’s network of roads, bridges, rails, and waterways remain accessible. Ongoing maintenance, preservation, and safety of these facilities remains a priority so that

goods and services can be provided freely throughout Whitman County with minimal impacts to residents and businesses.

The transportation network within the County should ensure:

- Year-round road access on primary County roads and State highways connecting business centers (including farms) and residents both within and outside of Whitman County.
- Roads with sufficient rights-of-way and shoulders to allow for farming vehicles to travel safely with other vehicles and modes of transportation.
- Maintain connections to freight transportation systems such as regional rail lines and barge loading facilities on the Snake River.
- Reliable cost-effective solutions to support both personal and public transportation options.
- Minimize conflicts between incompatible types of transportation uses (i.e., discourage bicycle paths in areas that may conflict with freight traffic).

Findings

Highways/Roads

U.S. Route 195

U.S. Route 195 (U.S. 195) is the primary north-south transportation route in Whitman County and serves as the backbone of the movement of goods and people throughout the County and the Palouse region. The highway, considered to be the busiest in southeastern Washington, is classified as a Highway of Statewide Significance (HSS) and a T2 freight route as identified by Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). U.S. 195, which is part of the Palouse Scenic Byway (further described below), is also classified as a major arterial by Whitman County. The roadway is primarily two lanes through much of the County with several passing lanes along the corridor north of Colfax. The highway is four lanes within the City of Colfax and extending a short distance north and three lanes a short distance south of Colfax.

There is a short, approximately one-half mile long spur, U.S. Route 195 Spur (more commonly known as the Genesee Spur), that connects U.S. 195 and U.S. Route 95 in Idaho, the primary north-south highway connecting Lewiston and Moscow, Idaho.

State Route 26

State Route 26 (SR 26) is the primary east-west transportation route in Whitman County and stretches across the state between U.S. 195 (Colfax) and I-90 (at Vantage in Grant County). The highway, considered to be the second busiest east-west highway in eastern Washington, is

classified as a HSS as identified by WSDOT, and is also part of the Palouse Scenic Byway.

SR 26 is entirely two lanes throughout the County. However, there are a number of projects anticipated along the route, one of which is scheduled for 2022 (westward climbing lanes from Colfax to Dusty).

State Route 270

State Route 270 (SR 270), known locally as the Pullman-Moscow Highway, is the primary route connecting the two cities of Pullman and Moscow, Idaho. The highway is one of the busiest highways in all of southeastern Washington, primarily because the route serves as a major commercial and commuting route between two universities, WSU & University of Idaho, which are large employment centers. Zoning-wise, both north and south of SR 270 is designated as the North and South Pullman-Moscow Corridor District, which is the only area in the County zoned for commercial, industrial, and retail development. The highway was expanded as a four-lane arterial in 2007 and is also classified as a Highway of Statewide Significance (HSS) as identified by WSDOT.

A short, two-mile, two-lane segment of SR 270 (Davis Way) connects US 195 with SR 27 (Grand Avenue) in downtown Pullman.

State Route 27

State Route 27 is also a north-south route through Whitman County, traversing between Pullman and Spokane Valley and serving as the primary commuter and commercial route for the towns of Palouse, Garfield, Oakesdale, and Tekoa. The route is entirely two lanes and is part of the Palouse

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Scenic Byway.

Other State Routes

Other two-lane State Routes include 23, 127, 128, 194, 271, 272 and 27. State Routes 194, 271 and 272 are designated as part of Palouse Scenic Byway. Each of these highways are much less traveled compared with the other routes mentioned above and are all considered rural major collectors.

County Roads

Overall, there are approximately 1,900 centerline miles of County owned and maintained roads in Whitman County. Paved County roads primarily function as minor collectors between major collectors and principal arterials. There are approximately four hundred miles of paved roads (non-state/US highways) maintained by the County. They essentially act as a local highway system serving rural populations.

There are also 1,100 miles of gravel roads throughout the County. These roadways are a critical part of the overall transportation network for the movement of people, locally produced agricultural goods, and goods and materials consumed by residents and local industries. These gravel roads are also vital connections to the many rural residents throughout the County.

There are approximately four hundred miles of seasonal dirt (or unsurfaced) roads throughout the County. These roads serve as seasonal access to agricultural lands and are critical for seeding, fertilizing, harvesting and other agricultural activities. These roads are closed to all traffic from November 15 through March 15 every winter.

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As part of the maintenance and upkeep of all roads within the County, Whitman County owns and operates several sites used to support the transportation system, including seven equipment maintenance shops, approximately two dozen active quarries, and several material stockpile sites. These sites account for approximately 171 acres of land.

Palouse Scenic Byway

The Palouse Scenic Byway, which is part of the Washington State Scenic and Recreational Highway system, was designated in 2003 and follows seven different highways throughout the Palouse region. The highways included as part of the Byway include:

- SR 26 from the Adams County line to Colfax;
- SR 27 from Pullman to Tekoa;
- SR 194 from Almota to Pullman;
- US 195 from the Idaho state line to Spokane County line;
- SR 271 from Oakesdale to Rosalia;
- SR 272 from Colfax to Palouse;
- County Roads: Scharpenberg and LaCrosse Airport Roads.

The Byway, sponsored by the Pullman Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center, serves, and promotes communities throughout the Palouse, highlighting many of the towns and communities as well as the many parks and natural features found throughout Whitman County.

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Air, Water, Rail, Land Transportation

Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport

The Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport (PMRA), located between Pullman and Moscow north of SR 270, serves as the primary passenger and commercial airport in Whitman County providing daily passenger air service to/from Seattle and Boise. PMRA plans to add additional routes in the future.

It also serves as a commercial hub for a number of other businesses and services, including Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting, Life Flight Network, Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories (SEL), Aero Craft, Inc., Inter-State Aviation, and Ranch Aero, Inc.

Port of Whitman Business Air Center

The Port of Whitman Business Air Center is a small general aviation airport and industrial park located one mile east of Colfax, south of SR 26 and accessed directly by Colfax Airport Road. The airport is a public use facility and offers a runway for general aviation aircraft and ultra-light aircraft. Occupying the airport property there are two 6-bay t-hangars and multiple Port-owned pole buildings. Business occupants at the Business Air Center include Airport RV & Mini Storage, Cochran Partnership, Ensley Farms, McGuire Air Service, Hennigar Trucking, Inland Crop Care, Joseph's Grainery and TLC Flying.

Ports of Almota, Central Ferry, and Wilma

There are several water ports located along the Snake River in southeastern Washington

that provide shipping and other services that support the many grain, chemical, wood, and other commodity companies who ship their goods by river barge. These ports are made possible by the dams on the lower Snake and Columbia Rivers operated by the US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE). Three of these ports along the Snake are located in Whitman County, all of which are operated by the Port of Whitman County – Ports of Almota, Central Ferry and Wilma. Each of them serves several tenants, all of which play a key role in the Whitman County and Washington State economies. All three Snake River-based port facilities in Whitman County provide low-cost shipping options to transport Whitman County-produced commodities to the larger West Coast ports and the Pacific Rim. Barging services help transport goods to others at a fraction of the cost of transporting goods via trucks. It also significantly reduces the impacts of truck traffic on local highways and County roads and reduces pollution from “over-highway” vehicle emissions.

Palouse River and Coulee City (PCC) Rail System

Rail service over the years has declined significantly, with multiple operators either consolidating or completely discontinuing service within Whitman County. One that remains is the Palouse River and Coulee City (PCC) Rail System. The PCC is the longest short-line freight rail system in Washington State, with a total of 297 miles serving five eastern Washington counties including Whitman County. WSDOT purchased all three lines serving the PCC in 2007. Preserving and maintaining these rail lines

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into the future helps Whitman County agricultural producers get goods to larger interstate rail lines and on to regional and international markets. Rail services (such as a single train) can replace several hundred trucks which helps reduce the wear and tear on local and state highways, as well as reduce pollution generated from “over-highway” vehicles.

The PCC Rail Authority - An intergovernmental entity formed by Grant, Lincoln, Spokane, and Whitman Counties - oversees the business and economic development portions of the operating leases for the PCC lines. Private railroads contract with WSDOT to operate each of the branches. The Palouse River and Coulee City Railroad operates the PV Hooper Branch (between Thornton and Winona and from Hooper through Winona to Colfax); the Eastern Washington Gateway Railroad operates the CW Branch (between Coulee City to Cheney); and the Washington and Idaho Railway operates the P & L Branch (between Pullman and Moscow, Idaho, and Palouse to Princeton, Idaho).

Land Freight/Trucking

Land freight has traditionally been, and continues to be, the dominant mode for transporting goods to and from Whitman County. Safe and reliable facilities are necessary to facilitate the efficient and reliable delivery of goods and services to businesses and residents throughout the County. Therefore, it is considered a high priority that a regular and consistent road preservation and maintenance program is necessary to keep County roads and

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highways suitable and safe for the type of traffic to support commerce and public/private travel.

The Washington State Transportation Commission developed the Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS) which classifies highways, county roads, and city streets. Under this program, the County has identified haul routes that are capable of handling heavy freight vehicles as well as agricultural equipment.

Public Transit

Due to the rural nature of Whitman County, public transportation is not feasible throughout the County at large. However, there are several transportation service providers who operate within Whitman County.

Council on Aging and Human Services (COAST)

COAST Transportation Services operates safe and reliable transportation for all residents within Whitman County and surrounding counties who are no longer able to drive but need access to basic necessities and activities. Operating similar to a dial-a-ride service, COAST ensures that individuals who live throughout the rural areas in and around Whitman County continue to go about their daily activities, continue to be a part of their community and do not feel isolated. There are no fares collected, nor any income restrictions for their services.

Pullman Transit

Pullman Transit, founded in 1979, is the transit operator that primarily serves

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Pullman and Washington State University. There are a total of twenty-seven vehicles ranging from vans to full-size diesel and hybrid coach buses which serve Pullman and WSU campus with daily service. Pullman Transit is primarily a “fixed-route” provider.

Regional Services

Wheatland Express, part of the Starline Collection, is a privately owned charter bus operator that provides service to/from the Spokane International Airport, to/from Seattle, as well as private charter operations.

Northwestern Trailways operates intercity buses between multiple cities throughout Washington and Idaho. The route through Whitman County connects Spokane, Pullman, Moscow, Lewiston, and Boise.

Amtrak does not serve Whitman County directly. However, there is Amtrak bus service provided from Pullman to Spokane where there is daily Amtrak rail service.

Non-Motorized System

Non-motorized transportation routes in Whitman County include:

- City of Pullman Pedestrian & Bicycle Circulation Routes
- Bill Chipman Palouse Trail
- Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail
- Columbia Plateau Trail
- Snake River Trail at Boyer Park
- Whitman County Parks
 - Kamiak Butte trails
 - Klemgard Park trails
 - Colfax Trail
 - Wawawai Park interpretive trail
 - [Rose Creek Preserve Nature Trail](#)

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- [Elberton Park trails](#)

Interjurisdictional Coordination

The Transportation Element should be prepared through a process that includes not only public participation but also intergovernmental coordination.

Collaboration should occur between WSDOT, PRTPO, Cities of Pullman and Colfax, the various small towns of Whitman County, Port of Whitman County, Pullman Transit, and other community stakeholders.

Palouse Regional Transportation Planning Organization (PRTPO)

The Palouse Regional Transportation Planning Organization (PRTPO) is a regional transportation planning agency that serves Whitman County, Asotin County, Columbia County, and Garfield County. The PRTPO is funded by Washington State, whose goals are:

represents cities, counties, WSDOT regions, transit agencies, ports, and large employers in the region. Each of these agencies appoints representatives to serve on the Palouse RTPO Transportation Policy Board. The Board engages, participates, and facilitates regional transportation discussions to provide for unified regional transportation planning for the four counties. The Palouse RTPO also acts as a regional transportation council to provide input on local, regional, state, and federal transportation needs and projects throughout the region. The

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PRTPO performs the following tasks for the region:

- Prepare a long-range Regional Transportation Plan for four counties
- Certify that the PRTPO Plans are made consistent with the countywide planning policies and the transportation element of Whitman County
- Assemble and maintain a six-year Regional Transportation Improvement Program
- Prepare a Regionally Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Plan (CPT-HSTP) every four years, with two-year interim updates to help local agencies fund public transportation services.
- Award and administer federally funded Transportation Alternative (TA funds) projects throughout the region.
- Assist local governments in transportation planning projects, grants, funding resources, and provide various technical assistance if requested.

Transportation Planning

Whitman County's long-term strategies for managing the number of transportation issues are regularly monitored and evaluated. The background technical information, goals and policies provided in

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this Element establish the basis for Whitman County's Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is updated by the Whitman County Engineer and Public Works Department on an annual basis. The following areas of focus are highlighted which serve as the foundation of the TIP:

- Maintenance and preservation of the County road system throughout all areas of the County
- Identification and ranking projects for funding that help guide the improvement of goods and services mobility throughout the County
- Provision for local transportation services addressing the needs of all user groups and ages throughout Whitman County
- Safe and functional multi-modal transportation facilities and other infrastructure, including those for commerce, freight, and public/private use
- Protection of the environment through reasonable and effective transportation policies
- Intergovernmental coordination of efforts at state, regional and local levels
- Compatibility between land use and transportation policy

Level of Service (LOS)

Level of service (LOS) is a term used to qualitatively describe the operating

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conditions of a roadway based on factors such as speed, travel time, maneuverability, delay, and safety. The level of service of a facility is designated with a letter, A to F, with A representing the best operating conditions and F the worst. Whitman County's adopted level of service standards are consistent with the standards established by the Washington State Department of Transportation.

WSDOT has adopted a LOS standard of "C" for all major roads, bridges and intersections as defined by the latest version of the Highway Capacity Manual (6th Edition, 2016). WSDOT establishes LOS standards for State facilities, of which all state highways within Whitman County are currently designated (at the time of this writing) at LOS "C" or better.

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Federal Functional Classification System

The Federal Functional Classification System as adopted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and as identified on the WSDOT Functional Classification Map, is used to identify functional classification of County roads. The Federal Functional Classification (FFC) system, last updated in 2013, is shown in Figure 5 below.

Whitman County Access Classifications

Whitman County's classification system is a system developed to implement access management, which is a technique for protecting the carrying capacity of roadways and improving safety on the County roads. Through access management, disruptions to through traffic are minimized by eliminating unnecessary driveways/accesses, spacing access points, managing turning movements, and other measures. Managing access is a way of limiting access in a more flexible way that is less costly to taxpayers.

Federal Functional Class Codes		
FFC Description	NEW FFC Code	Previous FFC Code
Rural Interstate	1	01
Rural Other Freeways / Expressways	2	(did not exist pre 2010)
Rural Other Principal Arterial	3	02
Rural Minor Arterial	4	06
Rural Major Collector	5	07
Rural Minor Collector	6	08
Rural Local Access	7	09
Urban Interstate	1	11
Urban Other Freeways / Expressways	2	12
Urban Other Principal Arterial	3	14
Urban Minor Arterial	4	16
Urban Major Collector	5	17
Urban Minor Collector	6	18 (did not exist pre 2010)
Urban Local Access	7	19

Figure 7. Federal Functional Class Codes. Washington State Department of Transportation, Guidelines for Amending Functional Classification in Washington State. October 2013

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The five (5) access management “classes” assigned to County roadways, numbered from Class I to V, reflect the various roadway environments. Factors considered in identifying “class” designation include, but are not limited to: traffic, volume, speed limit, adjacent land uses, functional classification, existing access density and conditions, and safety.

Class	Description
I	All weather State routes, FFC 4 Rural Minor Arterial or better; WSDOT/County access control measures
II	Improved all weather County roadway, FFC 5 Rural Major Collector or better
III	Improved roadway with paved surface and drainage, FFC 6 Rural Minor Collector or better
IV	Improved roadway with gravel, typically FFC 6 Rural Minor Collector, or sometimes FFC 7 Local Access
V	Unimproved dirt roadway, FFC 7 Local access (Primitive road – No warning signs)

Figure 8. Access Management Classes, Whitman County.

As land use development occurs, both within incorporated and unincorporated areas, the County should continually monitor impacts to both local and state highways to ensure that LOS remains at a consistent level. If development and/or

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other impacts occur that would cause a reduction to the current LOS, the County shall determine the appropriate course of action to mitigate such impacts through coordination with other local and state agencies. Concurrent with the goal of maintaining functional transportation corridors, the County recognizes that a primary goal is to grant reasonable and safe access to private property along the road system.

Road and Bridge Monitoring

The County regularly evaluates the condition and function of the County road and bridge system through the following resources:

Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) – Developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the HPMS is used to assess highway conditions and estimate national highway investment needs.

State of Washington Inventory of Bridge and Structure (SWIBS) – The State’s bridge inventory and inspection criteria system that assists in determining improvement thresholds and funding prioritization

Washington State County Transportation Metrics (GISMO, standing for GIS-based Mobility). GISMO, operated by the County Road Administration Board (CRAB), is a comprehensive road inventory and management system based within a Geographic Information System (GIS) framework. It enhances a county’s ability to make quality decisions through consistent, equitable, and defensible geographically-

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based management plans and operations. The systematic application of sound business logic, embedded in GISMO ensures accountability in county road departments, and assist counties in improving the predictable movement of goods and people throughout the County and Washington State.

Washington State Pavement Management System (WSPMS) – A method for prioritizing maintenance of road surfaces by systematically analyzing pavement life cycles.

County Rights-of-Way

Because of the agricultural industry, most, if not all, of Whitman County's roads accommodate several types of farming vehicles and equipment. To provide safe and reliable access for these, the maintenance of the non-travelled portions of the rights-of-way along all highways in Whitman County is just as important as the primary travel lanes.

Whitman County uses the transportation planning process to identify system needs throughout the County to provide adequate transportation facilities upgrades and services that meet current and future travel needs. The County's policy, adopted by Whitman County Board of County Commissioners, entitled *Accommodation of Utilities on County Road Right-of-Way and Land for Whitman County* (WAC 136.40, Resolution 046041), is periodically monitored, and adjusted to ensure rights-of-way are protected from significant negative impacts from utilities and other

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facilities that are constructed in or near County rights-of-way. Utilities are allowed in the rights-of-way through franchise agreements or specific use permits.

Framework Goals

The following framework goals and transportation goals and policies are not listed in any specific order or priorities but should be considered equally.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES

Through innovative planning approaches, interagency coordination, and responsible fiscal policy, provide for effective, supportive, and well-thought-out services to residents across the County.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROMOTE AND IMPROVE MOBILITY OPTIONS

Provide for a safe and reliable transportation network that enables residents, workers, commerce, and tourists to efficiently travel throughout and across rural Whitman County and its communities. Continue to explore and improve upon a variety of mobility options that include, but are not limited to automobiles, public and private transit, bicycles, and pedestrian.

Goals and Policies

GOAL T-1 – SAFE AND RELIABLE MULTI-MODAL HIGHWAY AND COUNTY ROAD NETWORK

Policy T-1.1 – Recognize the needs of all transportation system users in the County, including motor vehicles, freight, bicyclists, pedestrians, and public transportation.

TRANSPORTATION

Policy T-1.2 – Ensure the transportation needs of all types of rural users, including farming vehicles and other heavy equipment are met through ongoing maintenance and access to all County rights-of-way.

Policy T-1.3 – Continually coordinate with WSDOT and other agencies to monitor and improve traffic safety of highways and intersections at County facilities.

GOAL T-2 – MAINTAIN COUNTY ROAD FACILITIES TO ENSURE CONTINUED FUNCTION AND MOBILITY OF GOODS AND SERVICES

Policy T-2.1 – Maintain and improve the County's extensive state highway and County road system at a level adequate to the serve the needs of each area of the County, including movement of agricultural and other products, access to County parks and Port district facilities, industrial and commercial sites, Washington State University, and existing communities.

Policy T-2.2 – Prioritize cost-effective maintenance and preservation of County transportation facilities (roads, trails, paths, rail corridors, airports, etc.) to ensure long-term life span.

Policy T-2.3 – Maintain access to all major County road facilities in all weather conditions.

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GOAL T-3 – PROVIDE SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE NON-MOTORIZED ROUTES SUCH AS BICYCLE PATHS AND TRAILS

Policy T-3.1 – Multi-modal facilities should be designed to reduce conflicts and hazards where bicycle, equestrian, and pedestrians use major State and County roadways.

Policy T-3.2 – Priority should be given for improvements to routes where significant bicycle and other usage already exist and continue to exist.

Policy T-3.3 - Support and encourage construction of non-motorized paths between communities and economic centers to provide alternative transportation routes.

Policy T-3.4 – Designs for road improvements shall be evaluated for their ability to decrease conflicts between all transportation modes and hazards to travelers.

GOAL T-4 – DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A MULTI-MODAL REGIONAL FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM TO SERVE AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES IN THE COUNTY

Policy T-4.1 – Encourage and support freight-friendly transportation modes such as rail or barge systems wherever possible. Encourage businesses that generate a significant amount of freight to locate near railroad lines or barge transportation services.

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Policy T-4.2 – Develop an identification and inventory system to periodically collect and analyze traffic data on County roads. Use data to identify roadway condition deterioration rates and locations caused from light and heavy vehicle traffic. This system should be incorporated into budgetary and roadway improvement programs to assist in prioritizing capital improvement projects and programs.

Policy T-4.3 – Through education, public involvement, law enforcement and signage, encourage the consolidation of heavy vehicle traffic onto designated haul routes.

Policy T-4.4 – Use designated haul routes to develop priorities for road improvements that are financially feasible and cost effective. Whitman County will endeavor, when feasible, to design, construct, and maintain these routes to handle heavy truck traffic.

Policy T-4.5 – Emphasize and implement minimum design and construction standards for all-season access and public internal roads in industrial and commercial areas on designated Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS) and haul routes.

GOAL T-5 – MAINTAIN A SAFE PULLMAN-MOSCOW HIGHWAY (SR 270) CORRIDOR

Policy T-5.1 – Promote safe traffic conditions along the Pullman-Moscow Highway (SR 270) between Pullman and the Idaho state line.

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Policy T-5.2 – Coordinate with County Engineer, Parks Director, Planning staff and other agencies, organizations and interested parties in reviewing capacity and safety needs and improvements along the corridor as development continues.

Policy T-5.3 – Review and modify development standards, as necessary, to minimize and/or prevent increased access directly to and from SR 270 from individual properties. Where appropriate, consider alternative access points to the highway, such as frontage roads.

GOAL T-6 – ENCOURAGE LAND USE TYPES, MIXES, AND DENSITIES THAT PROMOTE EFFICIENT MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Policy T-6.1 – Encourage efficient and orderly development of properties and utilities by identifying and evaluating properties that are conducive to mutual planning through reciprocal cooperative agreements. This includes those areas around Pullman that are identified as residential cluster areas and the Pullman Tax Sharing Agreement.

Policy T-6.2 – Encourage development that is consistent with the Land Use Element which reduces conflicts, minimizes the need for expansion of the County road system, and maintains the same level of service for road facilities.

Policy T-6.3 – Review all proposed land use development proposals for consistency with the transportation system. Encourage

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placement of residential, commercial, and industrial uses in areas with existing access to appropriate infrastructure to support such uses.

GOAL T-7 – PROTECT AND SUPPORT EXISTING AIR TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES IN WHITMAN COUNTY

Policy T-7.1 – Existing airports, specifically the Port of Whitman Business Air Center and the Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport, shall be protected from encroachment by incompatible land uses and developments. In facilitating orderly and compatible development, encourage the development of long-range master plans for airport facilities and implementation of the Airport Landing Zone Overlay District (ALO).

Policy T-7.2 – Sites for new airstrips and airports shall be evaluated for safety and impacts on existing land uses as defined in the development standards section of the Zoning Ordinance.

Policy T-7.3 – Commercial and industrial uses near or adjacent to airport facilities should be considered compatible if they do not conflict with aircraft operations.

GOAL T-8 – SUPPORT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO POPULATIONS IN NEED

Policy T-8.1 – Support organizations and programs (i.e., COAST) which provide transportation options for groups in Whitman County, such as the elderly, who

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may not have the same access to transportation as the general population.

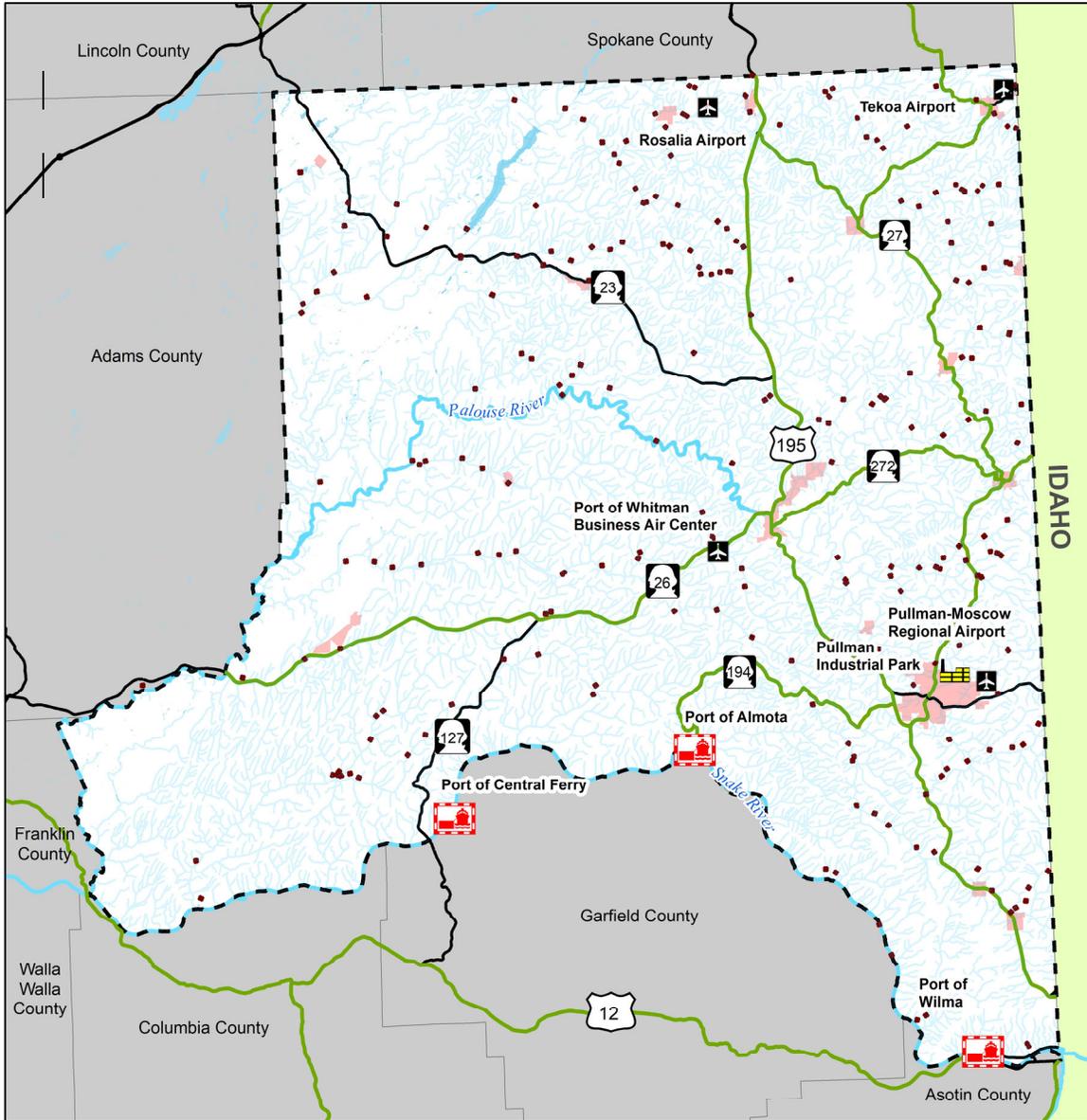
Policy T-8.2 – Collaborate with other rural counties, cities, towns and the States of Idaho and Washington to seek and develop common solutions to the transportation needs of the region's elderly and disabled.

GOAL T-9 – PARTICIPATE IN STATE AND REGIONAL PLANNING FOR TRANSPORTATION FACILITY NEEDS AND FUNDING WITHIN WHITMAN COUNTY.

Policy T-9.1 – State highway planning should reflect the priorities and constraints identified in local planning and public works programming. Primary state highways running through Whitman County (i.e., SR 26, SR 270, US 195) should remain top funding priorities for safety and mobility improvements.

Policy T-9.2 – Continue active coordination and communications with State transportation and local agencies including: WSDOT, Whitman County Public Works Department, Port of Whitman County, unincorporated rural communities, incorporated cities and towns, adjacent counties, towns, cities, state agencies and Washington State University.

Policy T-9.3 – Where appropriate, collaborate with the Palouse Regional Transportation Planning Organization (PRTPO) to help promote and improve local and regional, transportation planning needs and projects in Whitman County.

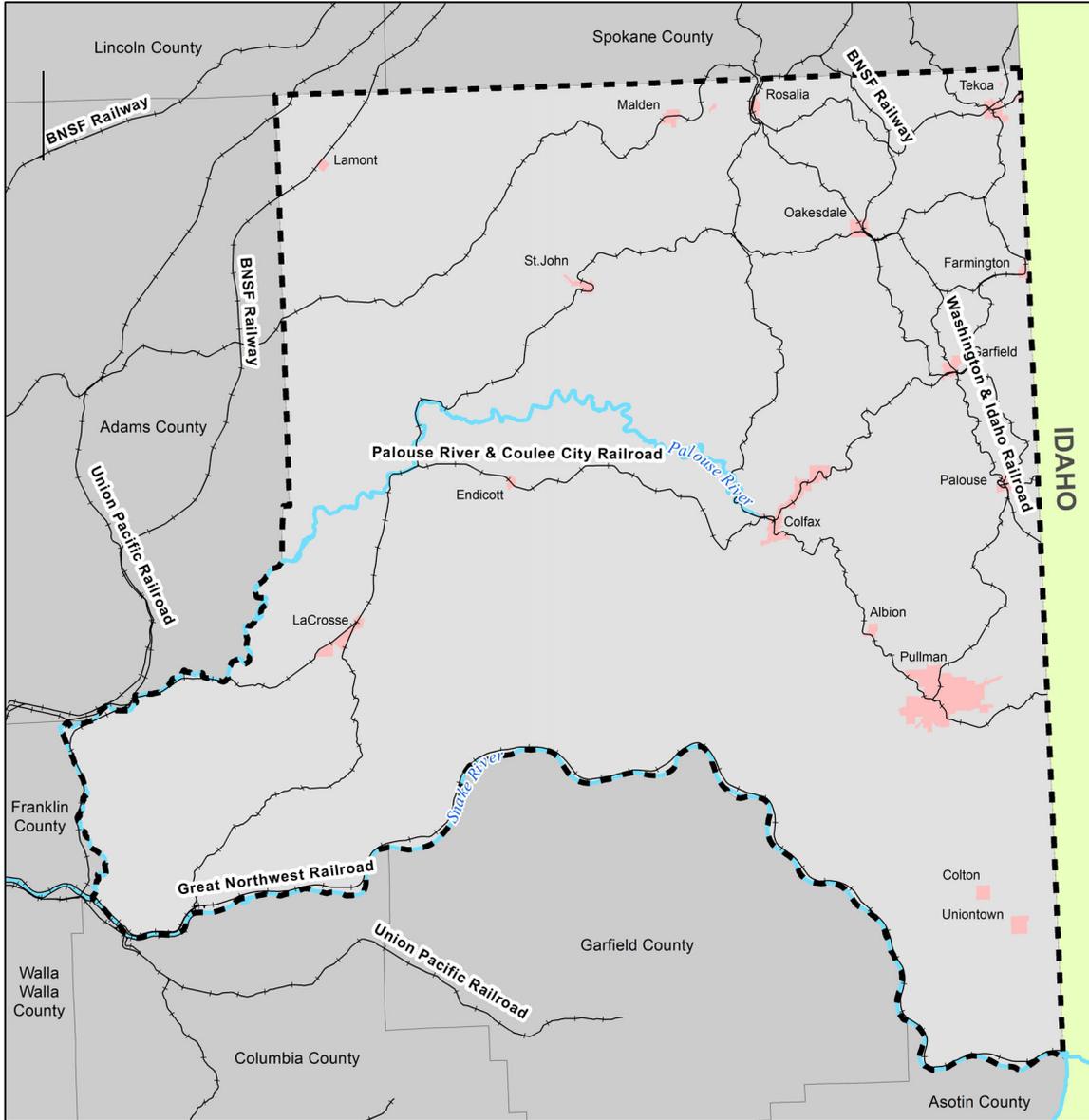


Whitman County Road Transportation and Port Map

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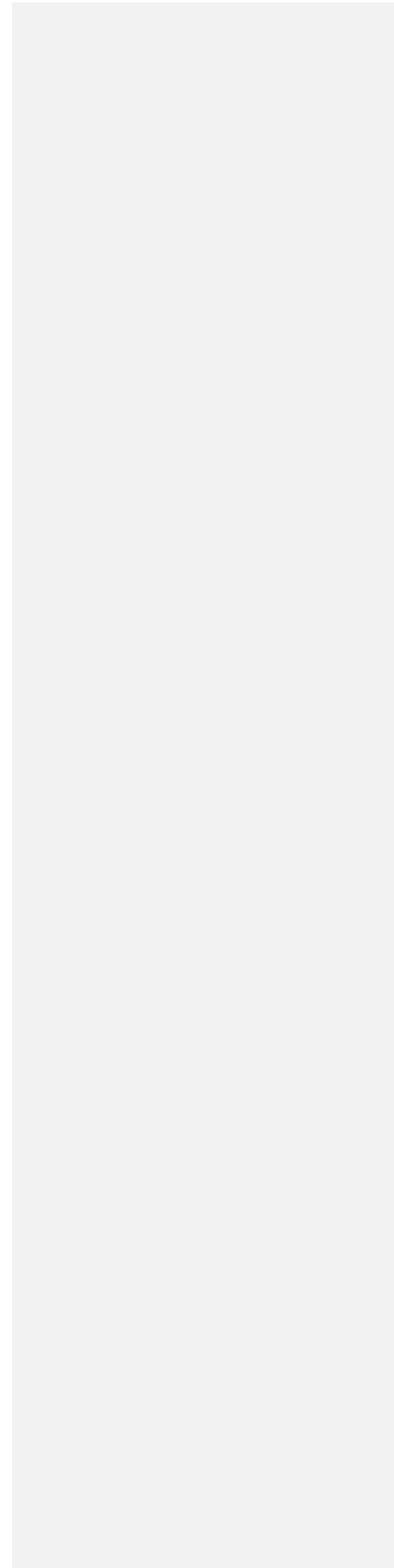
- | | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Routes | State Route | Whitman County | Bridge | Airport |
| Scenic Routes | US Route | City/Town | Stream/River | Pullman Industrial Park |
| | | | Ports | |





Legend

- Railroad
- Stream/River
- City/Town
- Whitman County



CHAPTER 4: PARKS, RECREATION, AND TRAILS ELEMENT

Purpose

The purpose of the Parks, Recreation, and Trails Element is to link parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces together as a County-wide system, developing goals and policies to address local and regional needs, as well as incorporate by reference the Whitman County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan.

Accessible and well-maintained parks and recreation facilities are a key factor in benefiting the quality of life of all residents in the County. In order to accomplish this, a key objective of this element of the Comprehensive Plan is to classify, protect and enhance parks, recreation, trails, and open spaces within Whitman County.

In addition to the management and preservation of Whitman County’s parks and recreation facilities, there are many historic and culturally important sites, buildings, and scenic drives throughout the County that are important to preserve and protect. These are described in full detail in the 2004-2009 Whitman County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan.

Introduction

As mentioned in the previous section, parks and recreation is a key component to enhancing regional and local quality of life. According to the County’s Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan, approximately 95% of the land within

Whitman County is in private ownership. As a result, there is limited availability of parks and open spaces. However, the few parks and facilities that are available provide a diverse variety of both active and passive recreational opportunities.

This element is centered on the Whitman County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan. While the Parks Plan has not been updated since 2004, it still serves as a facility inventory and as a guide for future planning.

The Whitman County Park Board, along with County Parks’ staff, oversees, reviews, and manages the operations, budgeting, and planning of County Parks, Recreation, and Trail facilities.



Bill Chipman Trail. Source: Mark Storey

Findings

Below contains lists of parks and trails within Whitman County. For the location of these facilities, refer to the Parks, Trails and Recreation Map.

County Parks

Name	Size (Acres)	Amenities
Kamiak Butte	298	Camping, hiking trails, picnic tables, shelters, amphitheater, playground, restrooms
Wawawai	49	Camping, hiking trail, shelters, bird viewing platform, restrooms
Klemgard	59	Hiking trail, shelters, horseshoe pits, multi-purpose field, picnic tables, playground, sand volleyball, restrooms
Elberton County Park (Site)	-	Former town site mostly owned by County Parks Department

Figure 9: County Parks

County Trails

Bill Chipman Palouse Trail

The Bill Chipman Palouse Trail is a seven mile, 10-foot-wide paved multi-use trail that

extends between Pullman and Moscow along a former rail line. The trail, part of the federal Rails to Trails program, serves a primary non-motorized recreational and commuter route between the two cities. Along the route there are several benches, bike racks, trash receptacles and ADA accessible restrooms. There is also an interpretive sign program along the route that provides local history of the Palouse region.

Colfax Trail

The Colfax Trail is a 2.5-mile gravel trail along a former railroad grade. The trail meanders through the hills along the Palouse River.

Palouse Empire Fairgrounds

Whitman County operates and maintains the Palouse Empire Fairgrounds, which serves as the location of the Palouse Empire Fair. In addition to the Fair that is held annually in September, the Fairgrounds hosts several other events, including arts and crafts shows, threshing and plowing bee, rodeo events, animal shows, weddings, and public meetings. At the site, facilities include an RV campground, display buildings, and rodeo grounds.



Kamiak Butte. Source: Mark Storey

Other Parks and Trails

Name	Size (Acres or Miles)	Amenities
Steptoe Butte State Park Heritage Site	151	Panoramic views, paragliding/hang gliding, picnic tables, BBQs, restrooms, interpretive signs
Steptoe Battlefield State Park Heritage Site	4	Interpretive signs/monument, picnic tables
Palouse Falls State Park Heritage Site	94	Waterfalls, overlook, interpretive signs, camping, picnic tables, picnic shelters
Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail	4,956 (250 (miles long))	Gravel trail for hiking, biking, horse riding, wagoning, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, dog sledding, multiple restrooms along the route
Boyer Park & Marina (Port of Whitman)	56	Full-service marina with long term boat moorage, campground, cabins,

		convenience store, restaurant, laundry, restrooms/showers, swimming beach; 1.5 miles paved path along the shoreline from Boyer Park to Almota
Revere Wildlife Areas	2,291	Shrub-steppe, and scabland wildlife areas
Escure Ranch	12,000	BLM scablands, open range, Towell Falls trailhead, other trails
Columbia Plateau Trail	5 miles (within Whitman County)	Part of an overall 130-mile-long trail between Spokane and Tri-Cities.
Snake River Trail at Boyer Park and Marina	3.5 miles	Walking and biking path with river and dam views, interpretive signs, picnic shelters and benches

Figure 10: Other Parks and Trails

Historic Sites - Whitman County

National Register Sites	
Name	Location
Heilsberg Farm	Colfax Area
Canyon Grain Bin and Chutes	Hay Area
Henley Site	Hay Area
McGregor Ranch	Hooper Area
Palouse Canyon Archeological District	Lyons Ferry Area
Interior Grain Tramway	Pullman Area
Leonard Round Barn	Pullman Area
Rosalia Railroad Bridge	Rosalia Area
Steptoe Battlefield Site	Rosalia Area
Steinke Round Barn	St. John Area
Grain Co. Elevator and Flathouse	Tekoa Area
Collins House and Grainery	Uniontown Area
State Register Sites	
Grave of Henry Hart Spalding	Almota
First Baptist Church	Hay

Figure 11: Historic Sites

Whitman County Parks, Recreation, and Trails Challenges & Opportunities

The 2004-2009 Whitman County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan includes an inventory of park facilities as well as identifies gaps and system deficiencies. The following list of recreational challenges and opportunities are identified for Whitman County, some of which are mentioned in the current Parks Comprehensive Plan:

Challenges

Limited space available within Whitman County for Dispersed Recreation – As noted in the Parks Comprehensive Plan, approximately 95% of land within Whitman County is privately owned. With a lack of available acreage, this severely limits the amount of land available to County residents to enjoy dispersed recreational opportunities.

Limited staffing and budgets – Whitman County and the small, incorporated towns located in the County have very limited financial and staff resources to manage, operate and maintain park facilities. This leads to both daily and long-term maintenance challenges, as well as agencies having to largely rely on grant funding which is very competitive with no guarantees on obtaining funding.

Addressing the long-term needs of park and recreation users – With changing demographics, long-term needs of park users may change over time. This creates an additional challenge for the County as staff tries to monitor current needs and demands

while also trying to assess future needs and accessibility requirements for park users.

Opportunities

Recreational opportunities – There are outdoor recreational opportunities, such as hunting and outdoor recreation, available on other properties owned by Federally-owned land (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Land Management, Washington State Department of Natural Resources). Also, in limited cases, some private landowners permit access for recreation by permission.

Variety of recreational programs – Along with local schools, recreational programs are available by a number of providers. Many are centralized around the Pullman area. This includes City of Pullman, Washington State University and other private organizations and camps. Whitman County Parks and Recreation Department also operates environmental education programs with Colfax and Endicott which includes an in-classroom aspect and nature

hikes with the school kids at Kamiak Butte. Also, beginning in the spring of 2022, nature hikes will expand to the Garfield/Palouse school kids.

Railbanking – The use of railbanking for the development of multi-purpose trails along existing rail lines is ~~consistent with the Whitman County Comprehensive Plan a potential option for the County to explore.~~ Railbanking, or commonly known as “rails-to-trails,” is a method by which rails lines proposed for abandonment can be preserved for future rail use through interim conversion to trail use. Two existing examples in the Palouse region are the Bill Chipman Palouse Trail ~~and Palouse to Cascades Trail (operated by Whitman County) and the Latah Trail in Idaho (operated as a non-profit). The County could continue to foster relationships with local groups (i.e., Pullman Civic Trust) who are actively involved in the promotion of railbanking and expansion of the County’s multi-purpose trails in balance with private property rights.~~

Goals and Policies

The following framework goals and parks, recreation, and trails goals and policies are not listed in any specific order or priorities but should be considered equally.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROTECTION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

All policies and decisions made by the County, and as guided by the Comprehensive Plan, will strive to protect fundamental private property rights of individuals and ensure that Whitman County land use policies and regulations balance the private property rights of all landowners to the degree possible.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – SUPPORT RECREATION AND ACCESS TO NATURAL AREAS

Support County residents in their ability to access outdoor recreation and natural areas throughout Whitman County through collaboration and partnerships, while recognizing the need to protect natural, scenic, and environmentally sensitive areas.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PRESERVE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF WHITMAN COUNTY

Recognize the value and importance of Whitman County’s heritage, protecting important cultural and historical buildings and sites.

GOAL PR-1 –PROVIDE PARK, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF WHITMAN COUNTY RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

Policy PR-1.1 – Development of new parks and recreation facilities shall be consistent with the Land Use Element and the Whitman County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan.

Policy PR-1.2 – Maintain and improve existing park, recreation, and trail resources that provide recreational opportunities for a wide range of ages and interest groups.

Policy PR-1.3 – To serve the current and long-term recreational needs of County residents, collaborate with other local and regional agencies, citizen groups and volunteers and private sector partners.

Policy PR-1.4 – Recognize the value that a well-maintained parks and recreation network provides in attracting economic development and tourism to Whitman County and the Palouse region.

GOAL PR-2 – IDENTIFY, PRESERVE AND PROTECT PUBLIC OPEN SPACE RECREATION AND WILDLIFE AREAS IN WHITMAN COUNTY

Policy PR-2.1 – Collaborate with and support state, federal and other agencies who manage open space areas in Whitman County to ensure these areas are maintained and available to the public.

Policy PR-2.2 – Where feasible, identify additional opportunities for access to open spaces and wildlife corridors through lawful access across private property, while respecting private property rights and the continuation of agriculture, ranching and other agriculture activities.

Policy PR-2.3 – Ensure that access to open space and wildlife areas is consistent with the protection of environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands, streams, steep slopes, and other similar areas.

GOAL PR-3 – SUPPORT THE MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS OF THE COUNTY’S EXISTING TRAILS

Policy PR-3.1 – Support ongoing maintenance of the County’s existing trails located within County parks or along existing rail corridors.

Policy PR-3.2 – Work with state and other funding sources to help continue the development of the County’s trail network

Policy PR-3.3 – Where appropriate, collaborate with community service groups and volunteers to help with maintenance and upkeep of trails.

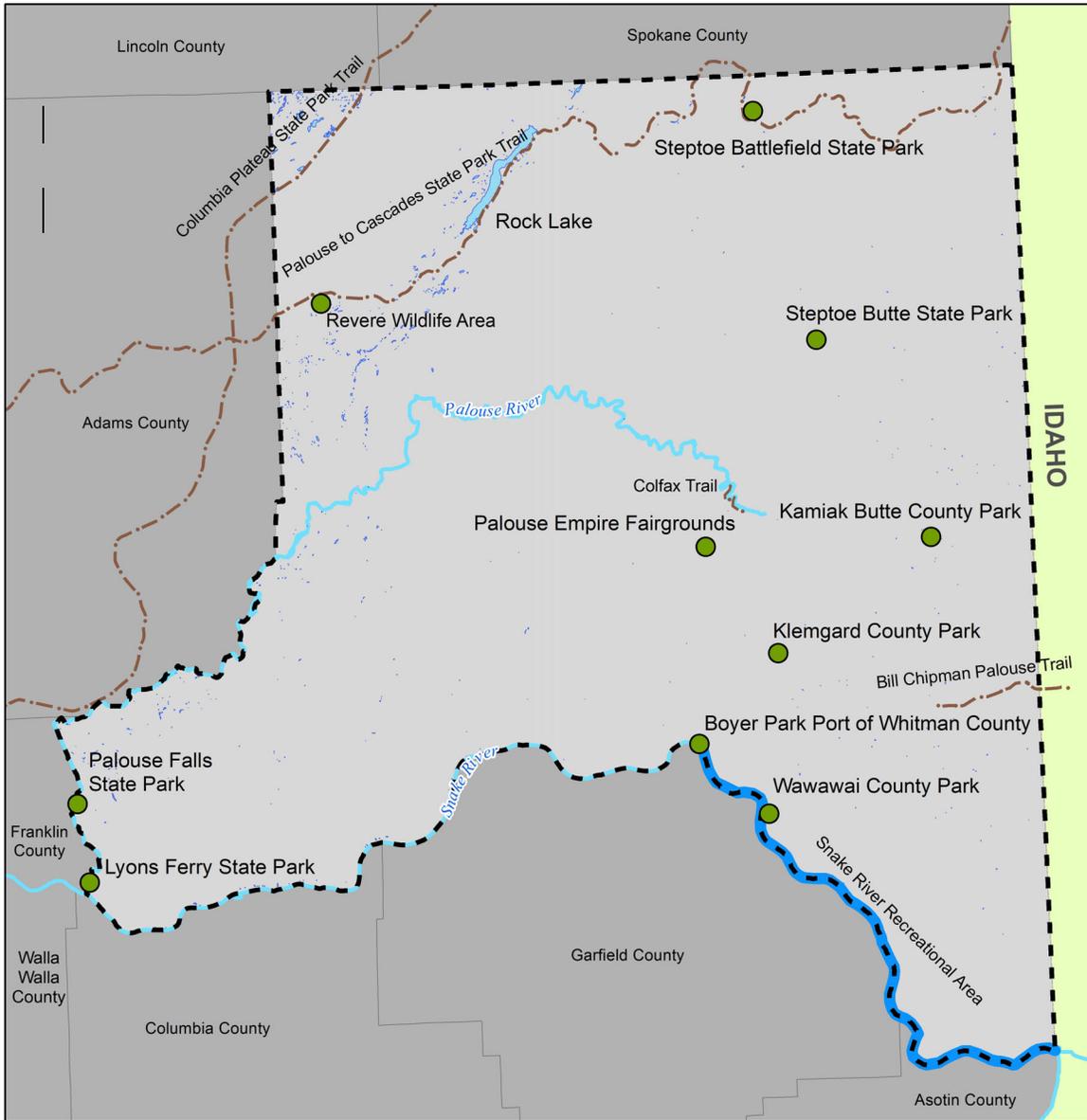
GOAL PR-4– EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW TRAILS IN WHITMAN COUNTY

Policy PR-4.1 – Explore potential options for new trail development and future trail expansion throughout Whitman County.

Policy PR-4.2 – Consider railbanking as a viable and legal option to develop multi-purpose trails on currently unused ~~or~~ **abandoned** rail corridors.

Policy PR-4.3 – Pursue and encourage public involvement in trail planning through a variety of methods, including but not limited to, trail and open space advocacy groups, local city and County advisory groups, and other volunteer organizations.

Policy PR-4.4 - Seek and establish ongoing funding sources for the development of new multi-purpose and specific use trails (i.e., hiking and/or equestrian only).

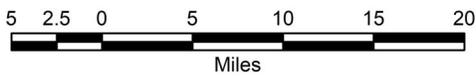


Whitman County Parks, Trails and Recreation



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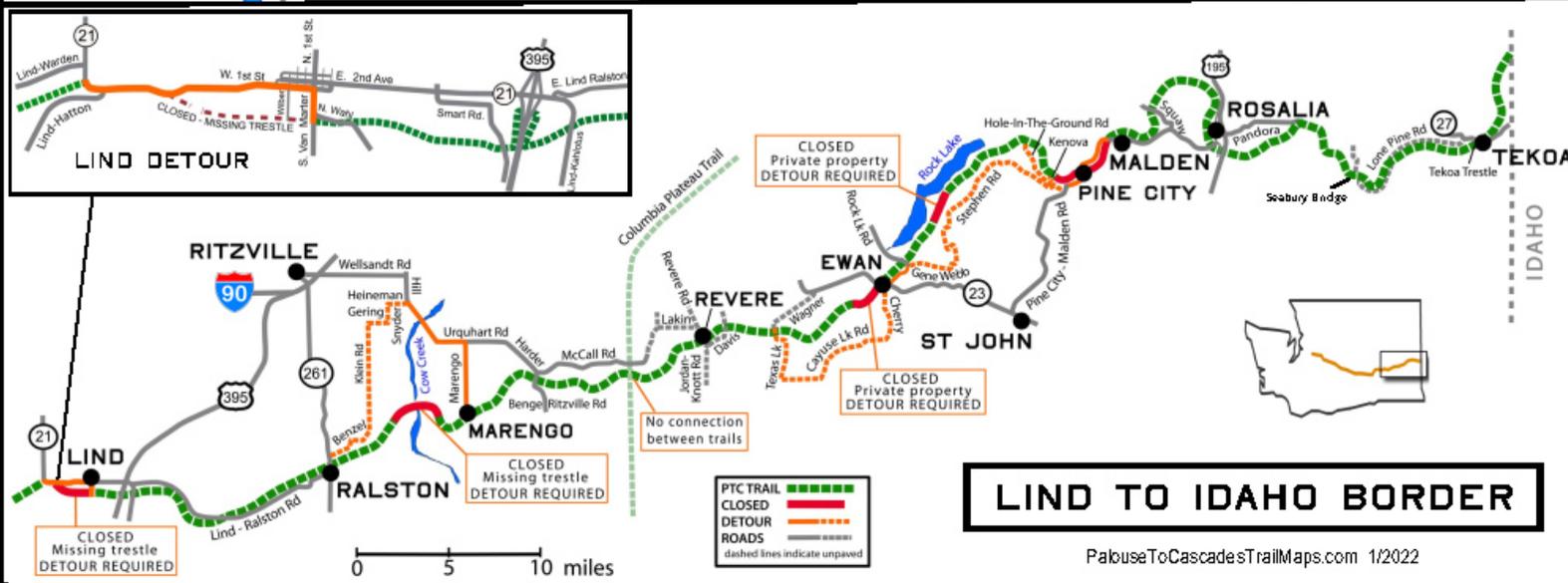
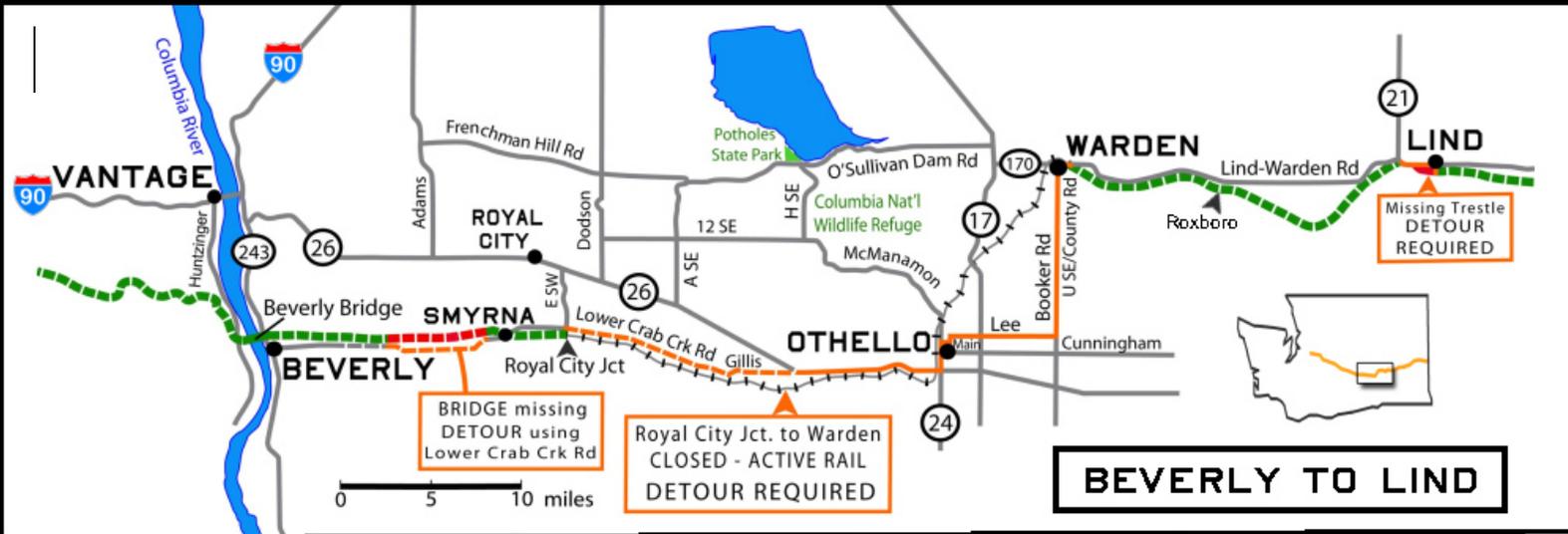
- | | | |
|--|---|--|
|  Stream/River |  Lakes/Waterbodies |  Park |
|  Snake River Recreation Area |  Whitman County |  Trails |



Map 7

Map 7

Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail – East of Columbia River



PalouseToCascadesTrailMaps.com 1/2022

CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Purpose

The purpose of the Economic Development Element is to establish “local goals, policies, objectives, and provisions for economic growth and vitality and a high quality of life.” RCW 36.70A.070(7). It is through these goals and policies that Whitman County seeks to enhance economic vitality and ensure long-term job and business growth.

Introduction

Whitman County may be rural in nature, but its economic importance to Washington State and Inland Northwest cannot be understated. The Palouse region, with some of the most fertile agricultural soils in the United States, generates a large amount of America’s wheat, barley, and pulse crops. The agricultural value of the Palouse, both within and surrounding Whitman County, is a key factor to the employment and economic base of the County and its local communities and region.

Washington State University and nearby University of Idaho in Moscow also play key roles in the economic vitality of the County. The jobs associated with these universities, as well as jobs created due to their location, help provide many key jobs and tax dollars that are important to Whitman County.

Lastly, the many entrepreneurial firms that call Whitman County home create a significant impact to the economic health and prosperity of the County.



*Port of Whitman Business Air Center (above);
Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories (below).
Sources: Port of Whitman, Schweitzer Engineering
Laboratories*



Findings

Summary

Although sparsely populated and regionally isolated, Whitman County is fortunate to offer a variety of job opportunities. Historically, unincorporated Whitman County’s economy has been driven by agriculture and, therefore, the jobs available to those seeking employment have been and continue to be in agriculturally related sectors.

As population growth within the County has increased, mostly around the Pullman area, there has been a slow but steady employment growth. In the last 20 years, Whitman County has become the engine of growth for the regional economy after decades of stagnation. Manufacturing growth has increased 322% from 2001 to 2019, versus -7% decline for Washington State, 1% for Idaho, and -22% for the U.S. The key drivers of Whitman County growth have been the entrepreneurial firms situated in the Port of Whitman County’s water-borne ports and industrial parks, increases in other manufacturing and service industries, and rising student enrollments at Washington State University. These non-farm related job opportunities are likely the result of steady growth of the Pullman area, the County-wide real estate development, and broadband projects of the Port of Whitman County, as well as the effect that Washington State University has on the local economy.

Economic Conditions/Analysis

Jobs by Sector

The largest industries by sector in Whitman County are government, health care and social and assistance, and retail trade (although a large portion of jobs are not classified). Combined, these make up approximately 60% of covered employment in the County.² Washington State University, while located within the city of Pullman, is the largest employer in the County.

Within unincorporated Whitman County, the largest employers tend to be those associated with the agriculture industry, which account for approximately 540 jobs. While not representing a large number of jobs countywide, the agricultural economy exerts a large influence on the rest of the economy through changes in commodity prices, shipping costs, and other factors related to international trade.

Washington State Employment Security Department (QCED)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Non Farm Employment by Industry, 2019



Figure 12. Percent of Employment by Industry, Whitman County, 2000-2019. ESD County Data Tables

The Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) projects overall nonfarm employment in Eastern Washington to grow at a 1.5 percent annual rate for the period from 2017 through 2027. Whitman County is already almost halfway through this period. Industries expected to grow the fastest include construction at 1.7 percent annually, transportation, warehousing, and utilities at 2.1 percent, information at 3.2 percent, professional and business services at 2.1 percent, education and health services at 2.1 percent, and leisure and hospitality at 1.7 percent.

Unemployment Rate

The average annual unemployment rate in Whitman County is often among the lowest in the state, befitting its large education, government, agriculture, and manufacturing employment. The Employment Security Department reports that for the first 9 months of 2020, the unemployment rate averaged 4.5 percent. Of the approximately 42,565 residents of working age living in Whitman County, approximately 8% were unemployed as of spring 2021.

Unemployment Rate of Working Age Population (16 years and over)

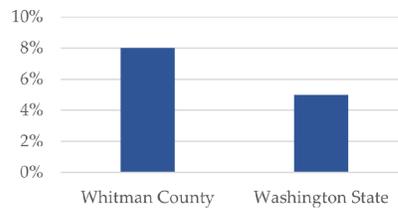


Figure 13. Unemployment Rate of Working Age Population. ESD County Data Tables.

Age

Whitman County’s population, due to the demographic influence of Washington State University, leans toward a younger population. This is certainly the case within Pullman. However, within the rural areas the age increases to an older demographic, albeit slightly. Whitman County is a younger-aged county compared with Washington State as a whole. (ESD WA)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

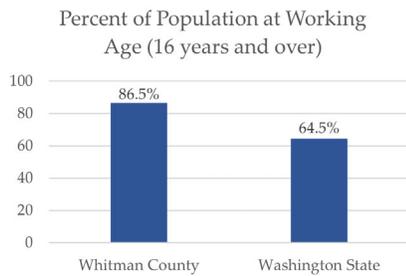


Figure 14. Working Age Population of Whitman County, 2019. ESD County Data Tables.

Wages

The median income in Whitman County between 2015 and 2019 was \$42,745, well below the state's median income of \$73,775. The median hourly wage in 2019 was \$23.60, which is more than the state's median hourly wage of \$23.14 (less King County).

The highest earners in Whitman County include professional and technical services, government, and wholesale trade. (ESD WA)

Average Annual Wage in Top-Earning Industries (2019)	
Government	\$59,520
Wholesale Trade	\$57,522
Professional & Technical Services	\$62,355

Figure 15: Average Annual Wages in Top-Earning Industries (E)

Educational Attainment

Whitman County has a higher educational attainment rate than compared with the state. Between 2014 and 2018, 95.2 percent over the age of 25 have a high school

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diploma, compared to 91.1 percent statewide. Those who have a bachelor's degree or higher include an estimated 49.5% of the County population, compared to 34.3% statewide. (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts)

Percent of Population with Higher Education (2014 – 2018)		
	High School Diploma	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Whitman County	95.2%	49.5%
Washington State	91.1%	34.3%

Figure 16: Percent of Population with Higher Education (US Census Bureau)

Economic Sectors in Whitman County

Agriculture

The largest economic sector by dollar value in Whitman County is agriculture. The dominant crops in Whitman County include wheat, chickpeas, barley, and lentils, which together make up over 730,000 acres countywide, and the County ranks number one in the state for market value of products sold in this category. Whitman County is also a contributor in sales of livestock, including hogs and pigs, sheep, goats, wool, mohair, and milk (2017 USDA Census of Agriculture, County Profile).

Natural Resources

Due to the dominance of agriculture, Whitman County has a finite amount of non-agricultural natural resources. However,

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these are critical to the local economy. Agencies, including the State, Whitman County, and local conservation districts, ensure that these important resources are protected. Sand, gravel and other rock and mineral extraction quarry operations have been continually operating for many years, some for decades. Whitman County also reviews and approves new applications for new quarries.

Education and Government

Washington State University, located within the city limits of Pullman, is the largest employer in Whitman County. This institution alone contributes not only to the immediate Pullman economy, but also countywide. Local schools are also located throughout the County and provide many jobs.

State, county, and local governments also make up a large portion of jobs in Whitman County. The jobs at these employers' help operate and maintain facilities and resources, roads, parks and facilities, and public infrastructure.

Other (Manufacturing, Industrial, and Service-Based Jobs)

Whitman County supports many other jobs, particularly in the manufacturing, industrial and service industries. The Port of Whitman operates the Business Air Center, located outside of Colfax, the Pullman Industrial Park, three ports located along the Snake River (Almota, Central Ferry, and Wilma), as well as Boyer Park and Marina. Also, within the unincorporated areas of the County, particularly within the urban growth area of

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Pullman and along the Moscow-Pullman corridor, there are dozens of small to medium-sized businesses. Businesses related to service sectors (retail, hotels, restaurants), health care and medical, and other small businesses and cottage industries are scattered throughout the County including in the small unincorporated communities.

Tax Sharing District with City of Pullman

Whitman County and the City of Pullman entered into a tax sharing agreement (effective June 29, 2015) which established a mutual agreement between Whitman County and Pullman to promote business growth in the unincorporated areas around Pullman. The agreement establishes an equal split of the sales tax generated from new development. Much of the tax sharing area defined in the agreement extends east from the Pullman City limits along both sides of the Pullman-Moscow Highway (SR 270) corridor to the Idaho state line. Under the agreement, retail sales tax allocated to local agencies (1 percent of the total 7.8 percent) would be equally split between the City and County, with a small portion of the money reserved to help pay for future infrastructure needs in the area for the two entities. The agreement expires in 2050, unless extended by both parties.

Whitman County Economic Development Partnerships

This economic development element primarily focuses on the County's role in identifying and promoting business

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development opportunities. However, it is important to mention the variety of agencies, organizations and government bodies that help foster business development in Whitman County. These agencies, while serving their own specific goals, offer the opportunity to partner on countywide and regional efforts for job creation, business development and business retention.

Port of Whitman County

Established in 1958, the Port of Whitman County (PWC) is a port authority operating as an independent government body run by elected commissioners with a mission to “improve the quality of life for all citizens of Whitman County. The Port of Whitman County is a leader in the development of industrial real estate and dark fiber optic infrastructure in Whitman County. In tandem with its infrastructure development, the Port also supports multi-modal transportation, business recruitment and retention and partners with other economic development agencies in the county for the benefit of all Whitman County residents. The Port owns three Snake River water ports: Wilma, Almota, and Central Ferry. In addition, the Port owns the Pullman Industrial Park as well as the Port of Whitman Business Air Center which includes a general aviation airport along with an adjacent industrial park. The Port also supports on-water recreation and manages Boyer Park and Marina on the Snake River which includes a campground, a marina and pedestrian & bike trail.

The Port of Whitman County port sites and

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projects account for 5,369 direct and indirect jobs and \$1.352 billion in output – 20% of County jobs, 31% of County output, 25% total compensation and 23% of gross regional product. Businesses associated with Port activities create \$21,389,608 in fiscal tax contributions annually. For every \$1.00 in port spending a property tax return of \$6.18 is realized.

Southeast Washington Economic Development Association (SEWEDA)

The Southeast Washington Economic Development Association (SEWEDA) is a regional economic development association that covers a four-county area of southeast Washington (Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Whitman). The goal of SEWEDA is to “create a more prosperous, successful, diversified and sustainable region within Southeast Washington by providing leadership and resources for the success of future businesses.” This is achieved by providing the following services:

- Local Business Support (Retention & Expansion Services)
- Business Attraction & Site Location Assistance
- Financial & Incentive Guidance
- Entrepreneurial Support
- Business/Workforce Training & Education
- Community Development Assistance

In addition to the above referenced goals and services, SEWEDA also has developed the 2018-2023 Comprehensive Economic

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Development Strategy (CEDS) which provides several goals, strategies, and actions to create jobs, diversify the economy, and improve the quality of life.

Palouse Knowledge Corridor

The Palouse Knowledge Corridor, a research partnership between Washington State University (WSU) and University of Idaho, is a regional economic development organization that focuses regional coordination to attract, retain and development talent and business across state lines. It is through this joint effort that new businesses in the agriculture, health, Robotic, Electronic, and Computer Technologies (REC-Tech) and other high technology sectors are supported to promote economic growth and prosperity in the Palouse region.

Washington SBDC Pullman Center

The Washington Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is a partnership between the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and Washington State University (WSU) that is managed by the Innovation and Research Engagement team. The SBDC houses a network of small business advisors that provide confidential client-focused services to stabilize, support and grow small business in Washington State. With over twenty-five advisors working in communities throughout the state, the WSU-SBDC collaboration provides meaningful local impact for our local stakeholders and community partners.

SBDC advisors provide one-on-one, confidential, no-cost advising on all phases of small business development and are

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often co-located with economic development specialists in community colleges, economic development agencies or government agencies. Other services of the SBDC include no cost or low-cost workshops on a variety of business topics and customized market research services.

The Washington SBDC, a member of the national America's SBDC program, is governed by a cooperative agreement between WSU, which is the statewide host of the program, and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

WorkSource

WorkSource offices are a partnership of state, local and non-profit agencies that deliver a wide array of employment and training services for both job seekers and employers in Washington State. The Pullman office of WorkSource provides services to the Palouse and southeast Washington State.

Washington State Department of Commerce

The Washington State Department of Commerce is the lead state agency that enhances and promotes sustainable community and economic vitality throughout the state. Connecting businesses, local governments, tribes, and community-based organizations, the Department of Commerce supports the Governor's priorities, provides funding for economic development projects across the state and seeks to achieve shared goals and economic objectives for the people of Washington State.

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Local Chambers of Commerce

The various chambers of commerce of the Palouse region play a key role in supporting and promoting the interests of the local business community. Local chambers of commerce in Whitman County include Colfax, Palouse, Pullman, and Tekoa.

Cities of Colfax and Pullman

The cities of Colfax and Pullman, the two largest communities and primary job centers within Whitman County, play a key role in providing services to citizens within the Palouse region. Colfax is the Whitman County Seat. Pullman, the largest city in Whitman County, is home of Washington State University and is the largest job and retail center in the County.

Whitman County Economic Development Challenges & Opportunities

Apart from the cities of Pullman and Colfax, both of which operate as their own jurisdictions, Whitman County is largely rural, consisting of small rural towns, agricultural and resource lands, and other natural open space and waterways. While this remoteness poses many challenges for Whitman County, it presents opportunities that set the County apart from some of its neighboring rural counties.

In their 2018-2023 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, SEWEDA conducted a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). This document takes a more comprehensive look at the four-county region. The items listed below are more focused toward Whitman

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County itself but are not intended to be an all-inclusive list. There are certainly many more than are provided here.

Challenges

Agriculturally-based economy – As stated earlier, the Palouse region is one of the most fertile and productive agricultural regions of the country. While this is certainly important to not only the local economy but also the statewide economy, this narrow focus and lack of diversification has created challenges during periods of economic challenges. Limited zoning for other industries may also contribute to this.

Little to no population growth – As observed in the statistics provided in the Land Use Element, unincorporated areas of Whitman County have experienced very little population growth. Not surprisingly, most of the County's growth has been experienced within Pullman's city limits. And even so, this growth has been limited as compared to other parts of eastern Washington. Low population growth typically means lack of employment opportunities, particularly within the rural areas of the County. Job availability is, therefore, often limited to incorporated areas. While jobs available to County residents are beneficial, this does not directly benefit the tax base to the County.

Slow decline job availability/job losses – Because of the effects of a national or global economic downturn such as the Great Recession of 2007-2009, or because of the overall low diversity of jobs, rural counties such as Whitman County tend to be more affected by economic shifts. When

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these economic changes affect the agricultural industry, this has an indirect impact to other job sectors within the County such as trades and services. Depending on the severity of the economic impacts, this may reduce job availability or may even lead to temporary or permanent job losses in these sectors. Recovery from these downturns may take longer in rural communities compared with their larger counterparts.

Aging population in rural areas – While the overall age of Whitman County remains relatively consistent, in part due to the growth of Washington State University, demographics in the rural areas of the County point to an aging population. This is likely due to a workforce that is either shrinking due to lack of jobs and retirees who choose to live in the rural areas.

Lack of affordable non-farm housing in rural areas – With the lack of affordable non-farm housing in the County, this may limit new or expanded job growth in rural areas. Many workers may need to travel long-distances to reach housing that is within budget, some even choosing to locate outside the County where housing is more plentiful and affordable.

Lack of public/private infrastructure in rural areas – The limited availability of water, sewer, fiber optic/high speed internet, and in some cases paved roadways, makes some areas of the County very limited in the amount of growth that can occur. Not only does this impact commercial development and job growth, but also residential growth. These infrastructure limitations play a

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significant role in future development opportunities.

Opportunities

Increasingly educated population/additional job growth – Whitman County is fortunate to be the home of Washington State University (WSU) (within Pullman city limits). As a result, the available workforce population of Whitman County tends to be more highly educated versus other rural communities that do not have a major university, let alone a higher education institution. And while the university is located within Pullman itself, the effects that a “college town” brings to unincorporated areas outside of Pullman are certainly recognizable.

Expand engineering, manufacturing, and light-industrial sectors – With the growth of Pullman, the growth of WSU and the University of Idaho in nearby Moscow, Idaho, and the economic impact that these two universities bring to the region, there is an increasing number of jobs in the engineering, manufacturing, and technology sectors. While most, if not all, of these jobs are currently located in Pullman, there may be future opportunities to promote and expand engineering, manufacturing, technology, and other similar jobs to be located outside city limits.

Growth of the Pullman-Moscow Highway Corridor – The Pullman-Moscow Highway (SR 270) has seen some commercial and industrial development over the last two decades, particularly in the retail/sales (auto/RVs) sector and industrial services (paving, sand/rock, concrete). As one of the

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only unincorporated commercial and industrial centers available in Whitman County, it is vital that continued business and employment opportunities exist along this corridor as a way to ensure the one of the County's primary tax and employment areas stays intact.

Access to outdoor recreation and cultural opportunities – The Palouse and southeast Washington is arguably one of most geologically and geographically unique regions of northwest. It is this natural beauty that attracts many tourists and full-time residents. Easy access to the variety of outdoor amenities makes Whitman County a desirable place to live, work and play, and can play a role in economic development. Quality of life, including indoor and outdoor activities, helps retain existing residents and students, as well as attract new job seekers who wish to call the Palouse region their new home.

Strong sense of community & resiliency – Rural counties and communities often have an appreciation of local history and a very strong sense of community. Whitman County and the communities throughout the County are no exception to this rule. Residents of rural communities often have demonstrated resilience and strength through economic downturns, natural disasters, and demographic shifts. It is this resiliency that helps strengthen local communities and not only maintaining but improving quality of life.

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Expansion of renewable energy – Renewable energy sources, such as hydroelectric and wind-power, are two methods to promote sustainability and address climate change. With two universities and their ongoing research in renewable energy, this not only benefits local economies through cleaner air and lower utility costs, but also promotes business expansion in these fields. This leads to new job opportunities while also supporting existing landowners through the siting of facilities on their property, such as wind farms.



Port of Whitman Boyer Park and Marina. Source: Port of Whitman

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Goals & Policies

The following framework goals and economic development goals and policies are not listed in any specific order or priorities but should be considered equally.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS AND COUNTYWIDE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Develop an approach that supports local business while also supporting countywide economic growth through partnerships and collaboration with business, civic and government leaders.

GOAL ED-1 – IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIVERSIFICATION OF THE COUNTY'S ECONOMIC BASE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM ECONOMIC STABILITY FOR CITIES, TOWNS AND THE COUNTY.

Policy ED-1.1 – Coordinate with Whitman County's Associate Development Organization (ADO), incorporated cities and towns, Port of Whitman County, local chambers of commerce, private business, and other economic development partners and citizen groups to explore and prepare strategies that promote economic growth and development in Whitman County.

Policy ED-1.2 – Support the Port of Whitman County with their efforts to diversify, expand, and support existing trade, manufacturing, telecommunication, and other services within and beyond the County's borders.

Policy ED-1.3 – Pursue grant funding, technical assistance, or other available options from federal, state, and local agencies that help support the County and local agencies to coordinate and plan for long-term, sustainable economic development.

GOAL ED-2 – RETAIN WHITMAN COUNTY'S EXISTING BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES.

Policy ED-2.1 – Support the retention of all existing businesses and industries to ensure the future economic health and prosperity of Whitman County.

Policy ED-2.2 – Identify all local, regional, and state resources that support business and job retention programs.

Policy ED-2.3 – Identify and resolve any County impediments to the retention/expansion of existing business in Whitman County.

GOAL ED-3 – SUPPORT BUSINESS SECTORS THAT HELP CREATE A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY IN WHITMAN COUNTY.

Policy ED-3.1 – Support a wide variety of business sectors and leverage their strengths and advantages in promoting strong local economies. Sectors in Whitman County include, but are not limited to:

- Agriculture
- Education
- Telecommunications

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- Technology/Manufacturing
- Health Care
- Natural Resources
- Port-related economic development
- Recreation
- Tourism
- Construction/Real Estate
- Home-based businesses

Policy ED-3.2 – Home-based business, with appropriate zoning controls, should be permitted within the County to promote innovative, low-cost, low-impact, and sustainable economic development.

Policy ED-3.3 – Support the local tourism and recreation industries by promoting the natural, historic, recreational, and cultural amenities that Whitman County and the Palouse region has to offer.

GOAL ED-4– PROMOTE THE NUMBER AND DIVERSITY OF BUSINESSES ALONG THE PULLMAN-MOSCOW CORRIDOR

Policy ED-4.1 – Expand retail and wholesale business opportunities along the corridor that provide consistent and predictable tax revenue for the County.

Policy ED-4.2 – Explore business growth and expansion opportunities that limit impacts to adjacent agricultural uses along the corridor.

Policy ED-4.3 –Support mixed-use development that encourages more intensive and compact development, incorporating housing and commercial uses, specifically along the north side of the Pullman-Moscow corridor where water is available.

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GOAL ED-5 – DEVELOPMENT OF RENEWABLE ENERGY FACILITIES TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMIC HEALTH OF THE COUNTY.

Policy ED-5.1 – Support the development and growth of renewable energy facilities (i.e., wind power, hydroelectric, solar power, geothermal) that foster economic prosperity (living wage jobs, revenue sources for rural landowners, increased tax base) and increasing the economic diversity of Whitman County.

Policy ED-5.2 – In partnership with other local and regional business partners, including City of Pullman, Washington State University, and Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories, help promote renewable energy technology and manufacturing opportunities in Whitman County.

GOAL ED-6 – ALLOW AND ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPATIBLE BUSINESSES IN AGRICULTURAL AREAS TO SERVE FARMERS AS WELL AS TO DIVERSIFY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGION.

Policy ED-6.1 – Encourage and identify creative, compatible, and beneficial use of resource lands other than agriculture to supplement the income of farm families. Such uses may include tourism, mining, quarrying, boating, hunting/fishing, recreation nursery, and renewable energy development.

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Policy ED-6.2 – Encourage and support commercial growth in unincorporated rural communities that focuses on agriculturally-

supportive and tourist/traveler supporting businesses.



Port of Wilma. Source: Port of Whitman

CHAPTER 6: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Purpose

Designation of critical environmental resources (“critical areas”), and the promulgation of development regulations that protect these resources, is required of all counties and cities within those counties, even for partially planning counties, under the Growth Management Act. Whitman County is bordered by a major river, the Snake, but overall, the County does not have spatially abundant wetlands, streams, or other types of critical areas. Nevertheless, with its steep hills and valleys and winding streams, Whitman County’s environmental resources provide essential services and habitat.

Additionally, with its reliance on dryland agriculture and low to moderate rainfall, Whitman County is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and can take important policy steps to support actions to mitigate climate change.

Introduction

Whitman County updated its Critical Areas regulations in Title 9 of the Whitman County Code in April of 2019 (Ord. No. 81462). This update incorporated the latest best available science, including wetland buffers based on category and habitat score rather than overall score. Critical areas can be defined in Whitman County Code 19.03.175 as areas and ecosystems including wetlands, areas with a critical recharging effect on

aquifers used for potable water (critical aquifer recharge areas), fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, frequently flooded areas, and geologically hazardous areas.

Findings

Designation of Critical Areas

Whitman County has designated the following critical areas and associated development regulations. These designations, and their regulations under Whitman County Code Title 9, constitute compliance with RCW 36.70A.050 and 36.70A.060.

Wetlands

Whitman County has adopted critical areas regulations based on the best available science. These regulations protect wetlands of Category I through Category IV and assign wetland buffers based on category and habitat score. Wetlands are regulated in Chapter 9.05.1100 of the Whitman County Code.

Critical aquifer recharge areas

Different types of critical aquifer recharge areas, or CARAs, include wellhead protection areas, sole source protection aquifers, susceptible groundwater management areas, special protection areas per WAC 173-200-090, and moderately, highly vulnerable, or highly susceptible aquifer recharge areas. CARAs are rated as having high, moderate, or low susceptibility

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based on soil permeability, geologic matrix, infiltration, and depth to water as determined by the Department of Ecology. CARAs are regulated in Chapter 9.05.1300 of the Whitman County Code.

Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas

Whitman County has adopted the following fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas for designation as critical areas:

- Areas with which state or federally designated endangered, threatened, and sensitive species have a primary association.
- State priority habitats and areas associated with state priority species.
- Habitats and Species of Local Importance. Areas legislatively designated and mapped by the County because of unusual or unique habitat warranting protection due to their population status or sensitivity to habitat manipulation. Habitats may include a seasonal range or habitat element with which a species has a primary association, and which, if altered, may reduce the likelihood that the species will maintain and reproduce over the long term.
- Naturally Occurring Ponds under Twenty Acres. Naturally occurring ponds are those ponds under twenty (20) acres and their submerged aquatic beds that provide fish or wildlife habitat, including those

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artificial ponds intentionally created from dry areas in order to mitigate impacts to ponds. Naturally occurring ponds do not include ponds deliberately designed and created from dry sites, such as canals, detention facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, farm ponds, temporary construction ponds, and landscape amenities, unless such artificial ponds were intentionally created for mitigation.

- Waters of the State. Waters of the state include lakes, rivers, ponds, streams, inland waters, underground waters, salt waters, and all other surface waters and watercourses within the jurisdiction of the State of Washington, as classified in WAC 222-16-031 (or WAC 222-16-030 depending on classification used).
- Lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers planted with game fish by a governmental or tribal entity.
- State Natural Area Preserves and Natural Resource Conservation Areas. Natural area preserves and natural resource conservation areas are defined, established, and managed by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.
- Areas of Rare Plant Species and High-Quality Ecosystems. Areas of rare plant species and high-quality ecosystems are identified by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources through the

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Natural Heritage Program and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife Priority Habitat and Species (PHS) List.

- Land useful or essential for preserving connections between habitat blocks and open spaces.

Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas are regulated by Whitman County Code 9.05.1200.

Frequently flooded areas

Whitman County has adopted flood hazard overlay zoning based on the Flood Insurance Study and Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as amended. This meets the requirement of the federal government for the County's eligibility for the National Flood Insurance Program.

Frequently flooded areas are regulated by Whitman County Code 9.05.1500.

Geologically hazardous areas

Whitman County has designated the following geologically hazardous areas and promulgated development regulations to minimize hazards to the public from these environmental features:

- Erosion Hazard Areas. These are areas identified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service as having moderate to severe, severe, or very severe rill and inter-rill erosion hazard.
- Landslide Hazard Areas. These are areas potentially subject to

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landslides based on a combination of geologic, topographic, and hydrologic factors.

- Seismic Hazard Areas. These are areas subject to severe risk of damage as a result of earthquake-induced ground shaking, slope failure, settlement, liquefaction, lateral spreading, or surface faulting.
- Other hazard areas as determined by the County Planner, including mass wasting, debris flows, rock falls, and differential settlement.

Geologically hazardous areas are regulated under Whitman County Code 9.05.1400.

Climate Change

Whitman County supports several policies aimed at elements of climate change. The County has created development regulations and a permitting pathway for commercial-scale wind facilities, small wind energy generators, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and more.

This is important for Whitman County because its dominant industry, agriculture, is dependent on adequate rainfall for the dryland cultivation of crops like wheat and lentils. Disruptions or large fluctuations in total amount or distribution of rainfall could negatively impact crop yields. Furthermore, increased frequency or intensity of heavy rain events, particularly in late winter and early spring before crops are planted, could lead to increased erosion and topsoil loss as well as increasingly dangerous and damaging flood events.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Washington’s renewable energy portfolio standards require the generation of renewable energy. Renewable energy facilities use a natural resource without depleting it, create economic benefits, offer additional sources of revenue to local landowners, increase tax revenues, and are compatible with existing land use policies and goals in the region.

Goals

The following Framework Goal relates to the Environmental Protection and Climate Change Element.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROTECT ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Anticipate and respond to impacts related to climate change by adopting land use strategies that foster the protection of clean air and water, fish and wildlife habitats, and healthy/productive ecosystems.

GOAL EP-1 – MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE AIR AND WATER QUALITY.

Policy EP-1.1 – The County should strive to adopt land use policies that are consistent with air and water quality requirements of both state and federal law.

GOAL EP-2 – PRESERVE AND MITIGATE IMPACTS TO CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS WHERE DESIGNATED.

Policy EP-2.1 – The County relies on the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) to

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assist landowners in agricultural areas in protecting environmental resources found on their land. This in turn requires that special attention be given to critical sites within non-agricultural areas. The County’s development regulations should be evaluated regularly to ensure they are meeting the goal of minimizing degradation and preserving critical environmental features.

Goal EP-3: Use best available science to guide and regularly update development regulations.

Policy EP-3.1 – The County should coordinate with, and monitor guidance produced by, state and federal agencies that could affect how up to date the County’s development regulations are.

Goal CC-1: Encourage the development of long-term, sustainable, and renewable energy generation within Whitman County.

Policy CC-1.1 – The County should ensure that development regulations related to facilities and utilities allow for and encourage upgrades to the electric grid, including battery storage and pumped storage hydroelectricity (PSH) where appropriate, that are key to developing sustainable renewable energy generation in Whitman County.

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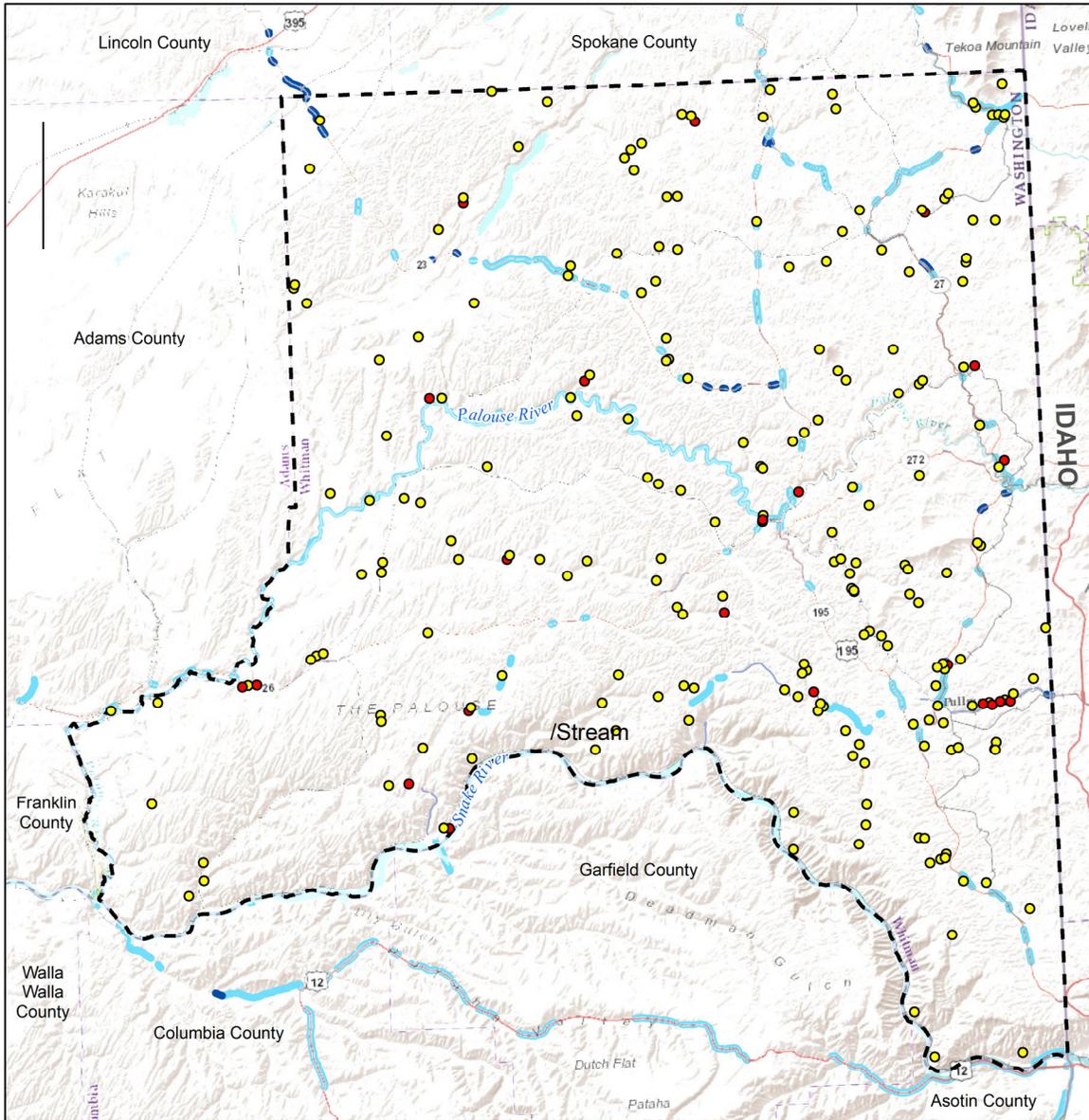
Goal CC-2: Encourage rapid build-out of electric vehicle infrastructure.

Policy CC-2.1 – The County should work with cities, the Port of Whitman County, Washington State University, and other private partners to coordinate build-out of electric vehicle charging stations at institutional property county-wide.

Policy CC-2.2 – The County should consider replacing aging vehicles with electric vehicles when appropriate and cost-effective.

Goal CC-3: Encourage multimodal transportation.

Policy CC-3.1 – ~~Whitman County supports multi-modal alternatives that reduce harmful emissions. The County should work with jurisdictions and community partners to appropriately site trails and paths where appropriate to encourage travel by ways other than private automobile.~~



N
 Legend

Whitman County Critical Areas and Natural Resources

- Stream/River
- Wetland
- Whitman County
- Lake
- Mine
- Quarry

Data Sources:
 Mine and Quarry data from Whitman County CAD layer data
 Critical Areas Data from WA State DNR



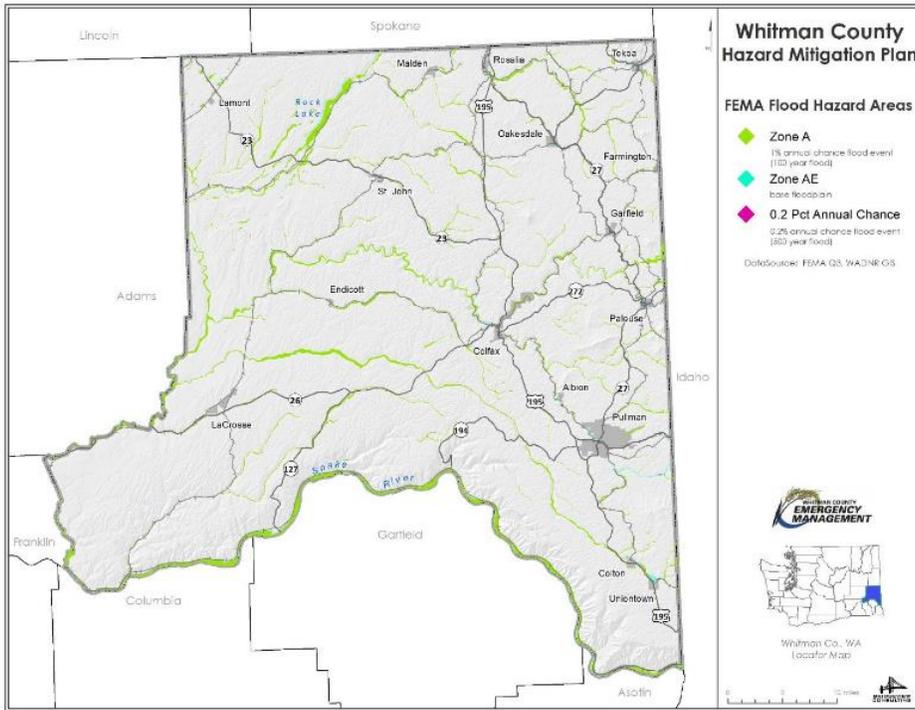


Figure 8-1. FEMA Flood Hazard Areas

CHAPTER 7: FACILITIES AND UTILITIES ELEMENT

Purpose

The purpose of the Facilities and Utilities Element is to identify public and private utilities, including transmissions lines, highways, major transportation facilities such as airports, solid waste facilities, reservoirs and water-related projects, and similar state and federally initiated projects. While not publicly owned, this Element also includes privately-owned telecommunications facilities, all of which serve Whitman County’s businesses and the public.

Introduction

Whitman County residents rely on facilities and services that support and enhance their quality of life. Services, facilities, and utilities include public buildings, public safety protection, electric, water, and sewer services. Even though Whitman County’s growth is slower than other surrounding counties, it is essential that planning efforts coordinate, identify and locate services and facilities in a manner that is consistent with the vision of the community.

Identifying locations where utilities and facilities are, 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 Whitman County’s financial resources.

Findings

In this element, facilities and utilities as noted will be described. However, transportation, parks, and recreation facilities are described in those elements.

County Buildings

Whitman County operates and maintains several facilities located throughout the County. These include:

- Whitman County Courthouse and Administration – Colfax
- Public Services Building - Colfax
- Sheriff’s Office – Colfax
- Jail Facility – Colfax
- Information Technology Facility - Colfax
- Whitman County Road Shops – located throughout the County to support maintenance and winter operations
- WHITCOM Regional 911 center – Pullman
- Various communication tower sites throughout the County for Sheriff, fire, EMS, and road departments
- Public Health Facility – Pullman
- Solid Waste Facility – near Pullman
- Miscellaneous parks buildings and restroom facilities

FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Public Safety

Whitman County Sherriff's Office provides law enforcement to all unincorporated areas of Whitman County.

Fire protection services are provided throughout all unincorporated areas of the County by fourteen fire protection districts. Each fire district provides fire protection (wildland and structural), EMS, and are operated largely by dedicated community volunteers.

Water/Sewer

Throughout the majority of unincorporated Whitman County, water and sewer are provided by on-site wells and on-site sewage disposal. Only those areas that are located within incorporated municipalities receive urban water and sewer services. All on-site systems in the unincorporated areas are reviewed and approved by Whitman County Environmental Health.

Solid Waste

The Whitman County Solid Waste Landfill and Transfer Station, located north of Pullman, manages the County's solid waste and recyclable materials. This facility serves all residents of the County through local waste haulers, contractors, and self-hauling residents. Commercial haulers currently providing services in Whitman County include Carroll & Naslund Disposal Service, Pullman Disposal Service, Empire Disposal, Sunshine Disposal, Town of Garfield, and Ada-Lin Waste Systems.

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Parks, Trails and Public Open Spaces

Whitman County owns and operates several parks, trails, and open spaces throughout the County. These are described in detail in the Parks, Recreation and Trails Element.

Transportation Facilities

Whitman County is served by a variety of transportation facilities, including state highways (US 195, SR 26, and others). The County is responsible for over 1,900-plus miles of roads and over three hundred bridges. The County is also responsible for hundreds of culverts throughout the County. Each of these facilities are regularly inspected, maintained, and occasionally replaced. The Transportation Element provides a more detailed description of each of these roadways.

Electricity and Gas

The majority of Whitman County is served by either Avista Utilities or Inland Power and Light Company. Energy sources include hydropower, wind power, solar, biomass, and natural gas.

Telecommunications/Cable & Satellite TV/Internet

Whitman County is served by several telecommunications providers. These include AT&T, CenturyLink, Colfax Cable, Spectrum Cable, DIRECTV, DISH Network, Frontier DSL, HughesNet, First Step Internet, Zply Fiber, Viasat, St. John Telephone and Pioneer Telephone. All major cell phone wireless carriers provide services throughout

FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Whitman County, including AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, and other smaller providers.

Whitman County also owns and operates various other communication equipment such as Public Safety and Public Works Department radio towers with antennas and repeaters.

Because the telecommunications and cable/satellite industries undergo constant changes, the above list and number of actual providers regularly changes as well.

Goals and Policies

The following Facilities and Utilities framework goals and policies are not listed in any specific order or priorities but should be considered equally.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROTECTION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

All policies and decisions made by the County, and as guided by the Comprehensive Plan, will strive to protect fundamental private property rights of individuals, and ensure that Whitman County land use policies and regulations balance the private property rights of all landowners to the degree possible.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – ENHANCE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES

Through innovative approaches, interagency coordination, and responsible fiscal policy, provide effective, supportive, and well-planned services to residents across the County.

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FRAMEWORK GOAL – EFFECTIVE LAND USE PLANNING

Develop countywide goals and policies that promote effective and consistent land use decisions that are responsive to local growth but also protect the unique character of Whitman County.

GOAL F-1 – ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN QUALITY OF LIFE AND VISION FOR WHITMAN COUNTY THROUGH PLANNED PROVISION OF FACILITIES AND UTILITIES BY THE COUNTY OR OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTITIES

Policy F-1.1 – Develop an inventory of existing facilities owned or operated by the County and owned or operated by non-county public entities. The inventory and all other associated information should eventually be maintained on the County's geographic information system (GIS) for public access.

GOAL F-2 – SITE FACILITIES AND UTILITIES CONSISTENT WITH THE POLICES OF THE LAND USE ELEMENT.

Policy F-2.1 – Future expansion to facilities and utilities that serve the needs of residents and businesses in Whitman County should be considered within the context of the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy F-2.2 – Adopt and maintain development regulations that ensure the siting of public and private facilities and utilities is consistent with the Land Use Element, as well as siting criteria jointly

FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

established by the County and the City of Pullman.

Policy F-2.3 – All major facilities construction, whether by state/federal governmental agencies, public or private utilities, should serve needs which are consistent with the environmental, social, and economic characteristics of the region, small towns, and family farms.

GOAL F-3 – ENSURE THAT FACILITIES AND UTILITIES ARE ADEQUATE TO SUPPORT EXISTING AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT WHITMAN COUNTY

Policy F-3.1 – Prior to approval of any land development, verify that adequate facilities and utilities are available.

Policy F-3.2 – Increased infrastructure needs triggered by future development proposals should be financed by the developer where practicable.

Policy F-3.3 – Collaborate with City of Pullman to promote the extension of urban infrastructure and services to commercial and industrial lands within the Joint Planning Area Committee (JPAC) Tax Sharing Agreement Area.

Policy F-3.4 – Whitman County should promote effective and ongoing collaboration and communication between incorporated towns and other agencies to improve services, facilities, and utility services.

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Policy F-3.5 – Coordinate long-range planning efforts with both public and private service providers to ensure sufficient infrastructure capacity for future needs.

GOAL F-4 – CONSTRUCTION OF MAJOR FACILITIES INITIATED BY STATE OR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO MINIMIZE IRREVERSIBLE USE OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS, AND TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS ON FARM AND RANCH OPERATIONS

Policy F-4.1 – Monitor plans and proposals of state and federal agencies for potential impacts to property.

Policy F-4.2 – Consider a permitting process for the siting of essential public facilities within Whitman County.

GOAL F-5 – FACILITIES CONSTRUCTED TO SERVE ENERGY NEEDS SHOULD BE LOCATED SO AS TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS ON ADJACENT LAND USES, INCLUDING AGRICULTURAL AND RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

Policy F-5.1 – Design of facilities near residential land use should incorporate measures to minimize visual, noise, light, and traffic impacts.

Policy F-5.2 – Facilities proposed next to agricultural croplands should incorporate measures to minimize impacts on farm access and practices.

Policy F-5.3 – Sites proposed for facilities should represent the best feasible location

FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

to minimize impacts on other land use, given constraints of land availability and costs.

Policy F- 5.4 – Require consolidation of antenna and other transmission equipment where feasible (i.e., utility poles, cables, trenching placement) to minimize adverse aesthetic and environmental impacts.

GOAL F-6 – ENCOURAGE WATER SYSTEM PLANNING TO PROMOTE EFFICIENT SERVICE, PROTECT THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENSURE ORDERLY PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT IN WHITMAN COUNTY.

Policy F-6.1 – Encourage public and private water purveyors to implement measurable water conservation practices [and improve or enhance the water supply](#).

GOAL F-7 – ENCOURAGE THE MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS OF EXISTING AND FUTURE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM(S) TO A LEVEL ADEQUATE TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE COUNTY

Policy F-7.1 – Promote the widespread availability of communications, broadband internet access, and similar technologies in cooperation with other public and private entities, to facilitate communication among members of the public, public institutions, and private businesses.

Policy F-7.2 – Opportunities to enhance and promote communications technology within Whitman County that support existing

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businesses and industrial users, strengthen its competitive edge in recruiting new business, and supporting existing and future residents should be considered a priority.



Source: Southeast Washington Economic Development Association (SEWEDA)

Appendix A: Maps

Land Use, Natural Resources, and Agricultural Conservation

[Map 1: Agricultural Land Uses](#)

[Map 2: Pullman-Area Zoning](#)

[Map 3: Critical Areas and Natural Resources](#)

[Map 4: Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance](#)

Transportation

[Map 5: Road Transportation and Ports](#)

[Map 6: Railroad Network](#)

Parks, Trails, and Recreation

[Map 7: Parks, Trails, and Recreation](#)

[Map 8: Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail – East of Columbia River](#)

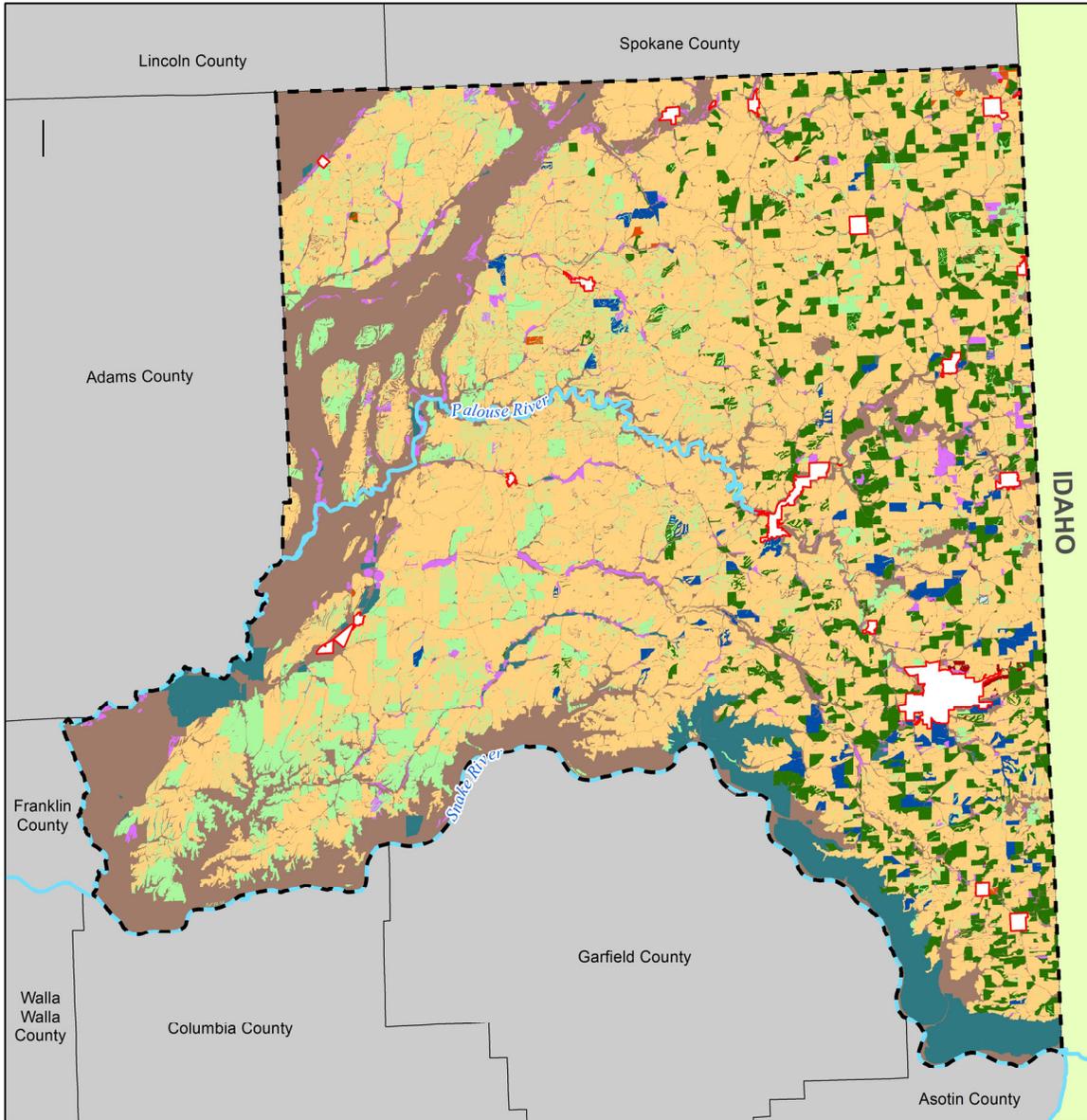
Environmental Protection and Climate Change

[Map 8](#)[Map 9](#): Critical Areas and Natural Resources (also located in Land Use chapter)

[Map 9](#)[Map 10](#): FEMA Flood Hazard Areas

Field Code Changed

Field Code Changed



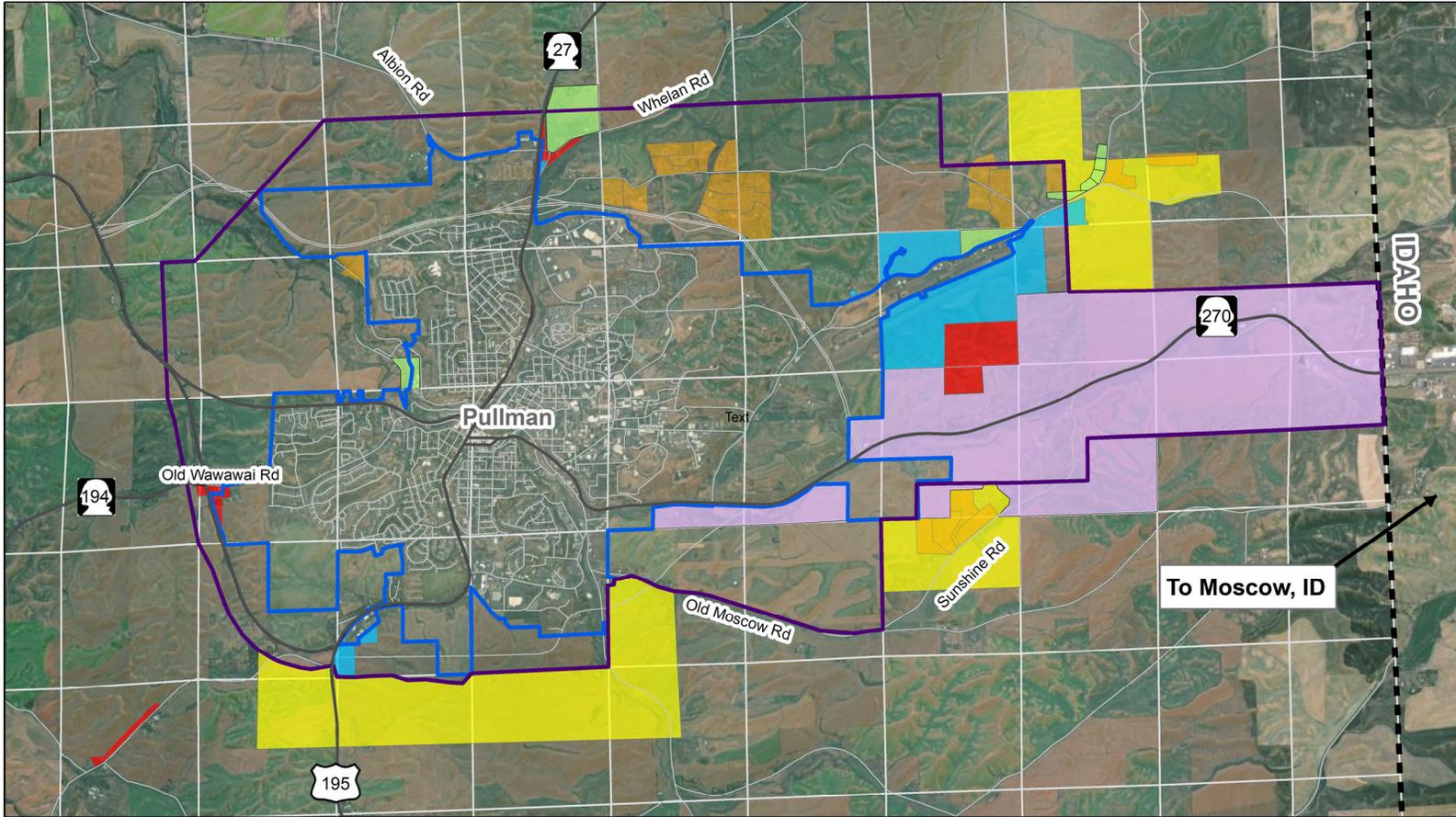
Legend

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|-----------|----------------|
| Cereal Grain | Herb | Oilseed | Vegetable | Stream/River |
| Commercial Tree | Nursery | Orchard | Vineyard | Whitman County |
| Developed | Seed | Other | Rangeland | City/Town |
| Hay/Silage | Turfgrass | Pasture | | |



Data Sources: NRAS (Natural Resource Assessment Section) Washington
State Dept of Agriculture, Washington
Dept of Ecology

Map 1



Whitman County Zoning Map - Pullman Area

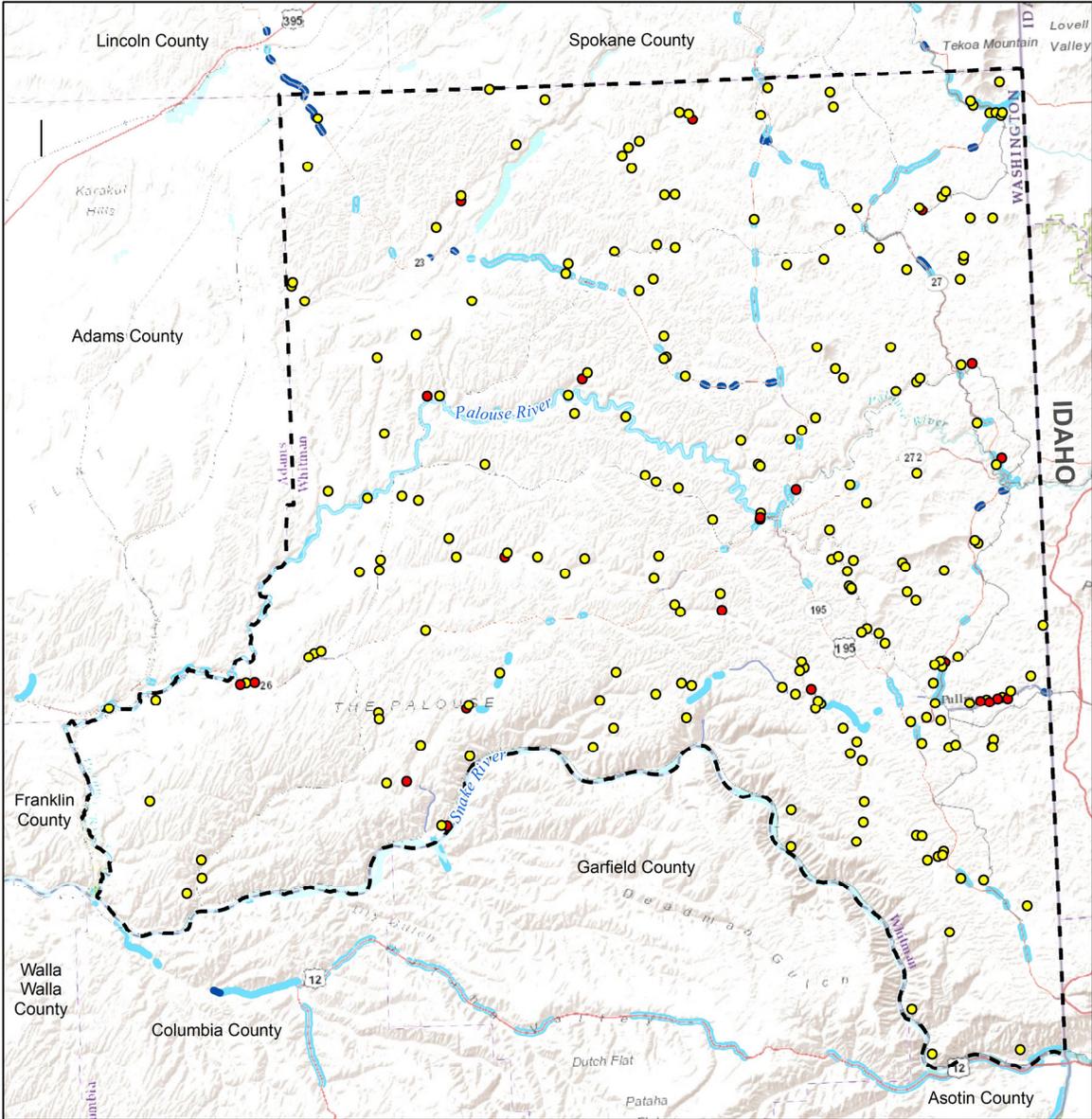


Legend

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Heavy Commercial - HC | Heavy Industrial - HI | Sections | Whitman County Boundary | State Highway |
| Light Industrial - LI | Cluster Residential Opportunity Zone | City Limit | Local Roads | US Highway |
| Cluster Residential District - CRD | Pullman Moscow Corridor | Tax Sharing Line | | |



Data Sources: Whitman County Planning Department (digitized by LDC, Inc.); WADNR; US Census Bureau TIGER Shapefiles
 Basemap: ESRI



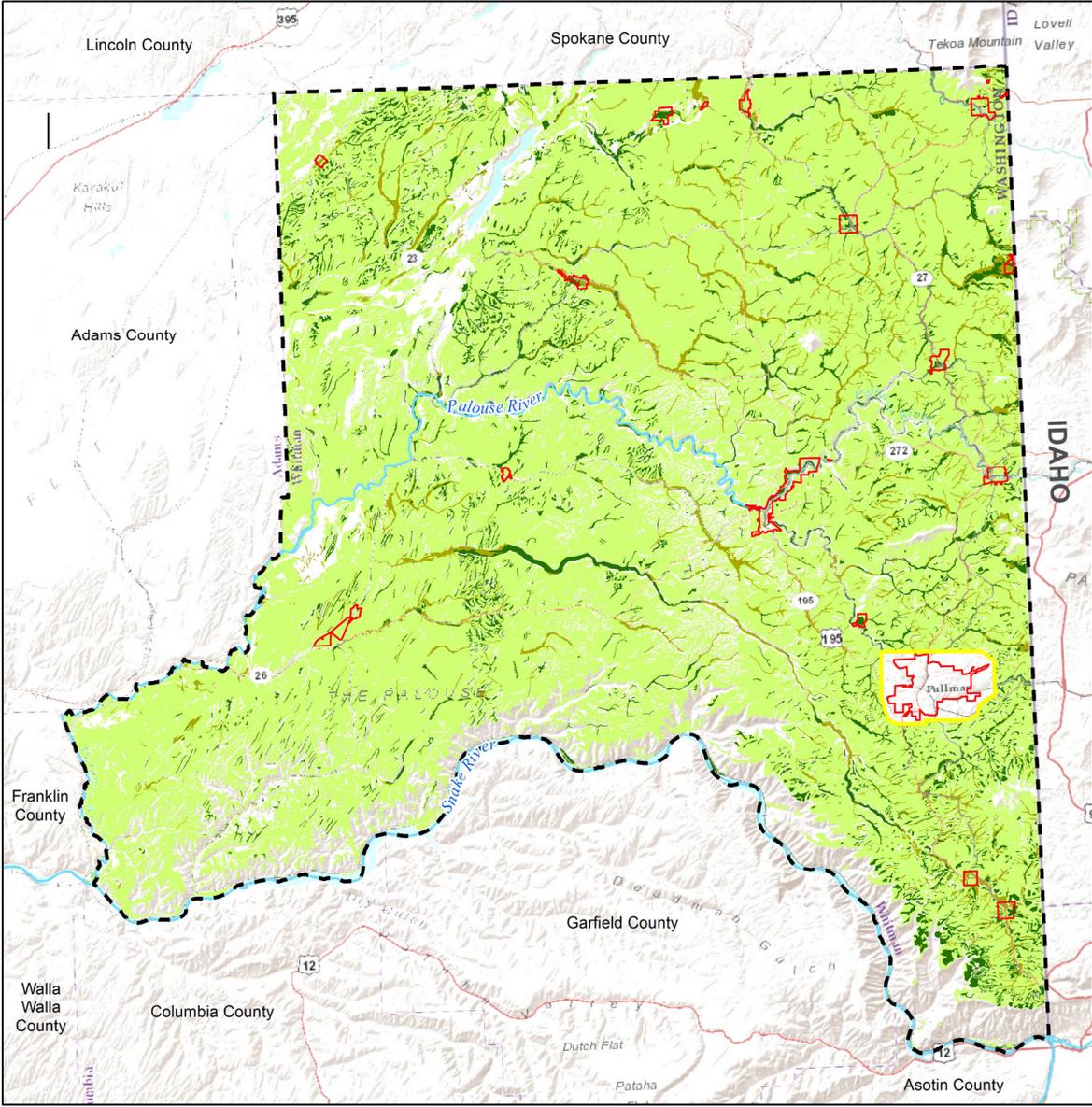
N
 Legend

Whitman County Critical Areas and Natural Resources

- Stream/River
- Wetland
- Whitman County
- Lake
- Mine
- Quarry

Data Sources:
 Mine and Quarry data from Whitman County CAD layer data
 Critical Areas Data from WA State DNR





Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Significance

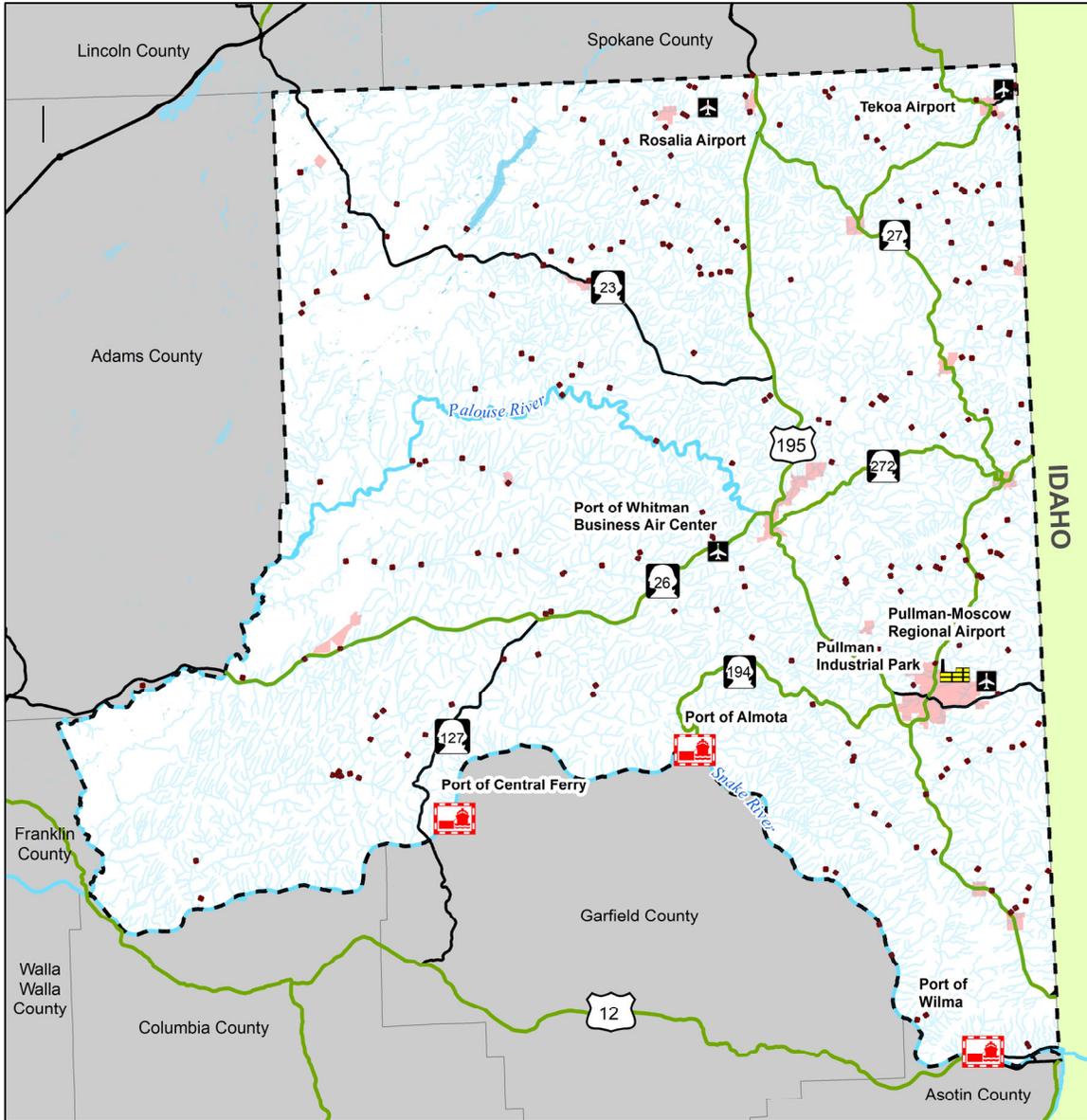
Legend

- All prime farmland
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Prime farmland if managed
- Pullman Urban Growth Area
- City/Town
- Whitman County
- Stream/River

Sources: USDA-NRCS Web Soil Survey; Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Significance, Washington Dept of Ecology, City of Pullman Draft Comprehensive Plan digitized by LDC, Inc. Basemap: ESRI



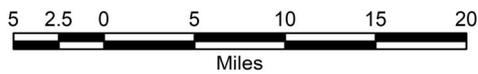
Map 4

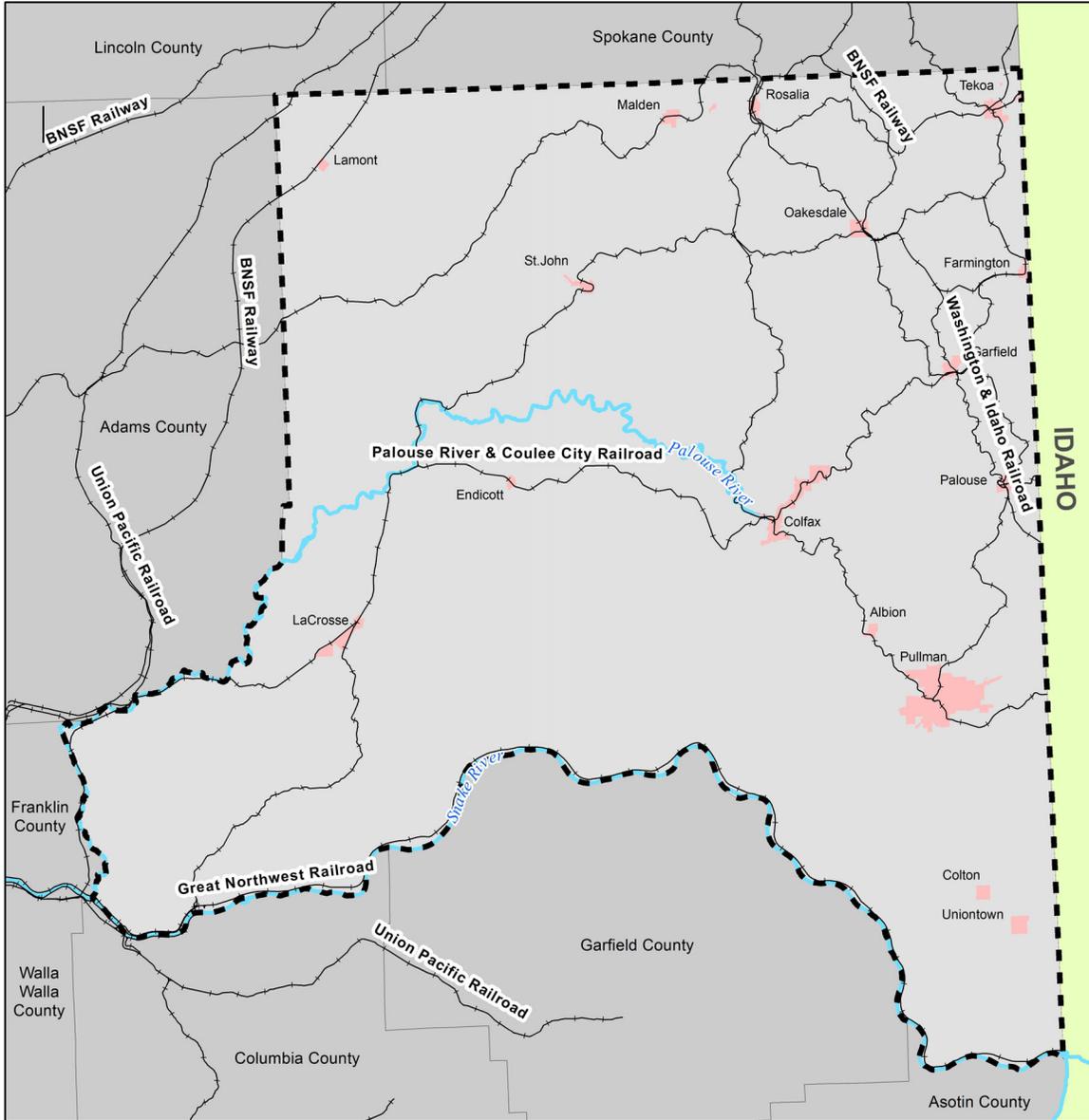


Whitman County Road Transportation and Port Map

Legend

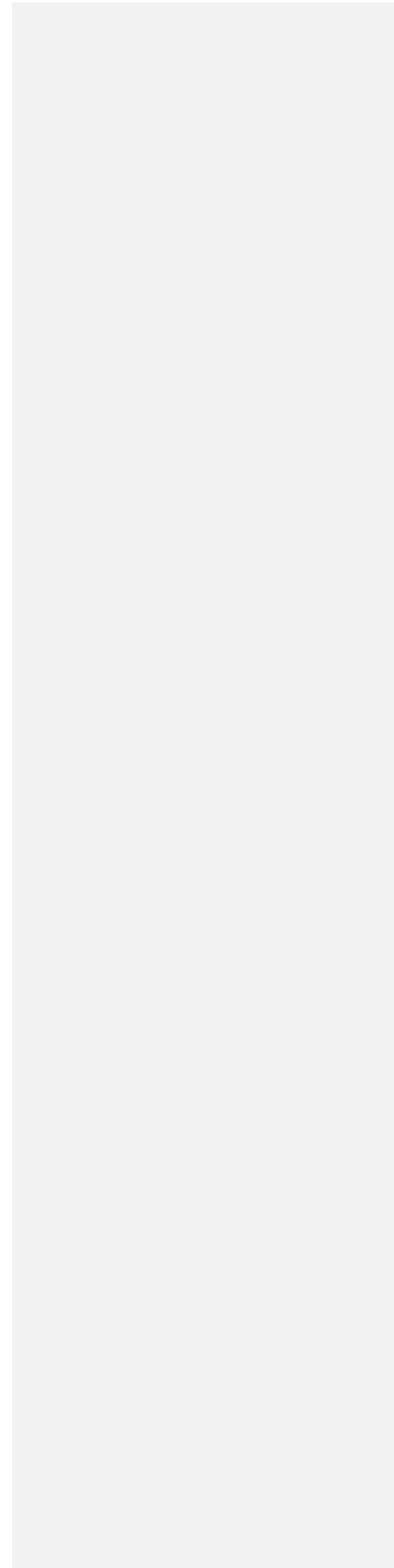
- | | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Routes | State Route | Whitman County | Bridge | Airport |
| Scenic Routes | US Route | City/Town | Stream/River | Pullman Industrial Park |
| | | | Ports | |

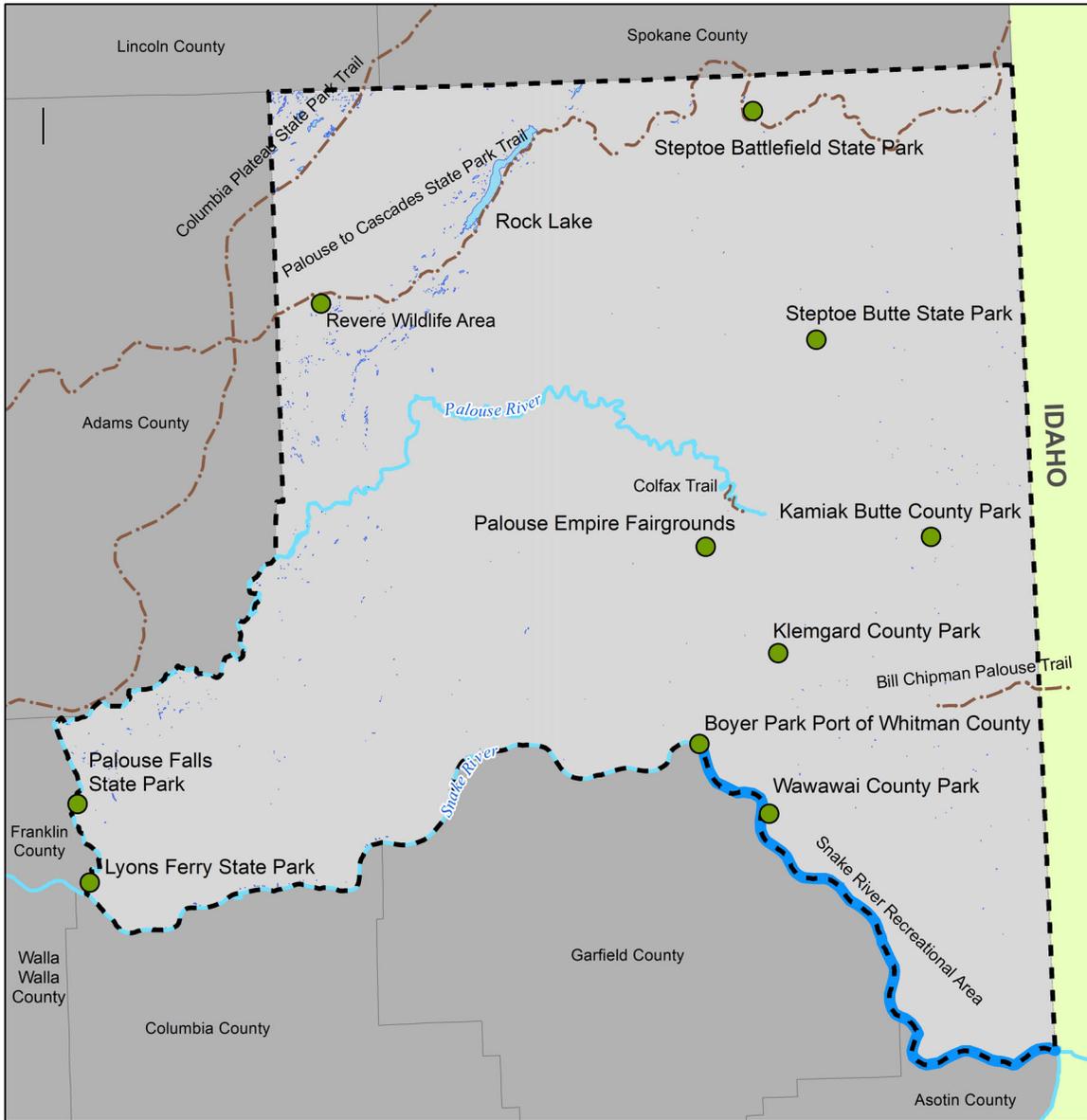




Legend

- Railroad
- Stream/River
- City/Town
- Whitman County



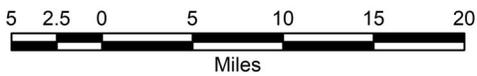


Whitman County Parks, Trails and Recreation

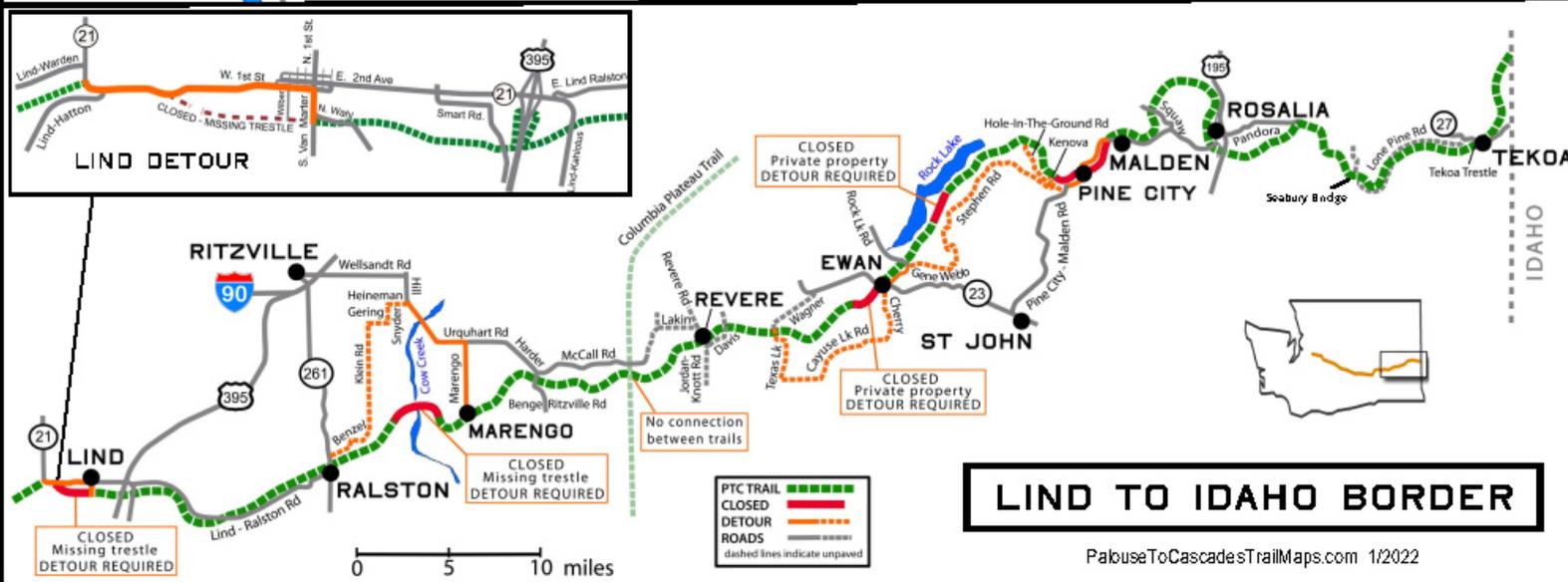
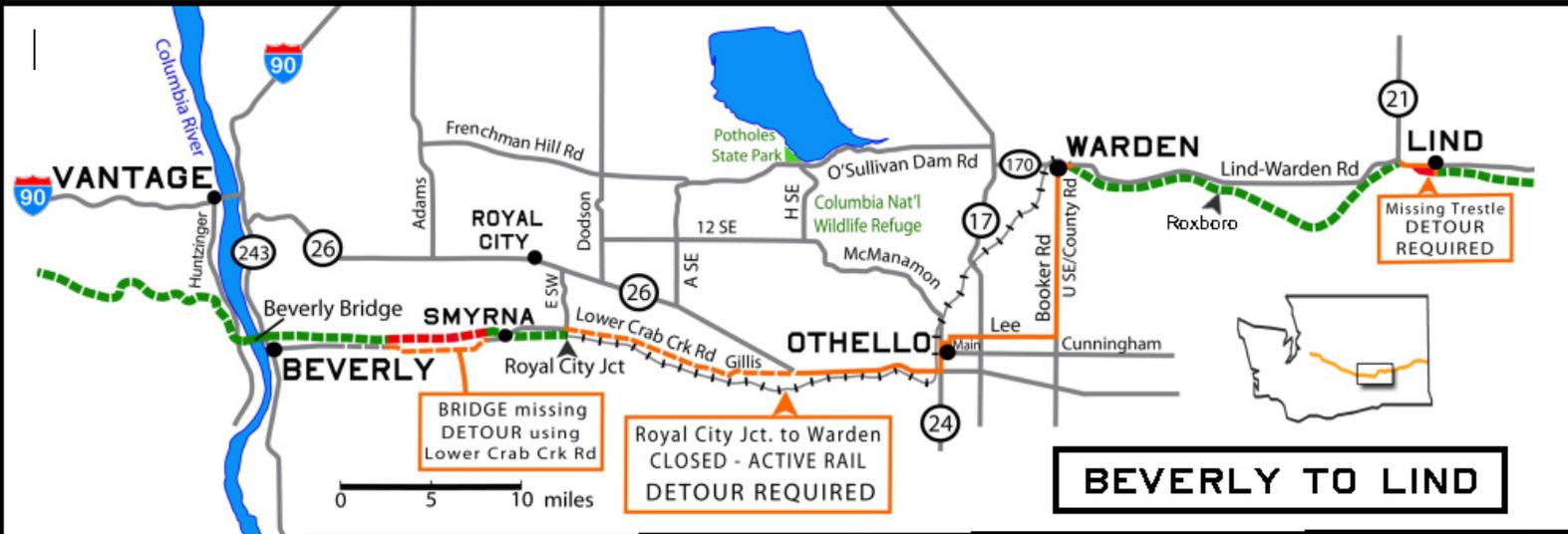


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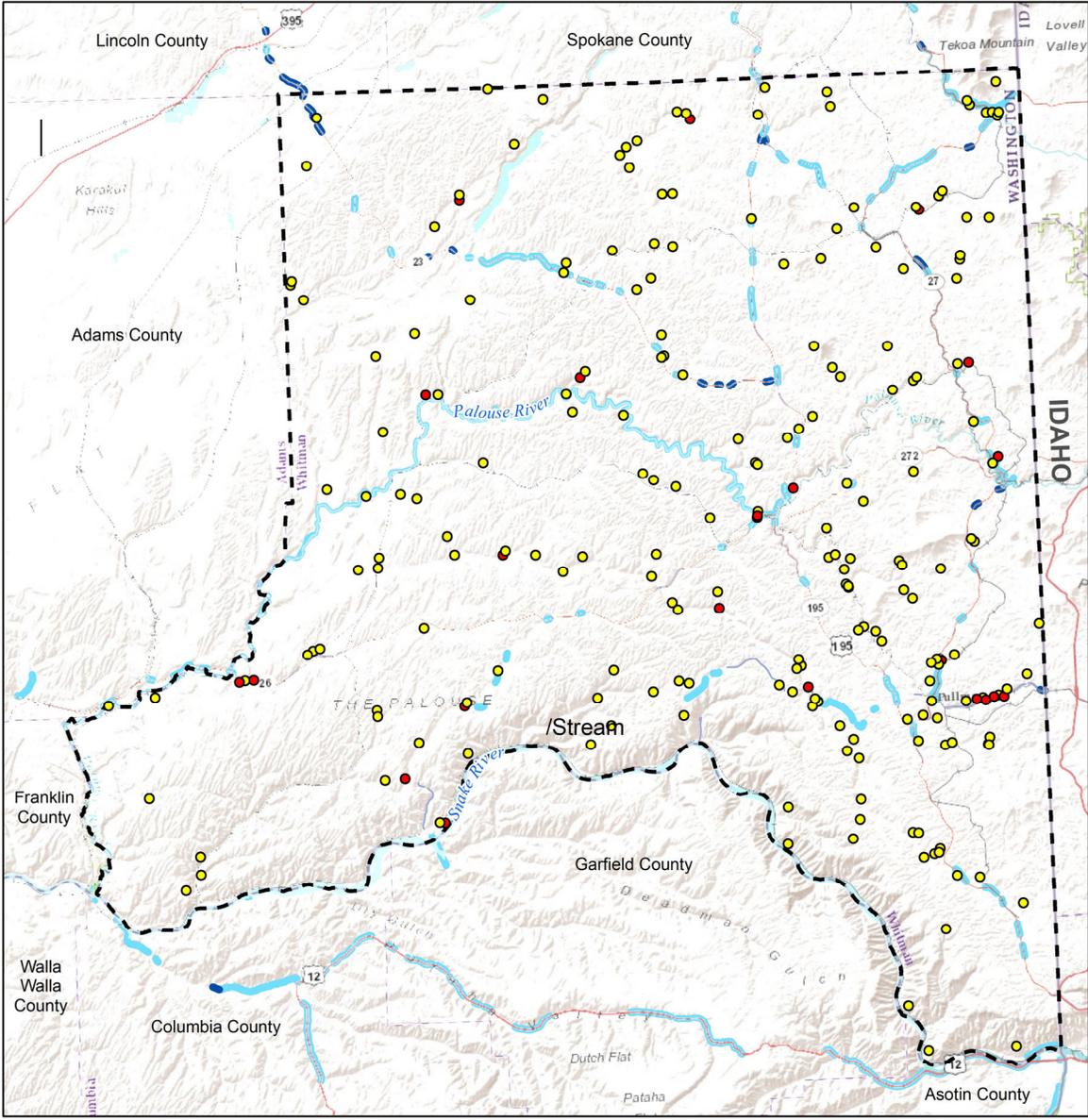
- Stream/River
- Lakes/Waterbodies
- Park
- Whitman County
- Trails



Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail – East of Columbia River



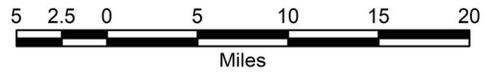
Map 8



Whitman County Critical Areas and Natural Resources

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
|  Stream/River |  Whitman County |  Mine |
|  Wetland |  Lake |  Quarry |

Data Sources:
 Mine and Quarry data from Whitman County CAD layer data
 Critical Areas Data from WA State DNR



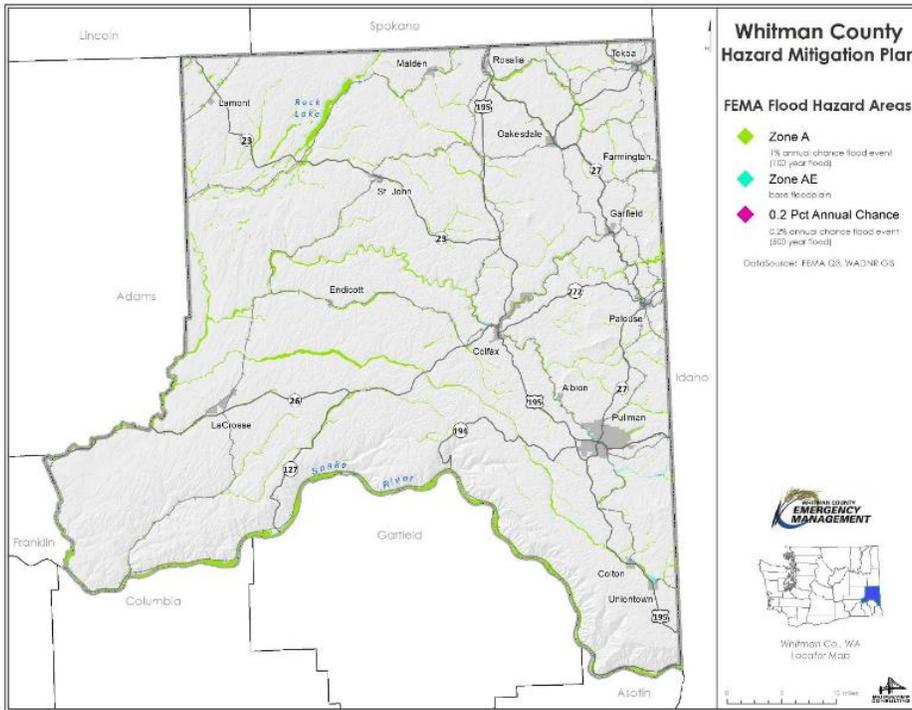


Figure 8-1. FEMA Flood Hazard Areas

Appendix B: Public Input Report