

Burlington



March 17, 2009

RE: Proposed Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Concept Plan

Skagit County
Planning and Development Services
Jeroldine Halberg, Senior Planner
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon WA 98273

Dear Jeroldine,

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the proposed concept plan to identify and plan for open space corridors within and between urban growth areas, including lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas.

You have stated that the plan is simply a layering of all the existing parks, open space, and trails plans from the cities, the county, and other agencies, along with some additional areas that create more effective open spaces.

In 2004, Burlington adopted a Connected Open Space Plan that is focused on the existing open spaces provided by levees, parks, wetland buffers, and the surrounding farmland/floodplain and the Skagit River. Detailed planning of future connections such as trails, other than the existing SR 20 trail, is a long range project for this area because there are a number of options on the table. There is a lot of work to be done to complete the planning process in coordination with the flood hazard mitigation and farmland preservation plans. Some recreation components are stable, such as boat launch ramps that provide the only free public access to the riverfront, and perhaps they should be mentioned.

The UGA Open Space Concept Plan may be an opportunity to consider expanding the future role of the Skagit Council of Governments in working on intergovernmental issues and programs, to ensure that the urban and rural areas have good representation and access to funding opportunities down the road. This suggestion came to mind because of the use of the term "County Council" instead of the Board of County Commissioners, and the proposal to place the County in charge of urban open space programs as lead entity, with the Board of Commissioners also controlling appointments to the Advisory Committee. Every incorporated city and town needs to be represented as they are clearly responsible for work in the City and Town Limits.

This is a difficult project with many diverse interests involved, and you have done a great job of working on the program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Margaret Fleek'.

Margaret Fleek
Planning Director

Planning & Permit Center

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RCW 36.70A.160**Identification of open space corridors -- Purchase authorized.**

Each county and city that is required or chooses to prepare a comprehensive land use plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall identify open space corridors within and between urban growth areas. They shall include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas as defined in RCW 36.70A.030. Identification of a corridor under this section by a county or city shall not restrict the use or management of lands within the corridor for agricultural or forest purposes. Restrictions on the use or management of such lands for agricultural or forest purposes imposed after identification solely to maintain or enhance the value of such lands as a corridor may occur only if the county or city acquires sufficient interest to prevent development of the lands or to control the resource development of the lands. The requirement for acquisition of sufficient interest does not include those corridors regulated by the interstate commerce commission, under provisions of 16 U.S.C. Sec. 1247(d), 16 U.S.C. Sec. 1248, or 43 U.S.C. Sec. 912. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to alter the authority of the state, or a county or city, to regulate land use activities.

(5) "Critical areas" include the following areas and ecosystems: (a) Wetlands; (b) areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water; (c) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas; (d) frequently flooded areas; and (e) geologically hazardous areas.