

SKAGIT ALTERNATIVE FUTURES POPULATION PROJECTIONS (2010-2060)

Issue statement: What population projection should the Alternative Futures project use for the “most likely” 2060 population target as well as for “high” growth and “low” growth scenarios for planning and modeling purposes.

Recommendation to Steering Committee: the Growth Management Technical Committee has recommended using a 2060 population projection of 217,578 as the “most likely” number for Alternative Futures modeling purposes. This number represents a continuation of the 2025 population target of 149,080 being used by Skagit Council of Governments jurisdictions for GMA planning purposes. The technical committee recommends using the Office of Financial Management (OFM) medium series number of 258,212 as the upper end for Alternative Futures modeling purposes, and the OFM low series number of 192,412 as the low end.

Background

A key element in developing and modeling the alternative futures will be agreement on population growth scenarios for the project’s 50-year planning period from 2010-2060. Conducting 50-year population projections is, in and of itself, a speculative venture. In general, the longer the projection period the greater the uncertainties and therefore the greater the variability in predicted results.

The current 2025 GMA population growth target (forecast) for the County is 149,080.¹ That target was selected by the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) Board in 2005 after careful review of the state Office of Financial Management’s (OFM’s) low, medium and high growth projections for 2025.² That adopted SCOG 2025 target is 2% below the mid-point between OFM’s 2025 medium and low series projections for the County.

As a starting point for determining “alternative futures” project population projections for the County out to 2060, project staff developed six (6) different population growth scenarios to help identify the potential range of population growth variability over the next 50 years.³ Those six different 2060 growth scenarios and their methodologies are shown in the companion document titled “Skagit 2000-2060 Population Projections.”

Growth Management Technical Committee Recommendation

Those growth scenarios were reviewed and evaluated by a sub-group of Steering Committee members at the March 4 Steering Committee meeting. Bullets briefly summarizing that discussion are found on page 4.

The Growth Management Technical Committee also addressed the issue at its April 10, 2009 meeting. The committee concluded that the six growth scenarios capture the

¹ OFM estimates the current (2008) Skagit County total population to be 117,500.

²The SCOG Board is comprised of elected officials from Skagit County, eight cities and towns, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, the Port of Skagit County, Skagit Transit, and the Skagit PUD.

³ Technical work by land use consultant Mark Personius.

reasonable range of population growth likely to be experienced within the next 50 years. The technical committee considered development of an OFM “high” series projection to 2060 but rejected it as unreasonable for GMA and Alternative Futures planning purposes.⁴ The Growth Management Technical Committee, by general consensus, recommended the following for alternative futures modeling purposes:

- Use a “most likely” 2060 target population as well as a low and a high population scenario to define the “bookends” for alternative futures scenario planning and modeling purposes. The technical committee’s recommended 2060 targets are:
 - “Most Likely”—Hypothetical SCOG Target—217,578.
 - High Target—OFM Medium Series—258,212.
 - Low Target—OFM Low Series—192,412.

The technical committee reasoned that the “most likely” population growth forecast should mirror an extension of the currently adopted SCOG 2025 target. That target reflects the current consensus among the various cities and towns, the Swinomish Tribe and the County as to an appropriate amount of growth to plan for in Skagit County consistent with current GMA planning policies.

The technical committee also felt that the population target adopted by SCOG for 2025 (149,080) generally reflects the current population growth trajectory (approximate mean of OFM Medium/OFM Low) experienced in the County from 2000-2008.

Actual growth in Skagit County over the next 50 years is likely to vary (sometimes significantly) decade by decade and will continue to be influenced by the larger and more complex regional and national social and economic trends, both positively and negatively.

In considering the technical committee’s recommendation, the Steering Committee should consider whether the OFM low series projection of 192,412 addresses the desire of some Steering Committee members to evaluate a lower future population for Skagit County based on a Puget Sound regional population allocation that seeks to protect unique agricultural and ecosystem resources in Skagit County.

⁴ A high growth scenario modeled on a linear trend of the OFM 2005-2025 “high” growth forecast series would result in a countywide population of more than 350,000 by 2060.

Additional Detail on County Population Projections (Optional – but helpful – reading)

The County’s current 20-year GMA population forecasts from the Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM) only reach out to 2025. OFM prepares three different 20-year GMA forecast scenarios for every county—high, medium and low. The “medium” series projection is what the OFM advises local governments as the “most likely” growth forecast for the ensuing 20 years.⁵ However, under the GMA, counties and their cities and towns have discretion in choosing a single 20-year planning target, so long as that target is between the OFM low and OFM high scenarios. Counties and their cities and towns jointly decide on a single 20-year GMA planning target that is then used to allocate population growth individually amongst the jurisdictions.⁶ That population allocation drives the sizing of urban growth areas and other GMA-related planning assumptions and actions for all jurisdictions in the county.

In brief, the scenarios include:

1. ***State Share Forecast***—predicts growth based on the County’s projected share of (unofficial) OFM-predicted statewide growth.
2. ***OFM Medium Series***—predicts growth based on linear trend of OFM medium series projections from 2025 to 2060.
3. ***GMA 2025 Target 2% Linear Trend***—predicts growth based on assumed 2% annual average growth rate from adopted 2025 GMA target out to 2060.
4. ***1960-2000 Trend***—predicts growth based on actual county population growth from 1960-2000 and OFM’s medium series forecast from 2005-2025.
5. ***Hypothetical SCOG Target***—predicts growth based on continuation of SCOG 2025 target (approx. mean of OFM medium and OFM low) out to 2060.
6. ***OFM Low Series***—predicts growth based on linear trend of OFM low series projections from 2025-2060.

Rationale for Selecting “Hypothetical SCOG Target” Scenario

There is particular concern among some urban jurisdictions about the higher population projections given the current policies that direct 80% of future growth in the County to urban growth areas, the significant constraints related to future urban growth area expansion (e.g., incursion into floodplains and agricultural lands), and the high costs to provide urban services to (primarily) new residential development. Future population growth planning assumptions should reflect those constraints by targeting a more realistic

⁵ Population growth is influenced by a wide range of factors, both quantitative and qualitative, including proximity to employment opportunities, the age, gender, education, income and household characteristics of the population, transportation mobility, housing affordability, climate and quality of life. OFM population projections are based on several quantitative factors, most notably fertility, migration and national and statewide economic activity forecasts.

⁶ The Skagit County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) direct that 80% of the countywide 20-year projected growth target be accommodated within urban growth areas (primarily cities and towns) and the remaining 20% is allocated to unincorporated rural Skagit County. The CPPs further allocate the share of projected 20-year urban growth amongst individual jurisdictions.

(lower) projection—even if that projection falls below the OFM “most likely” scenario (i.e., the OFM medium series projection).

Current Growth Trajectory

Analysis of 2000 US Census estimates and subsequent annual OFM population estimates for the County from 2000-2008 indicates that, based on the continuation of the average annual average growth rate for this most recent period, growth projections for 2010 and 2025 would be slightly above the mean of the OFM low and medium forecasts (see table below). Whether this period accurately reflects the current (2008-2009) deterioration of regional and national economic activities and conditions (and their resulting effect on local population growth), however, is unknown.

Skagit County Population

Year	Actual & (Projected on AAGR)	Mean OFM Low/ Medium Forecasts	OFM Low Forecast	OFM Medium Forecast
2000	102,979	----	----	----
2005	110,900	----	----	----
2008	117,500	----	----	----
<i>(2010)</i>	<i>(121,429)</i>	<i>118,932</i>	<i>113,977</i>	<i>123,888</i>
<i>(2025)</i>	<i>(155,414)</i>	<i>151,883</i>	<i>139,123</i>	<i>164,643</i>

AAGR=Average Annual Growth Rate 2000-2008 =1.66%.

Summary bullets from March 4 Steering Committee small-group discussion on population:

Small-Group Discussions

Population:

- Biodiversity of the watershed should be reflected in developing or using a lower than historic growth projections (i.e., OFM low projection)
- We should use a CPP consistent population projection to reflect current practice (OFM medium or average OFM med/low)
- Look at a high (fear factor #)
- How difficult would it be to analyze three different population growth scenarios across all the Alternate Futures

Skagit County Alternative Futures (April 2009) 2000-2060 Population Projection Scenarios

Scenario/Methodology	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2055	2060
<i>State Share Forecast</i>	102,979	110,900	123,888	135,589	150,305	164,643	178,036	188,147	200,364	212,855	228,694	245,449	260,984
<i>OFM 2000-2030 Medium Series Linear Trend</i>	102,979	110,900	123,888	135,589	150,305	164,643	178,036	190,153	204,403	218,222	231,392	244,663	258,212
<i>GMA 2025 Target 2% Growth Linear Trend</i>	102,979	---	123,888	---	---	149,080	---	---	193,804	---	---	238,528	253,436
<i>1960-2000 Trend + OFM 2010-2030 Medium Series</i>	102,979	110,900	123,888	135,589	150,305	164,643	178,036	175,442	190,399	202,745	214,370	226,181	237,352
<i>Hypothetical SCOG Target (Mean OFM Medium/OFM Low)</i>	102,979	110,900	118,932	128,470	140,535	149,080	158,706	168,386	178,670	188,393	197,736	207,757	217,578
<i>OFM 2000-2030 Low Series Linear Trend</i>	102,979	110,900	113,977	121,352	130,766	139,123	145,988	152,908	161,711	169,483	176,824	184,452	192,412

Scenario/Methodology Notes:

- 1. State Share Forecast**—Assumes Skagit County share of state population for 2030-2060 increases at same average five-year intervals projected from 2000-2030 based on OFM projections of state population 2000-2050. Sources: OFM/Forecasting/ December 2008; Mark Personius, AICP, Growth Management Consultant, December 2008.
- 2. OFM 2000-2030 Medium Series Linear Trend**—Skagit County 2030-2060 linear population growth based on extrapolation of OFM 2000-2030 population projections (medium series) for Skagit County. Sources: OFM/Forecasting/ October 2007; Mark Personius, AICP, Growth Management Consultant, December 2008.
- 3. Adopted GMA 2025 Target 2% Linear Trend**—Skagit County 2025-2060 population growth extrapolated based on an annual growth rate of 2% applied to Skagit County adopted 2025 GMA target population. Sources: Current and Projected Water Demand for Skagit County's Domestic, Commercial, and Industrial Sectors, Hydrologic Services Company, January 2006; Mark Personius, AICP, Growth Management Consultant, Dec. 2008.
- 4. 1960-2000 Trend + OFM 2010-2030 Medium Series**—Skagit County 2030-2060 linear population growth based on OFM 1960-2000 actual population and extrapolation of OFM 2010-2030 projections (medium series). Sources: OFM/Forecasting/ October 2007; Mark Personius, AICP, Growth Management Consultant, December 2008.
- 5. Hypothetical SCOG Target Population**—Skagit County 2030-2060 linear population growth based on OFM 2000-2025 estimated population, adopted SCOG 2025 target, and the mean of OFM Medium & OFM Low Series projections from 2010-2020. Sources: OFM/Forecasting/ October 2007; Mark Personius, AICP, Growth Management Consultant, April 2009. *[Recommended by the Growth Management Technical Committee on 4-10-09 as "most likely" 2060 target]*
- 6. OFM 2000-2030 Low Series Linear Trend**—Skagit County 2030-2060 linear population growth based on extrapolation of OFM 2000-2030 population projections (low series) for Skagit County. Sources: OFM/Forecasting/ October 2007; Mark Personius, AICP, Growth Management Consultant, December 2008.

Skagit County 2000-2060 Population Projections

