



Comprehensive Plan Policy or Development Regulation Amendment Suggestion

Planning & Development Services · 1800 Continental Place · Mount Vernon WA 98273
voice 360-416-1320 · www.skagitcounty.net/planning

Per RCW 36.70A.470(2), this form is intended for use by any interested person, including applicants, citizens, hearing examiners, and staff of other agencies, to suggest amendments to Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan policies or its development regulations, which are contained in Skagit County Code Title 14. Please do not combine multiple unrelated Comprehensive Plan policy or development regulation amendments on a single form. This form is for policy or development regulation amendments; use the Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment Request form for changes to the land use/zoning map.

Submitted By

Name	Hal Rooks	Organization	Guemes Island Planning & Advisory Committee (GIPAC)	
Address	1219 10th St.	City, State	Anacortes, WA	Zip 98221
Email	hsredfield@frontier.com	Phone	360-293-5171	

Proposal Description

Please answer all of the questions below that are applicable to your suggestion.

1. Describe your proposed amendment.

Amend the Drinking Water Code (existing SCC 12.48.250) to encourage rainwater collection systems for potable water on Guemes Island. For Guemes Island, consider adopting San Juan County's regulations for potable rainwater catchment systems, which have been in place and operated well for at least the past 15 years. San Juan County takes an innovative approach to potable rainwater catchment which puts the burden for issues like water quality and quantity produced on the homeowner. The homeowner is required to file a Declaration of Covenant for an alternative water source, which shifts the responsibility for maintaining the water quality and quantity on a catchment system from the County to the homeowner.

Revise/lower the definition of "adequate water supply" in existing SCC 12.48.030 from 350 gallons per day to 200 gallons per day for Guemes Island.

Allow homeowners on Guemes Island the option of using a rainwater collection system designer or designing their own system, if for personal use.

2. Describe the reasons your proposed amendment is needed or important.

Ground water from an aquifer is the only source of fresh water available to the large majority of residents of Guemes Island. In 1997, the federal Environmental Protection Agency designated the island's aquifer system as a "Sole Source Aquifer" under the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act. The WA Department of Ecology (DOE) identified coastal seawater intrusion areas on Guemes Island in the late 1980s. In May, 1994, DOE wrote a letter to Skagit County recommending limiting new well construction on the north end of the island, and also recommending the county discourage, island-wide, wells completed within unconsolidated materials near the coast. Rainwater catchment provides a proven alternative to wells.

Current Skagit County code formally discourages alternative water catchment systems and creates significant barriers to rainwater collection systems for potable water. For example, the code definition of "adequate water supply" requiring 350 gallons per day necessitates very large catchment structures, making rainwater collection infeasible on many sub-standard lots on Guemes. From GIPAC's research, most Guemes homes use less than 150 gal/day. We propose reducing the definition of "adequate water supply" to 200 gallons/day for Guemes Island because of the island's limited water supply and reliance on a sole source aquifer. A catchment system built to produce 200 gal/day is much smaller than one needing to produce 350 gallons. San Juan County's required minimum capacity is 200 gal/day for wells but San Juan County does not have a requirement for rainwater catchment systems because this is a responsibility of the homeowner.

Another current Skagit County requirement--that rainwater collection systems be designed by one of a handful of licensed engineers--add considerably to the cost of such systems--and has been deemed unnecessary by San Juan County. In San Juan County, systems may be designed by a qualified engineer, water system designer, or, in the case of systems for personal use, by the homeowners themselves.

3. *If you are suggesting revision to a particular section of the Comprehensive Plan, please identify which section(s):*

N/A

4. *If you are suggesting revision to the Comprehensive Plan, would the revision create inconsistencies with existing sections of the Comprehensive Plan? If so, please list those sections:*

N/A

5. *If you are suggesting revision to the Comprehensive Plan, would the revision require corresponding amendments to the County's development regulations?*

N/A

6. *If you are suggesting revision to a particular section of Skagit County Code Title 14, please identify which section(s).*

N/A

7. *If you are suggesting this development regulation amendment as a result of a particular project or permit application, please identify which project or application:*

N/A

8. *If you are suggesting specific language as part of your amendment, please attach that specific language. Specific language is not required.*

We suggest the County consider adopting code language addressing alternative water sources and rainwater collection systems, whether in the Drinking Water code (SCC 12.48), or the Critical Areas Ordinance (SCC 14.24), similar to that in the San Juan County Code:

SJC 8.06.140(C)(3):

Alternative water sources will be permitted for single-family residential use. Alternative water sources must be approved by the Health Officer.

Alternative water sources include:

(D): Rainwater catchment design meeting county guidelines. If the water is intended for domestic use, the applicant must submit a design by a qualified engineer or water system designer, and record on the property title a statement that the system is alternative and a description of operation and maintenance requirements. An owner may design a system for their own use.

The homeowner is required to file a Declaration of Covenant for an alternative water source with the County prior to system approval, which places the responsibility for maintaining the water quality and quantity for a catchment system on the homeowner. The homeowner is responsible if the system does not produce enough water. There is no ongoing testing requirement after the initial water quality testing and the County approves the catchment system.

9. *Describe why existing Comprehensive Plan policies should not continue to be in effect or why they no longer apply.*

N/A

10. *Describe how the amendment complies with the Comprehensive Plan's community vision statements, goals, objectives, and policy directives.*

The proposed code amendment is consistent with the Guemes Island Subarea Plan, which is an adopted element of the County Comprehensive Plan. The Guemes Island Subarea Plan identifies protection of the island's sole source aquifer as a key issue (#4 Environment Element) and calls for codification and updating of the County's Interim Seawater Intrusion Policy (Policy 4.3). While the Seawater Intrusion Policy was recently codified as part of the 2016 County Comprehensive Plan Update, Skagit County code still discourages any alternative to wells as the preferred water source for residences. Rainwater collection should be the preferred water source on Guemes where seawater intrusion is a significant problem.

11. *Describe the anticipated impacts to be caused by the change, including geographic area affected and issues presented.*

The proposed code amendment would affect only Guemes Island. It should slow seawater intrusion and well failure along the shorelines of Guemes, and provide increased protection for existing wells with senior water rights.

12. Describe how adopted functional plans and Capital Facilities Plans support the change.

N/A

13. Describe any public review of the request that has already occurred.

N/A

Notices

Fees. No fees are required for a policy or code change suggestion, per SCC 14.08.020(6).

Docketing. SCC Chapter 14.08 governs the process for docketing of Comprehensive Plan amendments; suggestions for changes to the development regulations are docketed following the same process. Docketing of a suggestion is procedural only and does not constitute a decision by the Board of County Commissioners as to whether the amendment will ultimately be approved.

Amendments are usually concluded by the end of the year following the request. State law generally prohibits the County from amending its Comprehensive Plan more than once per year.

Submission deadline. Suggestions must be received by the last business day of July for docketing. Suggestions received after that date will not be considered until the following year's docket.

How to Submit. Submit your suggestion via email (preferred) to pdscomments@co.skagit.wa.us or to Planning & Development Services at the address above.