

WHATCOM COUNTY

Planning & Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226-9097
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Mark Personius, AICP
Director

Wildlife Advisory Committee
Special Meeting

LOCATION

**Hybrid Meeting: Zoom (details below) and
Northwest Annex Conference Room
Whatcom County Planning and Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226**

Date: March 1, 2024

Time: 9:30-10:00 A.M. Pacific Time PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Whatcom County PDS is inviting you to a scheduled in person or Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89548919707?pwd=ZGxLYmVmRy8yeEhqB2xRQkpyZnVSUT09>

Meeting ID: 895 4891 9707

Passcode: 146151

Dial by your location:

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kdiYWtN4H7>

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Wildlife Advisory Committee Draft Meeting Agenda

for
March 1, 2024
9:30-10:00 A.M.

1. Call Meeting to Order, Roll call/Determination of Quorum
2. Vote on Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Memo to Consultant
3. Adjournment

Attachments:

- Final Document: Memo to Consultant, Comprehensive Plan 2025 Update

Next Committee Meeting:

March 8, 2024: 9:30-11:00am, Hybrid- Northwest Annex Conference Room

Individuals who require special assistance to participate in the meetings are asked to contact us at least 96 hours in advance. The staff contact at Whatcom County Planning and Development Services is Priscilla Drewry, pdrewry@co.whatcom.wa.us, 360-778-5979.

2025 Comprehensive Plan Update

Wildlife Advisory Committee Recommendations

Goal: The Wildlife Advisory Committee will compile as a memo a list of big picture items to recommend to the consultant for incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan.

- Once completed, this list will be approved by committee as a whole
 - The memo with the full list of comments is due at next meeting in March
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WAC Meeting

General Recommendations

- Policies beginning with vague, general, and suggestive language, such as “encourage” and “consider” should be replaced with more directive, definitive, and actionable language, such as “implement”, “maintain”, “pursue”. The following is an example.
 - Policy 10K-6: Consider sensitive fish, shellfish, and wildlife species and their habitats when establishing zoning densities and patterns.
 - “Consider” is a vague term and the policies provide no guidance for weighing the value of species and habitats compared to other considerations. Instead “Implement measures/protocol for addressing...”
- Policies should use defined and updated language for consistency with other policies in which these same terms are used.
 - Policy 10K-6: Consider **sensitive** fish, shellfish, and wildlife species and their habitats when establishing zoning densities and patterns.
 - “Sensitive” species is not defined, although the use of the term implies “listed species.” Be careful and consistent in using this term. Does this apply to just federal, and state listed species? Should also include local species of importance. “Sensitive” could also imply “species likely to be adversely affected by.”
 - Don’t use non-technical terms that are not defined: e.g., 10-K3 refers to “environmentally fragile areas” and “critical plant and wildlife areas.”
 - 10K-15: Mitigation to Habitat Conservation Areas should be tracked and monitored to ensure no net loss to natural area.
 - “Natural area” is not defined and it is unclear whether this approach ensures that functions and values are maintained.
- Where applicable, Species of Local Importance should be addressed in policy.
- Location of definitions of terms, including those used in County Code, will be stated for reference.

- Metrics and background information need to be updated throughout the Comprehensive Plan
 - “Whatcom County is home to a distinct subspecies of the Great Blue Heron, which has the third largest colony in the Puget Sound area.”
 - If this is included, check with Ann Eissinger on the status of this colony. I believe it is no longer as large.
 - ...the peregrine falcon (ESA candidate species).
 - The official status is “Not listed” (it is not an ESA candidate).
- If policy mentions the establishment of programs, confirm and update. If such programs have been established, there still may be a need to have a policy related to the program related to the goals and outcomes.
- When policies contain multiple components, these should either be written as separate policies or provide sub-headings, whichever is more appropriate. Policy 10-K9 is an example of a policy statement with two components. Policy 10-L11 is a good example where sub-headings were used effectively.
- Use of a term (not necessarily a technical term) in closely associated policies should have the same meaning in both policies. Similarly, a policy that relies on another policy as a foundation should use the same terminology. 10-K1 and 10-K2 are related (10-K1 is the foundation for 10-K2) and provide a good example of problematic use of terminology. 10-K2 uses terms not in 10-K1 or uses some terms differently.

Subject Matter

- The term “plant” is generally understood to refer to the taxonomic kingdom Plantae (multicellular, predominantly photosynthetic, vascular plants, including mosses, flowering plants, and cone bearing seed plants). Organisms in other kingdoms, include Fungi, should also be referenced as important forms of life.
- Support and maintain programs for the removal and management of invasive species.
- The County shall support programs that encourage the protection of wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity from human activities and structures.
- Develop and implement Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridor Overlay Zone to be used as a tool for evaluation of a development’s impact on designated corridors.
- Identify critical wildlife passage areas in consultation with wildlife experts and agencies. Areas identified as being critical for passage should be prioritized for land conservation.
- The County should collaborate with Tribes, other government agencies, and private, and non-profit organizations to establish an inventory-level assessment and monitoring program for wildlife populations in Whatcom County. This program would provide a database for the Ecosystem Report and support periodic updates of wildlife population status and trends.
- Revise and update the Ecosystem Report.
- Where fitting, policy under goal 10K and 10L should amend that “the County will consider projected impacts of climate change on wildlife, plants, and fungi, and prioritize habitat protection. When acquiring land for habitat protection, efforts should be made to protect and restore areas of each habitat type most likely to be resistant to and enhance resilience to climate change.”

- Measures shall be taken that mitigation sequencing is followed to avoid impacts before taking mitigation action.
- Mitigation shall avoid converting high value upland terrestrial habitat to low grade wetlands.
 - It is hard to mitigate when policies, rules and standards are not first established regarding protection of said wildlife species associated with HCAs.
- Mitigation shall prioritize preservation to avoid losing high quality habitat.
- Wetlands: Develop a baseline of current conditions and monitor over time to ensure no net loss of function occurs and to prevent cumulative impacts.
- Use best available science to support and develop GIS and mapping analyses of Whatcom County and update maps as new data become available.