

ANNUAL REPORT

WHATCOM COUNTY
AUDITOR'S OFFICE



2019

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\$2,559,402

Amount collected for Homeless Housing, Page 15

11,081

New registered voters, Page 5

56.20%

General Election voter turnout, Page 6

2019 BY THE NUMBERS

370,000

Number of historical document pages scanned and processed, Page 13



113,648

Total records indexed and added to online records search, Page 13

\$4.50

Recording fee increase, Page 15

1,537

Increase in vehicle/vessel licensing transactions county-wide, Page 17

Contact Information

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Office Hours (*excluding holidays*)
Monday—Friday
8:30 am—4:30 pm

Message from the Auditor

The theme for an office committed to exceptional customer service and continuous improvement, and one that embraces technology, is change. Not change for the sake of change, but change that improves customer service, enhances services we offer and creates efficiencies for the staff. 2019 brought numerous changes through technology, workflow improvements, legislation, and a move to more suitable space for the election center.

This annual report highlights the changes that occurred in 2019. From fee increases, to new technology, new space to new legislative mandates, the office is constantly evolving. Our goal is to implement these changes in a way that improves the public experience when interacting with our office. I hope you find the information interesting and enlightening.

But perhaps the biggest change for the office was the retirement of County Auditor Debbie Adelstein. Debbie was a public servant for over 26 years, the last eight serving as Auditor. I was privileged to work for her as Chief Deputy for over seven of those years. Her legacy is significant:

- Technical improvement through new systems for recording, ballot tabulation, envelope scanning, on-line marriage license application
- Improved space for the elections center, including improved observer experience
- Support of staff cross-training between all three departments
- Development of a comprehensive policy and procedure manual
- Involvement with numerous state committees committed to representing Whatcom County in legislation, policy decisions, and the new state-wide voter registration systems

Debbie will be missed. This annual report is dedicated to her.

Sincerely,



Diana Bradrick
Whatcom County Auditor



Administering Elections

- ◆ File candidates for local elected offices
- ◆ File and process all local ballot measures
- ◆ Design and print a local voters' pamphlet for each election
- ◆ Layout, proof, and print ballots and various election materials
- ◆ Ensure that all eligible voters are mailed a ballot 20 days prior to an election
- ◆ Hire, train, and supervise Opening Board workers, ballot collection teams, and ballot drop box closers
- ◆ Ensure ballot secrecy and security is maintained
- ◆ Receive, process, and count returned ballots
- ◆ Certify and publish election results
- ◆ Conduct Observer Training

Election Division

What's New in 2019

Same Day Voter Registration

Due to a legislative change, same day voter registration was implemented for the August Primary Election. Voters may now register or update their registration until 8:00 p.m. election day. Previously there was a 29 day deadline prior to the election for currently registered voters. With VoteWA, this process became more easily managed due to an ability for any county to see where a voter was registered, and whether a ballot had been received. The system only allows for one active registration per voter and prevents sending another ballot to a voter if one has already been accepted. Whatcom accommodated the increase of voters in the office during the week before the election by adding laptop kiosks in the lobby for users to register or update their registration.

No More Stamp Needed

Another change in 2019 was pre-paid ballot return postage. Funding by the state for a pilot in 2018 was continued in 2019. Because turnout varies so widely from election to election and year to year, it will take more years of comparison data to determine if prepaid postage resulted in increased voter turnout.



Whatcom County has been very involved with the new state-wide voter registration/election management system now known as VoteWA. Chief Deputy Diana Bradrick served on the Request for Proposal committee, both Auditor Debbie Adelstein and the Chief Deputy served on the Executive Steering Committee. Amy Grasher, Election Supervisor was a Super User, involved in testing new functionality, training users, and providing feedback to the state regarding necessary improvements. VoteWA was implemented in June, just in time for the August 2019 Primary. Improvements include a GIS component for addressing and precincting voters, an improved on-line voter interface, an enhanced signature verification application and the ability for staff to see where in the state a voter is registered.

New Election Center

A significant improvement to the county Elections Center occurred in 2019 with the completion of a remodel of the prior law library allowing us to move all of the elections processing activities to one room in the basement. The only ballot processing activity that remains upstairs is signature verification. This move has provided greatly enhanced space for ballot and envelope storage, a secured server room, improved space for observers, a separate room for the noisy envelope slicer and direct access to the document storage vault.

Core Services

- ◆ Register Whatcom County citizens to vote, including those living overseas and in the military
- ◆ Update and maintain the voter registration database
- ◆ Promote voter education
- ◆ Verify signatures for Initiatives, Referenda, and Petitions and every returned ballot
- ◆ Maintain and update district and precinct boundaries



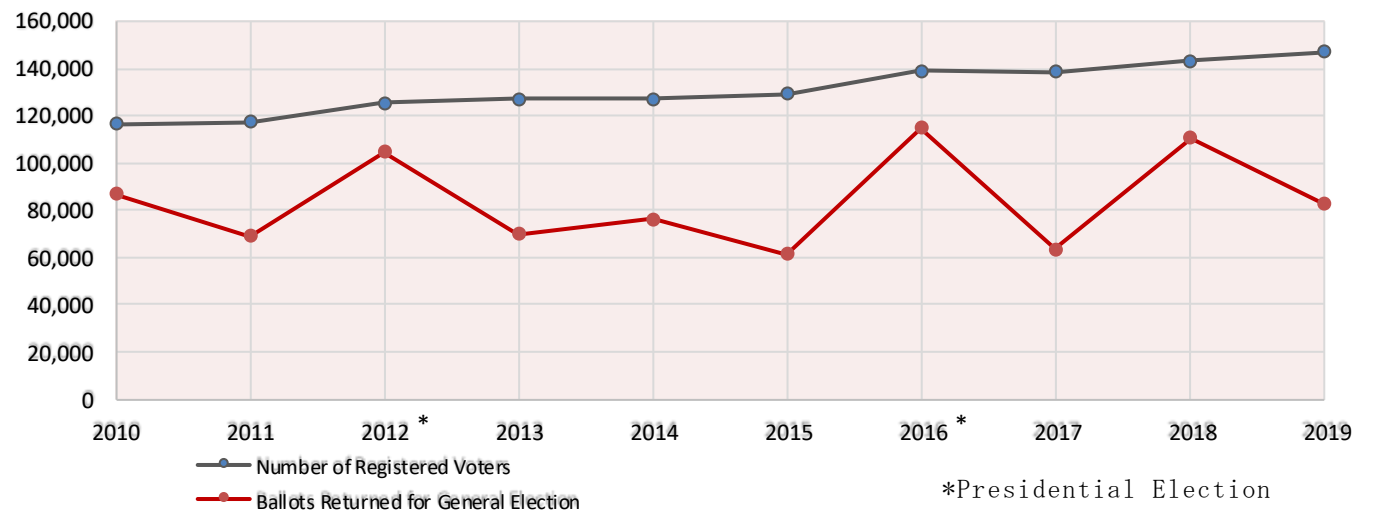
Election Division

Voter Registration

The chart to the right shows new registered voters and ballot return in the general election for those voters. The chart below shows all registered voters and ballot return for general elections. Both charts demonstrate that elections occurring in odd years typically have lower voter turnout than even years. The chart of new voters also shows that while new voter registrations have increased the percentage of ballots returned for those new registrations remains fairly consistent from year to year. 2016 is a peak year due to the Presidential election that year.

	New Voters by year	Voted in Gen 2019	Voted in Gen 2018	Voted in Gen 2017	Voted in Gen 2016	Voted in Gen 2015	Voted in Gen 2014	Voted in Gen 2013	Did voter return a ballot?
2013	5,900	1,981	2,500	1,300	3,400	1,400	2,000	2,000	34%
2014	7,200	3,111	3,400	1,900	4,680	2,000	3,100		43%
2015	8,400	3,073	4,200	2,200	5,700	2,500			30%
2016	16,850	6,388	8,900	4,100	13,400				79%
2017	6,700	4,411	4,600	2,300					34%
2018	12,550	9,276	9,400						75%
2019	11,081	3,876							35%

Registered Voters and Ballots Returned During a General Election



2019 Elections

February 12 Special Election:

- Ferndale School District 502 Proposition 2019-2 (General Obligation Bonds—\$112,000,000)
- Nooksack Valley School District 506 Proposition 2019-1 (General Obligation Bonds—\$29,700,000)
- Concrete School District 11 Proposition No. 1 Replacement of Expiring Levy for Educational Programs & Operations

August 6 Primary:

- 1 state office
- 4 county offices
- 10 city offices
- 2 school offices
- 2 fire offices

November 6 General:

- 15 state measures
- 122 races
- 1 local ballot measure

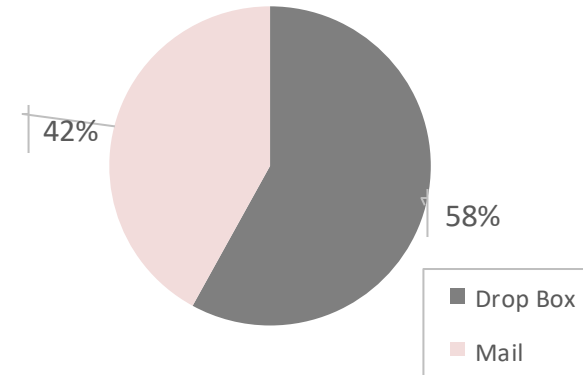
Election Division

Ballot Return in 2019

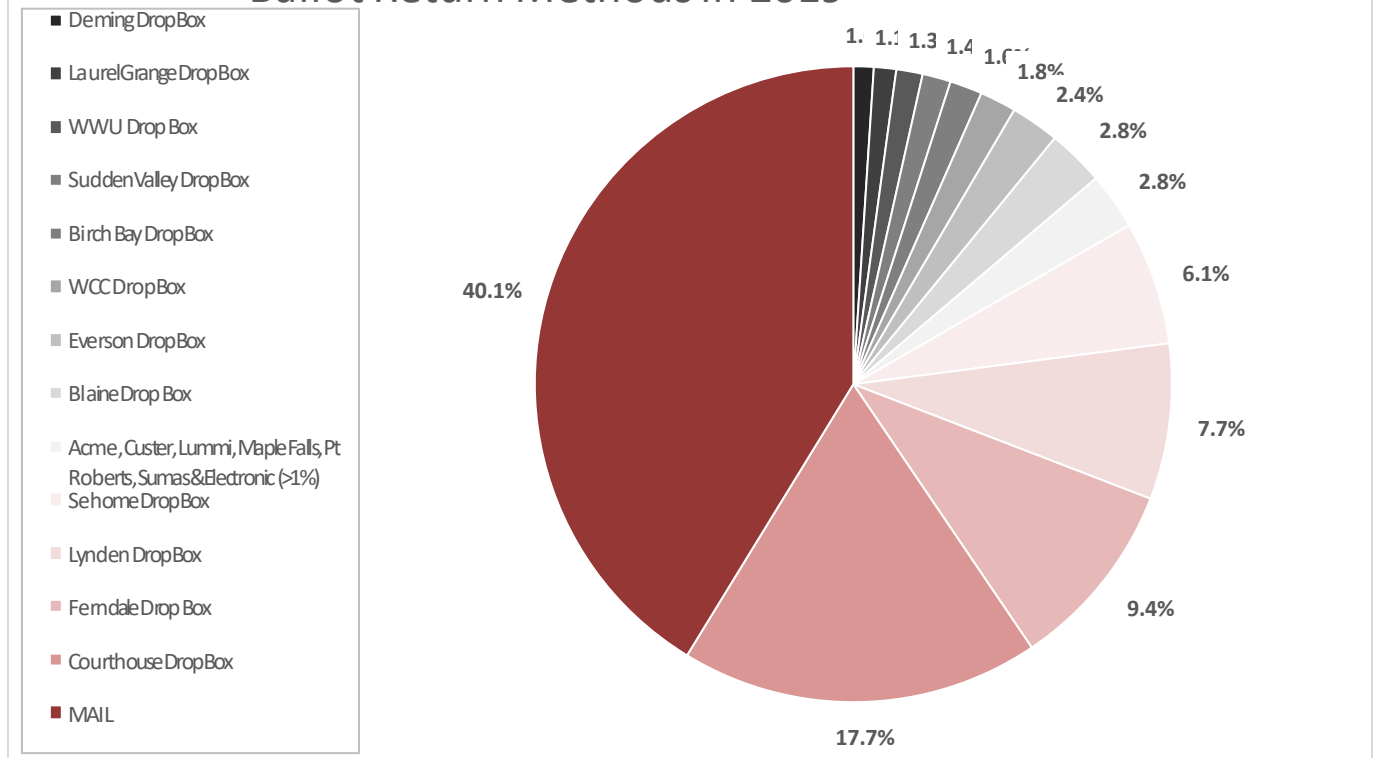
There was a total of 333,682 ballots mailed for the three elections conducted in 2019. Of the total returned ballots, 153,109 were accepted and 1,430 were rejected, equating to a 45.8% average voter turnout over the course of the year.

Did pre-paid postage increase return by mail? Due to the fluctuation from year to year in ballot return we are unable to determine the full effect of prepaid postage on voter turnout without more data. What you can tell from the charts is that ballot return by mail was slightly lower in 2019 than in 2018 at 40.1% compared to 42%.

Ballot Return Methods in 2018



Ballot Return Methods in 2019



10 Year High & Low Turnout

Non-Presidential General Elections:

- ⇒ 2018—77.13%
- ⇒ 2017—45.88%

Primary Elections (August)

- ⇒ 2008—46.65%
- ⇒ 2013—21.71%

Special Elections (February/April)

- ⇒ April 2015—57.97%
- ⇒ February 2018—32.58%

Whatcom County's voter turnout is higher than the average for Washington State.

	Whatcom County	Washington State
2019	56.20%	44.82%
2018	77.13%	71.83%
2017	45.88%	37.10%
2016	82.70%	78.76%
2015	47.24%	38.45%
2014	59.81%	54.16%
2013	54.89%	45.27%
2012	83.46%	81.25%
2011	59.02%	52.95%
2010	74.62%	71.24%
2009	53.62%	50.89%
Average	63.14%	56.97%

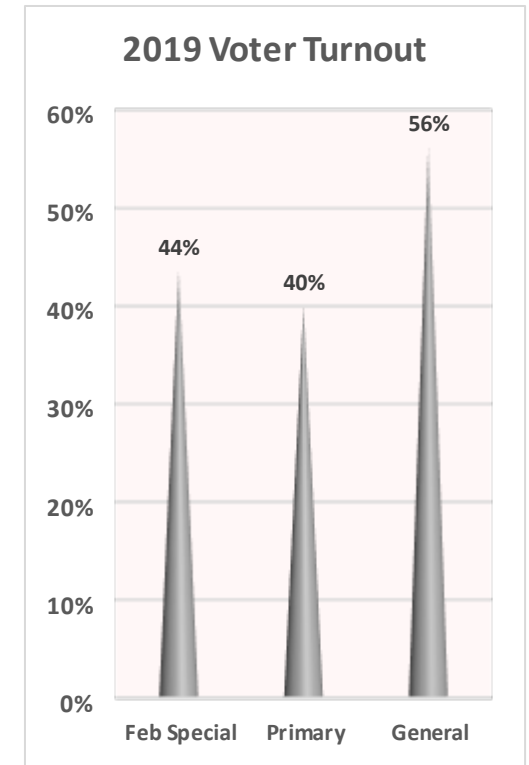
Election Division

A Historical View of Voter Turnout

2019 saw a fairly strong voter turnout for an odd-year general election at 56.20%. In the past 10 years, 2011 was the only odd year election with a higher turnout with 59.02%.

The chart on the bottom left illustrates Whatcom County's turnout is consistently higher than the turnout for Washington State as a whole.

The chart below shows the 29-year history of general election turnout in Whatcom County.



General Election Turnout in Whatcom County (*Presidential Election years in gray)										
1990-1999	1990	1991	1992*	1993	1994	1995	1996*	1997	1998	1999
Ballots Returned	39,660	39,660	64,463	44,911	45,192	45,511	65,565	50,593	57,090	53,038
Turnout %	64%	64%	81%	56%	53%	51%	69%	59%	63%	58%
2000-2010	2000*	2001	2002	2003	2004*	2005	2006	2007	2008*	2009
Ballots Returned	74,671	44,163	55,066	45,786	91,497	63,716	69,782	55,059	101,399	61,288
Turnout %	76%	45%	60%	48%	86%	62%	68%	53%	87%	53%
2010-2019	2010	2011	2012*	2013	2014	2015	2016*	2017	2018	2019
Ballots Returned	86,993	69,147	104,727	69,709	76,123	61,136	114,920	63,626	110,504	82,537
Turnout %	74%	59%	83%	54%	59%	47%	82%	45%	77%	56%

General Election Cost Per Ballot & Hours Worked					
	Election Cost	Registered Voters	Number of Ballots Cast	Cost per Registered Voter	Cost per Ballot Cast
2019	\$430,451	146,851	82,537	\$2.93	\$5.22
2018	\$407,002	143,265	110,504	\$2.84	\$3.68
2017	\$503,000	138,688	63,626	\$3.63	\$7.91
2016	\$505,413	138,962	114,920	\$3.64	\$4.40
2015	\$424,543	129,345	61,136	\$3.28	\$6.94
2014	\$399,789	127,280	76,123	\$3.14	\$5.25
2013	\$421,691	127,002	69,709	\$3.32	\$6.05
2012	\$468,529	125,485	104,727	\$3.73	\$4.47
2011	\$398,255	117,162	69,147	\$3.40	\$5.76
2010	\$353,525	116,581	86,993	\$3.03	\$4.06

Election Costs

Election costs are calculated based on all expenses related to that specific election. Major costs include salaries, printing, postage, vendor services to mail the ballots, and allocated costs such as election hardware and software maintenance, facilities costs and administrative overhead.

Election Division

Cost Per Ballot and Cost Per Registered Voter

As the charts show, the higher the voter turnout, the less the cost per ballot cast. Costs for 2019 increased over 2018 because ballots cast was significantly lower in 2019. We also started paying annual maintenance for our new ballot tabulation system (Clear Ballot) — a cost avoided in 2018 because the first year was included in the purchase. Cost per registered voter continues a downward trend although slightly higher than in 2018—again because of increases in maintenance. Improvements in technology have helped reduce costs even with increases in salaries, postage, and printing—the largest impacts on the elections budget.

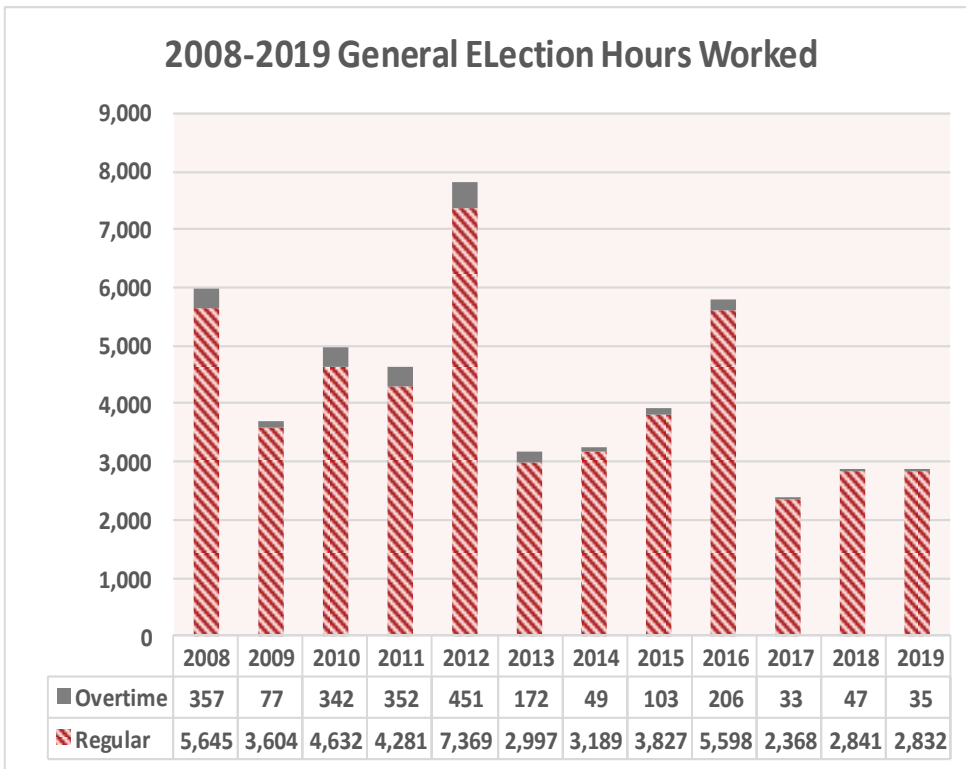
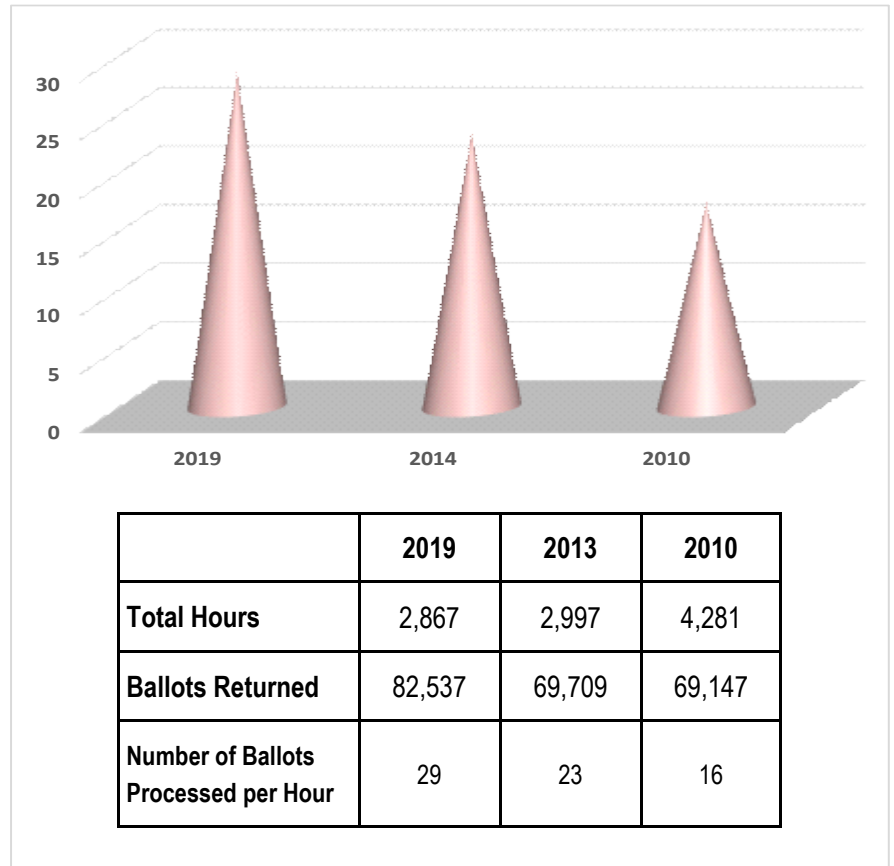
August Primary Election Cost Per Ballot & Hours Worked					
	Election Cost	Registered Voters	Number of Ballots Cast	Cost per Reg. Voter	Cost per Ballot Cast
2019*	\$359,044	147,256	58,184	\$2.44	\$6.17
2018*	\$349,565	139,813	62,717	\$2.50	\$5.57
2017	\$323,155	105,045	32,681	\$3.08	\$9.89
2016*	\$303,463	132,362*	49,088	\$2.29	\$6.18
2015	\$279,259	102,161	25,861	\$2.73	\$10.80
2014*	\$320,465	126,961*	42,736	\$2.52	\$7.50
2013	\$184,976	65,994	14,325	\$2.80	\$12.91
2012*	\$317,225	118,654*	47,234	\$2.67	\$6.72
2011*	\$284,726	118,678*	44,270	\$2.40	\$6.43
2010*	\$294,259	114,312*	50,015	\$2.57	\$5.88

*indicates county-wide election

Election Division

Ballot Processing Efficiency

The chart to the right compares the 2019 General Election to two other odd year elections of comparable ballot return size—2014 and 2010. The chart illustrates how many ballots per staff hour were processed for each of the three years. Total hours represents all staff hours (full time and part time) needed to administer the entire election from the first step of setting up the election in the system through certification and post-election hours needed for document archiving and billing activities. The number of ballots processed per hour divides total hours into ballots returned. As you can see from the chart, the combination of new technology and improved efficiencies in our procedures reduced the number of hours required to administer the election by more than half.



The chart to the left shows total hours worked during the General Election over the past 12 years. While the number of hours fluctuates due to voter turnout, which impacts the number of ballots that are processed, you can see a steady decline in overtime used for all elections.

Core Services

- ◆ Record paper and electronically submitted documents
- ◆ Index recorded documents for ease of public access
- ◆ Make recorded documents publicly available through in-person customer service center and online access
- ◆ Help customers search recorded documents
- ◆ Provide certified copies of recorded documents
- ◆ Register and reserve plat and condominium names
- ◆ Register process servers
- ◆ Preserve and protect historically significant permanent archival documents

Indexing

- ◆ Staff indexed 42,425 documents and verified 41,858 records in 2019

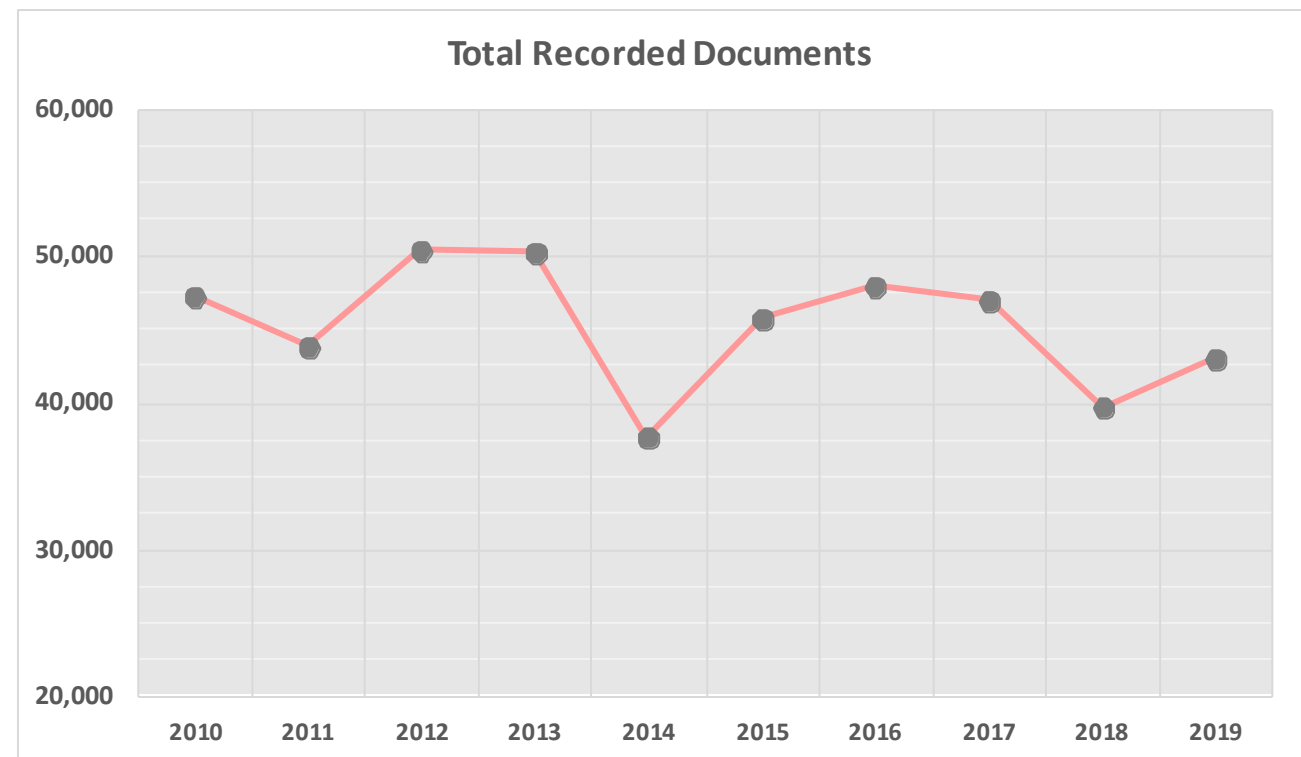
Recording Division

Document Recording

In 2019, a total of 42,924 documents were recorded, an 8% increase or 3,176 documents over 2018. Document recordings are volatile; volume relates directly to interest rate fluctuations (lower rates result in refinancing of existing loans) and the real estate sales market.

Four document types represent over 75% of all recorded documents in 2019:

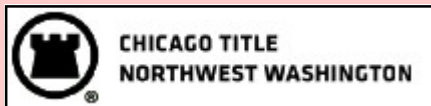
1. Deed of Trust—9,784 (22.79%)
2. Deed—8,389 (19.54%)
3. Reconveyance—7,792 (18.15%)
4. Appointment of Trustee— 6,362 (14.82%)



Four e-Recording Submitters:



Two Local Title Companies:



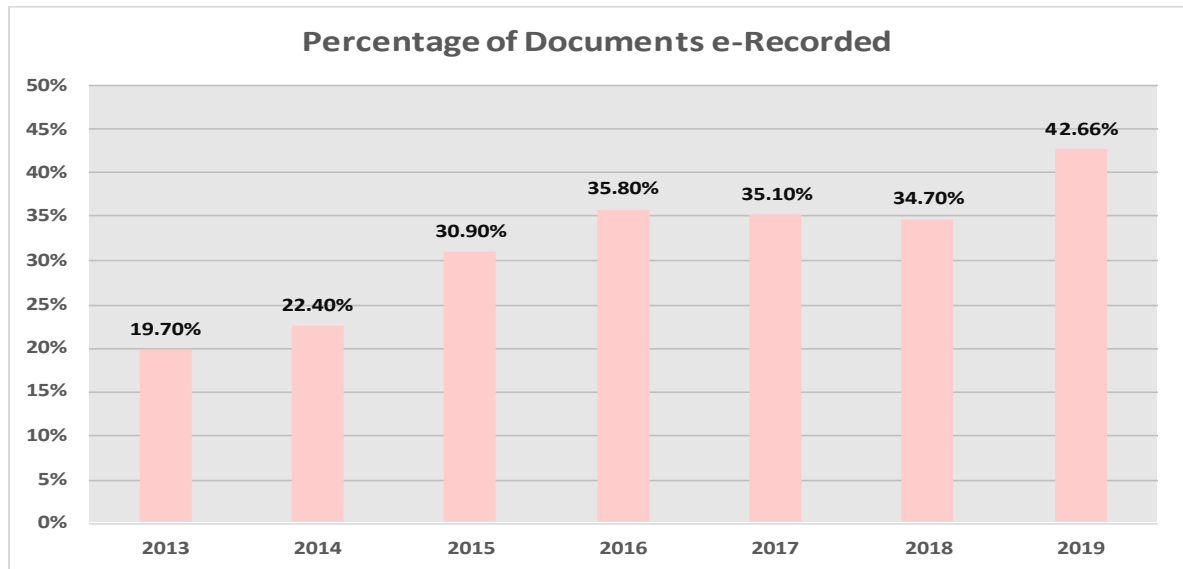
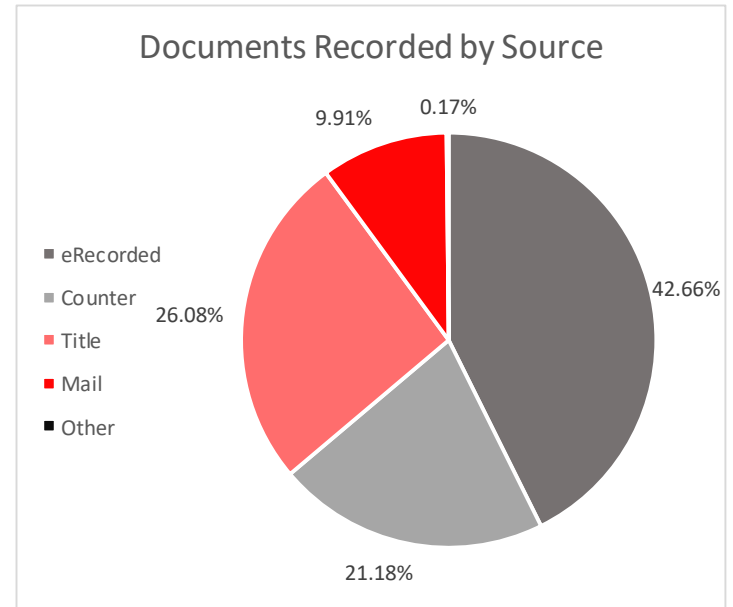
Recording Division

Document Submission

Documents may be submitted to be recorded in a number of ways: over the counter, through the mail, by title company courier, or through an e-Recording submitter. The chart to the right spotlights the various submission methods.

Title companies represent the largest proportion of recording customers, but they are increasingly using electronic submission rather than delivering paper to the office. The documents brought to the office by title company couriers was 26.08% compared to 29.39% in 2018. E-Recording increased from 34.70% to 42.66% from 2018 to 2019.

The chart at the bottom right shows the growth of e-Recording transactions since its inception in 2013.



Did you know?

- ◆ The Auditor's office does redact social security numbers after the document has been recorded so that the number is not viewable through the online Digital Research Room. However, the documents recorded are public unless exempt from state law and an unredacted document can be requested.
- ◆ If a certified copy is altered, it is no longer a true certified copy. Once it is recorded it cannot be determined how the original document was altered. Therefore, prior to recording an altered certified document the submitter needs to indicate the document was altered.
- ◆ The Recording Division is the custodian of Whatcom County's recorded documents dating back to 1854 in multiple formats:
Bound Books, Original Linen Maps, Mylar Maps, Microfilm and Microfiche, Online Images.
- ◆ All recorded documents are permanent and archival. Original documents not available at the Whatcom County Auditor's Office are stored at the Northwest Regional Archives facility in Bellingham or in the county records center. Copies of the electronic records are stored at the Digital Archives in Cheney.

Recording Division

Recording System Enhancements

New features were added to the Recorded Document Search menu now known as the Digital Research Room. These features allow the researcher to view a specific range of recorded documents at one time; ability to narrow results by summary, party, map and then to sort by auditor file number or recording date.

We added a new feature to our Marriage software to automatically send an email to the couple after 60 days from their marriage license expiration date reminding them we have not received the Washington State Certificate of Marriage form.

Our office has not received your completed Washington State Certificate of Marriage acknowledging your marriage. If you did not get married, then there is nothing further for you to do. However, be aware that the marriage application expired on Nov 5 2018 12:00AM. If you plan to get married in the future you will need to apply for a new marriage license.

If you did get married, contact the officiant that performed the ceremony to inquire if the Washington State Certificate of Marriage was returned to our office.

If the Washington State Certificate of Marriage was not submitted, please submit this document as soon as possible. It can be submitted in person or mailed to Whatcom County Auditor, 311 Grand Ave. Suite 103, Bellingham, WA 98225. Contact the recording division of the Whatcom County Auditor's office if you have further questions at 360-778-5100 option 5.

Other Changes in Recording

Beginning January 1, 2019, homeowners and property owners are able to record a restrictive covenant modification document at no fee as a notice of a previously recorded document containing a racially restrictive covenant. RCW 49.60.227

Instructions along with Restrictive Covenant Modification forms are available in our office and on our website.



Recording Division

Historic Records Projects

Indexing of Historical Documents:

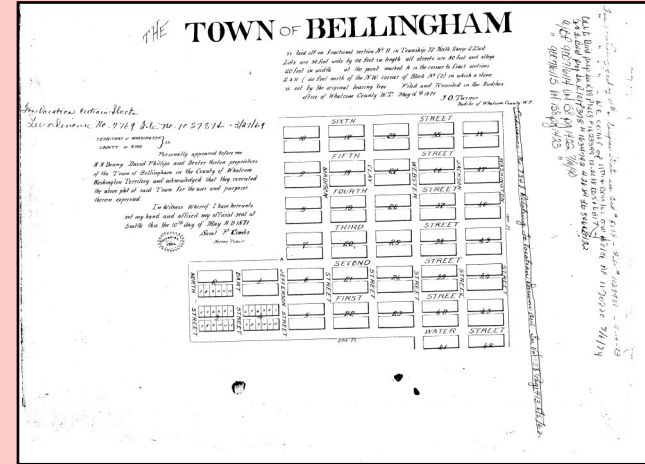
We added the following record series to our digital recorded document repository this past year: 17,745 mining claim records, 2231 miscellaneous records, and 12,820 power of attorney records. These documents were recorded from 1884 to 1963. The imaging service vendor only pre-indexed these records with the Auditor File Number, requiring these records to be fully indexed by the staff in order to be searchable by the public. Full-time staff devoted available hours to this indexing project in addition to part-time temporary employees. In addition to the above project, staff is continually researching, indexing and verifying historical documents from previous imaging projects. 71,223 *historic* records were indexed and 155,051 verified. This multi-year project will continue into the future until we have all the recorded records digitized and searchable.

Historic Deed Books:

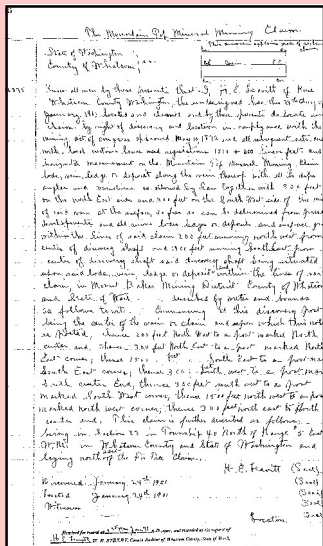
We started a new 2 year imaging project in 2019 to image the rest of the Auditor's office historical records dating back to 1853. The historical records are in bound books at the Washington State Archives, Northwest Regional Branch. Approximately 370,000 images were scanned, masked, enhanced, de-speckled, cropped, and resized and stored as a multi-page tiff. The images will be imported into the Helion recording system in 2020.

This multi-year project when completed will allow staff to quickly retrieve and view these historical records by the auditor file number. Another benefit of this project is preservation of these records electronically.

The second phase of this project is to index these historical records so they can be found by recording date, document type, grantor and grantee names instead of only the auditor file number.



The Recording Division has records dating back to 1854. Those records not yet accessible online are available on microfilm in the Auditor's Office. Once the historical records project is complete, ALL documents will be available online.



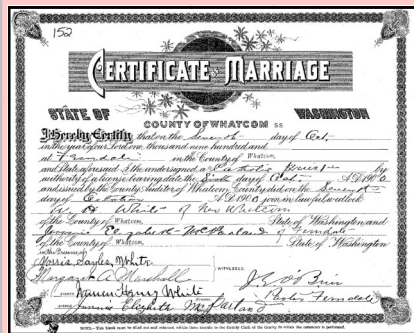
Core Services

- ◆ Issue marriage applications
- ◆ Record and index marriage licenses
- ◆ Provide certified copies of marriage records
- ◆ Preserve and provide access to marriage records in Whatcom County dating back to 1854

MARRIAGE RETURN.

1. Date of License *Oct 19 '93*
 2. Full Name of Groom *Clay M. Wood*
 3. Age Last Birthday *28*
 4. Color (s) *White*
 5. No. of Groom's Marriages *None previous*
 6. Residence *New Whatcom*
 7. Birthplace (s) *Michigan - Secod*
 8. Occupation *Telegarding*
 9. Father's Name *John P. Wood*
 10. Mother's Maiden Name *Mary Sawyer*
 11. Full Name of Bride *Cathie M. Anderson*
 Maiden Name if a Widow
 12. Age Last Birthday *18*
 13. Color (s) *White*
 14. No. of Bride's Marriages *None previous*
 15. Residence *New Whatcom*
 16. Birthplace (s) *Michal - Minn*
 17. Occupation
 18. Father's Name *James Anderson*
 19. Mother's Maiden Name *Mary Ridge*
 20. Date of Marriage *Oct 19 '93*
 21. Place of Marriage *New Whatcom*
 22. By whom Married, and Official Station *Clay C. Cook*
 23. Names of Witnesses and their Residences and their Signatures
 No. 1 *W. S. Hilly*
 No. 2 *Anna B. Cook*

NOTE.—(a) State color distinctly, so race may be known, as White, Black, Mulatto, Indian, Chinese, Mixed White and Indian, etc.
 (b) Give State or foreign country, so nationality is clear if a foreigner.

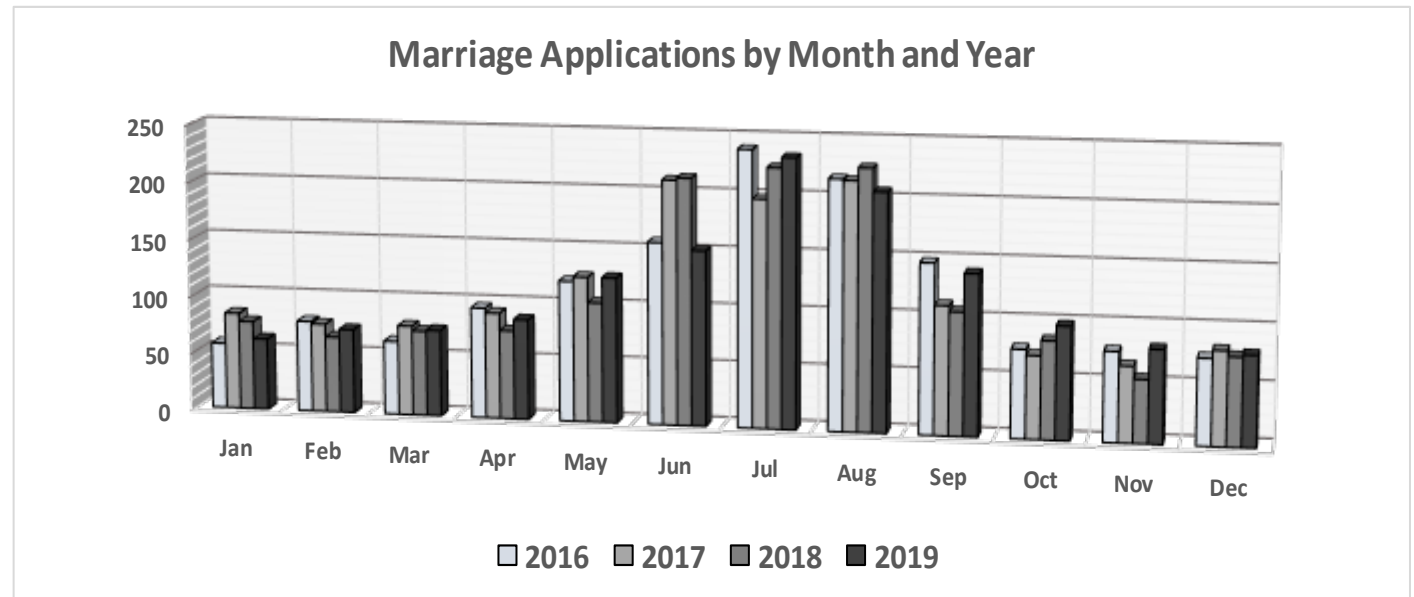
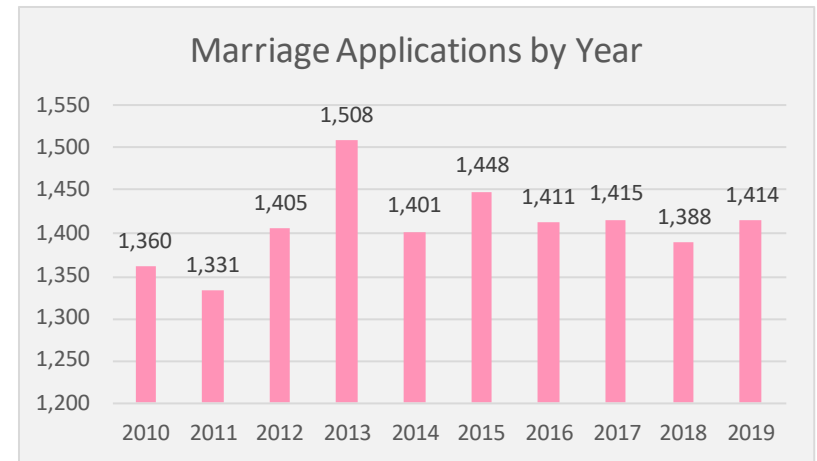


Recording Division

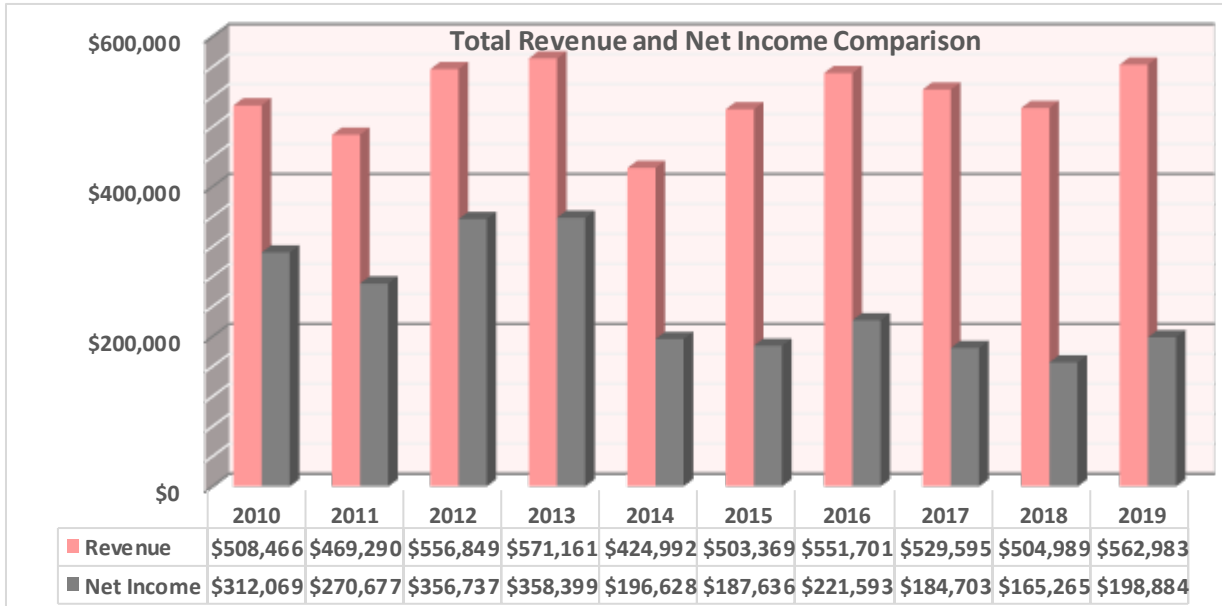
Marriage Licensing

The Recording staff issued 1,414 marriage licenses in 2019, 26 more than 2018's total. See chart at right for a look at the past 10 years.

The marriage application form is available on the Auditor's website enabling couples to fill out the application before coming to the office. If they have not filled it out ahead of time, couples fill out their application at kiosks available in the office. This automated process reduces processing time for both the couple and the staff.



Recording Division



Recording Revenue

Recording fees are charged for each document and page. Monies collected go to the county general fund and a number of special purpose funds. In 2019, new legislation resulted in an overall recording fee increase of \$4.50. This increase will go to the State Library-Archives Building and to help fund statewide programs for urban housing. While there are some exemptions to the recording fee, most documents are charged the new base rate of \$103.50 for a one page document and \$1 for each additional page. The chart at right shows the fee distribution.

Of the fees collected for affordable and homeless housing, a portion remains locally for county use, and a portion is distributed to the state for statewide programs. The total collected is shown below:

<u>Affordable Housing</u>	
County	\$288,259
State	+ \$137,507
Total	\$425,766

<u>Homeless Housing</u>	
County	\$1,755,501
State	+ \$ 803,901
Total	\$2,559,402

Recording Fee (\$103.50) Distribution

- Housing - Local (\$56.88)
- Housing - State (\$28.62)
- Recording (\$5.00)
- Records (\$6.00)
- State Records (\$7.00)

Of the total general fund revenue collected, revenue for recording documents was \$452,052.00 in 2019. Recording also collects fees for copies, certified copies, conducting research for customers, administrative fees for collection of the Affordable and Homeless Housing fees, marriage application fees, and a few miscellaneous fees. The total contribution to the county general fund for these fees was \$110,930.57 in 2019.

Core Services

- ◆ Title and license vehicles and vessels in partnership with the Washington State Department of Licensing
- ◆ Train, oversee, and audit six local vehicle and vessel licensing subagents
- ◆ Collect tax on behalf of the Department of Revenue for private party sales and out of state sales
- ◆ Issue disabled parking placards

Did You Know?

Licensing fees for transferring ownership of your vehicle or renewing your registration is the same whether you visit the County Courthouse or one of the local licensing offices. The \$5 service fee for renewing annual registration and the \$12 title transfer fee support a local licensing office or construction and purchase of state ferries depending on where the transaction is processed. The fee change became effective January 1, 2015.

Licensing Division

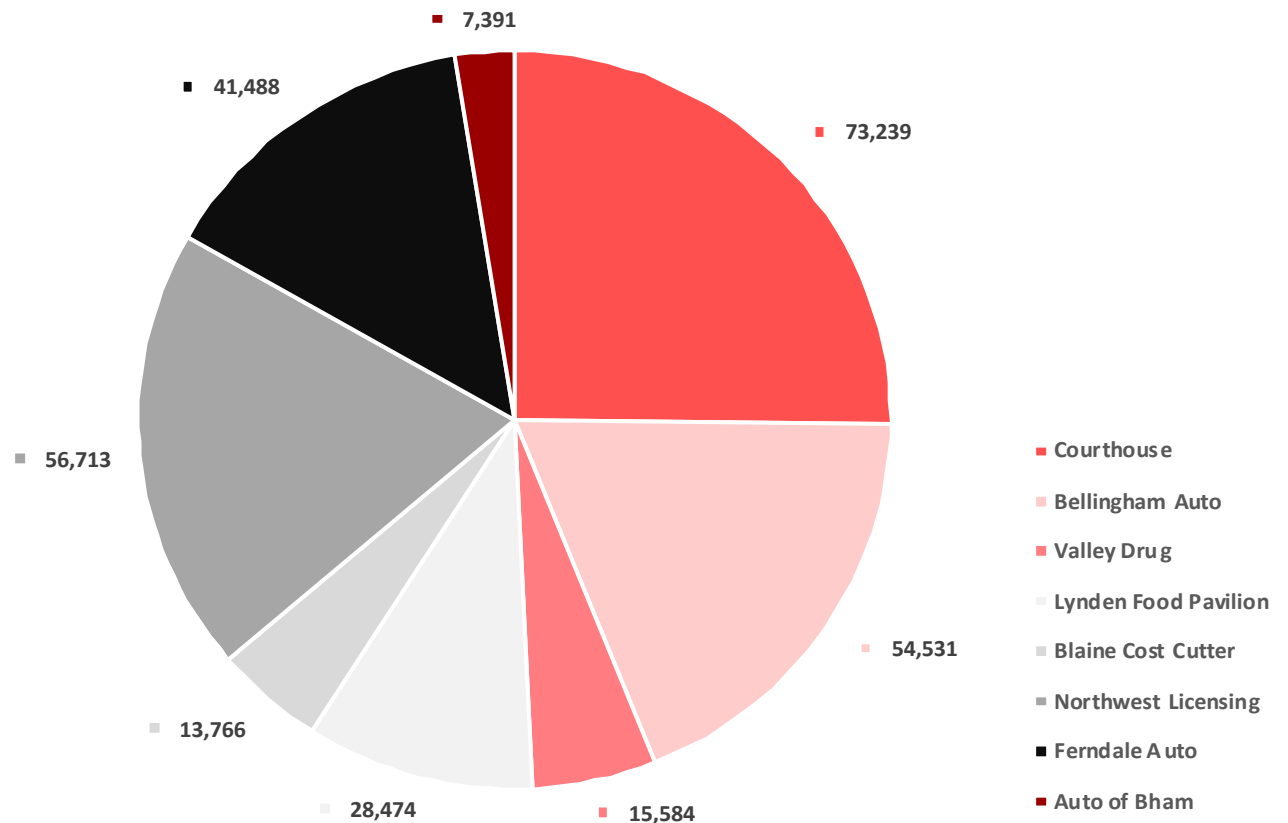
Title and Tab Transactions

In 2019, Licensing staff processed 73,239 vehicle and/or vessel title and tab renewal transactions. The county, together with six subagents, processed approximately 291,186 transactions, 1,537 more than in 2018. This is an average of 5,600 transactions in the county per week!*



*Licensing transaction data is pulled directly from the State drives.

2019 Transactions by Location



2019 Audits

- ◆ All seven licensing offices were audited by DOL in 2019
- ◆ The DOL field auditor reviews offices for compliance with DOL policies, procedures, and contract.
- ◆ The Auditor's office had no findings. The Subagent offices had no major findings, small procedural improvements were recommended.

New Subagency

- ◆ The longtime owner of Bellingham Auto subagency retired October 24, 2019
- ◆ The replacement office opened October 26, 2019
- ◆ The Auditor's Office had three business proposals, two candidates were interviewed
- ◆ Down time between closing one office and opening the new office was limited so customer services were minimally impacted.

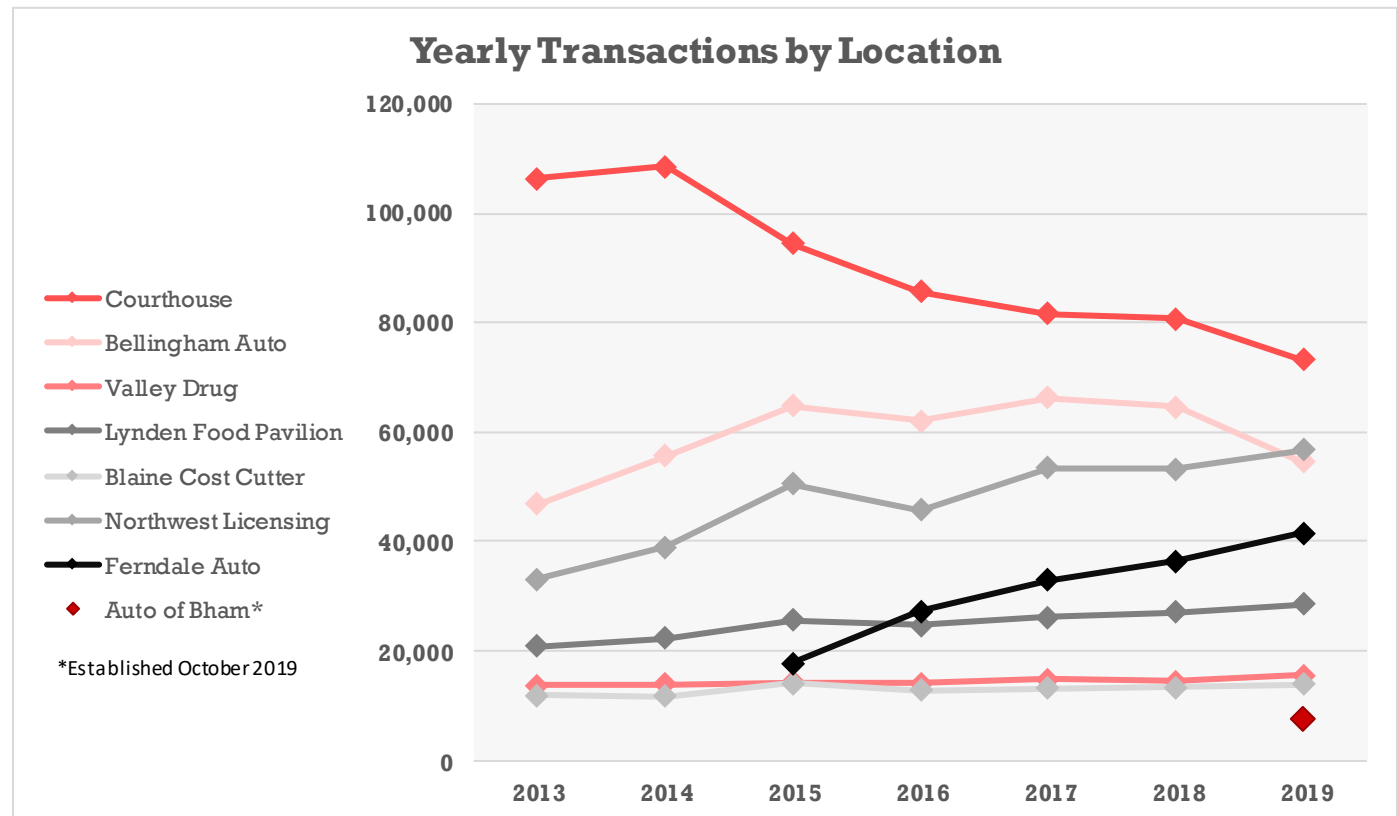
Licensing Division

Transaction History

Transactions at the courthouse have decreased steadily since 2014. 2019 saw a reduction of 7,509 transactions over 2018. However, total transactions countywide increased by 1,537. Changes in procedures and fees account for the reduction in the courthouse transactions including:

- "Normalizing" the fees collected by the county and the subagents
- Dispersing internet transactions between the county and the subagents, setting the default agent to the one closest to the customer
- Allowing subagents to process quick titles

The chart below shows a comparison of licensing transactions by location over the last seven years.



Subagents in Whatcom County:

- ◆ Auto Licensing of Bellingham
1738 Iowa Street, Bellingham
- ◆ Valley Drug Licensing
208 E. Main Street, Everson
- ◆ Auto Licensing of Ferndale
1740 La Bounty Drive, Suite 4, Ferndale
- ◆ Lynden Food Pavilion Licensing
8130 Guide Meridian, Lynden
- ◆ Blaine Cost Cutter Licensing
1733 H Street, Suite 100, Blaine
- ◆ Northwest Licensing
2502 Cedarwood Avenue, Bellingham

A subagent is a private business that enters into a contract with a County Auditor and is appointed by the Department of Licensing Director to perform vehicle and vessel title and licensing services.

As part of the oversight of the six subagents, the Licensing Staff:

- Held two subagent meetings
- Administered eight certification tests
- Verified that two clerks completed 1800 hours to become Certified Licensing Operators

Licensing Division

Fee Changes

April 1st – SSB 6438

- Charge both the title service fee (\$12) and the registration service fee (\$5) when titling and registering a vehicle in the same transaction. Previously, only the title service fee was charged.

May 1st – SSB 6437

- New \$6.00 abandoned recreational vehicle disposal fee for registration of campers, motor homes, and travel trailers. Allows application to DOL for reimbursement of transporting, storing, dismantling, and disposing of abandoned recreational vehicles from public property.

July 28th - ESB 1789 Increased service and filing fees—first increase to service fees in 10 years, first adjustment to filing fees in more than 20 years. Increases include:

- Title service fee \$12 to \$15; Title filing fee \$4 to \$5.50; Registration service fee \$5 to \$8; Registration filing fee \$4 to \$5.50; Filing fees collected by DOL equally distributes \$0.50 of each transaction back to the counties.

Green Transportation – House Bill 2042

- Reinstated sales and use tax exemption for new electric vehicles and adds used vehicles to the exemption. Tax exemption available for new vehicles with a sales price or fair market value of \$45,000 or less and used vehicles with a sales price or fair market value of \$30,000 or less. Maximum amounts eligible for tax exemptions decrease over time through July 31, 2025.
- Increased electric vehicle fee \$75 from \$150 to \$225 (Aug 1, 2019) and created a new \$75 fee for hybrid vehicles (October 1, 2019). These fees support the adoption of electric vehicles, expanding charging infrastructure, developing greener transit options, and support clean alternative fuel infrastructure.

\$30 Car Tabs – Voter Initiative I976

- Effective date December 5, 2019. injunction by King County Superior Court, has delayed implementation while the legality of initiative is reviewed.
- Proposed Fee Changes:
 - Eliminate the passenger vehicle weight fee (\$25-\$72); Reduce gross weight fee for trucks from \$53 - \$93 to \$30; Reduce the Electric Vehicle Fee from \$150 to \$30; Reduce the snowmobile registration fee from \$50 to \$30; Reduce commercial trailer fee from \$34 to \$30; Eliminate motorhome weight fee of \$75; Eliminate Transportation Benefit District (TBD) fees; Remove the 0.3% motor vehicle retail sales tax; Restructure how RTA calculates fees.
- Tabs will never be just \$30. If I-976 is fully implemented, the lowest possible tab fee would be \$43.25.

Did you know?

- ◆ The \$15 title service fee and the \$8 registration service fee collected at subagent offices fund their local small business office. Service fees collected by county auditors fund the ferry vessel replacement account. The fees and distribution are set by RCW 46.17.040.
- ◆ DOL calculates the need for more subagent offices based on monthly transaction volume and distance to the nearest licensing office. For example, a new office would have to be 10 miles or more from another office and anticipate doing between 501 - 1,000 transactions a month.

New Plates!

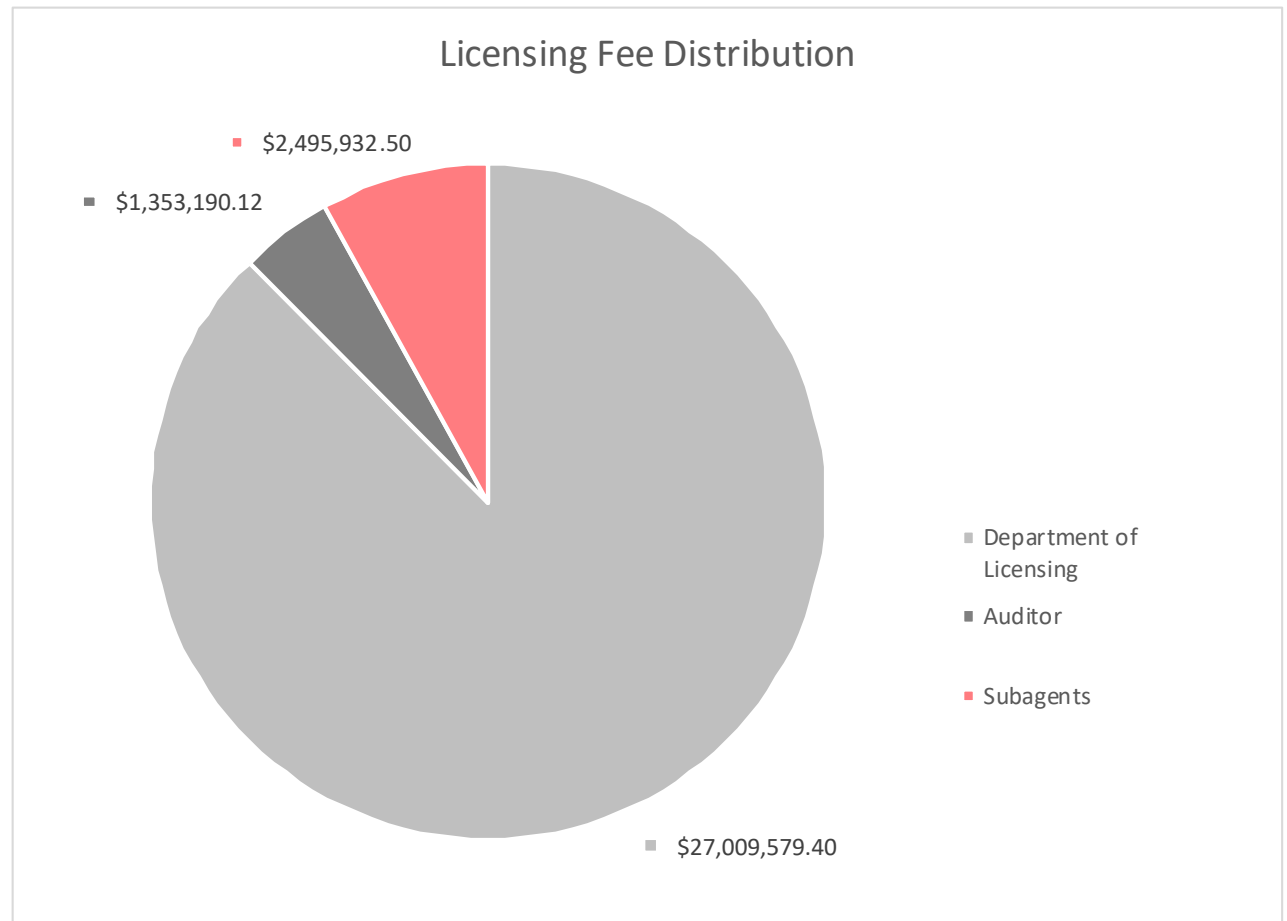
- ◆ Two new license plate designs came out in 2019. The Seattle Storm and the San Juan Islands special license plates. The Seattle Storm special plate fees support the Washington State Legislative Youth Advisory Council. The San Juan Islands special plate fees support the Madrona Institute stewardship projects.



Licensing Division

Licensing Revenue

Whatcom County licensing transactions totaled over \$30 million in state and local vehicle/vessel licensing fees in 2019. Of the total fees collected, 88% were allocated to the Department of Licensing to support the state’s transportation system. The remaining funds were divided between the Whatcom County General Fund and the county’s licensing subagents as shown in the chart below.



Core Services

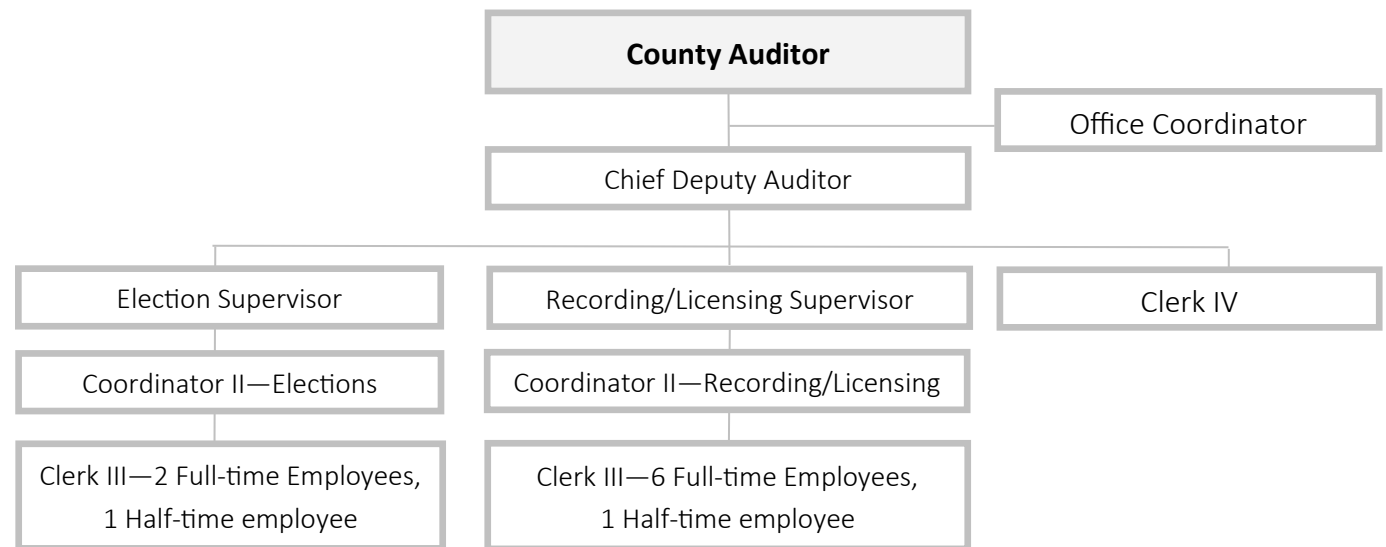
- ◆ Administration
- ◆ Oversight of Three Divisions
- ◆ Budget
- ◆ Payroll
- ◆ Purchasing/Accounts Payable
- ◆ Initiatives, Referenda, District Creation
- ◆ Requests for Proposals
- ◆ Contract Management
- ◆ Legal Notices and Press Releases

Administrative Overview

Auditor's Office Administration, namely the Auditor, Chief Deputy, Office Coordinator, and Clerk IV, provide support for office-wide operations.

Administration Highlights in 2019

- ◆ Processed 4 resolutions for ballot measures
- ◆ Calculated and mailed out 69 Election and Registration cost bills to cities and districts
- ◆ Managed 50 contracts
- ◆ Developed and issued 2 Requests for Proposal
- ◆ Updated the Candidate Filing Guide, the Initiative/Referenda Handbook and the Policies and Procedures Manual
- ◆ Processed 127 Oaths of Office and created Certificates of Election/Appointment
- ◆ Coordinated remodel and move into new Election Center space
- ◆ Worked with County IT Department on cybersecurity initiatives and coordinated installation of new equipment to meet same day registration requirements
- ◆ Managed budgets in the amount of \$2,957,391



Highlights:

- ◆ Legislative Committee
- ◆ Recording Committee
- ◆ Voter Intent Guidelines Committee
- ◆ Executive Steering Committee for a new statewide Voter Registration system
- ◆ Property Records Industry Association (PRIA)
- ◆ International Association of Government Officials (IGO)

Statewide Involvement

In addition to the oversight of three divisions under the Auditor’s purview, the Auditor and the Chief Deputy participate in the Washington State Association of County Auditors (WSACA) and the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO). These statewide advocacy groups provide opportunities to interact with other counties, statewide officials, and to learn and share best practices.



Washington State Association of County Auditors (WSACA)

Chief Deputy Diana Bradrick co-chaired the WSACA Legislative Committee until May of 2019 when she became Chair. Her participation advocates for legislative priorities affecting the auditors; she solicits input and participation from all members of the association. Auditor Debbie Adelstein served as a member of the WSACA Recording Committee. Bradrick participates in recording and election policy committees. The committees focus on standardization of practices to achieve and maintain consistency of common goals.



Secretary of State’s Office Committees

Auditor Adelstein served on the Executive Steering Committee for the VoteWA project—the new statewide voter registration database scheduled to go live in April, 2019. Chief Deputy Bradrick served as the Auditor’s back-up on this committee and as her Subject Matter Expert.



National Involvement

Chief Deputy Bradrick has been a long-time member of the International Association of Government Officials (IGO) and the Property Records Industry Association (PRIA). Her participation in these associations keep the office current on emerging technology as well as up-to-date on national trends in the recording, elections, records management and marriage licensing areas.





Auditor's Office Staff Photo

Front Row; Sue, Debbie, Diana, Nicolle & Amy

Middle Row; Krystal, Agy, Morgan, Kathleen,
Stacy & Jessie

Back Row; Nic, Kellye, Kelhi & Dan

Not Pictured; Kimberly & Laura

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