

# 3 Rural and Natural Resource Element

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## Introduction

Clark County's rural and resource areas are characterized by forests, large and small scale farms, rivers and streams that provide quality habitat for fish and wildlife, and a wide variety of homes found in Rural Centers and scattered on lots in a broad range of sizes. Many rural residential communities are focused in areas with historic roots of large-scale commercial forestry, farming, and mining. Also, rural residential communities are focused on scenic resources such as rivers and views or to lifestyle activities such as the keeping of horses.

The soils and terrain in the rural and resource areas create significant environmentally sensitive areas, such as steep, erodable slopes, wetlands and ground water recharge areas. Maintenance of tree cover, natural vegetation and wetlands are critical to prevention of erosion, flooding, property and habitat damage, the continued functioning of the ecosystem and preservation of rural character.

## Growth Management Act

Statewide planning goals were adopted in 1990 as part of the Growth Management Act (GMA) to guide development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations. A basic principle of the GMA is that growth should first be directed to areas already characterized by growth and where growth can be supported with adequate urban facilities and services. By directing development to areas where facilities are currently provided or can be efficiently provided in the future, the county can better utilize limited resources in both rural and urban areas. Additionally, by generally directing growth to such areas, Clark County can ensure that a distinct option for rural living will be available for generations to come. This Chapter satisfies the GMA's mandatory Rural Element (RCW 36.70A.070 (5)) by:

- designating rural lands "lands that are not designated for urban growth, agriculture, forest or mineral resources";
- providing a projected 20-year population growth;
- identifying rural government services;
- providing a variety of densities for residential, commercial and industrial land uses; and,
- addressing rural character of such lands, which can include critical areas as well as small-scale farm and forestry activities.

This Chapter also satisfies the GMA's Goal 8 to maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries and designated resource lands (RCW36.70A.020 (8)).

## Clark County's Rural Communities

Clark County's rural area contains predominately low-density residential development, farms, forests, watersheds crucial to fisheries and flood control, mining areas, small rural commercial centers, historic sites and buildings, archaeological sites and regionally important recreation areas. Designation and conservation of a rural area maintains rural community character as a valued part of the county's diversity. It also provides choices in living environments, maintains a link to Clark County's heritage, allows small-scale farming and forestry and helps protect environmental quality and sensitive resources.

As defined by (WAC 365-195-210(19)), rural lands are those areas, which lie outside of urban growth areas and do not include designated long-term resource lands (agriculture, forest or mineral resources). In Clark County the rural area represents a lifestyle based on historical development patterns and resource-based industries such as commercial forestry, Christmas trees, dairies, berry farming, orchards and mining. Today much of the county's rural lands include a mix of resource, small commercial, recreational and residential uses.

No single attribute describes the rural landscape. Instead combinations of characteristics which are found in rural settings impart the sense of what we commonly describe as rural. These factors are cumulative in nature and the more of these factors that are present influence feelings of whether a particular area is rural. In many cases these characteristics are subjective and frequently not all of them are found in each area. When describing rural conditions the public will often describe these areas in terms of a certain lifestyle. The factors listed below are those that usually describe "rural character."

- the presence of large lots;
- limited public services present (water, sewer, police, fire, roads, etc.);
- different expectations of levels of services provided;
- small scale resource activity;
- undeveloped nature of the landscape;
- wildlife and natural conditions predominate;
- closer relationship between nature and residents;
- personal open space;
- a sense of separation from intense human activity;
- a sense of self sufficiency; and
- rural commercial supporting rural area population.

Planning for rural lands in Clark County is important for the following reasons:

- to maintain a rural character;
- to recognize their location at the urban fringe, where they are susceptible to sprawl development which can overwhelm the existing character, infrastructure and way of life;
- to serve as transition areas between urban and resource uses because urban and resource uses are dependent on each other, but are not always compatible;
- to provide services and goods that support resource activities;
- to supply nearby urban residents with locally harvested resource products which are fresh and often less costly;
- to allow the efficient provision of public facilities and services by clearly delineating between urban and rural uses so that growth is directed to more compact urban centers;
- to add an important dimension to the quality of life through the existence of rural lands, open space and natural or critical areas;
- to provide for the planned future expansion of urban uses, if necessary or needed, in the rural lands that border designated urban areas; and,
- to protect and enhance streams and riparian habitat necessary for sustaining healthy populations of salmonids.

The Rural and Natural Resource Element is an integral part of the county's 20-Year Plan. This element concentrates on how future land use needs within rural and resource lands will be met, and the methodology used to designate resource lands. This element emphasizes how rural and resource

lands should be used in the future, supporting the ongoing and future resource activities (farming, forestry and mineral extraction) and encouraging such activities on a smaller scale in the rural non-resource lands. Together, this element in concert with the rest of the 20-Year Plan supports the long-range vision for Clark County.

**Rural Population Growth**

The Rural Area is not expected to accommodate large amounts of growth, but allows for low-density residential development and other traditional rural uses. The GMA requires that rural development be contained and controlled to ensure the protection of rural character, assure the visual compatibility of rural development with the surrounding rural area, protect environmentally sensitive areas and habitat and protect against conflicts with natural resource uses such as farming, forestry and mining. As of January 2015, 62,205 people resided within the rural and resource lands, or those areas outside of the urban growth areas.

It is anticipated that 12,859 people or 10 percent of the new growth will be accommodated in the rural area. The total county population projection (including urban and rural areas) over the next 20 years is approximately 577,431 persons.

**Rural Land Distribution**

Clark County is approximately 420,000 acres in size, of which approximately 320,000 acres are outside the Urban Growth Area. The predominate land uses outside the Urban Growth Area include forest, agriculture and single family residential development. Table 3.1 illustrates the distribution of land uses based on 1994, 2004 and 2016 zoning categories throughout the rural and resource lands.

**Table 3.1 Acreage Totals Based on 1994, 2007 and 2016 Zoning Categories**

ZONING	ACRES - 1994	ACRES - 2007	ACRES - 2016
R-5, R-10, R-20	105,102	100,117	102,213
AG-10 <sup>1</sup> , AG/WL	39,802	35,760	37,460
FR-20 <sup>1</sup> , FR-80	157,516	158,068	158,099

<sup>1</sup>Zoning changed from AG-20 and FR-40 in the 2016 plan update.

**Rural Commercial / Industrial Uses**

Existing commercial and industrial uses are located within the rural and resource areas of Clark County. The majority of existing commercial uses can be found within Rural Centers (275 acres), although there is some commercial use outside these centers (85 acres). Currently, the majority of industrial land is found within the cities or the proposed urban growth areas. Industrial land within the rural area is limited to the Brush Prairie area and Chelatchie Prairie, the site of the abandoned sawmill.

Commercial and industrial lands, especially regarding the relationship with employment, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, Land Use and Chapter 9, Economic Development. CR-1 and IH are the zoning designations applied to rural commercial and industrial parcels.

**Rural Center**

Rural Centers are distinguished by small lot development with a definite edge, surrounded by a rural landscape of generally open land used for agriculture, forestry, large lot residential development, recreation and environmental protection purposes. These centers are often at the crossroads where historical development has allowed for both smaller lots and commercial uses within these nodes of development. Within these centers rural residential development is based on historical patterns.

Commercial activities located at crossroads provide rural residents with an opportunity to meet many of their daily needs without going into one of the cities.

Within the Rural Centers, the following land uses have been identified: residential, commercial, industrial, public facilities, parks and open space. The commercial and industrial designations are similar to past comprehensive plan maps with some additional commercial areas designated. The commercial and industrial activities within these centers should support opportunity for job growth, tax base to support schools, rural and resource needs and not draw people from the urban area.

Commercial uses to be encouraged in Rural Centers include post offices, veterinary clinics, day care, schools, small medical practices, shopping services and housing opportunities compatible with surrounding roads, and utilities. These, in turn, reinforce the center’s rural character and distinct sense of community. The Rural Centers of Clark County are as follows: Brush Prairie, Meadow Glade, Hockinson, Dollars Corner, Farger Lake, Amboy, and Chelatchie Prairie. Table 3.2 and 3.3 provides acreage information on existing land uses within these Rural Centers.

**Table 3.2 Acreage of Land Uses in Clark County's Rural Centers, 1994**

Rural Centers	Land Uses in Acres				
	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Public	Total
Amboy	364	23	NA	13	400
Brush Prairie	242	49	36		327
Chelatchie	279	15	229		523
Dollars Corner	223	106	NA		329
Hockinson	236	28	NA		264
Meadow Glade	1284	15	9		1,308

Source: Assessor’s Data Base

**Table 3.3 Acreage of Land Uses in Clark County's Rural Centers, 2016**

Rural Centers	Land Uses in Acres				
	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Public	Total
Amboy	325	26	0	40	401
Brush Prairie	229	63	25	10	327
Chelatchie	192	11	234	42	479
Dollars Corner	219	115	0	4	338
Farger Lake <sup>1</sup>	68	21	0	4	92
Hockinson	237	32	0	30	299
Meadow Glade <sup>2</sup>	482	8	0	0	490

Source: Assessor’s Data Base

<sup>1</sup> Farger Lake was created in 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Meadow Glade is within the proposed Battle Ground UGA expansion.

## Designation Criteria

A variety of different attributes were assessed to determine the future land uses within the rural and resource lands of the county. As required by the Growth Management Act legislation, the conservation of resource lands (agriculture, forestry and mineral) was analyzed and based on the criteria provided, resource lands were designated. After identifying resource lands, the rural lands were analyzed with regard to lot patterns and sizes and current uses, including the commercial activity within the Rural Centers. Furthermore, rural lot sizes providing for primarily residential

development were considered in light of the county's ability to properly serve such sites. The GMA designation criteria for both rural and resource lands were used in the determination of minimum lot sizes for all land use designations. This determination was also based on the population allocation to these areas and the ability to provide services. These land use designations emphasize the predominant types of uses be it resource-based or more residential in nature.

The policies (pages 3-14 through 3-23) for the rural area govern the use of lands, which are not reserved for agriculture, forest, or mineral resources, nor are they designated for urban development. Land uses, densities, and intensities of rural development are to be compatible with both adjacent urban areas and designated natural resource lands. A minimum lot size of one dwelling per five, ten, or twenty acres has been designated throughout the rural area based on existing lot patterns; buffers to adjacent resource lands; preservation of rural character, and continued small scale farming and forestry.

The policies for the resource areas govern the use of lands that are reserved for agriculture, forest, and mineral resources. More specific designation criteria for these three resource land categories are found under the following three headings: Forest lands, Agricultural Lands, and Mineral Lands.

### **Resource Lands**

Clark County is fortunate to have a variety of lands rich in natural resources including forests, farmland and deposits of gravel, sand and other minerals. These natural resources are a component of the economy, providing jobs, tax revenue and valuable products and materials for local use and export. Farmlands and forests also provide aesthetic, recreational and environmental benefits to the public while contributing to the diverse character of the county. The resource land designations are tailored to each of the resources and at a minimum address the guidelines provided by state law. Below is a brief description of the state minimum guidelines and methodology used in designating forestry, agriculture and mineral resource lands. The majority of this work was developed with the assistance of three citizen focus groups, each responsible for a specific resource.

### **Forest lands**

The Washington Department of Commerce (Commerce) provided counties and cities with guidelines to assist in classifying and designating resource lands. These guidelines include criteria for identifying forest resource lands. According to Commerce, the private forestland grading system of the state Department of Revenue should be used in classifying forest resource lands, which includes the identification of quality soils for forestry. Long-term commercially significant forestlands generally have a predominance of higher private forestland grades.

Forest land is defined by the Growth Management Act as "land primarily useful for growing trees, including Christmas trees...for commercial purposes, and that has long-term commercial significance for growing trees commercially" (WAC 365-190-060). Long-term commercial significance "includes the growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land for long-term commercial production, in consideration with the land's proximity to population areas, and the possibility of more intense uses of the land."

The effects of proximity to population areas and the possibility of more intense uses of the surrounding lands are also important factors in classifying forestlands. Commerce provides seven indicators as guidelines for local governments to use in classifying forestlands:

- the availability of public services and facilities conducive to the conversion of forest lands;

- the proximity of forestland to urban and suburban areas and rural settlements: forestlands of long-term commercial significance are located outside the urban and suburban areas and rural settlements;
- forestlands consist of predominantly large parcels;
- the compatibility and intensity of adjacent and nearby land use and settlement patterns with forestlands of long-term commercial significance;
- property tax classification: property is assessed as open space or forestland pursuant to RCW 84.33 or 84.34;
- local economic conditions which affect the ability to manage timberlands for long-term commercial production and significance; and
- history of land development permits issued nearby.

The delineation of forest lands began by quantifying and mapping Commerce’s seven indicators. With the exception of soil grades (Figure 21), which are uniformly outstanding throughout the county, maps were created showing parcel size, tree cover, tax status, physical structures, roads, utilities, zoning, slope and rainfall. Urban areas and areas close to urban and suburban areas where few stands of timber remain were not mapped.

The maps were used to identify forest resources within the county. The task was made easier by the Washington Forest Protection Association, which represents many large and small forest owners, and the Washington Department of Natural Resources. These groups classified lands under their ownership for designation as long-term forest resource land. Other lands were designated based on the criteria outlined above.

### **Agricultural Lands**

Agricultural land is defined by the GMA as "land primarily devoted to the commercial production of horticulture, viticulture, floriculture, dairy, apiary, vegetable, or animal products or of berries, grain, hay, straw, turf, seed, Christmas trees or livestock, and that has long-term commercial significance for agricultural production" (WAC 365--190-050). Long term commercial significance "includes the growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land for long-term commercial production, in consideration with the land's proximity to population areas, and the possibility of more intense uses of the land."

Quality soils are a primary factor in classifying and designating agricultural resource lands (Figure 22). Commerce requires that the land capability classification system of the United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service be used in classifying agricultural resource land. This system includes eight classes of soils published in soil surveys. As with forestlands, the effects of proximity to population areas and the possibility of more intense uses of the land are important factors in classifying agricultural lands. Commerce provides 10 indicators to assess these factors; however, it is left up to the local jurisdictions to interpret these guidelines in the designation of resource lands:

- the availability of public facilities,
- tax status,
- the availability of public services,
- relationship or proximity to urban growth areas,
- predominant parcel size,
- land use settlement patterns and their compatibility with agricultural practices,
- intensity of nearby land uses,
- history of land development permits issued nearby,

- land values under alternative uses, and
- proximity to markets.

The classification and designation of agricultural land began by quantifying and mapping Commerce's ten indicators. Maps were created showing prime and unique soil, agricultural cover, forest cover, parcel size, tax status, physical structures, roads, utilities and zoning. Heavily forested areas and urban areas were not mapped.

The maps were used to identify Clark County's most productive farmland. This process identified farm areas that included major patterns of high quality soils and agricultural activity in areas with generally larger parcels. These lands became candidate areas for consideration as agricultural resource lands of long-term commercial significance. Commerce's guidelines again were used to more closely examine candidate areas with serious limiting factors and to determine the relative value of candidate areas for agricultural use. The Vancouver Lake lowland candidate area, with its high quality of soils, large parcels, and wildlife values, was placed in a special class. The remaining candidate areas were divided into three tiers.

After completion of this work, looking at forestry and agriculture on an individual basis, it was found that there were a number of areas where farming activity was occurring adjacent to forestry and vice versa or where parcels were not identified up because both farming and forestry activity was occurring on the site, with neither being the predominant use. Therefore, all the "edges" of the resource areas were re-evaluated. Reconsideration of the land use designations in these areas was done by a task force in 1998. Through that review, much of the 35,000 acres of land designated as Agri-Forest under the 1994 Comprehensive Plan was redesignated to Rural 20, 10 or 5, representing 20, 10 or 5-acre minimum lot sizes. Approximately 3,500 acres of the land was disputed by an alternative task force contingent. Consideration was remanded back to the county by the courts. The Clark County Board of Commissioners voted to retain the rural designation rather than a resource designation.

GMA allows the use of innovative zoning techniques in areas designated as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance (RCW 36.70A.177). Listed among five examples is the use of cluster zoning. A clustering provision was included in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan update.

### Mineral Lands

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.040(3)(b)) requires Clark County and each city within it to designate mineral resource lands and to adopt development regulations conserving those resource lands from which the extraction of minerals occurs or can be anticipated. The Act specifically requires the designation of "mineral resource lands that are not already characterized by urban growth and that have long-term significance for the extraction of minerals."

There are three key issues to the designation and conservation of mineral resource lands. These issues include:

- defining what types of mineral resources are potentially significant in the county;
- defining the extent and long-term significance of aggregate that is needed to meet the demand of the county's projected population; and,
- determining how to balance a variety of land uses within mineral resource areas.

The mineral resources identified and mined in Clark County consist of two aggregate types: sand and gravel (round rock) and quarry rock.

The primary uses of sand and gravel deposits are aggregate for Portland cement “ready mix” concrete and asphalt concrete, drain rock, base rock and fill. There are four principle sand and gravel mining areas in Clark County: the North County-Woodland Area, East Fork of the Lewis River, Orchards and East Mill Plain. The deposits in the northern half of the county are primarily recent alluvium and Pleistocene terrace deposits. The thickness of the alluvial deposits ranges from a few feet to tens of feet, while the terrace deposits are approximately 30-60 feet thick. The rocks have not been weathered and are fairly hard.

The most abundant gravel deposits lie in the southern portion of the county (Orchards, East Mill Plain). These are primarily recent alluvium and Pleistocene flood deposits. The gravel here is uniform in size, un-weathered, and contains a high percentage of hard, non-reactive rocks. This area also has little overburden and a close proximity to markets. Deposits range from 60 to 100 feet thick, with thickness generally decreasing with distance north from the Columbia River. The expansion of the Vancouver and Camas urban areas has made a major portion of this resource permanently inaccessible.

The second type of aggregate, quarry rock, is typically used as base rock for roads, riprap, and jetty rock or as crushed aggregate. In southwest Washington, most quarry rock is of marine volcanic origin, characterized by poor strength and durability due to contact with sea water during extrusion of lavas. However, there are several locations in Clark County where high-quality basalt bedrock is found capable of producing substantial amounts of durable aggregate. Currently seven rock quarries are in active operation in the county. With the exception of Fisher Quarry, most rock quarries are located in the north and east portions of the county a considerable distance from the market.

Mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance were designated as part of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan as required by WAC 365-190-070. Mineral resource lands consist of areas that appear to contain the resource, based on the best available geological information; are primarily not within environmentally sensitive areas (e.g., 100-year floodplain, high quality wetland areas); and are at least 80 acres in size, or include at least one 40-acre parcel or two 20-acre parcels which are currently vacant. Parcel size is not a requirement if the land is adjacent to an existing mining site.

The Department of Natural Resources published an updated map showing known and potential mineral resources in 2005 (Figure 23). Identified mining areas are designated with the Surface Mining Overlay (SMO) District, which is an overlay zone that can be combined with any other zoning district. Areas where the SMO was applied were updated in 2014 (Figure 24).

Development standards in Title 40 were revised in 2014 to help maintain a balance between surface mining and adjacent land uses. Extraction of mineral deposits in the Surface Mining Overlay District is a permitted use outright, while rock crushing, asphalt plants and concrete batch plants can be approved as conditional uses. Special standards include maximum permissible noise levels, hours of operation, drainage provisions and land restoration requirements. The provisions of this district also apply to surface mining operations that were active prior to the adoption of these standards.

### **Critical/Sensitive Lands**

Identification and protection of critical areas is a key component of the GMA legislation. The critical areas component, including maps, definitions and policies, can be found in Chapter 4, Environmental Element. Critical areas can be found within the urban areas and within the rural and resource areas of



the county. These critical areas include flood hazard areas, geological hazard areas, wetlands, shoreline and surface waters, wildlife conservation areas, aquifer recharge areas and scenic areas.

### **Parks and Open Space**

Realizing the importance of parks and recreation to the livability of the community, Clark County adopted its first Parks Comprehensive Plan in 1965. Clark County owns and operates approximately 4,006 acres of park and open space lands. These lands are divided into these categories: neighborhood, community and regional parks, and open spaces. This includes 12 regional parks, three special facilities acres, and conservation areas and greenway systems. Many of these parks are in the rural area, including Moulton Falls, Lewisville Park, Lacamas Lake, Siouxon and Whipple Creek Park. Recreational facilities are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, Parks and Open Space.

### **Master Planned Resorts**

The Growth Management Act allows counties to permit master planned resorts. A master planned resort means a self-contained and fully integrated planned unit development, in a setting of significant natural amenities, with primary focus on destination resort facilities consisting of short-term visitor accommodations associated with a range of developed on-site indoor or outdoor recreational facilities. A master planned resort may include other residential uses within its boundaries, but only if the residential uses are integrated into and support the on-site recreational nature of the resort (RCW.36.70A.360).

### **Capital Facilities and Utilities**

Capital facilities are the basic services that the public sector provides to support land development including roads, public schools, fire and police protection, parks, libraries, and utilities. Within the rural area, water availability is provided either through private wells or by Clark Public Utilities. Sewage disposal is predominately provided by on-site septic disposal. However, there are areas, which have sanitary sewer systems due to failures of the septic systems, such as Meadow Glade and Hockinson. Utilities are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6, Capital Facilities and Utilities.

### **Transportation**

Land use and transportation are closely linked, even within the rural and resource areas. Within the rural area, the functional classification for roads includes Rural Principal Arterials, Rural Minor Arterials and other rural roads such as Major and Minor Collectors and local roads. Analysis of rural road definitions and deficiencies is discussed in Chapter 5, Transportation.

### **Equestrian Element**

Clark County recognizes the contributions of equestrian livestock husbandry, training, competition, and recreation activities to the overall rural quality of life in Clark County. These activities provide a lifestyle value to numerous county residents and visitors and economic revenue for rural residents and business owners. There are numerous organizations that support the equestrian industry by providing education and promoting equine husbandry, including the Clark County Extension Service, Future Farmers of America, 4H, the Clark County Executive Horse Council, the Mt. St. Helens Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen, and numerous other special interest equestrian-related groups.

As growth continues to occur throughout the county, open land to sustain livestock and existing or potential trail segments may be lost to uncoordinated land development and road improvements. Also, requirements of the Endangered Species Act may limit livestock management choices and the location of new equestrian facilities on land constrained by large riparian corridors. Additionally, with the county's emphasis on preserving agricultural and forestry lands within the Resource and Rural

Districts, the development of large equestrian facilities of a size and scale that would be incompatible with agricultural and forestry practices within these districts should be discouraged.

The Equestrian Community plays a vital role in Clark County’s economy and rural character. Clark County is unique in the Portland metropolitan area for having many one- to ten-acre exurban parcels. These properties, many of which host equine uses, are a premium attraction for some. According to the Clark County Equine Impact report (Clark County Executive Horse Council, 2009), 4.8% of Clark County households own equines. The estimated number of equines in Clark County is approximately 28,902.

### Community Framework Plan

Clark County adopted the Community Framework Plan in April 1993. The Framework Plan established a consensus among the citizens of the county about the lands, which would eventually be committed to urban uses and those which should remain rural. The Framework Plan is not a detailed plan, but a plan that provides a framework through policies that guide the development of the 20-Year Plan. The Framework Plan policies are discussed in Chapter 1, Land Use. Policies that relate to rural lands can be found in most elements of the plan including Land Use, Rural and Resource Lands, Transportation, Public Facilities, Utilities, Parks and Open Space, Economic Development and Community Design.

### Goals and Policies

#### 3.0 Countywide Planning Policies

- 3.0.1 The county shall recognize existing development and provide lands, which allow rural development in areas, which are developed or committed to development of a rural character.
- 3.0.2 The county and each municipality shall cooperate to ensure the preservation and protection of natural resources, critical areas, open space, and recreational lands within and near the urban area through adequate and compatible policies and regulations.

#### County 20-Year Plan Policies

##### Rural Areas – General

**Goal: Compatible with maintaining rural character and rural (levels of service)(services), ensure that lands outside of urban growth areas are viable places to live and work.**

#### 3.1 Policies

- 3.1.1 Clark County shall maintain and protect the character of rural lands defined as those lands outside of urban growth areas by promoting:
  - Large lot residential development compatible with adjacent farming, forestry and mining and not needing urban facilities and services;
  - Non-residential development in Rural Centers;
  - Economic development activities consistent with the preservation of rural character;
  - Agriculture, forestry and mining activities;

- Regional parks, trails and open space;
  - Environmental quality, particularly as evidenced by the health of wildlife and fisheries (especially salmon and trout), aquifers used for potable water, surface water bodies and natural drainage systems; and
  - Historic character and resources including archaeological and cultural sites important to the local community.
- 3.1.2 Land use designations shown on the Clark County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map include areas that are rural in character and meet one or more of the following criteria:
- Generally characterized by a larger lot size;
  - Do not require urban levels of public services;
  - Opportunities exist for farming and mineral activities;
  - The area is contiguous with other rural lands or can serve as a buffer between large-lot residential development and resource activities or urban areas;
  - The area is not needed to provide capacity for population or employment growth in the 20-year forecast; and,
  - The area has outstanding scenic, historic, environmental, resource or aesthetic values.
- 3.1.3 Clark County's Rural Area is considered to be permanent and shall not be redesignated to an Urban Growth Area until reviewed pursuant to the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.130(3), and Countywide Planning Policy 3.0.
- 3.1.4 Master Planned Resorts may be approved in an area outside of established Urban Growth Boundaries consistent with the requirements for plan amendments in the Clark County Code.
- 3.1.5 Encourage cooperative resource management among farmland and timberland owners, farm foresters, rural residents, environmental groups and local, state, and federal resource agencies for managing private and public farm and forestlands and public resources.
- 3.1.6 Rural development shall not be allowed unless appropriate facilities and services (water, storm drainage, roads and approved sanitary treatment) are in place or planned.
- 3.1.7 Rural lands generally shall be served by septic tanks and individual wells (when public water is not available). Wastewater treatment shall be provided by individual on-site treatment systems or approved alternative sewage treatment technologies.
- 3.1.8 Sewer lines shall not be extended into rural areas except to correct existing health hazards. Sewer lines shall not be extended until other means for treatment, such as state approved alternative technologies, have been assessed and determined not to be feasible due to environmental constraints.
- 3.1.9 Rural and Resource land designations within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area are consistent with the requirements of the National Scenic Area legislation. The minimum lot size requirements and uses shall only be authorized to the extent that they are consistent with the National Scenic Area legislation established to implement the requirement of the scenic area.

- 3.1.10 Activities in rural areas shall be conducted in a manner consistent with the Clark County Shoreline Master Program, if in shoreline jurisdiction.

### **Rural Lands**

**Goal: Compatible with maintaining rural character and rural (levels of service) (services), provide for lands outside of urban growth areas that are predominately for residential uses.**

### **3.2 Policies**

- 3.2.1 Rural lands as designated on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map are generally for rural residential development, for accessory uses such as home businesses and for small-scale resource uses.
- 3.2.2 Land designated as Rural are characterized by a range of lot sizes and generally are not characterized by high-quality soils.
- 3.2.3 Those areas with a Rural Comprehensive Plan designation shall have a residential density of one dwelling unit per 5, 10 and 20 acres (R-5, R-10 and R-20 respectively).
- 3.3.4 Clustering of parcels is allowed consistent with platting and zoning requirements and the Clark County Code.
- 3.2.5 If schools and related facilities need to be sited in rural areas, preference shall be to locate first in Rural Centers and then, as a last resort, in areas designated as Rural.

### **Rural Centers**

**Goal: Maintain the character of the designated Rural Centers within the surrounding rural area.**

### **3.3 Policies**

- 3.3.1 Rural Centers as designated on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map are distinct areas that:
- provide a focus for the surrounding rural area that is appropriate in character and scale in the rural environment;
  - provide appropriate commercial developments to serve adjoining rural areas;
  - provide services to tourists and other visitors recreating in the area; and,
  - provide an opportunity to develop facilities that can function as a community center in those areas where an incorporated town no longer serves that role for the surrounding area.
- 3.3.2 Rural Centers:
- are generally characterized by smaller lot patters;
  - have residential development and small-scale business that provides convenience shopping and services to nearby residents;
  - have access to arterial roadways; and,
  - are surrounded by rural landscapes of generally open land used for agriculture, forestry, large lot residential, recreational and environmental protection purposes.

Rural Centers identified on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map are: Amboy, Brush Prairie, Chelatchie Prairie, Dollars Corner, Fargher Lake, Hockinson and Meadow Glade.

- 3.3.3 Rural Centers shall have a residential density of between one unit per acre and one unit per five acres (RC-1, RC-2.5 and R-5) based on the historical pattern in the area. In no case shall density exceed one unit per acre.
- 3.3.4 Rural commercial development should support the needs of rural residents and natural resources activities rather than urban area uses. Appropriate uses for Rural Centers include:
- resource-based industrial development consistent with rural character and levels of service;
  - commercial uses supporting resource uses, such as packing, first state processing and processing which provides value added to the resource products may occur in resource areas; and,
  - post offices, veterinary clinics, day care, small medical practices and schools that provide employment, shopping services and housing opportunities within Rural Centers. The scale should be compatible with surrounding roads and utilities, which reinforce the rural character and distinct sense of community.
- 3.3.5 If schools and related facilities need to be sited in rural areas, preference shall be to locate first in Rural Centers and then, as a last resort, in areas designated as Rural.
- 3.3.6 Rural Center designation criteria are as follows:
- an area proposed as a Rural Center had to have existed as of July 1, 1990, identifiable by pre-existing small lot development patterns, natural features as boundaries and access to arterials;
  - proponents of a new Rural Center shall submit to the county a petition signed by at least 60 percent of the property owners of the land within the boundaries of the proposed new Rural Center;
  - a new Rural Center or a boundary expansion of an existing Rural Center shall be considered and evaluated by the county through the annual review under CCC40.560 and pursuant to RCW36.70A.070(5)(d).

#### Forest lands

**Goal: To maintain and enhance the conservation of productive forestlands and discourage incompatible uses associated with forestry activities.**

#### **3.4 Policies**

- 3.4.1 Forest lands as designated in the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map shall be managed primarily for the conservation of long-term commercial significant forest lands for productive economic use.
- 3.4.2 Primary land use activities on forest lands are commercial forest management, agriculture, mineral extraction, public recreation uses and other non-forest related economic activities relying on forest lands.

- 3.4.3 Those areas with Forest Tier I and Forest Tier II Comprehensive Plan designations shall have a residential density of one dwelling unit per 80 and 20 acres (FR-80 and FR-20 respectively).
- 3.4.4 Clustering of parcels is allowed consistent with platting and zoning requirements and the Clark County Code.
- 3.4.5 Forest activities shall be encouraged by:
  - supporting land trades that result in consolidated forest ownership;
  - working with forest landowners and managers to identify and develop other incentives for continued forestry; and,
  - taking into consideration in capital improvements plans maintaining public roads adequate to accommodate the transport of forest commodities.
- 3.4.6 Land use activities within or adjacent to forestland shall be located and designed to minimize conflicts with forest management and other activities on forestland to include the following:
  - residential development on lands adjacent to designated forestland shall be located away from the forestland and should provide for a buffer between residential and forest activity;
  - special development standards for access, lot size and configuration, fire protection, water supply and dwelling unit location shall be adopted for dwellings within or adjacent to designated forest lands; and
  - notification shall be placed on all plats and binding site plans that the adjacent land is in resource use and subject to a variety of activities that may not be compatible with residential development.
- 3.4.7 Special purpose districts and local improvement districts in lands designated in the 20-Year Plan for forest use will only be used when the services or facilities provided by the special purpose district or local improvement district through taxes, assessments, rates or charges directly benefit those forest lands.
- 3.4.8 Resource activities on forest lands performed in accordance with county, state and federal laws should not be considered public nuisances nor be subject to legal action as public nuisances.
- 3.4.9 In identifying and designating commercial forest land, the following factors shall be taken into consideration: operational factors, growing capacity, site productivity and soil composition, surrounding land use, parcel size, economic viability, tax status and public service levels that are conducive to long-term continuance in forest management.

## Agricultural Lands

**Goal: To maintain and enhance productive agriculture lands and minimize incompatibilities with adjacent uses.**

### 3.5 Policies

- 3.5.1 Agriculture lands as designated in the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map shall be managed primarily for the conservation of long-term commercial significant agriculture lands for productive economic use.

- 3.5.2 Primary land use activities on agriculture lands are commercial agriculture management, agriculture-related uses, temporary worker facilities, forest activities and other non-agriculture related economic activities relying on agriculture lands.
- 3.5.3 Those areas with Agriculture Comprehensive Plan designations shall have a residential density of one dwelling unit per 10 acres (AG-10).
- 3.5.4 Clustering of parcels is allowed consistent with platting and zoning requirements and the Clark County Code.
- 3.5.5 Those areas with Agriculture/Wildlife Comprehensive Plan designations shall have a residential density of one dwelling unit per 160 acres (AG/WL).
- 3.5.6 Agriculture activities shall be encouraged by:
- limiting residential development in or near agricultural areas;
  - limiting public services and facilities which lead to the conversion of agricultural lands to non-resource uses;
  - maintaining public roads in capital improvement plans to accommodate the transport of agricultural commodities;
  - cooperative resource management among agricultural land owners, environmental groups, state and federal resource agencies and federally recognized Native American tribes for managing the county’s public and private agricultural lands;
  - supporting land trades that result in consolidated agricultural ownership;
  - encouraging the maintenance of agricultural lands in current use property tax classifications, including those classifications as provided for in RCW 84.34 and CCC Chapter 3.08;
  - working with agricultural landowners and managers to identify and develop other incentives for continued farming; and,
  - encouraging agricultural land use as a clean industry incorporating tax breaks, right to farm, purchase of development rights, transfer of development rights and other economic means and develop strategies to support farming practices.
- 3.5.7 Minimum parcel size should be adequate to allow reasonable and economic agricultural use.
- 3.5.8 Special purpose taxing districts and local improvement districts in lands designated in the 20-Year Plan for agricultural use will only be used when the services or facilities provided by the special purpose district or local improvement district through taxes, assessments, rates or charges, directly benefit those agricultural lands.
- 3.5.9 Land use activities within or adjacent to agricultural land shall be located and designed to minimize conflicts with agricultural management and other activities on agricultural land, to include the following:
- residential development adjacent to agricultural land shall be approximately buffered from agricultural activities;

- public services and utilities within and adjacent to designated agricultural areas should be designed to prevent negative impacts on agriculture and allow for continued resource activity;
  - notification shall be placed on all plats and binding site plans that the adjacent land is in resource use and subject to a variety of activities that may not be compatible with residential development.
- 3.5.10 Agricultural activities performed in accordance with county, state and federal laws should not be considered public nuisances nor be subject to legal action as public nuisances.

### Mineral Lands

**Goal: To protect and ensure appropriate use of gravel and mineral resources of the county and minimize conflict between surface mining and surrounding land uses.**

### **3.6 Policies**

- 3.6.1 Support the conservation of mineral lands for productive economic use by identifying and designating lands that have long-term commercial significance for mineral extraction and that are not already characterized by urban growth.
- 3.6.2 Designate mineral resource lands based on the following:
- geological, environmental and economic factors;
  - surrounding land uses, zoning and parcel size; and,
  - the suitability of public access roads to be used as haul roads.
- 3.6.3 Ensure that mineral extraction and processing operations minimize the mitigate any significant adverse impacts on water, fish, wildlife and nearby land uses.
- 3.6.4 Ensure that the use of adjacent lands will not interfere with the continued use of designated Mineral Resources lands for the extraction of minerals in the accustomed manner and in accordance with best management practices.
- 3.6.5 Establish notification standards whereby developments on lands in the vicinity of designated mineral resource lands are given notice that they are locating in or adjacent to a potential mining area.
- 3.6.6 The Surface Mining Overlay shall not be designated within Rural (R) zones except to allow the expansion of an existing mining site.
- 3.6.7 Surface mining other than Columbia River dredging shall not occur within any 100-year floodplain except for projects with an approved Habitat Conversation Plan.

### Urban Reserve Lands

**Goal: To identify a limited set of lands outside of but adjacent to urban growth areas that will be first priority lands for inclusion as needed urbanizable lands in subsequent UGA expansions.**



### 3.7 Policies

- 3.7.1 If designated, Urban Reserve areas shall abut established urban growth areas in all cases.
- 3.7.2 Those areas with an Urban Reserve Comprehensive Plan overlay designation shall have a residential density of one dwelling unit per 10 and 20 acres.
- 3.7.3 Urban reserve areas shall be based on the following:
- the efficiency with which the proposed reserve can be provided with urban services in the future;
  - the unique land needs of specific urban activities assess from a regional perspective;
  - the provision of green spaces between communities;
  - the efficiencies with which the proposed reserve can be urbanized;
  - the proximity of jobs and housing to each other;
  - the balance of growth opportunities throughout the region so that costs and benefits can be shared;
  - the impact on the regional transportation system; and,
  - the protection of designated agricultural and forest resource lands from nearby urbanization.
- 3.7.4 All divisions of land in the urban reserve area shall be subject to the land division review process and result in parcels of 10 acres or more in size.
- 3.7.5 Urban reserve lands shall be the first priority lands for inclusion in urban growth boundaries.
- 3.7.6 Prior to the inclusion of the urban reserve area in urban growth areas, the county will:
- work with cities to prepare and adopt general transportation, sewer and drainage system plans for the urban reserve area which identify areas with the urban reserve area appropriate for siting of public facilities; and,
  - work with cities, special districts and school districts to prepare and adopt plans for siting of public facilities and schools.

#### Rural Industrial Land Bank

**GOAL: Support the creation of a rural industrial land bank consistent with the growth management act to provide a master planned location for living wage jobs and industries supporting rural communities in an environmentally sensitive manner.**

### 3.8 Policies

- 3.8.1 Designate a rural industrial land bank that is compatible with surrounding land uses and that creates long term value for both the community and the industrial users.
- 3.8.2 Develop rural major industrial developments within the designated rural industrial land bank that promotes sustainable development by minimizing our environmental impacts, protecting natural resources, and reducing waste.

- 3.8.3 Anticipate changing market and industrial needs and maintain the flexibility required for a variety of light industrial uses within the rural industrial land bank.
- 3.8.4 Ensure rural major industrial development within the rural industrial land bank respects and preserves critical areas functions and values, and develops a stormwater solution that mimics the natural hydrology of the site while developing buffers both internally and externally. Incorporate low impact development strategies.
- 3.8.5 Ensure infrastructure requirements are met to maximize the land value. Coordinate infrastructure analysis and planning with public and private agencies so that their long term planning can anticipate the future light industrial development within the rural industrial land bank.
- 3.8.6 Develop a roadway and site infrastructure backbone within the rural industrial land bank that allows for phased development based on the market needs. Accommodate rail access.
- 3.8.7 Promote a level of predictability for future light industrial developers and the County through the flexibility of standards and consolidated reviews.