



City of Connell

EASTERN  
WASHINGTON'S  
HARVESTLAND

## PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

Connell City Hall  
104 E. Adams St.  
Monday, September 22, 2025  
5:30 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

Robert Misener, Jerry Sackmann, Ray Minor, Jack Brandt

3. CONSENT CALENDAR

Minutes from the August 18, 2025 Meeting of Planning Commission

4. ORDER OF BUSINESS

Review and discussion of:

- Parks and Open Space Element of Comprehensive Plan
- Natural Environment Element of Comprehensive Plan

5. OTHER

Next Planning Commission Meeting: Tentatively Set for October 27, 2025

6. ADJOURN

*The public is welcome and encouraged to attend this meeting. The City of Connell wishes to provide reasonable access to all public meeting for individuals with disabilities. Please contact the City Clerk at least three business days prior to the meeting for accommodations to be arranged.*

**CITY OF CONNELL, WASHINGTON  
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**August 18, 2025**

The Regular meeting of the Connell Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Misener at 5:30 pm in Connell City Hall.

**ROLL CALL**

**Commission Members:**

- Robert Misener
- Jerry Sackmann
- Ray Minor
- Jack Brandt

**Staff Members Present:**

- City Administrator Cathleen Koch
- AHBL Planning Consultant Nicole Stickney
- Public Works Director Hallie Tuck

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Minor** moved to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2025 Planning Commission meeting. **Commissioner Sackmann** seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**BUSINESS**

***Open Record Hearing – Proposed Amendments to Flood Hazard Regulations (CMC Chapter 15.08)***

**Chair Misener** opened the hearing at 5:31 pm. There were no audience members present.

**Nicole Stickney** of AHBL presented the recommended floodplain regulation amendments. She explained that Jason Radtke of the Washington State Department of Ecology conducted a Community Assistance Visit (CAV) to ensure compliance with applicable FEMA regulations. Red-lined changes were included for Planning Commission to consider.

**Chair Misener** closed the hearing at 5:33 pm.

**Commissioner Minor** moved to adopt the findings and conclusions contained in the staff report and recommended the City Council adopt the proposed changes to CMC Chapter 15.08. **Commissioner Sackman** seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

***Review of Franklin County’s Countywide Planning Policies and Connell’s Growth Targets***

**Nicole Stickney** explained that Franklin County has to work with all cities in the county on the countywide planning policies, which includes the Urban Growth Area (UGA). Franklin County’s policies will be incorporated into the City of Connell’s Comprehensive Plan.

She pointed out that Connell's projected growth is considered moderate, as well as conservative, in terms of jobs and housing development when looking at a 20-year timeframe. There was discussion regarding policy III (promotion of contiguous and orderly development and the provision of urban services to such development) and how it would apply to Cemetery Road. The biggest change in the countywide planning policies was in regards to state mandates for affordable housing to ensure that it is not excluded in zoning codes. The last item Ms. Stickney noted was that policy #52 recognizes Franklin County may eventually lose the tax base needed to operate essential services.

***Review Draft of the Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan***

**Ms. Stickney** talked about portions of the comprehensive plan that would be coming forward in the next year, including the Introduction Chapter that contains facts about Connell. A survey will be going out to ask the community, commission, and council for input. Discussion continued about other details such as the wildfire threats, transportation, alleys and the esquatzel. Other chapters will be discussed at future meetings.

**NEXT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for Monday, September 22, 2025 at 5:30 pm.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

There being no further business before the Connell Planning Commission, Chair Misener adjourned the meeting at 6:48 pm.

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Chair Robert Misener

ATTEST:

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City Clerk Marissa Ortiz

# PROJECT MEMO



**TO:** Cathleen Koch  
**FROM:** Nicole Stickney  
Tri-Cities - (509) 380-5883  
**DATE:** September 16, 2025  
**PROJECT NO.:** 2230973.30  
**PROJECT NAME:** City of Connell; Comprehensive Plan  
Periodic Update  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed Edits and Changes to the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element

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We have prepared a draft Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element of the City of Connell Comprehensive Plan, for review by the Planning Commission. The document is dated September 17, 2025.

We can present our work product at the Planning Commission's meeting this month, seeking the Commission's review of this document and specifically requesting input as to the Goals and Policies.

### Summary of changes to the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element:

- *Throughout:* Updated dates, facts, and statistics based on new information, including new data sources and updated City documents
- *Added detail:* In order to enhance the element and be resourceful, we added a lot of information and discussion from the City's Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan (approved by Council in early 2020) including feedback collected from the public about the Parks System. We also added information previously prepared by our firm about the City's Pool.
- We listed out recent city accomplishments (such as adding a dog park to Striker park and upgrades to the Community Center).
- We have added information about future planned park development at Oasis II.

### Proposed changes to Open Space Goals and Policies:

We have suggested some "wordsmithing" and grammatical improvements. All proposed changes are shown with underline/ ~~strikeout~~.

We have proposed two new "Open space" policies, listed as items OS-1.3 and OS-1.4. These two policies are fairly aspirational in nature: "Manage environmentally sensitive lands for long-term ecosystem health and biodiversity of natural systems, while maintaining community accessibility" and "Support efforts to provide education and public awareness regarding the benefit of open spaces to biodiversity, stormwater management, and climate hazard mitigation" but can serve the city well in the future if grant funding or other opportunities arise relating to these themes.

### Proposed changes to Park and Recreation Goals and Policies:

We have suggested some "wordsmithing" and grammatical improvements. All proposed changes are shown with underline/ ~~strikeout~~.

Goal PR-1 pertains to the desire to have parks distributed throughout the city which are accessible. We have added to policy PR 1.2 the phrase "maintain facilities that offer both passive and active recreation such as sports fields, play structures, and picnic tables or benches" to emphasize the varied needs of different park users.

Next, we have proposed four new policies under Goal PR-2. These policies relate to the themes of safety, environmental stewardship, and the cost-saving partnership that has occurred with Coyote Ridge Correction Center residents over the years.

Finally, Goal PR-3 is focused on recreation programming. We have proposed three new policies relating to needs and community priorities, as identified during the Parks Plan update effort, via the community survey results.



**Additional notes:**

1. Table 4 is shown with "TBD" for the numerical values, more analysis needs to be done relating to growth and future development. Likewise, the narrative on the following page also includes "placeholder" information and calculations need to be performed.
2. Text in yellow is a placeholder from previous documents. We will continue to work with City staff to update the proposed projects list, for further input by the Planning Commission at a future meeting.

NS/ns

c: Wayne Carlson, AHBL  
City of Connell Planning Commission

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This Element describes how parks are developed and maintained in Connell and sets the foundation for the future of the city's park system by cataloging existing parks and identifying both current and anticipated needs.

Parks, green spaces, and recreational amenities play a vital role in enhancing the city's livability. Often seen as counterparts to residential, commercial, and industrial areas, these public assets are typically city-owned and serve the broader community. Varied recreational spaces and opportunities are a year-round need, shared by residents of all ages and abilities.



The State's Growth Management Act requires the City to encourage the retention of open space and the development of recreational opportunities. The long-range city policy is to provide a variety of local recreational facilities for the city's residents as funds become available.

The City requires that new development provide its own recreational space consistent with the Level of Service (LOS) of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents<sup>1</sup>. This means that developers must dedicate parkland to the city as a part of projects which result in population growth, such as but not limited to division of land through the platting process. In other cases, particularly where development is not associated with subdivisions such as infill development, short plats, or multi-family buildings, impact fees may be imposed.



<sup>1</sup> Does not include residents who are institutionalized persons at the Coyote Ridge Corrections Facility



The city's most recent Capital Improvement Plan (financial plan) for parkland development and improvements is included on the final page of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, and covers the six-year period from 2020 through 2026.

## OPEN SPACE

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the City to encourage the retention of open space and the development of recreational opportunities.

Open space areas and corridors are valuable to the community because they separate incompatible land uses; provide corridors in urban areas; protect stream and water courses; provide refuge for wildlife; provide linkage between schools, parks, and major areas of public activity; buffer major roadways; provide aesthetic relief from developed areas; and preserve the natural character of the area.

There are currently no formally designated open spaces in the City, although there are many undeveloped parcels owned by the City of Connell that, because of circumstances or location, are not suited for many uses. A future assessment of these parcels could result in designated open space. This does not mean that there is no "Open Space" in the city; to the contrary, there are many undeveloped lands and places that serve as functional open spaces, such as the Esquatel Coulee that traverses the town.

## PARKS SYSTEM

The City currently features six developed City parks (organized into two categories: *neighborhood park* and *community park*), together with a bike path, on City land comprising over 20 acres.

Parks which are **neighborhood parks** have a service area of a reasonable walking distance less than or equal to 1 mile, while the service area for a **community park** includes all land within the city limits.

The majority of the City's residents are able to easily access and enjoy parks with a number of activities available. **Figure 1** is a map of the City's parks and the Community Bike Path, which is followed by a list of the City's parks with a bit of history and a description of the amenities.





The park system includes:

*Clark Street Park<sup>2</sup>*

Located at the intersection of East Clark Street and North Chelan, this is a very popular spot for many activities, such as birthday parties and lunch breaks. The park features a large soccer field with goal and ball return net, a picnic area, half-court basketball, a playground and swings, and public restrooms.



*Heritage Park*

This park is situated in the original Town Plat from the early 1900s. Found at the corner of W. Adams Street and N. 2nd Avenue, Heritage Park (formerly known as Old Town Park) was Connell’s first community park. As such, it was the site of many city functions over the years and is still heavily used. This beautiful, shaded park is currently the home of the Connell Heritage Museum, and features public restrooms, a half-court basketball, a volleyball court, swings, and a playground.

*Pioneer Park<sup>3</sup>*

Located at 341 East Birch, this park offers alternative access areas from East Fir and East Date Streets. Originally built in the 1960s, this park is the most active gathering place for the City.

Park facilities include the Pioneer Park Pavilion, a nine-hole Disk Golf course, a playground, a basketball court, baseball diamonds, a skateboard park, a large grassy open area, and several picnic shelters.



The Pioneer Park Swimming Pool is open during the summer which includes water slides, an L-shaped lap pool, a wading pool (featuring zero-depth entry), locker rooms, a lifeguard and ticketing building with mechanical pump and chemical storage. In 2025 the pool was open six days a week for Open Swim and Lap Swim (and was closed Sundays). Swim Team practice was held at the pool and Swim Lessons were offered in the mornings on Mondays,

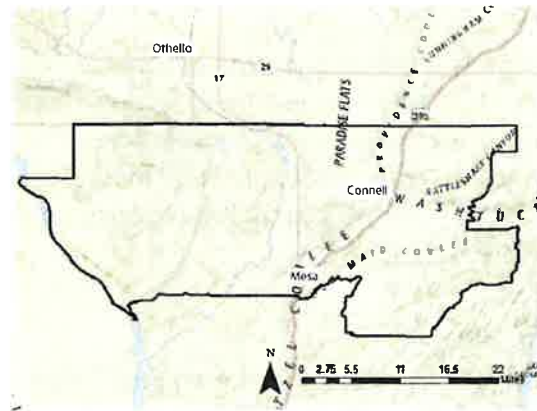
<sup>2</sup> The City of Connell received RCO funds for Clark Street Park under project 92-335 (Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – Local Parks Category) and must be maintained under the Long-Term Grant Responsibilities requirements of RCO.

<sup>3</sup> The City of Connell received RCO funds for Pioneer Park under project #77-024 (Land and Water Conservation Fund) and #78-057 (State Bonds). RCO funds were also used for the Connell Swimming Pool under project #97-103 (Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – Local Parks Category) and RCO funds were used for the Pioneer Park Athletic Fields under Project # 04-1355 (Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – Local Parks Category). These projects must be maintained under the Long-Term Grant Responsibilities requirements of RCO.



Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays and Adult Water Aerobics classes were held on Monday and Thursday evenings.

The service area for the Pioneer Park Swimming Pool is very large; it is the only public pool within Census Tract No. 208 (Franklin County) which spans 454.5 square miles, including the outlying communities of Mesa, Eltopia and Basin City, with approximately 10,000 people.



The skate park is a featured amenity at Pioneer Park, found at 341 E. Birch Street. Many parents and more than 30 youth came to council meetings and special advisory meetings to supply input into the facility design. It has been well-utilized, with people coming from all over the region to enjoy the facility.

#### *Striker Park*

Located on the west end of West Fir Street, this neighborhood park offers a playground, a basketball court, volleyball court, public restrooms, numerous shade trees, and a multi-purpose open area. The primary use of Striker Park is the baseball field. The city established a dog park area in 2022 with separate areas cordoned off for small dogs and for larger dogs.

The improvement was made following the public engagement and input opportunities that were conducted in 2020 when the city's Parks Plan was updated. Feedback from City of Connell staff and citizens indicated that Striker Park was underutilized and could better serve the community as a place designated for dogs, with appropriate fencing and ground surfacing.

#### *Columbia Park*

Located at the intersection of West Fir and First Avenue, this small neighborhood park features swings, half-court basketball, and playground equipment.

#### *Future Park Development*

There is land designated by the current developer of the "Oasis II" development which is planned to be dedicated to the city and developed as a Neighborhood Park in the future, as build-out occurs.



**Table 1: Connell Parks at a glance**

PARK	SIZE	CONDITION	AMENITIES
<b>Clark Street Park</b> 320 E Clark St. <i>Neighborhood Park</i>	1.67-Acre	Generally good condition, with the exception of the soccer pitch.	
<b>Heritage Park</b> N 3rd & W. Adams St <i>Neighborhood Park</i>	1.42-Acre	Good condition overall, but not enough seating or pavilions.	
<b>Pioneer Park</b> 411 E Birch St. <i>Community Park</i>	12.5-Acres	The largest park in Connell. Many features have been recently renovated or upgraded. Some pool renovations were completed in 2024.	
<b>Striker Park</b> 745 W. Fir Street <i>Neighborhood Park</i>	3.67-Acres	Good condition overall, with a newly added off-leash dog area. Might be under-utilized.	
<b>Columbia Park</b> 720 S First Ave. <i>Neighborhood Park</i>	0.52-Acre	A neighborhood park with shade trees and play equipment. Good condition overall.	
<b>Oasis Village Park</b>	1.33 Acres	<i>This is a planned/ future neighborhood park</i>	

**KEY:**

- SOCCER FIELD
- PLAYGROUND
- BASKETBALL COURT
- BATH-ROOMS
- PICNIC TABLES
- VOLLEYBALL NET
- SWIMMING POOL
- DISC GOLF COURSE
- BASEBALL FIELD
- SKATE PARK
- DOG PARK

**Athletics Fields**

The North Franklin School District and the City of Connell established a cooperative agreement (interlocal) for recreation and sports facilities in 2002 for the Athletic Fields Project, where the District and City entered into an agreement to share in the construction, maintenance, and operation costs of the project. The agreement is still in place and has not been changed.



*Community Bike Path- Public Artwork Sculptures*

A community bike path runs parallel to US Highway 395 and is almost one mile in length. The bike path features public artwork sculptures financed by State funding associated with prison expansion (one-half of one percent of sales tax). The funding provided the opportunity for artwork by world-renowned artists to be installed in the community.



*Parks Leadership*

A Park and Recreation Advisory Board (the “Board”) advises the Connell City Council on matters related to parks and recreation. Created in 1957, the board had three members appointed by the Mayor. The Board’s initial function was to control and supervise parks in Connell, develop rules and regulations, plan for adequate public parks, and advise the Planning Commission concerning park requirements. The Board now boasts five members and convenes when needed, advising the City Council on rules and regulations for operation of the City’s programs, considering requests for conduct and sponsorship of activities, and making recommendations.

The City Council refers major proposals for parks to the Board, such as construction, reconstruction, improvements, and land acquisition and new programs. For highly significant activities, the Board makes recommendations to the Planning Commission, which then prepares a formal recommendation to the City Council.

*Accomplishments*

Many proposed projects and objectives listed in the city’s previous Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan (2020) have been completed:

FORMER OBJECTIVE	STATUS
Create a Dog Park, potentially located within Striker Park	<b>Completed</b> in 2022 and located in Striker Park
Complete the following projects at the Community Center: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking lot replacement (scheduled to begin in 2020)</li> <li>• Interior renovations</li> <li>• Exterior renovations</li> <li>• Roof replacement</li> <li>• Consider renovations to the interior or exterior of the building to maximize use of the interior spaces</li> </ul>	The following was <b>completed</b> : new HVAC (2021), Parking lot (2021), Roof replacement (2022) All other project elements are still needed.



<p>Develop a neighborhood park near the Oasis neighborhood.</p>	<p><b>Pending</b> - In 2022, when a preliminary plat (subdivision application) was proposed, the City exercised its authority under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) to require the developer to provide park lands and specific improvements as mitigation for the growth that will result from the development. At project completion, the park at "Oasis II" will be 0.75-acres, feature play space, picnic tables, and a walking path.</p>
<p>Create a Visitor Center at Columbia and Fir</p>	<p><b>Completed</b> in 2021; known as the "North Franklin Visitor Center" the project included the renovation of an existing building</p>

In addition, the tennis courts at S. Dayton Ave were removed and the lot can be prepared for other uses.

## Level of Service

### National Benchmarks

The City owns 21.11-acres of park space and enjoys a joint-use agreement with the North Franklin School District (NFSD), which brings the total amount of parkland and recreational spaces (the school ballfields and playgrounds) available to the public to approximately 89.66 acres.

Based on the 3,228 local residents, this means there are approximately 27.78 acres of parkland (including NFSD play fields), per 1,000 people in the City.<sup>4</sup>

In the 2025 Agency Performance Review, the National Recreation and Parks Association describes that the national average for the Level of Service (LOS) for parks is 10.2 acres per 1,000 persons.<sup>5</sup> The same organization has been recommending between 6.25 and 10.5 acres per 1,000 residents since 1934, adjusting their standards in subsequent publications.<sup>6</sup> When including the NFSD playgrounds / fields in calculations, the City is exceeding the national standard.

### Local Adopted Standards

The City's parks have traditionally been categorized as either a neighborhood park or a community park for the purpose of Level of Service standards. The distinction between the two categories relates to the distance people travel to reach a park and also the area served by a particular park.

<sup>4</sup> The calculation does not include institutionalized persons at the Coyote Ridge Corrections Facility.

<sup>5</sup> [NRPA 2025 Performance Review](#)

<sup>6</sup> ["Planning for Parks, Recreation and Open Space in your Community, 2005"](#)



A neighborhood park is typically smaller than a community park and includes those parks with a service area of a reasonable walking distance less than or equal to 1 mile.

A community park typically has a service area that includes all land within the city limits (and may also attract patrons from outside the city).

**Table 2** lists the minimum LOS for each type of park in Connell.

*Table 2. Level of Service Standards*

PARK TYPE	MINIMUM LOS STANDARD
Neighborhood Park	3 acres per 1,000 residents
Community Park	6 acres per 1,000 residents

**Table 3** identifies the amount of current parkland according to park type, together with the number of acres “per 1,000 residents” based on the current estimated population. Table 3 calculations do not include NFSD parklands.

*Table 3: Recreational Land Needs*

PARK TYPE	TOTAL ACREAGE	ACRES PER 1,000 PEOPLE <sup>A</sup>	MEETING SERVICE STANDARDS?
Neighborhood Park*	8.61	2.67	No, there is a deficit
Community Park	12.5	3.87	No, there is a deficit

<sup>A</sup>Based on the 2024 OFM Population Estimate of 3,228 residents – not in group quarters

\*Even if the planned park at Oasis II were completed now, the addition of 0.75 acres of park space would still mean that the city would fall short of the standard (at 2.89 acres of Neighborhood Parks per 1,000 people)

### Discussion

As previously shown, the City is exceeding the national LOS standard of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, when the NFSD recreation land is factored into the calculations. Accordingly, the City could also show the local service standards are met sufficiently when including the NFSD lands. However, when only calculating city-owned (and controlled) parkland space, we find there is a deficit.

**Table 4** illustrates the amount of land that needs to be acquired in the preceding twenty-year period, in order to meet LOS standards for the projected 2046 population.

*Table 4: Recreational Land Needs- by the Year 2046 for Projected Population*

Connell is projected to increase by 470 more residents between 2020 Census population and 2046.



PARK TYPE	TOTAL ACERAGE	ACRES PER 1,000 PEOPLE	CURRENT PARKLAND SURPLUS/ NEED ACRES BASED ON SERVICE STANDARDS
Neighborhood Park	TBD	TBD	TBD
Community Park	TBD	TBD	TBD

Connell is expected to continue to grow at a rate equal to or slightly above that of the surrounding County. Because of this growth, Connell will need to explore ways to add to parklands in order to meet the adopted level of service standards for community parks.

### *Park Locations and Served Population*

Figure 2 shows a depiction of residences and their proximity to recreational facilities. The locations of residences are based on County Assessor data, and “Single-Family Residential” includes those properties with a primary improvement of a single-family residential structure, a manufactured home, or a duplex. “Multi-Family Residential” includes properties with a primary improvement of a “low rise multiple” structure.

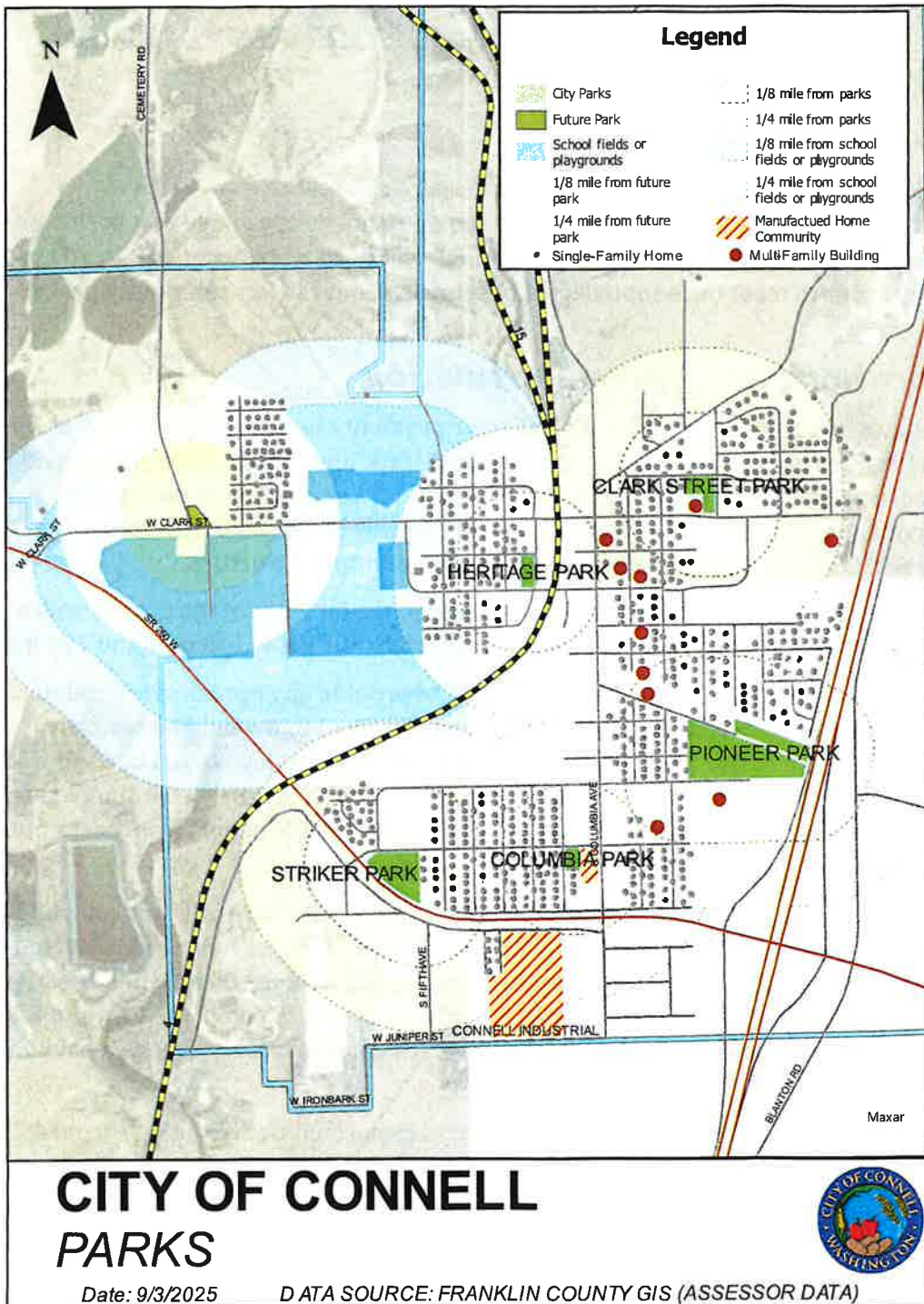
Next, the figure also depicts the existing and planned parks facilities in the City, as well as the school ballfields and playgrounds and their respective buffers of 1/8 mile and 1/4 mile.

The buffers are “as the crow flies” and are intended to provide an approximate depiction of a short or slightly longer walking distance (or biking distance) that would be typically considered acceptable to use for accessing parks. However, street layout and barriers such as railroad crossings would most certainly influence reasonable access. Accordingly, this analysis does not account for the walking or accessible distance of people from parks but rather illustrates the distance of households from parks.

The portion of single-family households within 1/8 mile of a City park is XX percent, and the portion of those households within 1/4 mile is XX percent. As for households located within multi-family structures, all (100 percent) are located within 1/4-mile buffer from a City park. The RV Park (Coyote Run RV Park) is found at the south end of the City and is not within 1/4 mile of any recreational facility. However, the property does feature a pavilion and a recreation room.

In conclusion, there is generally good access to recreational facilities in the City, from a locational perspective, and the addition of the park at Oasis II will address an existing spatial gap.





## Recreation Programming

As a small city, Connell lacks a full-scale, formal recreation program. Nonetheless, the City remains committed to providing swim lesson opportunities each summer at the community pool for the recreational value to the community, and also as a public health and safety initiative.

The City rents out the Pioneer Park Pavilion and the Community Center (described in the Capital Facilities Element of this Plan) for various public and private events or parties.

The North Franklin School District, District 5 Little League, and Junior Eagles are some of the local and regional organizations that organize youth sports ranging from cheer to flag football in the community. Games and practices are held primarily in NFSD facilities in Connell and other regional locations.

The Connell Library, which is a part of the Mid-Columbia Library System, also serves an important role in community life with activity offerings that are open to the public. Summer and winter reading programs, Lego clubs, and preschool story time are some examples.

Pool activities include lifeguard training, water safety classes, swimming lessons, swim team, and free swim passes for participants of the Mid-Columbia Library reading program. Offering these recreational programs promotes fun, safety and health.

## Funding Mechanisms

The State Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) is an important funding source for the acquisition and/or development of city parks.

Continued collaboration with the North Franklin School District and partnerships with non-profit corporations could be used to address current unmet recreation needs in the community. Additionally, donation of former railroad rights-of-way for additional trail development could be beneficial.

In the past, crews from the Coyote Ridge Corrections Center have helped construct parks, build a library, work on the swimming pool, renovate a church, and built fixtures in City Hall. The agreement between the Department of Correction and the City benefits the community, providing significant savings to taxpayers; lowering costs for parks projects and maintenance.



## Park Guidelines

The Board established the following policies as a guide for current and future planning and development of parks, recreation, and open space in the City of Connell:



1. Parks and Recreation planning shall promote the health, safety, and well-being of residents in order to enhance the quality of life.
2. Recreational opportunities shall include a wide range of activities to encompass all residents' interests and capabilities.
3. The City will comply with all Federal and State environmental laws and consider the environmental and aesthetic qualities of Connell as new development occurs in the City.
4. The City may consider utilizing its ability through the Growth Management Act to impose impact fees and/or mitigation of said fees on developers and new development.
5. The Board shall work closely with the Planning Commission, City Council, and staff to prepare a budget for maintenance/operation and capital outlay, with funds set aside for park purposes.
6. Monies collected specifically for the Parks and Recreation Reserve Account will be used to upgrade and replace parks equipment, buildings, structures, and landscaping. Monies may also be used to develop recreation activities at City parks.
7. The Board shall prepare regulations encompassing rules for parks, such as scheduling, fees, and signage – listing rules of each park and guidelines for development and care of facilities. The goal shall be to maintain and preserve parks and equipment and protect investment, and to seek cooperation among community groups via education, stewardship, and maintenance for care and keeping of parks.
8. The Board will encourage all citizens to participate in current and future park projects and activities and make their concerns known to the Board.
9. The Board will develop effective partnerships with community groups and institutions, including but not limited to NFSD, Boy Scouts, Little League, Swim Team, Eagle's Nest, Library, Downtown Development, Palouse Junction, and others, including park maintenance by Coyote Ridge.
10. In consultation with the City Council, the Board shall seek, identify, recommend and promote a dedicated funding source and create a project list for operation and maintenance of parks.



## Project Development

Community facilities projects identified during the next 10 years are listed in **Table X**.

**Table X - Community Facilities Capital Improvement Plan**

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COST
VIDEO SURVEILLANCE EQUIPMENT – PARKS	\$20,000
SWIMMING POOL	To be evaluated in 2019
PIONEER BASKETBALL COURT PLAYER BENCHES (2)	\$1,500
PIONEER BASEBALL FIELD PORTABLE BENCHES (4)	\$6,000
MINI PAVILION – CLARK PARK	\$7,000
PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT	\$16,000 per unit as needed
COMMUNITY CENTER – HEATING/ COOLING SYSTEM	\$50,000
COMMUNITY CENTER – NEW ROOF	\$20,000
COMMUNITY CENTER – PARKING LOT RECONSTRUCTION	\$250,000

This all needs to be updated. I think a “splash pad” was also meant to be on this list. There is a writeup about a “splash pad” need in the PROS plan.

Do we want to keep on the list:

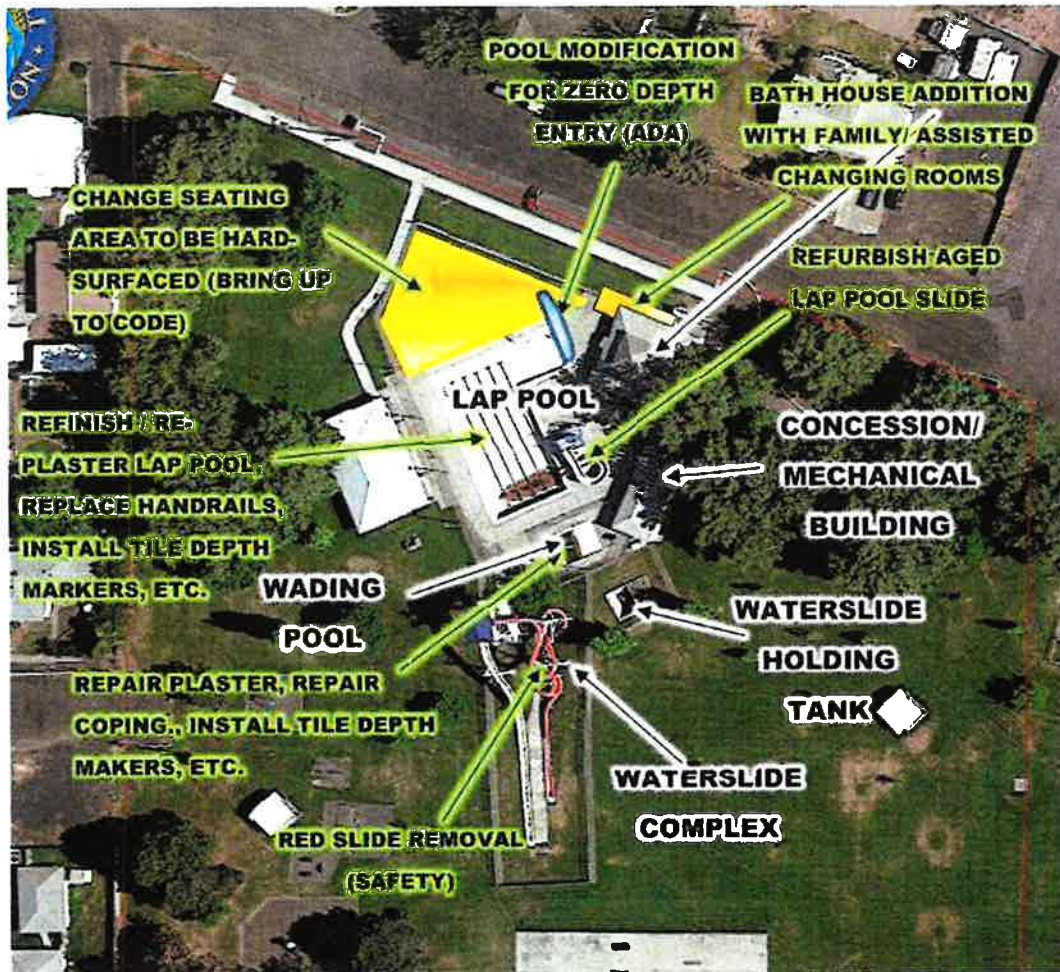
- Upgrade restroom fixtures and structures at all City parks
- Replace shelters and add cement pads to picnic shelters at all City parks
- Purchase additional equipment and/or improve existing equipment for the skate park
- Provide a drinking fountain for visitors of the skate park and provide access to a spigot or water source for cleaning equipment and surfaces
- Pavilion upgrades
- Build picnic shelters in Clark Park, Heritage Park and Columbia Park
- Outdoor fitness park

Here is the wish list of what the city wanted to do with RCO grant money in 2020:

- **Renovate existing lap pool**
  - **Provide ADA pool entry**



- Refurbish aged lap pool slide
- Repair plaster and coping, install tile depth markers, etc.
- Refinish and re-plaster the lap pool
- Replace handrails
- Upgrade lighting to LED
- Construct a new family-friendly bathroom
- Renovate existing bathhouse (with family / assisted changing rooms)
- Convert grass seating area to concrete (hard surface for accessibility)
- Upgrade mechanical building and light fixtures



## Current and Future Community Needs

Connell is the largest community in Franklin County north of Pasco. As a result, and because of the variety of excellent recreation facilities available in the community, City recreational facilities, especially the swimming pool, ballfields, and soccer fields, are extremely well used by Connell residents, and also by residents of Mesa, Kahlotus, Basin City, and residents of unincorporated Franklin County.

The North Franklin School District encompasses all of Connell, covers an area west to the Columbia River, east to the Snake River, south to Eltopia, and north beyond the County line (including parts of Adams County). Connell is considered the primary meeting place for children and young adults who live in the north portions of Franklin County, as well as in Connell, Basin City, Mesa, and Kahlotus.

The median age in Connell was estimated by the US Census to be 38.8 years (for the year 2023), which has increased from the median age of 32.5 years recorded by the 2010 census. Connell still has a lower median age than the State overall (37.3 years).

It appears that Connell is an aging community. Nonetheless, the city still has a high percentage of households with children (42 percent). It is important to keep in mind the needs of different population cohorts, and future demographic demands in planning for the future of Connell's parks and recreation facilities and programs.

A question included in a previous public survey (conducted in 2020, prior to the start of the COVID pandemic) asked how the City should focus its recreation and programming efforts and funding. The responses, taken as a whole, indicated that more focus should be given to youth and teen programs, and less focus on senior, adult, and other programs.

The public survey respondents indicated that, although the focus of activities may need to shift, the number of Connell's park facilities is generally meeting the needs of the community.

When asked in the public survey how the City should focus its park facilities efforts and funding, over 40 percent of respondents stated that the most focus should be placed on upgrading, maintaining, and adding amenities to existing parks (such as shelters and grills). Between 49 and 55 percent of respondents said that the least amount of focus should be placed on acquiring more land for parks and developing new parks. City-sponsored activities include Swim Team, T-Ball, Little League, basketball, track and field, Disc Golf, and soccer. These events attract participants from Connell and the surrounding area, extending to Othello and Tri-Cities, and are coached by volunteers. The public survey responses and comments confirm that Swim Team and other pool activities are in demand; 65 percent of survey participants indicate they participate in aquatics and pool activities including Open



Swim, Swim Team, and swim lessons. One respondent commented, “The pool is the most important part of our parks, it needs to be replaced so please do what you have to do to keep it open for our students.” Leisure activities such as walking, hiking, and relaxing were the second most common uses of the City’s parks, according to the responses to the public survey. Comments were made in the survey and at the public workshop regarding the existing bike/pedestrian trail.

Suggestions for improving the Trail include making it longer and providing amenities along the Trail for breaks and conversations; like benches and water fountains.

Next, according to comments received at the Board’s public workshop on January 7, 2020, the public would like to see the following improvements:

- More seating at Heritage Park;
- An additional large pavilion and a smaller pavilion placed in Heritage Park;
- Security lighting at the Skate Park within Pioneer Park;
- Potential addition of Junior soccer goals to Striker Park;
- The addition of an off-leash dog area (Dog Park), possibly in Striker Park;
- Consideration of moving one volleyball court from Striker Park (where it is not used often) to Columbia Park (which needs more activities);
- An extension of the bike path to the north and from east to west to downtown;
- Consideration of the addition of seating and water fountains to the bike path; and
- The addition of an outdoor fitness park.

### *Accessibility and ADA Requirements*

The Public Survey asked participants how accessible they find Connell’s Parks and Recreation facilities in general, and 65 percent responded that they are very accessible while 28 percent chose “somewhat accessible” as their answer. There is a desire in Connell for increased Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility at each park.

A study of the existing conditions at Connell Pioneer Park Swimming Pool was conducted by ALSC Architects and presented to the City of Connell in September of 2019 (Appendix A) revealing that there may not be an accessible path from the signed ADA parking stalls in the main parking area to the Swimming Pool facility, and the pool entry should be made accessible. The City applied for a grant to increase accessibility but was not awarded funding during the grant cycle.

### *Operation and Maintenance*

The City is proud of all the parks and recreation opportunities available to its residents and visitors and also recognizes that such amenities come at a cost. **Table 5** provides an



overview of the maintenance activities required for the City’s parks and recreation facilities.

*Table 5: Required Maintenance Schedule*

<b>MAINTENANCE ACTIVITY</b>	<b>TIMING (YEARLY)</b>	<b>ESTIMATED TIME TO COMPLETE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES NEEDED</b>
<b>Open restrooms for season</b>	April 1 <sup>st</sup>	1 day	1
<b>Close restrooms for season</b>	End of October	1 day	1
<b>Mow park grasses</b>	April-October	Once per week, per park	1
<b>Blow out irrigation water lines</b>	November	3 days	2
<b>Restroom checks</b>	April-October	Once per week, per park	1 (1 hour)
<b>Spray weeds</b>	May and July	4 days each month	1
<b>Fertilize grass</b>	As needed	1 day	1
<b>Open pool</b>	Last week of May	4 days	3
<b>Check pool water</b>	June-August	Every day-30 minute	1
<b>Close pool</b>	End of August	3 days	1

The Public Survey<sup>7</sup> asked the question, “How would you rate the quality and maintenance of the City’s park facilities?” A small number of respondents, approximately 10 percent, said that park facilities need major improvements; over 48 percent said they believe the parks are somewhat well maintained; and 21.7 percent said they see the parks as very well maintained. Many of the City’s parks are in need of renovations and upgrades; however, there is a need to reduce the costs of maintenance and upkeep of the park system in order to ensure its continued presence.

Some ideas for decreased costs include:

- Replacement of grass under play structures with a material that is safe for children and does not require mowing and frequent maintenance,
- Consideration of xeriscaping rather than lawn in appropriate locations to reduce the need for mowing and irrigation, and
- Gradual replacement of some trees in parks, with more appropriate tree species selected for each site in order to reduce issues with roots and extensive pruning.

<sup>7</sup> See “Parks, Recreation, Open Space Plan” adopted in 2020 under Resolution # 2020-02; Appendix B



## OPEN SPACE GOALS AND POLICIES

Open space areas and corridors should separate incompatible land uses; provide corridors in urban areas; protect stream and water courses; provide refuge for wildlife; provide linkage between schools, parks, and major areas of public activity; and buffer major roadways, as well as provide aesthetic relief from developed areas and preserve the natural character of the area.

**Goal OS-1** *Provide for the preservation of open space and encourage aesthetic development and preservation of natural areas, historical resources, open space, and structural facilities.*

OS-1.1 Enhance the environmental and aesthetic qualities of the city.

OS-1.2 Protect the views and features that are unique to the Connell area.

Strategy:

A. Provide buffers for ~~sensitive~~ environmentally critical areas.

OS-1.3 Manage environmentally sensitive lands for long-term ecosystem health and biodiversity of natural systems, while maintaining community accessibility.

OS-1.4 Support efforts to provide education and public awareness regarding the benefit of open spaces to biodiversity, stormwater management, and climate hazard mitigation.

## PARK AND RECREATION GOALS AND POLICIES

**Goal PR-1** *Provide a variety of well distributed, accessible parks, trails and recreational facilities.*

PR-1.1 Plan new parks and develop parks and recreation programs based on current and anticipated community needs and population projections.

PR-1.2 Provide a range of programs and facilities for year-round recreational choices and maintain facilities that offer both passive and active recreation such as sports fields, play structures, and picnic tables or benches.

PR-1.3 Develop a system of trails and paths that connect local and regional destinations.

Strategies:

A. Provide trails for walking, bicycling, hiking and jogging to encourage active lifestyles and community health.



B. Establish trails that are harmonious and compatible with existing natural features, for example, trails may be developed along certain habitat corridors.

- PR-1.4 Promote and encourage the addition of amenities through volunteer projects and initiatives.
- PR-1.5 Work to increase compliance with ADA accessibility standards.
- PR-1.6 Continue to create and maintain partnerships with the North Franklin School District, community organizations and Franklin County on sports and general recreation activities and amenities.
- PR-1.7 Work with developers to identify land appropriate for the development parks and recreation facilities, and potential enhancement and amenities that can offset a portion of the land dedication requirement in order to meet and maintain established level of service standards for new development while preventing future burdens on the city for maintenance needs.
- PR-1.8 Establish a Parks Impact Fee.
- PR-1.9 Provide parks, trails, and recreational facilities that serve a diverse public; design (or improve) the facilities in order to meet community recreational values and needs.

**Goal PR-2** *Acquire and enhance parks and parkland.*

- PR-2.1 Pursue dedication of private land to facilitate access to, or continuity of, the park system.
- PR-2.2 Seek state funding sources to develop parks and recreational amenities.
- PR-2.3 Plan and identify fund reserves for future facility renovations, upgrades, and rehabilitation / replacement.
- PR-2.4 Take measures to enhance safety, the perception of safety, and potentially minimize crime.
- PR-2.5 Promote the use of native and naturalized plantings, minimize the use of irrigation, herbicides, fertilizers, and pesticides (particularly near critical areas) and control invasive species.
- PR-2.6 Plant appropriate trees in City parks through the development and implementation of a tree plan, including a list of recommended trees.
- PR-2.7 Continue to partner with the Coyote Ridge Corrections facility in Connell to utilize inmate labor at a low cost to the city, providing significant savings to the taxpayers by lowering costs.
- PR-2.8 Identify methods and approaches to provide historical and interpretive information about the cultural and history of Connell and increase public awareness of unique local attributes.
- PR-2.9 Provide shaded areas in high-usage parks.



**Goal PR-3**

*Continue to provide recreation programs to meet community expectations, values, and needs.*

PR-3.1

Provide programs and services by meeting the diverse needs of city residents as funding permits.



# PROJECT MEMO



**TO:** Cathleen Koch  
**FROM:** Nicole Stickney  
Tri-Cities - (509) 380-5883  
**DATE:** September 17, 2025  
**PROJECT NO.:** 2230973.30  
**PROJECT NAME:** City of Connell; Comprehensive Plan  
Periodic Update  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed Edits and Changes to the Natural Environment Element

In order to meet current requirements of the Growth Management Act, we have prepared a draft Natural Environment Element of the City of Connell Comprehensive Plan, for review by the Planning Commission. The document is dated September 17, 2025.

We can present our work product at the Planning Commission's meeting this month, seeking the Commission's review of this document and specifically requesting input as to the Goals and Policies.

### Summary of proposed changes to Natural Environment Element:

- *Throughout:* Updated dates, facts, and statistics based on new information, including new data sources and updated City documents (throughout)
- *Background section:* We added information about the Watershed Resources Inventory Area (WRIA) pertaining to groundwater levels. We also added a brief description of local climatic conditions and we added a discussion about the new Climate Change and Resiliency requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA).
- *Critical Areas:* We added a description of "Wellhead protection areas," expanded upon the information about floodplains and floodplain regulations, and added a brief section about Shrubsteppe mapping and landscapes
- *Wildfires:* We added a new section about wildfires (this topic and measures to reduce and mitigate the risk to lives and property posed by wildfires is required, per RCW 36.70A.070(1) as amended in 2023).
- *Environmental Justice:* This part has not yet been prepared, but we have indicated there is a "placeholder" for a new section. There are many requirements of the HB 1181 passed by the legislature in 2023 pertaining to environmental justice that will need to be incorporated into this Element and several others.

### Proposed changes to Natural Environment Goals and Policies:

We have suggested some "wordsmithing" and grammatical improvements. All proposed changes are shown with underline/ ~~strikeout~~ formatting.

For Policy NE-2.1 we propose adding "Shrubsteppe habitat" to the list of important natural systems.

For the policies under Goal NE-3, we suggest changing the term "Sensitive area" to "Critical Area" to be consistent with the term usage in other parts of the plan (the two terms are synonymous, but most cities now use the term "critical area"). We have also proposed two new policies, NE-3.4 pertaining to native landscaping use and NE-3.5 about removal of invasive species.

Under Goal NE-4 which states "minimize impact costs of development to property owners while also protecting critical areas" we have proposed a new policy NE-4.2 "encourage new developments to locate outside of geological and flood hazard areas."

Goal NE-5 addresses the protection of groundwater; we propose adding a new policy NE-5.7 "protect existing natural areas which provide storage of stormwater during flood events" in order to better meet the requirement for provisions to protect groundwater quality / quantity per RCW 36.70A.070(1) as amended in 2023.

Next, we have drafted Goal NE-6 and a series of policies under it that will address the equity and environmental justice themes that are now required by the GMA.



Finally, we have drafted proposed Goal NE-7 regarding wildfires with a policy to implement the wildland urban interface code. While the state has not yet required cities to adopt the wildland urban interface code, we think a few have already done so as early adopters and it is anticipated this will become a state mandate in the near future.

**Additional notes:**

1. We will need to incorporate additional language about open space corridors and green spaces “including lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails and connection of critical areas and urban and community forests” per RCW 36.70A.070(1) as amended in 2023; we plan to include this language in the Land Use Element. Likewise, somewhere in the plan we will need to add some discussion about environmental health disparities.
2. “Shoreline Management” is a goal of the Growth Management Act and the Shoreline Management Act of Washington state is a key component of environmental planning / regulation. However, Connell is not subject to the SMA as none of the water features in the city meet the criteria.
3. Many cities are required to address organic materials management facilities (per HB 1799 of 2022) but the requirement does not apply to Connell due to population size.

NS/ns

c: Wayne Carlson, AHBL  
City of Connell Planning Commission

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# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ELEMENT

## BACKGROUND

The City of Connell is located at the junction of the Providence, Esquatzel, and Washtucna Coulees. The coulees are channels cut by Pleistocene cataclysmic floodwaters that washed across the region periodically throughout the Pleistocene Epoch. The average land surface elevation is about 850 feet above sea level.

The Esquatzel Coulee is an aquifer recharge area, a wildlife habitat area, contains wetlands, and is mapped as a frequently flooded area. The Esquatzel Coulee (together with the Washtucna Coulee) comprises a high-quality riparian corridor and major nesting sites for ferruginous hawks.



These important features of the natural environment are worthy of protection and maintaining a high-quality natural environment contributes greatly to the experience of the community, who value a high quality of life. Maintaining a quality natural environment in the City depends on coordinated actions between government, the private sector, and individuals.

This Element supplies information and discussion about the unique natural features in Connell, and also provides guidance for reducing the risks to people, property, and the environment posed by geological and flood hazard areas. Mitigation is a key concept – both from the perspective of minimizing or counterbalancing potential negative impacts on the environment by development, and also in the way we seek to reduce environmental risks onto the built environment.

### *Hydrogeology and Landforms*

Connell is located within the Esquatzel-Coulee Watershed Resources Inventory Area (WRIA) 36, the area that drains to the Esquatzel Coulee; the WRIA 35 boundaries stretch into areas of Grant and Adams Counties. Connell is also situated within a portion of the “Odessa Subarea” where groundwater levels are declining rapidly in many places within



the mapped subarea<sup>1</sup>. The Connell Urban Growth Area lies in the region known as the Pasco Basin, which is situated within the Columbia Plateau. The Columbia Plateau is underlain by a series of basalt flows and sedimentary interbeds commonly referred to as the Columbia River Basalt Group. These Miocene-age flows erupted between 6 and 17 million years ago. The flows have formed a generally horizontal, layered sequence, which have an estimated maximum thickness of 14,000 feet at the plateau's low point near Pasco.

In order of decreasing age, the upper three major formations of the Columbia River Basalt Group of relevance to this plan include the Grande Ronde, Wanapum, and Saddle Mountain Basalts. These three formations form the Yakima Basalt Subgroup. The Vantage sedimentary interbed is typically found between the Wanapum and Grande Ronde Basalts, and the Mabton sedimentary interbed generally separates the Saddle Mountain and the Wanapum Basalts. The Vantage interbed is thin to missing in the vicinity of Connell and the top of the Grande Ronde Basalt is at an elevation of approximately 250 to 300 feet above sea level.

The Wanapum formation is reportedly up to 600 feet thick in the vicinity and contains as many as ten basalt flows. Sedimentary interbeds are rare and generally only a few feet thick when present. The Saddle Mountain basalt formation also averages about 600 feet in thickness. Sedimentary interbeds are common and often 50 feet in thickness or more.



In the Columbia River Basalt, flow tops and bottoms, which are potentially augmented by sediment interbeds, combine to form significant water-bearing zones. Each of Connell's municipal wells utilizes aquifers located in the Wanapum and/or Grande Ronde Basalts.

It is assumed that ground water in the unconfined aquifer moves generally in a southern direction, down the Esquatzel Coulee into the Pasco Basin. Flow directions in potential confined or semi-confined basalt aquifers are also generally toward the south.

Connell lies upon alluvium and flows of the Wanapum Basalt. Soils overlaying basalt on the uplands surrounding the city vary in consistency from sand to clayey silt and caliche.

There are no major surface water bodies in the immediate vicinity of the city and the unconsolidated materials in the area generally appear to be unsaturated.

<sup>1</sup> WAC 173-128A and WAC 173-130A address the Odessa Subarea; See Ecology publications such as WRIA 36 Esquatzel Coulee Watershed Water Availability (publication # 20-11-036) for more information, available at <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2011036.pdf>



## Climate Conditions

Connell has a semi-arid, cold desert climate, according to the Köppen climate classification system, meaning the precipitation threshold is higher than that of an arid climate, and the average annual temperature is less than 64.4 degrees. Average cold temperatures in December (the coldest month) are about 32 degrees, while the average temperatures in July and August are around 70 degrees, with an average high of 86. Average precipitation is around 8.83 inches. Connell lies in zone 7A in the USDA hardiness metric.<sup>2</sup>

## Regulatory Framework

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires municipalities to protect the environment and enhance Washington State's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water. Cities are required to regulate and protect fish and wildlife habitats, wetlands, steep slopes, and provide opportunities for access to natural resource lands and water. In accordance with GMA requirements, the City regularly updates the Critical Areas Ordinance. Through that process, the City amends the development regulations surrounding wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas (CARAs), geologically hazardous areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, and frequently flooded areas.

Since the last Periodic Update to this plan was prepared, the state has changed requirements for cities to include: guidance around provisions for protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater used for public water supplies, considerations for environmental justice<sup>3</sup> and unequal health outcomes, and wildfire preparedness<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) launched a Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resilience Initiative (WSRRI) in response to wildfires in 2020. The initiative has resulted in a collaborative, focused effort to conserve and restore shrubsteppe landscapes in Eastern Washington, which is in abundance in and around Connell.

Finally, in 2023, HB 1181 was passed by the legislature mandating that Comprehensive Plans include a new Climate Change Element. A goal was added to the Growth Management Act:

***Climate change and resiliency*** - Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies under RCW 36.70A.210 and chapter 47.80 RCW adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled; prepare for climate impact scenarios; foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards; protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice.

<sup>2</sup> USDA adjusted its hardiness zones in 2023. Accessed: <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov>

<sup>3</sup> SB 5141, passed in 2021

<sup>4</sup> HB 1578 (2023), PLUS new \*\*HB 1522 (2025) for utilities.



As a result, Connell is required to perform this work as part of the Comprehensive Plan update in the 2026 update cycle. Due to its size, Connell must address “resiliency” topics in its Climate Element, but the City is not required to have a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction sub-element (RCW 36.70A.070(9)).

## CRITICAL AREAS

Critical areas are environmentally sensitive zones that require protection under state law. The regulations and planning efforts aimed at safeguarding these areas are not meant to prevent reasonable use of public or private land. Instead, they ensure that any development in or near these areas is carried out in a way that respects and preserves the community’s natural resources.

As mandated by the GMA, the City’s Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), codified at Connell Municipal Code Chapter 15.12, promotes the maintenance, enhancement, and preservation of critical areas and environmentally sensitive natural systems by avoiding or minimizing adverse impacts from construction and development. Under the state GMA, local governments are required to use the Best Available Science (BAS) when reviewing and revising policies and regulations for critical areas per WAC 365-196-485.

### *Wetlands*

Wetlands are those areas, designated in accordance with the approved federal wetland delineation manual and applicable regional supplements (WAC 173-22-035), that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. There is a natural 1.6-acre wetland classified as a Freshwater Forested/ Shrub wetland in the western part of town near the junction of State Route 260 and the BNSF railroad tracks. Other wetlands areas are found associated with the Esquatzel Coulee, as well as those areas associated with irrigation and water reservoirs, such as the Lamb-Weston Dam.

### *Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs)*

Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs) are those areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used to supply drinking water from the infiltration of precipitation and runoff. In the case of Connell, the aquifer is deep under basalt in the Yakima Basalt subgroup, and wells are used to access groundwater for drinking purposes. Preventing contamination is necessary, as the quality and quantity of groundwater in an aquifer is inextricably linked to its recharge areas. Some aquifers may also have critical recharging effects on streams, lakes, and wetlands that provide critical fish and wildlife habitat.

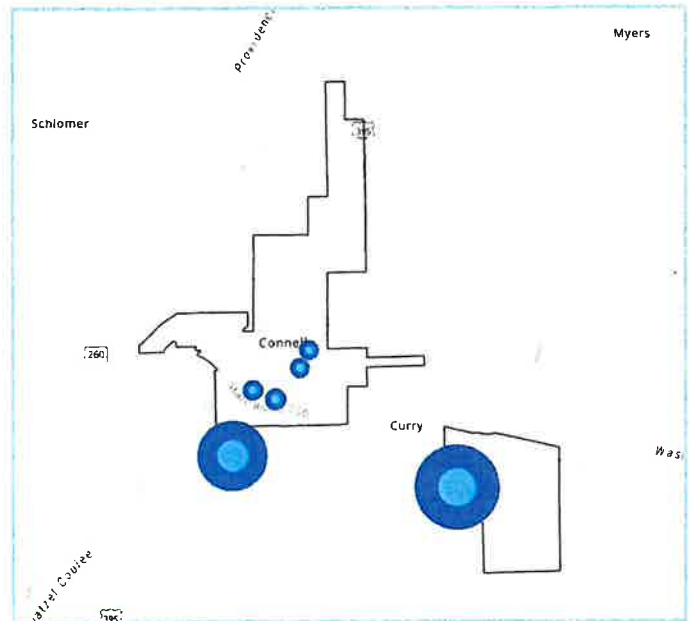


In Connell, the Esquatzel and Washtunca Coulees are designated as CARAs<sup>5</sup>.

**Wellhead Protection Area**

A Wellhead Protection Area is established by the State Department of Health and is the portion of a zone of contribution for a well, wellfield or spring which is used for municipal drinking water. These are typically defined by the boundaries of the 1-,5-, and 10-year groundwater time of travel, or boundaries established using alternate criteria approved by the Department of Health in those settings where groundwater time of travel is not a reasonable delineation criterion, in accordance with WAC 246-290-135. In Connell, these areas intersect with the Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas, and there are additional regulations to protect these areas in Connell Municipal Code Titles 13 (Water and Sewerage), 14 (Buildings and Construction, and 17 (Zoning).

A wellhead protection overlay zone that covers the one-year management area for all the city wells is included in the Connell zoning code. The overlay zone provides vigilance when granting building permits and dealing with zoning issues. Zoning changes should restrict or prohibit the presence of potential contaminant sources such as those listed in Wellhead Protection Plan portion of the City’s Water System Plan.



*Figure 1: One- and Five -year Wellhead Protection Areas*

Source: Washington Department of Health

**Geologically Hazardous Areas**

Areas susceptible to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events are classified as Geologically Hazardous. They can pose a threat to the health and safety of people and a threat to structures when incompatible development is sited in areas of significant hazard.

Connell has some areas of moderate to high seismic liquefaction risk, generally along the Esquatzel Coulee. Liquefaction susceptibility is higher in areas where water-saturated sand soil loses strength during earthquake shaking<sup>6</sup> and results in sand and silt taking on the characteristics of a liquid. There are also some steep slopes along the Esquatzel Coulee,

<sup>5</sup> Water System Plan, City of Connell, 2016. Prepared by Anderson Perry and Associates, Inc.

<sup>6</sup> <https://dnr.wa.gov/washington-geological-survey/geologic-hazards-and-environment/geologic-hazard-maps>



which could result in erosion or sliding depending on the soil conditions and water levels. Many geological hazards can be reduced or mitigated by engineering or modified construction practices, so that risks to public health and safety are minimized, the regulations for which are codified in Connell's municipal code in Title 15.

### *Frequently Flooded Areas*

There are two types of regulatory flood areas in the city of Connell:

- Floodways which are defined as the channel of a stream and adjacent land areas which are required to carry and discharge the flood water or flood flows of any river or stream associated with a regulatory flood.
- Flood Fringe which is defined as that land area which is outside a stream's floodway, but is subject to periodic inundation due to flooding, associated with a regulatory flood. We can think of the flood fringe as a buffer area for the floodways, in which development could be allowed, but would need to meet certain conditions.

Frequently flooded areas (or "floodplain areas") are identified on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), produced by FEMA, upon which floodplain insurance is based. FEMA has mapped floodplain areas that generally run North-South through the City of Connell. From the northern corporation limits, areas of "100-year" and "500-year" mapped floodplains follow around the Esquatzel Coulee and extend further east across the BNSF Right of Way, almost to Davis Way. The floodplain area narrows at Clark Street, and then generally follow along N Second Avenue, with the 500 year floodplain extending to North Almira Avenue.

The City of Connell participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) that makes federally-backed flood insurance available for all structures, whether or not they are located within the floodplain. Chapter 15.08 of the Connell Municipal Code "Flood Hazard Regulations" governs development and uses in frequently flooded areas.

### *Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas*

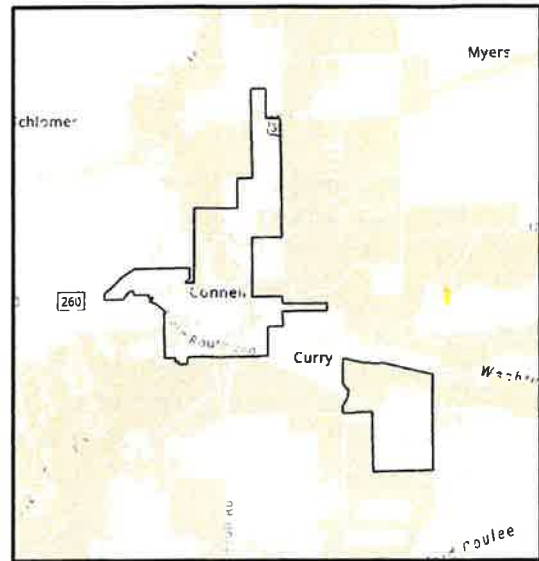
Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas include areas that are identified as being of critical importance in the maintenance and preservation of fish, wildlife, and natural vegetation. In Connell the mapped areas are outside the city limits and are associated with the coulees; they are the Esquatzel coulee habitat area to the southwest, the Washtucna coulee habitat area to the southeast and a secondary area of the Washtucna coulee habitat area north and slightly east. See **Figure XX**.

Habitats and species of local importance have been identified by the City in the Critical Areas Ordinance.



***Shrubsteppe***

Shrubsteppe landscapes cover much of Eastern Washington, Franklin County and areas in and around Connell. They are extremely diverse and fragile landscapes characterized by rolling, grassy plains, featuring an overstory of sagebrush and other woody shrubs. Animal species include the Ferruginous hawk and the burrowing owl. Once covering large swaths of the western United States, only 20 percent of this unique landscape remains. Currently, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife considers the Shrubsteppe a “priority habitat” and recommends conservation.



*Figure 2: Shrubsteppe Habitat, WDFW, 2022*

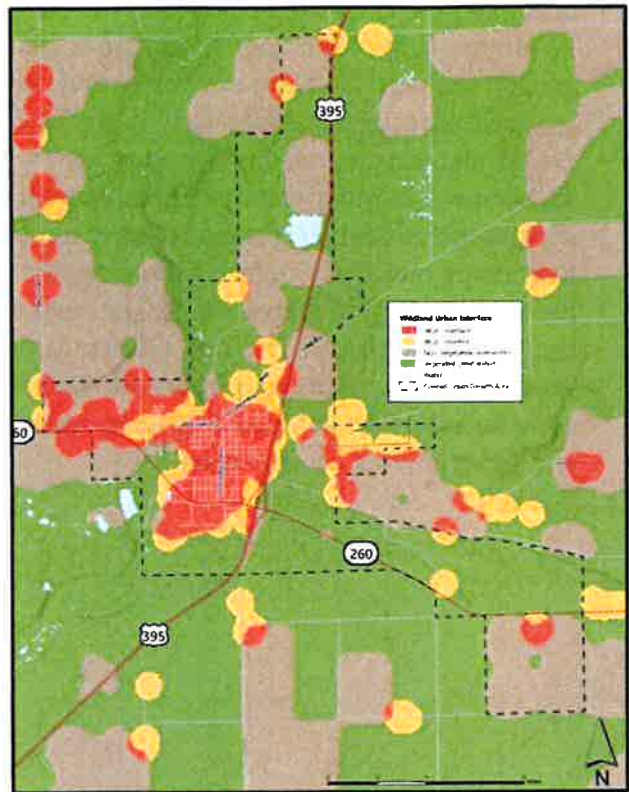


## WILDFIRES

Connell is surrounded by sparsely populated rural areas, agricultural lands, and open space. As populations move further into open space, the chances of risk to lives and property increases. The areas in which population and previously undisturbed lands interact is referred to as the Wildland-Urban Interface. This is the location where the possible threat of wildfires on structures is increased due to the proximity of fire-prone vegetation near the structures. The map at **Figure 3** depicts the areas in and around Connell<sup>7</sup>.

Climate conditions, weather patterns, topography, hydrology, and development conditions all contribute to the set of conditions that can increase potential threat of catastrophic events. The International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) exists to provide a set of land use and related land development regulations and could be adopted by the city wholly or in part to support wildfire mitigation. Connell's arid climate, and frequent hot and dry winds create ideal wildland fire conditions, resulting in frequent Red Flag warnings from the National Weather Service. Wildfires can destroy homes, agricultural lands, and sensitive open space environments like Shrubsteppe.

Despite hot and dry weather conditions in the summer months, Franklin County experiences relatively few wildfires, as classified by the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This is likely because of the nature of the shrubsteppe environment, which tends to not be forested, and the prevalence of irrigated agriculture lands. According to data from DNR, between 2008 and August of 2020 approximately 12,591 acres burned due to wildfires, about 1 percent of Franklin counties landmass<sup>8</sup>. However, the majority of wildfires over one-acre (85%) occur in eastern Washington, which can cause poor air



*Figure 3: Wildland Urban Interface Map of Connell, 2024*

<sup>7</sup> The Washington Wildland Urban Interface was mapped for 2019 by the WA State Department of Natural Resources – Wildfire & Forest Health Divisions under consultation from the USFS Rocky Mtn Research Station. This map represents modeling data and may not reflect actual or current conditions. This map is a geographic representation based on available information and does not represent survey data. For reference only; no warranty is made concerning the accuracy, currency or completeness of data depicted on this map. Consult DNR for additional information and for revisions/ amendments.

<sup>8</sup> <https://geo.wa.gov/datasets/wadnr::dnr-fire-statistics-2008-present/about>



quality<sup>9</sup> due to smoke during the fire season (typically July through September). Statewide DNR data for wildfires over one acre indicate that approximately 80 percent whose cause could be determined had human causes, such as debris burning, fireworks or small combustion engines, such as those on lawnmowers.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

This is a placeholder. We should work on this section with the Climate grant money if possible. There will be goals and policies related to this topic.

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT GOALS AND POLICIES

### Goal NE-1

~~Preserve the environment and~~ Protect the City's environmentally critical areas.

#### NE-1.1

Periodically update the critical areas regulations consistent with best available science and state guidance.

#### NE-1.2

Regulate development in frequently flooded areas and maintain flood hazard regulations in cooperation with the Department of Ecology in order to maintain compliance with FEMA standards and retain participation in the Nation Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

#### Strategy:

- A. Coordinate with the Army Corps of Engineers, US Bureau of Reclamation and BNSF to ensure maintenance of the flood ways.

#### NE-1.1

Protect priority habitats and species in conservation and wetland areas. ~~wildlife habitats in designated open space and wetlands areas.~~

#### Strategies:

- A. Base the protection methodology on the size, location, and vulnerability of the wildlife habitat and species.
- B. Acquire and protect key significant wildlife habitat areas.
- C. Ensure the preservation of a variety of habitat types, sizes and locations.

<sup>9</sup> <https://dnr.wa.gov/wildfire-resources/smoke-resources>



- NE-1.2 Preserve natural drainage ways and critical aquifer recharge areas.  
Strategies:  
 A. Promote public awareness of the natural drainage ways, their role in the area, and the importance of maintaining natural drainage systems.  
 B. Establish standards for the retention, recharge, and treatment of stormwater runoff channeled from impervious surfaces.  
~~C. Subsequent development within the flood hazard areas of the city should be regulated in accordance with the National Flood Insurance Program.~~
- NE-1.3 Regulate development in geologically hazardous areas.  
Strategy:  
 A. Require engineering, architectural, or geo-technical investigations and certifications for approval of development permits or authorizations to proceed in hazardous areas.
- NE-1.4 Prevent isolation of communities of endangered, threatened or sensitive species.  
Strategy:  
 A. Encourage the preservation or protection of habitat corridors.
- NE-1.5 Preserve and protect the Esquatzel Coulee.
- Goal NE-2** *Enhance the environment where possible.*
- NE-2.1 Provide incentives for the restoration of degraded wetlands, watercourses, shrubsteppe habitat, and other important natural systems.
- NE-2.2 Encourage the development and maintenance of non-regulated wetland areas.
- Goal NE-3** *Mitigate adverse environmental impacts.*
- NE-3.1 Mitigate all adverse impacts to wetlands.
- NE-3.2 Require the mitigation of impacts from development adjacent to critical sensitive areas.
- NE-3.3 Require a dust control plan be submitted to the city whenever ground cover is disturbed in a development.
- NE-3.4 Encourage the retention of native vegetation, and the incorporation of native landscaping in developed areas.
- NE-3.5 Encourage the removal of invasive species and the replanting of native vegetation.



- Goal NE-4** *Minimize impact costs of development to property owners while also protecting critical areas.*
- NE-4.1 Use density bonuses, and other means of compensation as appropriate for the protection of critical areas.
- NE-4.2 Encourage new development to locate outside of geological and flood hazard areas.
- Goal NE-5** *Protect the quality and quantity of the ground water used for public supplies ~~by means of the following~~ policies.*
- NE-5.1 Cooperate with agencies charged with the regulations of commercial and industrial chemicals, such as Ecology, to prevent chemical contamination of ground waters.
- NE-5.2 Preclude contamination of ground water from failing septic systems by continuing to require that all occupied buildings be connected to the sanitary sewer system.
- NE-5.3 Develop a spill response plan to ~~cope with~~ manage potential chemical or hazardous spills associated with the railroad, highways and local industry.
- NE-5.4 Prepare an overall storm water plan to guide public and private investment in storm water facilities.
- NE-5.5 Maximize on-site retention in new developments, to increase the chances of runoff recharging the ground water in a manner similar to that which occurs in nature.
- NE-5.6 Encourage efficient use of water and Low Impact Development (LID) design.
- NE-5.7 Protect existing natural areas which provide storage of stormwater during flood events.
- Goal NE-6** *Promote equity and environmental justice in environmental planning and land use decisions, and balance economic viability with critical areas protection.*
- NE-6.1 Support programs to ensure that all residents, regardless of race, social, or economic status, have clean air, clean water, and other elements of a healthy environment and prioritize the reduction of impacts to vulnerable populations that have been disproportionately affected. Address impacts to vulnerable populations and areas that have been or will be disproportionately affected by climate change and land use decisions, and balance economic viability with critical areas protection.
- NE-6.2 Support and incentivize environmental stewardship on private and public lands



**Goal NE-7**

**Support Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) hazard mitigation planning and implement adopted mitigation initiatives.**

**NE-7.1**

Reduce and mitigate the risk to lives and property posed by wildfires through implementation of portions of the wildland urban interface code.

**NE-7.2**

Require proposed developments to provide sufficient and adequate access for firefighting equipment.

## SOURCES

NOAA- National Centers for Environmental Information. Accessed September 2, 2025 at <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/us-climate-normals/#dataset=normals-monthly&timeframe=30&location=WA&station=USC00451690>

Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resilience Initiative (WSRRI) Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. Accessed August 14, 2025 at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/habitat-recovery/shrubsteppe#wsrri>

Photo Credit: Sage thrasher by Rod Gilbert (WDFW)

