

Skagit County Planning and Development Services Public Notice & Invitation to Comment:

CONCERNING THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE GUEMES ISLAND FERRY SCHEDULE

Proponent & Lead Agency: Skagit County, Washington

Description of Proposal - Location: Skagit County proposes to adopt a modified and permanent schedule of ferry service between Anacortes and Guemes Island, Washington. In 2006, the Board of County Commissioners adopted a resolution temporarily adding five (5) runs in the evening hours on Mondays through Thursdays. The County is conducting an environmental review of proposed permanent ferry service alternatives. These range from a “No Action Alternative” where service would revert to the schedule in effect prior to the temporary expansion in 2006, to a “Current Expanded Service Alternative” reflecting the temporary schedule that is currently in effect.

The ferry operates between the Anacortes ferry terminal (located at the north end of I Street within the City of Anacortes) and the Guemes Island ferry dock (located at the southern terminus of Guemes Island Road in unincorporated Skagit County).

The purpose of the review process described in this notice is to assess the potential environmental impacts of changes to the scheduled ferry service. As described in greater detail below, Skagit County will be preparing an “Environmental Assessment Report” of the potential impacts that the proposed schedule changes could have upon the Guemes Island environment.

Because the proposal addresses existing and future demand for ferry service and is not expected to impact future land use decisions or result in a need for additional terminal space, dock improvements, parking, or road improvements, it has been determined to be a non-project action under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

Invitation to Submit Comments & Attend Community Workshop: Interested citizens, agencies and affected tribes are encouraged to comment on the proposal and the scope of issues to be reviewed within the Environmental Assessment Report. You may comment on the proposed alternatives, the scope of issues to be assessed, and any other concerns you may have regarding the proposal.

The deadline for submitting written comments on the scope of the Environmental Assessment is **4:30 p.m., Friday, February 15, 2008**. Please send written comments to the address of the SEPA Responsible Official, listed below. Written comments may be mailed, faxed, or submitted in person. *E-mail correspondence will not be accepted.*

Skagit County will conduct a Community Workshop from **2:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 10, 2008, in the Guemes Island Community Hall, 7549 Guemes Island**

Road, Guemes Island, WA 98221. The workshop will provide an opportunity to ask questions concerning the potential scope and timing of the environmental review, and to submit comments regarding the environmental issues to be analyzed.

Environmental Assessment and Pending Threshold Determination: As noted above, Skagit County is preparing an Environmental Assessment of the potential impacts that permanent changes to Guemes Island ferry service might have on the rate and timing of island growth, as well as the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts such growth may or may not have on groundwater quantity and quality. The County is conducting this analysis in advance of the issuance of a SEPA Threshold Determination under WAC 197-11-315, in order to help inform the decision of the County's SEPA Responsible Official.

This Environmental Assessment is intended to augment the process and analysis required under SEPA through the early identification, and mitigation, of any probable significant adverse impacts that may be occasioned by the proposal.

Alternatives Proposed for Consideration: Three (3) alternatives will be reviewed in the Environmental Assessment:

1. No Action (Pre-Existing Plans and Regulations). Under this option, ferry service would not be expanded, and instead, the level of service would revert back to the level provided prior to the passage of County Resolution Number R20060184.
2. Reduced Expanded Service. This alternative anticipates that approximately four scheduled crossings would be added over the no action alternative, during evening hours on Mondays through Thursdays, concluding by 9:00 p.m.
3. Current Expanded Service. This alternative anticipates that approximately five scheduled ferry crossings would be added over the no action alternative, during evening hours on Mondays through Thursdays, concluding by 10:00 p.m.

The assessment will also consider the impacts of a schedule that varies by season, with more runs and later service times being offered during summer months and fewer runs and an earlier conclusion to service in winter months.

Pending SEPA Threshold Determination: Skagit County has determined that this proposal requires environmental review and issuance of a threshold determination under RCW 43.21C and WAC 197-11-315 (i.e., the State Environmental Policy Act). Prior to issuance of the threshold determination, the County will prepare an Environmental Assessment Report to supplement the SEPA record. The Environmental Assessment Report is intended to identify potential environmental impacts associated with the proposal, as well as facilitating public participation in identifying which ferry service plan alternative, or combination of alternatives, should be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.

Background information for this Notice is provided in an "Environmental Assessment – Background & Overview" document that is available for public review at the following locations:

- Skagit County Website: www.skagitcounty.net
- Skagit County Planning and Development Services Department, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA, 8:00 – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- Guemes Island Library, 7549 Guemes Island Road, Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.; Saturdays, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

The purpose of the Environmental Assessment – Background & Overview is to describe the proposed action, the alternatives for environmental review, and the specific environmental concerns to be addressed in the Report. Following the community workshop meeting and public comment period outlined in this notice, Skagit County will determine the appropriate scope of environmental review, and begin preparation of the Environmental Assessment Report. Thereafter, the Skagit County Responsible Official will consider the completed Environmental Assessment Report, as well as public and agency comments, prior to issuing a SEPA threshold determination.

Elements of the Environment to be Examined: Skagit County has identified the following areas for review and discussion in the Environmental Assessment.

- I. Natural Environment:
 1. Water
 - a. Surface water runoff/absorption;
 - b. Groundwater movement/quantity/quality; and
 - c. Water supplies.
- II. Built Environment:
 1. Land Use:
 - a. Population and development patterns; and
 - b. Housing;
 2. Transportation:
 - a. Ferry transportation system; and
 - b. Movement/circulation of people or goods.

Please refer to the Environmental Assessment Report – Background & Overview for additional information on the suggested approach to the analysis and issues to be considered.

Contact Person:

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SEPA Responsible Official:

Gary R. Christensen, AICP
 SEPA Responsible Official
 Skagit County Planning and Development Services Department

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