



INTRODUCTION

COUNTY-WIDE PLANNING POLICIES

The following County-Wide Planning Policies were developed and adopted by Franklin County¹ in coordination with the cities within Franklin County to establish a framework to ensure that county and city comprehensive plans are consistent with one another as required by the Growth Management Act.

I. Policies to Implement RCW 36.70A.020

1. The Comprehensive Plans of Franklin County and each of its cities therein shall be prepared and adopted with the objective to facilitate economic prosperity by accommodating growth consistent with the following:
 - A. **Urban Growth:** Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities exist or can be provided in a cost-efficient manner.
 - B. **Reduce Sprawl:** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
 - C. **Transportation:** Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that may reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled, and are based on regional priorities and coordinated with the comprehensive plans of Franklin County, the Cities of Pasco, Mesa, Connell and Kahlottus, the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments.
 - D. **Housing:** Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments of the Franklin County population and promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
 - E. **Economic Development:** Encourage economic development consistent with the adopted comprehensive plans. Promote economic opportunity for all residents of the

¹ Resolution 2025-223

- county, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the county's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.
- F. **Property Rights:** Private property rights shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
 - G. **Permits:** Applications for permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability, and through a process which provides for integrated and consolidated review.
 - H. **Natural Resource Industries:** Maintain and enhance natural resource based industries including: productive agriculture (cultivation and grazing), fisheries, and mineral industries. Encourage the conservation and improvement of productive agricultural lands and discourage incompatible uses.
 - I. **Open Space and Recreation:** Encourage the retention of useful open space and green space and enhance development of recreational opportunities, enhance critical fish and wildlife habitat, increase public access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.
 - J. **Environment:** Protect and enhance the environment and enhance the region's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water for all uses, including potable domestic requirements.
 - K. **Citizen Participation and Coordination:** Encourage the involvement of citizens and tribes in the planning process, including the participation of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, and ensure coordination between communities, tribes, and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
 - L. **Public Facilities and Services:** Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.
 - M. **Historic Preservation:** Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.
 - N. **Climate change and Resiliency.** As determined to be appropriate by each jurisdiction consistent with the Growth Management Act, County and city comprehensive plans will include policies to 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.
 - O. **Shorelines of the State.** Protect and enhance the shorelines of the state while planning for and fostering all reasonable and appropriate uses through coordinated planning efforts between the State, the County, and the cities within the County.

II. Policies to Implement RCW 36.70A.110 relating to the establishment of Urban Growth Areas

1. Each city within Franklin County is included within a designated urban growth area (UGA).
2. Designated UGAs should include an amount of undeveloped area to adequately accommodate forecasted growth and development for the next 20 years. The size of the UGA should reflect the Comprehensive Plans of each municipality which identifies the amount of land needed to accommodate community and essential public facilities, housing, commercial and industrial activities, and enough land to prevent inflation of land costs due to market fluctuations and limited land supplies. Further, the size of UGAs should consider the provision of open space, locations for parks and recreation, and protection of Critical Areas as well as natural barriers to development.
3. Designated urban growth areas should include those portions of the county already characterized by urban growth and having existing public infrastructure, public facilities and service capacities to serve existing and future growth.
4. Designated urban growth areas should include those areas that are within the recognized utility service areas of each city.
5. The size of urban growth areas will vary due to regional settings and should be adequate to promote-viable economic development strategies, promote choices in housing accommodations, and ensure adequate lands are available for associated open spaces and public purposes.
6. The County shall, in consultation with the cities, propose a population allocation for the purposes of updating Comprehensive Plan documents, which considers the most recent population distribution as provided by the published OFM intercensal population estimates. The combined population figures for each municipality and the County must total the State's population forecast for Franklin County. The allocation shall be reconsidered during the periodic review required by RCW 36.70A.130. The County, in consultation with the Cities, may review growth projections and allocations between update cycles when circumstances have changed, (for example, actual growth rates or permitting varies from the predicted patterns, or when OFM provides a new set of projections for GMA planning).
7. Population projections used for designating urban growth areas will be based upon information provided by the Office of Financial Management (OFM). Use of the "mid" series as provided by OFM shall be used for Franklin County for the 2026 update cycle. A period of twenty years is the typical planning period.
8. Municipalities should limit the extension of water and sewer service to areas within each jurisdiction's urban growth area, except where otherwise permitted by law.
9. Final development approval will continue to reside with the County for areas outside of City limits.

10. During the periodic update cycle, the County shall review its UGA, patterns of development, and densities.
11. Generally, applications for amendments or changes to the UGA may only be submitted by the County or a municipality within the County prior to the deadline established for the year's docketing process (with intervals coinciding with the required periodic update of the comprehensive plan). When a city or the county proposes to alter a UGA, it is the responsibility of the proponent to provide confirmation (through studies, reports, and adopted plans) that all of the requirements above have been met, as well as provide a land capacity analysis (guided by WAC 365-196-325), and SEPA documentation; except for net zero swaps, which must meet requirements and criteria in RCW 36.70A.130(3)(c) during the periodic update and RCW 36.70A.110(8) during an annual amendment.
12. Within Urban Growth Areas, urban uses shall be concentrated in and adjacent to existing urban services, or where they are shown on a Capital Improvement Plan.
13. The extension of a UGA into an area of Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance (or any Resource Lands) is not allowed.
14. Legal and physical availability of water must be considered when including lands into the UGAs.
15. When requesting UGA expansions, Cities shall demonstrate the ability for in-fill development to occur in existing low-density areas within the City's UGA to avoid leap-frog development patterns.
16. All policies within each jurisdiction's and Franklin County's Comprehensive Plans shall be modified to be consistent with adopted Countywide Policies.

III. Policies for promotion of contiguous and orderly development and the provision of urban services to such development [RCW 36.70A.210 (3)b]

17. Joint county/city standards shall be established for development within each individual urban growth boundary, but beyond corporate limits of cities. It is in the public interest that joint standards be developed to preclude the creation of development patterns without municipal utilities and substandard infrastructure and property division that would burden the public with unnecessary costs to correct or compromise the ability of the UGA to accommodate the municipality's 20-year population forecast. These standards should include:
 - A. Street locations, both major and secondary;
 - B. Street right-of-way widths;
 - C. Street improvement widths;
 - D. Street improvement standards;
 - E. Lots and blocks including special lot reservation system when public sewer concurrency cannot be provided;
 - F. Curbs and gutters;
 - G. Sidewalks;

- H. Road construction standards;
 - I. Cul-de-sac location and dimensions;
 - J. Storm drainage facilities, quantity, quality, and discharge locations;
 - K. Street lights, conduit, fixtures, locations;
 - L. Sewer, septic regulations, private sewer, dry sewer facilities;
 - M. Water, pipe sizes, locations, fire flows, uniform codes;
 - N. All building requirements;
 - O. Subdivision and platting requirements including density, parks and open space;
 - P. Collection and use of development impact fees as appropriate;
 - Q. Residential design standards;
 - R. Zoning standards;
18. The availability of the full range of urban governmental services will be subject to the annexation policies of the adjacent municipality.
19. The timing of utility extensions into the urban growth area should be consistent with the adopted comprehensive plan and capital facilities plan of the adjacent municipality.
20. Proposed annexations should not leave isolated "islands" of roadways or parcels left to be served by the County. Annexations should follow RCW 35.02.170 to avoid road "splitting."
21. Proposed annexations, where reasonable, should attempt to avoid splitting parcels where ownership will lie in joint jurisdiction of both the County and the City.
22. Existing water rights should be incorporated or transferred into the city's municipal rights whenever annexation takes place or when water will be supplied by the municipality in order to avoid relinquishment of water and/or lack of supply in the future.
23. The County and Cities should execute interlocal agreements to coordinate plans for and manage growth in urban growth areas. Interlocal agreements shall acknowledge and implement the Countywide Planning Policies.

IV. Policies for siting public facilities of a county-wide or state-wide nature, including transportation facilities of a statewide significance as defined in RCW 47.06.140 [RCW 36.70A.210(3)c]

24. When an appropriate issue arises, the County and Cities within, along with participation from the public, shall cooperate in a process to site essential public facilities of regional and statewide importance. The objective of the process shall be to ensure that such facilities are located so as to protect environmental quality, optimize access and usefulness to all jurisdictions, and equitably distribute economic benefits/burdens throughout the region or county.
25. No local comprehensive plan or development regulations will preclude the siting of essential public facilities, but standards may be generated to ensure that reasonable compatibility with other land uses can be achieved.

26. Essential public facilities that require urban levels of public services (e.g., public sewer) or generate urban levels of traffic and employment should be located where urban services are available consistent with the comprehensive plan.
27. Essential public facilities should not be located in Resource Lands; essential public facilities should avoid critical areas unless no other practical location exists.
28. Essential Public Facilities should be sited to allow for adequate levels of support services such as law enforcement, emergency response services, hospitals, etc. depending on the type of facility.
29. The County and Cities are encouraged to establish areas and criterion for siting of essential public facilities before proposals are submitted.

V. Policies for county-wide transportation facilities and strategies [RCW 36.70A.210(3)d]

30. Maintain active county-city participation in the Benton Franklin Council of Governments in order to facilitate city, county, and state coordination in planning regional transportation facilities and infrastructure improvements to serve essential public facilities including Port District facilities and properties.
31. Comprehensive plans shall include, where applicable, the master plans of identified major transportation facilities such as airports, railroads, major freight terminals, and public transit and policies to ensure that they are reasonably accommodated and compatible with future surrounding land uses, in order to ensure the protection of regional transportation assets.
32. Where the level of service (LOS) for a locally owned transportation facility adopted in a county or city comprehensive plan cannot be maintained as a result of proposed new development, that development shall be denied, unless transportation improvements or strategies to accommodate the impacts of development are made concurrent with the development.

VI. Policies that consider the need for affordable housing for all economic segments of the population and parameters for its distribution [RCW 36.70A.210(3)e]

33. The housing element of each comprehensive plan shall:
 - A. Address the manner and the extent that demand from all segments of the housing market will be met.
 - B. Identify sufficient capacity of land, infrastructure, and services for a healthy mix of home types, sizes, and prices with ownership opportunities for the widest possible range of incomes, including but not limited to, government assisted housing for low income families, manufactured housing, multi-family housing, migrant agricultural worker housing, group homes, foster care facilities,

emergency housing, emergency shelters, and permanent supportive housing and other supportive housing types. All segments of the housing market must be accommodated in appropriate numbers for the 20 year planning window.

34. County and city comprehensive plans should encourage regeneration of existing housing inventories with methods such as:
 - 1) Permitting accessory dwellings or the division of existing structures when adequate infrastructure exists;
 - 2) Methods of protecting the inventory of manufactured home parks to avoid displacement;
 - 3) Sponsoring housing rehabilitation programs offered by state and federal governments.
35. Consideration should be given to the provision of diversity in housing types to accommodate elderly, physically challenged, mentally impaired, and the special needs of the population, i.e. congregate care facilities.
36. Comprehensive plans shall consider the effects of public improvement development costs on housing, including impact fees. Allowance for exemption from impact fees for projects, which enhance housing for low and moderate income householders, should be considered.
37. Each community shall provide its fair share of housing affordable to low and moderate income households by promoting a balanced mix of diverse housing types.
38. Consideration should be given to implementing innovative regulatory strategies, which provide incentives for developers to provide housing affordable to low and moderate income households in order to avoid socioeconomic segregation.

VII. Policies for joint county and city planning within urban growth areas [RCW 36.70A.210(3)f]

39. City and county planning efforts will be coordinated within urban growth areas.
40. County and City Plans should be consistent in order to allow for orderly expansion within the UGAs.
41. The county and each city shall jointly develop and implement development, land division and building standards, and coordinate permit procedures for the review and permitting of new subdivisions within Urban Growth Areas.

VIII. Policies for county-wide economic development and employment [RCW 36.70A.210(3)g]

42. The comprehensive plan of the county and each city shall promote employment and economic opportunity.
43. Consideration should be given to diversification of the economic base to provide opportunities for economic growth in all communities on a county-wide basis to ensure a healthy, stable, economic base.

44. The County and all municipalities will participate in creating a County-wide economic strategy.
45. The provision of utilities and other supporting urban governmental services to commercial and industrial areas should be coordinated and assigned a high priority by utility purveyors and service providers.
46. In order to attract new industry and provide for expansion of existing industries, the County and the cities will designate land supply of sufficient size and diversity to provide a range of suitable locations for industrial and commercial development and their buffers. The designation of this land shall be established in a way that preserves natural resource based industries and critical areas.

IX. Policies for the analysis of fiscal impacts [RCW 36.70A.210(3)h]

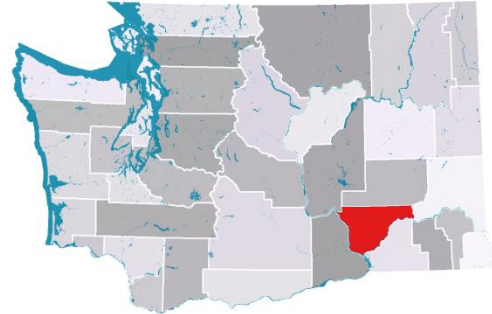
47. Construction design and placement standards for roads, intersections and streets (with provisions for storm water conveyance), sewer, water and lighting infrastructure, should be determined based upon an analysis which identifies the most appropriate public expenditure over extended periods of time. Utilities should be incorporated into such analysis.
48. If communities consider the imposition of impact fees, said fees should be established on the basis of identifiable development impacts.
49. Capital Improvement Plans and Land Use Plans shall include fiscal analyses which identify the most cost effective uses of regional and local public services.
50. Support the development of public schools in areas where utilities are present or can be extended, is financially supportable at urban densities, where the extension of public infrastructure will protect health and safety, and the school locations are consistent with the analysis recommended by WAC 365-196-425(3)(c) as existed on the date of adoption of this document.
51. It is recognized that if the Growth Management Act and these policies are implemented to their maximum extent, County government may eventually lose the tax base needed to operate essential services, including the criminal justice function and the Offices of Treasurer, Assessor, and Auditor, which serve all jurisdictions in the area. The County and cities shall coordinate on essential services as needed to address the region's needs.

X. Policies for Participation

52. A federally recognized Indian tribe may voluntarily choose to participate in the county or regional planning process and coordinate with the county and cities, as set out in RCW 36.70.040 and RCW 36.70A.110 and RCW 26.70A.210.
53. All jurisdictions will establish procedures to ensure early and continuous participation by the public and plan for and coordinate with other agencies and districts, such as ports, schools, energy providers, etc. in the development and amendment of plans and implementation programs.

INTRODUCTION

This Comprehensive Plan (Plan) for Franklin County is the long-term vision and plan for managing the county's natural and built environment. The Plan includes policy direction for community and economic development, housing, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, public services, infrastructure, and growth.



Franklin County's Location

Franklin County is located in eastern Washington, in the mid-Columbia Valley. To the west and south, the Columbia River provides the border with Benton County. Grant and Adams County are located to the north. The Snake River and its tributary, the Palouse River, create the separation from Walla Walla and Whitman counties.

Franklin County is characterized by vast amounts of farmland (approximately 73% of the County¹), much of which is irrigated using water diverted from rivers. Prior to 1945, Franklin County and the Columbia Basin as a whole, had very little farming development. The completion of the Grand Coulee Dam in 1941 and the Columbia Basin Project Act of 1943 aided in supplying irrigation, power, and flood control in the area of Franklin County, contributing to the presence of the vast amount of farmland today. Franklin County is within the South Columbia Basin Irrigation District, a special purpose district² which gained operation and maintenance responsibilities from the Bureau of Reclamation in 1968. The District has operating responsibility for facilities to serve up to 300,000 acres in Franklin County, supplied by canals from the reservoir behind Grand Coulee Dam.



As of 2022, Franklin County had approximately 751 farms with an average farm size of 781 acres³. Crops in Franklin County generate over \$700 million in revenue each year⁴. A wide variety of crops are grown within Franklin County, with some of the highest value crops including apples, potatoes, sweet corn, onions, and grapes. The county has the fourth highest market value of crops sold and the fifth highest market value of livestock, poultry, and products compared to all counties in Washington State. The highest market value of products sold within

¹ Found in Benton-Franklin Trends, with data from the USDA's agricultural census, which occurs every 5 years. Link: [USDA Census](#).

² Defined in RCW 36.96.010 and means a local government that is separate from the County and serves a limited purpose such as services and facilities for irrigation.

³ USDA's agricultural census, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/Washington/st53_2_001_001.pdf

⁴ WSU Extension, accessed at <https://extension.wsu.edu/benton-franklin/agriculture/>

the *crops* category are fruits, trees, nuts, and berries. The highest market value of products sold within the *livestock, poultry, and product* category is milk from cows. The top crop in terms of acreage in the county is forage (hay/haylage).

The climate is semi-arid, with an average rainfall of approximately seven to 12 inches per year (depending on location within the county) and approximately 7.5 days of rainfall annually. There is one major population center, the City of Pasco, which is where the vast majority of population growth in the county occurs, and the City also serves as the County Seat. The location of Franklin County within the Columbia Basin, as well as its agricultural character and climate, allows for seasonal recreational uses which attract tourism and also help to support agri-business.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

The Growth Management Act (GMA) provides a framework for growth and development throughout the state. Factors influencing approval of GMA in 1990 included uncoordinated and unplanned growth, the lack of common goals expressing the public's interest, and the degradation of the natural systems. Another principal factor was the threat from unplanned growth to health, safety, and to the high quality of life enjoyed by residents of the state.

State and County Goals and State Mandates

The GMA includes 15 Planning Goals (RCW 36.70A.020), which are mandated by the State for all fully planning counties, and adopted by Franklin County:

Table 1: State and County Planning Goals

TOPIC	GOAL
Urban Growth	Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
Reduce Sprawl	Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
Transportation	Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled and are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
Housing	Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments of the population of this state; promote a variety of residential densities and housing types encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
Economic Development	Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting

	economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.
Property Rights	Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
Permits	Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
Natural Resource Industries	Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and productive agricultural lands and discourage incompatible uses.
Open Space and Recreation	Encourage the retention of open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.
Environment	Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
Citizen Participation and Coordination	Ensure the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
Public Facilities and Services	Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.
Historic Preservation	Identify and encourage the presentation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.
Climate Change and Resiliency	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.
Shoreline Management	Prevent the inherent harm in an uncoordinated and piecemeal development of the state's shorelines.

The GMA requires that Franklin County adopt a Comprehensive Plan and further, the County must enact land development regulations that are consistent with, and implement, the Comprehensive Plan. The comprehensive plan is a policy document to guide orderly development throughout the county in coordination with its cities and consistent with surrounding jurisdictions. The plan is not a regulatory document, but guides and directs the development of “development regulations” as codified in the Franklin County Code, such as zoning, subdivision regulations, and the administration of said regulations

The other regulatory measures that will be reviewed and amended or adopted to implement the County's plan are the critical areas ordinance (CAO), zoning ordinance and map, and the Shoreline Master Plan (SMP), to ensure consistency with the future land use map, mandates, and policies of this Plan. This will establish the use, density, intensity, and environmental protections for future development.

Legal Framework and the Plan's Purpose

This Plan serves as the “blueprint” for a period of twenty years, from 2026-2046, and replaces the previous Comprehensive Plan documents. This plan may be amended on a yearly basis, but not more than once per year. The County is required to update its plan periodically to address changing conditions and the next periodic update is expected by 2036.

The Plan considers the past and present history and circumstances of the county, and the people's choices and preferences, with the requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA). This Plan is a decision-making tool; a broad statement of community goals and policies, providing a community vision.

It is the role of county government to respond to the requirements of the GMA and to also respond to the needs and expectations of its residents and businesses. Such needs and expectations relate to safe and secure housing options, a vibrant economy, educational opportunities, a safe and efficient transportation system, and recreation opportunities.

This Plan includes goals and policies that provide guidance for public and private decision-makers in Volume 1. Volume 2 contains supporting information, analysis and important maps that correspond to the presented goals and policies.

This Plan provides the basis for the designation of land use, for infrastructure development, and for implementing community services. It is written for a planning period of twenty years, with periodic updates and an annual review of capital and transportation projects, and a potential for annual text and mapping amendments.

The Plan covers the entire county in order to coordinate from a system-wide standpoint, particularly for the provision of infrastructure and population growth. The cities of Pasco, Connell, Mesa and Kahlotus each maintain their own plans within their Urban Growth Areas

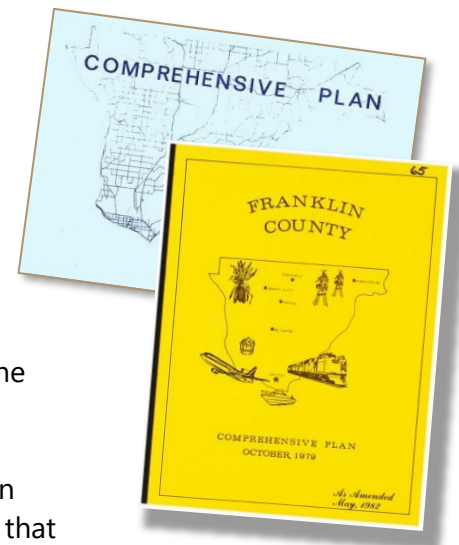
(UGAs). The cities and county coordinate for development activities within UGAs but outside of the incorporated city limits. Most of the policies and the remaining rural facilities and services primarily apply to those unincorporated areas of the county.

PREVIOUS PLANS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Pre-GMA Planning

Franklin County adopted its first Comprehensive Plan document in 1970, which was called “Phase 1” and consisted of a very simple review of growth trends and population, and presented eight general “goals” followed by twelve development policies addressing the broad categories: agriculture, residential, commercial, industry, recreation, and public facilities/services. The document focused on the northern portions of the county, including the communities of Mesa, Basin City, Connell, and Kahlotus. “Phase 2” was adopted in 1975 and was much broader in scope and addressed the county as a whole, with particular emphasis on the southern portions of the county, including Pasco and the Riverview area.

Later, an updated version was adopted in 1979 and amended in 1982. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was developed and distributed at that time.



Initial Formation and Adoption of the GMA Plan: 1991-1995

Local planning under the GMA began in 1991 after the County opted into the GMA planning program. In January 1993, the County adopted County-Wide Planning Policies by Resolution 93-015, assuring a collaborative planning process between the county and its cities. In addition, the County planning department prepared and circulated a questionnaire to all county residents. The questionnaire included questions for individuals on housing preferences, perceptions of the county’s strengths and weaknesses, what should and should not be changed, perceptions of agriculture, preservation of natural resources, the economy, jobs and the pros and cons of an aggressive economic development program, and asked about personal visions for the county.

In April 1993, a series of public meetings were conducted in locations across the county including Basin City, Mesa, and Kahlotus. Staff additionally conducted special information gathering sessions called “one-on-ones” with key officials and other identified individuals in the community asking questions from the questionnaire that were specific to the respective community the individual came from. County staff also prepared draft comprehensive plan goals and policies for review and discussion, together with the synopsis of the questionnaires, the “one-on-ones” discussions, and the vision statement at a second series of four public meetings held in various rural locations around the county. Staff additionally sought information from the public utility districts, irrigation districts, school districts, and other special purpose governments

necessary for the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. The first Franklin County GMA Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1995 by Resolution 95-071.

Revisions and Updates 2001-2008

In 2001, after passage of legislation amending several sections of the GMA, the County revised and adopted an update of the transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan. Next, in mid-2002, the County began a general update of the Comprehensive Plan building on the previous collective planning effort. In September 2003 the Planning Commission began a series of advertised workshops reviewing and commenting on a “working draft” including a preliminary discussion of the urban growth area boundaries and goal and policy development which continued through the March 2005 Planning Commission meeting. During this period, staff contacted Franklin County PUD, Big Bend Electric Association, Port of Pasco, Franklin County Park Board, Franklin Conservation District, Franklin County Historical Museum, and the various County department directors for their respective input. From December 2004 through March 2005, “Open Houses” were held at Connell, Basin City, Mesa, and Kahlotus, and Pasco to describe and review the “working draft” of the Comprehensive Plan revision and to seek public input and comment for the final draft. In June of 2005 the final draft of the revised Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.

Work on the newly adopted Comprehensive Plan continued into 2006, 2007, and early 2008 through public meetings, public workshops and public hearings with the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners, again seeking further public input and comment. This review was completed to comply with the 2007 GMA required update of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan was adopted in early 2008 by Resolution 2008-089.

Periodic Update 2018 (with 2021 adoption)

The 2018 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update achieved two goals: efficiently and thoroughly updating the Plan for GMA compliance while building on the work produced in the 2008 Plan and providing opportunities for public outreach and input on each of the Plan elements. The update process began in October of 2017 and continued through early 2021. Over that time span, the Planning Commission held a series of public workshops to review plan revisions and seek public input. The workshops were broadly advertised to the public and were typically held after the Planning Commission’s regularly scheduled monthly meetings. The public workshops were well attended and for those community members unable to participate in meetings, a mailing list and dedicated website were maintained and utilized. Comments from the Planning Commission, Public agencies, and community members were incorporated into the final draft of the Plan.

Shoreline Master Program Update 2016 and 2023

In June 2023, the County approved the most recent update to the Shoreline Master Program (SMP), which was prepared with a grant from the Washington Department of Ecology. The last

update to the SMP prior to June 2023 was completed in 2016, which replaced the original SMP that Franklin County adopted in 1974. The SMP implements the requirements of the Washington State Shoreline Management Act (SMA) which was enacted in 1971 and the state SMA guidelines which were approved by Ecology in 2003. The updated 2023 Franklin County SMP provides goals, policies, and regulations for the development of Franklin County shorelines consistent with the SMA and guidelines. Periodic review of SMPs must occur once every ten years. The SMP is a stand-alone document, but the goals and policies must be included as an element of the comprehensive plan, and the development regulations adopted in the SMP shall be integrated with or overlaid on the County's development regulations (RCW 36.70A.480). The SMP is found in Chapter 18.16 of the Franklin County Code. In the case of this plan, the SMP is adopted by reference, as well as any updates in the future.

Periodic Update 2026

This Plan Update has been carefully considered and reviewed through a systematic process of study and public hearings before the Planning Commission and adoption by the County Commissioners. Public participation occurred throughout this Update process, including an online survey and three open house events. Regulatory measures to implement the Plan will be revised or adopted in the form of ordinances such as zoning code amendments, subdivision code amendments, critical areas ordinances, and amendments to the Shoreline Master Program. These implementation measures will reflect and carry out the goals, policies, and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan.

In order to coordinate the County's plan with those of its cities and ensure compliance with the GMA, a set of Countywide Planning Policies (CWPP) were adopted in 2025 by Resolution 2025-233. These policies provide a framework for how and where growth will be located throughout the county by examining the UGAs of each city based on population projections from the State Office of Financial Management (OFM). The CWPPs also contain policy guidance for how the County, together with the jurisdictions within should provide for housing, transportation, economic development, and infrastructure suitable for urban and rural areas consistent with the goals set forth in the GMA.

Also in this update cycle, the County is mandated by the state (by HB 1181) to incorporate a Climate Change Element into the comprehensive plan. The legislation includes requirements for making substantive changes to the Land Use and Transportation Elements as well as adding a new element, with a sub-element addressing greenhouse gas emissions reductions and resiliency. Governor Jay Inslee and the legislature prioritized climate and environmental guidance in the face of catastrophic wildfires, droughts, and record breaking heat within the state, as well as global sea-level rise in the past decade. Of particular importance in Franklin County is the threat of drought as it relates to irrigation of the vast agricultural lands.

WHAT IS IN THE PLAN?

The Comprehensive Plan touches on many aspects associated with rural communities and development, including character and a vibrant economy. The Plan will serve the citizens by providing development guidelines for safe, livable, and economically viable communities.

Table 3 briefly summarizes each Element included in this Comprehensive Plan. The Plan's elements are directed at enhancing the rural county's livability while meeting the concerns and interests expressed by the county's residents.

Table 3: Element Summaries

Element	Element Focus Areas
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Natural Environment	Environmental stewardship, water quality, air quality, fish and wildlife habitat, natural hazards, and climate change.
Economic Development	Investment and economic opportunity, diversification and economic resilience, employment and industry trends and forecasts.
Housing	Housing capacity to meet projected growth, housing inventory and trends, housing preservation, housing design, provision of a range of housing types to serve diverse needs and all economic segments of the community.
Historical and Cultural Resources	Methodology for designation of historic places, inventory, preservation of historic lands and structures, and encouraging education on the county's history.
Capital Facilities Plan	Facilities and infrastructure needed for public services that will support planned population and employment, level of service standards, inventory, financing strategies, design and location, maintenance, and collaboration with regional partners.
Utilities	Utility providers, wireless communication facilities regulations, alternate energy sources, consistency across plans, design and location, service efficiency and environmental sustainability, collaboration with regional partners and utility providers.
Transportation & Circulation	Transportation to support land uses envisioned by the Comprehensive Plan, existing transportation network, movement of people and goods,

	level of service standards, transportation projects, financing, maintenance, safety, and environmental protection.
Climate	Groundwork for measures to prepare for, mitigate, and recover from the negative impacts of climate-related hazards and an overview of contributing sources of greenhouse gas emissions, highlighting key opportunities for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.
Parks & Recreation	Inventory of parks and recreation facilities available to county residents along with service needs and projections based on population projections.

The GMA requires the Plan to include a future land use map. This Comprehensive Plan includes a Land Use Map and other maps necessary to provide information and clarification for the Plan's text. The Franklin County future land use map and the text of the plan graphically describe the location of rural and resource lands, the needed infrastructure, and the fiscal planning necessary to ensure future planning is realistic. The maps contained within this document, though as accurate as possible given the size limitations of the document, are merely representations and the official maps are available for more accurate review at the County Planning and Economic Development Department office.

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The County is characterized by its open spaces, quality development, and agriculturally related industries.

Franklin County enjoys a diversity of population and is a good place to live with quality education in its schools, low crime rate, clean, fresh air, and friendly neighbors.

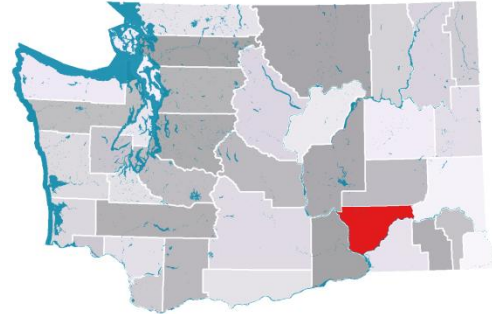
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Like all activities undertaken by governments, the critical activity is implementation. The Plan considers existing land uses, private property rights, potential future land uses, conservation of natural resource lands, and the effect of potential, future economic factors. It addresses the needs for housing and prescribes steps to be taken to ensure that housing needs across the community may be met. There is a strong feeling within the county that citizens create and manage their respective destinies through a strong planning process.

The Comprehensive Plan is implemented in a number of ways. The zoning code is the primary way that the Comprehensive Plan is carried out, by establishing regulations that direct land use, design and physical development requirements that must be adhered to in order to fulfill the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Infrastructure development and investments (such as extension of municipal water systems) are also guided by the principles and policies established by the Comprehensive Plan. County programs and initiatives such as Open Space protection and Economic Development Plans are also guided by the Comprehensive Plan.

INTRODUCTION

This Comprehensive Plan (Plan) for Franklin County is the long-term vision and plan for managing the county's natural and built environment. The Plan includes policy direction for community and economic development, housing, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, public services, infrastructure, and growth.



Franklin County's Location

Franklin County is located in eastern Washington, in the mid-Columbia Valley. To the west and south, the Columbia River provides the border with Benton County. Grant and Adams County are located to the north. The Snake River and its tributary, the Palouse River, create the separation from Walla Walla and Whitman counties.

Franklin County is characterized by vast amounts of farmland (approximately 73% of the County¹), much of which is irrigated using water diverted from rivers. Prior to 1945, Franklin County and the Columbia Basin as a whole, had very little farming development. The completion of the Grand Coulee Dam in 1941 and the Columbia Basin Project Act of 1943 aided in supplying irrigation, power, and flood control in the area of Franklin County, contributing to the presence of the vast amount of farmland today. Franklin County is within the South Columbia Basin Irrigation District, a special purpose district² which gained operation and maintenance responsibilities from the Bureau of Reclamation in 1968. The District has operating responsibility for facilities to serve up to 300,000 acres in Franklin County, supplied by canals from the reservoir behind Grand Coulee Dam.



As of 2022, Franklin County had approximately 751 farms with an average farm size of 781 acres³. Crops in Franklin County generate over \$700 million in revenue each year⁴. A wide variety of crops are grown within Franklin County, with some of the highest value crops including apples, potatoes, sweet corn, onions, and grapes. The county has the fourth highest market value of crops sold and the fifth highest market value of livestock, poultry, and products compared to all counties in Washington State. The highest market value of products sold within

¹ Found in Benton-Franklin Trends, with data from the USDA's agricultural census, which occurs every 5 years. Link: [USDA Census](#).

² Defined in RCW 36.96.010 and means a local government that is separate from the County and serves a limited purpose such as services and facilities for irrigation.

³ USDA's agricultural census, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/Washington/st53_2_001_001.pdf

⁴ WSU Extension, accessed at <https://extension.wsu.edu/benton-franklin/agriculture/>

the *crops* category are fruits, trees, nuts, and berries. The highest market value of products sold within the *livestock, poultry, and product* category is milk from cows. The top crop in terms of acreage in the county is forage (hay/haylage).

The climate is semi-arid, with an average rainfall of approximately seven to 12 inches per year (depending on location within the county) and approximately 7.5 days of rainfall annually. There is one major population center, the City of Pasco, which is where the vast majority of population growth in the county occurs, and the City also serves as the County Seat. The location of Franklin County within the Columbia Basin, as well as its agricultural character and climate, allows for seasonal recreational uses which attract tourism and also help to support agri-business.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

The Growth Management Act (GMA) provides a framework for growth and development throughout the state. Factors influencing approval of GMA in 1990 included uncoordinated and unplanned growth, the lack of common goals expressing the public's interest, and the degradation of the natural systems. Another principal factor was the threat from unplanned growth to health, safety, and to the high quality of life enjoyed by residents of the state.

State and County Goals and State Mandates

The GMA includes 15 Planning Goals (RCW 36.70A.020), which are mandated by the State for all fully planning counties, and adopted by Franklin County:

Table 1: State and County Planning Goals

TOPIC	GOAL
Urban Growth	Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
Reduce Sprawl	Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
Transportation	Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled and are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
Housing	Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments of the population of this state; promote a variety of residential densities and housing types encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
Economic Development	Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting

	economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.
Property Rights	Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
Permits	Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
Natural Resource Industries	Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and productive agricultural lands and discourage incompatible uses.
Open Space and Recreation	Encourage the retention of open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.
Environment	Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
Citizen Participation and Coordination	Ensure the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
Public Facilities and Services	Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.
Historic Preservation	Identify and encourage the presentation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.
Climate Change and Resiliency	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.
Shoreline Management	Prevent the inherent harm in an uncoordinated and piecemeal development of the state's shorelines.

The GMA requires that Franklin County adopt a Comprehensive Plan and further, the County must enact land development regulations that are consistent with, and implement, the Comprehensive Plan. The comprehensive plan is a policy document to guide orderly development throughout the county in coordination with its cities and consistent with surrounding jurisdictions. The plan is not a regulatory document, but guides and directs the development of “development regulations” as codified in the Franklin County Code, such as zoning, subdivision regulations, and the administration of said regulations

The other regulatory measures that will be reviewed and amended or adopted to implement the County's plan are the critical areas ordinance (CAO), zoning ordinance and map, and the Shoreline Master Plan (SMP), to ensure consistency with the future land use map, mandates, and policies of this Plan. This will establish the use, density, intensity, and environmental protections for future development.

Legal Framework and the Plan’s Purpose

This Plan serves as the “blueprint” for a period of twenty years, from 2026-2046, and replaces the previous Comprehensive Plan documents. This plan may be amended on a yearly basis, but not more than once per year. The County is required to update its plan periodically to address changing conditions and the next periodic update is expected by 2036.

The Plan considers the past and present history and circumstances of the county, and the people’s choices and preferences, with the requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA). This Plan is a decision-making tool; a broad statement of community goals and policies, providing a community vision.

It is the role of county government to respond to the requirements of the GMA and to also respond to the needs and expectations of its residents and businesses. Such needs and expectations relate to safe and secure housing options, a vibrant economy, educational opportunities, a safe and efficient transportation system, and recreation opportunities.

This Plan includes goals and policies that provide guidance for public and private decision-makers in Volume 1. Volume 2 contains supporting information, analysis and important maps that correspond to the presented goals and policies.

This Plan provides the basis for the designation of land use, for infrastructure development, and for implementing community services. It is written for a planning period of twenty years, with periodic updates and an annual review of capital and transportation projects, and a potential for annual text and mapping amendments.

The Plan covers the entire county in order to coordinate from a system-wide standpoint, particularly for the provision of infrastructure and population growth. The cities of Pasco, Connell, Mesa and Kahlotus each maintain their own plans within their Urban Growth Areas

(UGAs). The cities and county coordinate for development activities within UGAs but outside of the incorporated city limits. Most of the policies and the remaining rural facilities and services primarily apply to those unincorporated areas of the county.

PREVIOUS PLANS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Pre-GMA Planning

Franklin County adopted its first Comprehensive Plan document in 1970, which was called “Phase 1” and consisted of a very simple review of growth trends and population, and presented eight general “goals” followed by twelve development policies addressing the broad categories: agriculture, residential, commercial, industry, recreation, and public facilities/services. The document focused on the northern portions of the county, including the communities of Mesa, Basin City, Connell, and Kahlotus. “Phase 2” was adopted in 1975 and was much broader in scope and addressed the county as a whole, with particular emphasis on the southern portions of the county, including Pasco and the Riverview area.

Later, an updated version was adopted in 1979 and amended in 1982. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was developed and distributed at that time.



Initial Formation and Adoption of the GMA Plan: 1991-1995

Local planning under the GMA began in 1991 after the County opted into the GMA planning program. In January 1993, the County adopted County-Wide Planning Policies by Resolution 93-015, assuring a collaborative planning process between the county and its cities. In addition, the County planning department prepared and circulated a questionnaire to all county residents. The questionnaire included questions for individuals on housing preferences, perceptions of the county’s strengths and weaknesses, what should and should not be changed, perceptions of agriculture, preservation of natural resources, the economy, jobs and the pros and cons of an aggressive economic development program, and asked about personal visions for the county.

In April 1993, a series of public meetings were conducted in locations across the county including Basin City, Mesa, and Kahlotus. Staff additionally conducted special information gathering sessions called “one-on-ones” with key officials and other identified individuals in the community asking questions from the questionnaire that were specific to the respective community the individual came from. County staff also prepared draft comprehensive plan goals and policies for review and discussion, together with the synopsis of the questionnaires, the “one-on-ones” discussions, and the vision statement at a second series of four public meetings held in various rural locations around the county. Staff additionally sought information from the public utility districts, irrigation districts, school districts, and other special purpose governments

necessary for the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. The first Franklin County GMA Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1995 by Resolution 95-071.

Revisions and Updates 2001-2008

In 2001, after passage of legislation amending several sections of the GMA, the County revised and adopted an update of the transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan. Next, in mid-2002, the County began a general update of the Comprehensive Plan building on the previous collective planning effort. In September 2003 the Planning Commission began a series of advertised workshops reviewing and commenting on a “working draft” including a preliminary discussion of the urban growth area boundaries and goal and policy development which continued through the March 2005 Planning Commission meeting. During this period, staff contacted Franklin County PUD, Big Bend Electric Association, Port of Pasco, Franklin County Park Board, Franklin Conservation District, Franklin County Historical Museum, and the various County department directors for their respective input. From December 2004 through March 2005, “Open Houses” were held at Connell, Basin City, Mesa, and Kahlotus, and Pasco to describe and review the “working draft” of the Comprehensive Plan revision and to seek public input and comment for the final draft. In June of 2005 the final draft of the revised Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.

Work on the newly adopted Comprehensive Plan continued into 2006, 2007, and early 2008 through public meetings, public workshops and public hearings with the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners, again seeking further public input and comment. This review was completed to comply with the 2007 GMA required update of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan was adopted in early 2008 by Resolution 2008-089.

Periodic Update 2018 (with 2021 adoption)

The 2018 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update achieved two goals: efficiently and thoroughly updating the Plan for GMA compliance while building on the work produced in the 2008 Plan and providing opportunities for public outreach and input on each of the Plan elements. The update process began in October of 2017 and continued through early 2021. Over that time span, the Planning Commission held a series of public workshops to review plan revisions and seek public input. The workshops were broadly advertised to the public and were typically held after the Planning Commission’s regularly scheduled monthly meetings. The public workshops were well attended and for those community members unable to participate in meetings, a mailing list and dedicated website were maintained and utilized. Comments from the Planning Commission, Public agencies, and community members were incorporated into the final draft of the Plan.

Shoreline Master Program Update 2016 and 2023

In June 2023, the County approved the most recent update to the Shoreline Master Program (SMP), which was prepared with a grant from the Washington Department of Ecology. The last

update to the SMP prior to June 2023 was completed in 2016, which replaced the original SMP that Franklin County adopted in 1974. The SMP implements the requirements of the Washington State Shoreline Management Act (SMA) which was enacted in 1971 and the state SMA guidelines which were approved by Ecology in 2003. The updated 2023 Franklin County SMP provides goals, policies, and regulations for the development of Franklin County shorelines consistent with the SMA and guidelines. Periodic review of SMPs must occur once every ten years. The SMP is a stand-alone document, but the goals and policies must be included as an element of the comprehensive plan, and the development regulations adopted in the SMP shall be integrated with or overlaid on the County's development regulations (RCW 36.70A.480). The SMP is found in Chapter 18.16 of the Franklin County Code. In the case of this plan, the SMP is adopted by reference, as well as any updates in the future.

Periodic Update 2026

This Plan Update has been carefully considered and reviewed through a systematic process of study and public hearings before the Planning Commission and adoption by the County Commissioners. Public participation occurred throughout this Update process, including an online survey and three open house events. Regulatory measures to implement the Plan will be revised or adopted in the form of ordinances such as zoning code amendments, subdivision code amendments, critical areas ordinances, and amendments to the Shoreline Master Program. These implementation measures will reflect and carry out the goals, policies, and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan.

In order to coordinate the County's plan with those of its cities and ensure compliance with the GMA, a set of Countywide Planning Policies (CWPP) were adopted in 2025 by Resolution 2025-233. These policies provide a framework for how and where growth will be located throughout the county by examining the UGAs of each city based on population projections from the State Office of Financial Management (OFM). The CWPPs also contain policy guidance for how the County, together with the jurisdictions within should provide for housing, transportation, economic development, and infrastructure suitable for urban and rural areas consistent with the goals set forth in the GMA.

Also in this update cycle, the County is mandated by the state (by HB 1181) to incorporate a Climate Change Element into the comprehensive plan. The legislation includes requirements for making substantive changes to the Land Use and Transportation Elements as well as adding a new element, with a sub-element addressing greenhouse gas emissions reductions and resiliency. Governor Jay Inslee and the legislature prioritized climate and environmental guidance in the face of catastrophic wildfires, droughts, and record breaking heat within the state, as well as global sea-level rise in the past decade. Of particular importance in Franklin County is the threat of drought as it relates to irrigation of the vast agricultural lands.

WHAT IS IN THE PLAN?

The Comprehensive Plan touches on many aspects associated with rural communities and development, including character and a vibrant economy. The Plan will serve the citizens by providing development guidelines for safe, livable, and economically viable communities.

Table 3 briefly summarizes each Element included in this Comprehensive Plan. The Plan's elements are directed at enhancing the rural county's livability while meeting the concerns and interests expressed by the county's residents.

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ELEMENT

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT GOALS

The goals and policies of the Shoreline Master Program are also part of this Comprehensive Plan.

 Denotes goals that are strongly related to the Climate Element.

See the Climate Element for additional Goals and Policies related to the Natural Environment.

- Goal A.** *Recognize natural areas, shorelines, and environmentally critical areas.*
- Goal B.**  *Protect and enhance surface water and groundwater quality for human health, drinking water supply, and to meet water quality standards.*
- Goal C.** *Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitats, with emphasis on those identified by the State and Federal governments as endangered, threatened, or sensitive resources, or identified by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Priority Habitat and Species program.*

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

 Denotes policies that are strongly related to the Climate Element.

General Policies:

- NE-1  Recognize natural areas, shorelines, and critical areas as unique community assets that help build resiliency to climate hazards.
- NE-2 Use the Shoreline Master Program (SMP), Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), and other ordinances, as applicable, together with State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental review to designate and protect critical areas and the natural environment.
- NE-3  Protect life, property, and public health from natural, climate, and geologic hazards.
- NE-4  Protect natural features and existing topography through appropriate development design and avoid, minimize, or mitigate negative environmental impacts.
- NE-5 Protect environmentally critical areas by implementing incentives including density bonuses, clustering, and other means of compensation as appropriate.
- NE-6  Implement and apply Flood Damage Prevention regulations to identify and regulate lands which are in FEMA-designated Special Flood Hazard Areas.
- NE-7 Support updating the County FIRM mapping and adopt a digital (GIS-based) mapping system (D-FIRM) for modernization, to support hazard mitigation, and to increase permitting efficiencies.
- NE-8  Support the Voluntary Stewardship Program.
- NE-9  Use the Department of Ecology's Stormwater Manual for Eastern Washington as a guide for planning and for implementing stormwater best management practices.
- NE-10 Restrict development that significantly causes degradation or depletion of surface waters or groundwater, or locate and design developments to avoid, minimize, or mitigate such impacts.
- NE-11  Encourage educational programs and voluntary efforts of agricultural producers, processors, irrigation districts, and municipal users to responsibly manage return flows to improve surface and ground water quality.
- NE-12  Support the development and implementation of septic tank and drain field standards that protect surface and ground water quality and human health.
- NE-13 Encourage development of water-oriented recreational, cultural, and commercial facilities and uses in shoreline locations where feasible, consistent with the SMP, to enhance and diversify community recreational resources and its attractiveness to tourists.

- NE-14  Integrate natural areas and critical areas into a linked pattern of open lands to provide buffers, visual resources, and to enhance wildlife and habitat connectivity.
- NE-15 Work with adjacent jurisdictions and state, federal, and tribal governments during development review to identify and protect habitat networks at jurisdictional boundaries.
- NE-16 Support dust control measures.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS

This element describes the natural setting in Franklin County, and how environmental protection and stewardship may occur. The primary purpose of this Natural Environment element is to discuss Franklin County's natural features and functions.

This Element complements the Climate Element, which includes resiliency as an important theme.

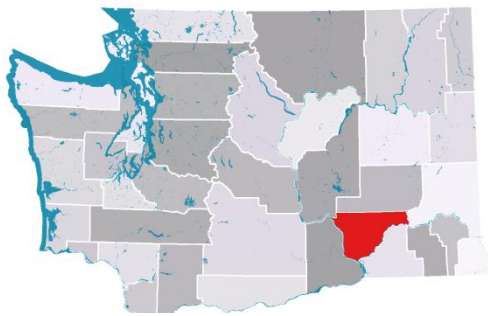


Figure 1: Franklin County's location among Washington State Counties

Franklin County is located in the south-central part of the State of Washington. It is bounded on the west and separated from Benton County by the Columbia River. On the south and east, the Snake River and its tributary, the Palouse River, separate it from Walla Walla County. Adams County is located to the north and Grant County is located to the northwest.

The area is arid to semi-arid, receiving an average precipitation of about six to seven inches per year. The area averages about five days of snowfall and 10 days of rainfall annually. The median monthly temperature ranges from a low of 30.6 degrees Fahrenheit in January to a high of 75.7 degrees Fahrenheit in July. High wind velocities, with peak gusts as high as 70 mph or higher can be expected at any time of the year.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) categorizes the geology of the state into geologic provinces. Franklin County uniquely lies at the south end of the Channeled Scablands, a portion of the Columbia Basin Province, formed by alternating volcanism and flooding that has occurred since the Miocene and Pleistocene eras and the more recent Columbia Basin Project that brought irrigation water into the region. As a result, the county contains many canyon and cliff features, unique rock formations and interesting geological formations, potholes, lakes and the Columbia and Snake Rivers that make some of the rural areas suitable for the development of major recreational activities.

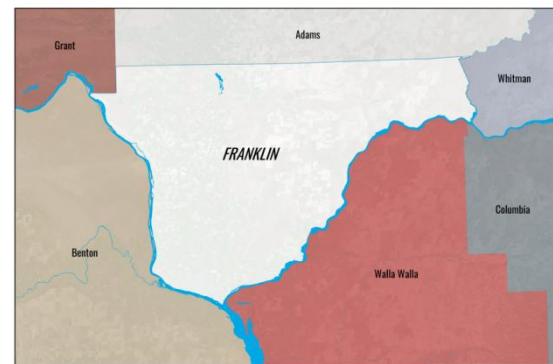


Figure 2: Franklin County and Surrounding Counties

The Columbia Basin Project, including the construction of dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers, changed the landscape of much of Franklin County through water storage and diversion, providing sufficient irrigation water for a wide variety of field crops, orchards, vineyards, etc., together with the appurtenant secondary support of agricultural industries and businesses. This transformed what was once dry land into productive farmland. Also, within the agricultural lands of Franklin County, seasonal recreational use has become an embodiment of the rural lifestyle and is encouraged, shared, and even promoted as a facet of our extended community. Such activities are typically complementary to the business of farming or ranching and are an opportunity to share the daily rural experience with urban neighbors. Such use is additionally regarded as accessory to agri-business.

GEOLOGY

Franklin County is within the Columbia Basin. Canyon and cliff features of the county include Palouse Canyon and Devils Canyon, as well as many unique rock formations. Some of the most interesting geographical features are the Juniper Dunes area located northeast of Pasco off the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway.

Three of the five geological formations, which characterize the entire Columbia River Basalt Group, occur in Franklin County. From the youngest to the oldest, these are:

- Saddle Mountain Basalt (formed 6-13 million years ago), found primarily in the Mesa area extending southeast and northwest;
- The Wanapum Basalt (13.5 to 14 million years old), occurring primarily in the northeast and along the Snake River; and
- Grande Ronde Basalt (15.6 to 17 million years old), found primarily at the eastern border.

The Grande Ronde Basalt Formation was formed 15 to 17 million years ago from large eruptions of molten lava, probably from a huge volcano located in the southeastern corner of Washington or northeastern Oregon. The number of flows associated with the volcano are in the hundreds and vary in thickness from a few inches to about 300 feet. Few sedimentary interbeds are found, indicating relatively short periods between eruptions.

The Wanapum Basalt Formation was formed 13.5 to 14 million years ago. Large and numerous linear vents discharging large, but less frequent, amounts of flood lava developed in the same areas as the Grande Ronde Volcano. Sedimentary interbeds were created within and between formations, mainly by the erosion of older rock surrounding the plateau and volcanic material associated with the creation of the Cascade Range. Continued deposition of flood basalts between six and thirteen million years ago is called the Saddle Mountain Basalts. These activities, primarily during the Miocene and Pliocene eras, combined with the shed sediments from the

rising and volcanically active Cascade Range, form interbedded sedimentary formations within the Columbia River Basalts. These interbeds are part of the Ellensburg Formation.

Deposition of sedimentary materials continued in the area during the Pleistocene era. These initial deposits are referred to as the Ringold Formation and consist of fluvial (stream) and lacustrine (lake) deposits of silts, sand, and gravel. Late in the Pleistocene Epoch, numerous glacial outwash and flood deposits occurred. These deposits are attributed to catastrophic flooding caused by the breakup of ice dams holding back impoundment, such as Lake Missoula in western Montana. Breakage of these ice dams was responsible for formation of the area north of Franklin County known as the Channel Scablands. Outpouring from these lakes scoured the land, leaving large channels. The flood waters rushed out of Lake Missoula through Spokane, spread out over the basin, and then came together again at Wallula Gap, where a large lake was created, depositing silt in this area.

Stratigraphy

The geologic history summarized above helps to explain the current stratigraphy, or the layering and attitude of rock formations. The Columbia River Plateau can be subdivided into three informal structural sub-provinces¹: the Yakima Fold Belt, the Palouse Hills, and the Blue Mountains. The western half of Franklin County is in the Yakima Fold Belt sub-province, and the eastern half lies in the Palouse Hills sub-province.



Figure 3: Kahlotus Ridgetop Natural Area Preserve (Photo: Washington DNR)

¹ "Provinces" means areas that exhibit essential continuity of geologic history.

Seismology

Franklin County is in a region of low to moderate seismic activity. The region can experience earthquake “swarms”, typically lasting a few days to several months, where earthquakes tend to gradually increase and decay in frequency but not in magnitude.

FOR MORE
INFORMATION
REFER TO THE
DNR
PUBLICATIONS:

Flood basalts and glacier floods—Roadside geology of parts of Walla Walla, Franklin, and Columbia Counties, Washington, by R. J. Carson and K. R. Pogue. 1996. 47 p., 68 figs. *Archived at:*
www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/ger_ic90_roadside_floodbasalts_glacierfloods.pdf

Geology of parts of Grant, Adams, and Franklin Counties, east-central Washington, by M. J. Grolier and J. W. Bingham. 1978. 91 p., 33 figs. *Archived at:*
www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/ger_b71_geol_grant_adams_franklin_co.pdf

Bibliography of the geology of the Columbia Basin and surrounding areas of Washington, by G. B. Tucker and J. G. Rigby. 1979. 475 p., 24 pl. *Available at:*
www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/ger_ofr79-5_bib_geology_columbiabasin_text.pdf

Soils

Soils are described and characterized in the Resource Lands sub-element to the Land Use Element.

HYDROGEOLOGY/HYDROLOGY

Structure and Groundwater Movement

The Columbia Plateau regional aquifer is a major system that consists chiefly of a great thickness of basalt belonging to the Columbia River Basalt Group, together with minor sedimentary deposits, which are overlain by undifferentiated consolidated and unconsolidated surficial sediments. For hydrological purposes, these formations have been subdivided into three hydrogeologic units along stratigraphic boundaries. These are from oldest to youngest:

- The Grand Ronde - This formation is composed of at least 30, and perhaps as many as several hundred, individual flows, most of which are fine grained. As mentioned above, sediment interbeds within the Grand Ronde Basalt are rare and generally only a few feet thick where present;
- Wanapum - This formation contains as many as ten flows, generally consisting of medium-grained basalt relatively high in iron and titanium oxides. Sedimentary interbeds in the Wanapum Basalt are more common than in the Grand Ronde Basalt, but are still rather rare and generally only a few feet thick where present;

- Saddle Mountain - The flows of this formation vary greatly in texture and composition. The basalt averages about 600 feet in thickness with a maximum thickness of more than 800 feet near Pasco. Sedimentary interbeds are common and rather thick, often 50 feet or more.

The basalts form a complex series of aquifers and confining beds. Groundwater in the basalts occurs in joints, vesicles, fractures, and other localized features that result in permeable zones. The greatest permeabilities are in highly vesicular and/or fractured tops and basal parts of basalt flows. The centers of most basalt flows are dense and have very low permeabilities and generally act as confining beds.

The general direction of groundwater flow is based on inference of water level measurements from approximately 400 wells taken in March 1986. Most of the shallow groundwater flow is directed perpendicular to the water table contours, toward the Columbia and Snake Rivers, where it discharges. However, some shallow groundwater flow is directed toward internal drains including canyons and coulees. On a local scale, flow at the water table is frequently directed toward buried drains. Although the altitude of the water table changes seasonally, the general pattern of flow remains relatively constant. With increasing depth in the groundwater system, flow is orientated more toward the rivers and is less influenced by the internal drains. This is particularly true of basalt aquifers.

The Columbia Basin Irrigation Project caused dramatic changes in the area's groundwater levels between 1950 and 1986. There are large areas where the water table has risen to, or nearly to, the land surface. Sub-surface drains have been installed in most of the areas of shallow water table. The most recent water level data (1986-1991) indicates that most of the study area has reached a state of dynamic equilibrium.

Rising water tables are of particular concern to the County because problems can result, including road deterioration, (particularly west of Basin City) and the potential loss of productive farmland, due to landslides.

Water Resources

Franklin County is historically a semi-arid region with varying amounts of rainfall depending on location within the county. The southern portion of the county (near Pasco) receives approximately seven to eight inches of rainfall annually, while the northeast portion of the County can receive as much as 12 inches per year. Rainfall is influenced by elevation and the watershed associated with the location. On a countywide basis, Franklin County is seeing less precipitation on the five-year average basis from 2019-2024, by a little less than one inch per year than the average precipitation from 1900 to present. Only a very small amount of that precipitation becomes groundwater for human and economic uses. Unfortunately, most precipitation occurs during the winter months when demand is low. During the summer periods, low-flowing streams depend on groundwater inflow.

Surface Water

Water from the Columbia River is used for hydropower generation, irrigation, navigation, flood control, protection of salmonid species, municipal and industrial water needs, tribal treaty commitments, fish and wildlife needs, and recreation. The Columbia Basin Project (CBP) is a federally authorized project that facilitates these uses. The CBP includes an expansive canal system, which delivers irrigation water to farms. For more information on the Columbia Basin Project, see the "Utilities" Element.

The Columbia, Snake, and Palouse rivers and the many coulees in the region provide a water source for aquifer recharge areas and provide floodplain, wetland, and fish and wildlife habitat. Many indigenous wildlife species depend on these river and coulee corridors for cover and other sustenance essential to their life cycles. These waters of the state are protected under shoreline or critical area protections (for example through the County's Shoreline Master Program and Critical Areas Ordinance).

Groundwater

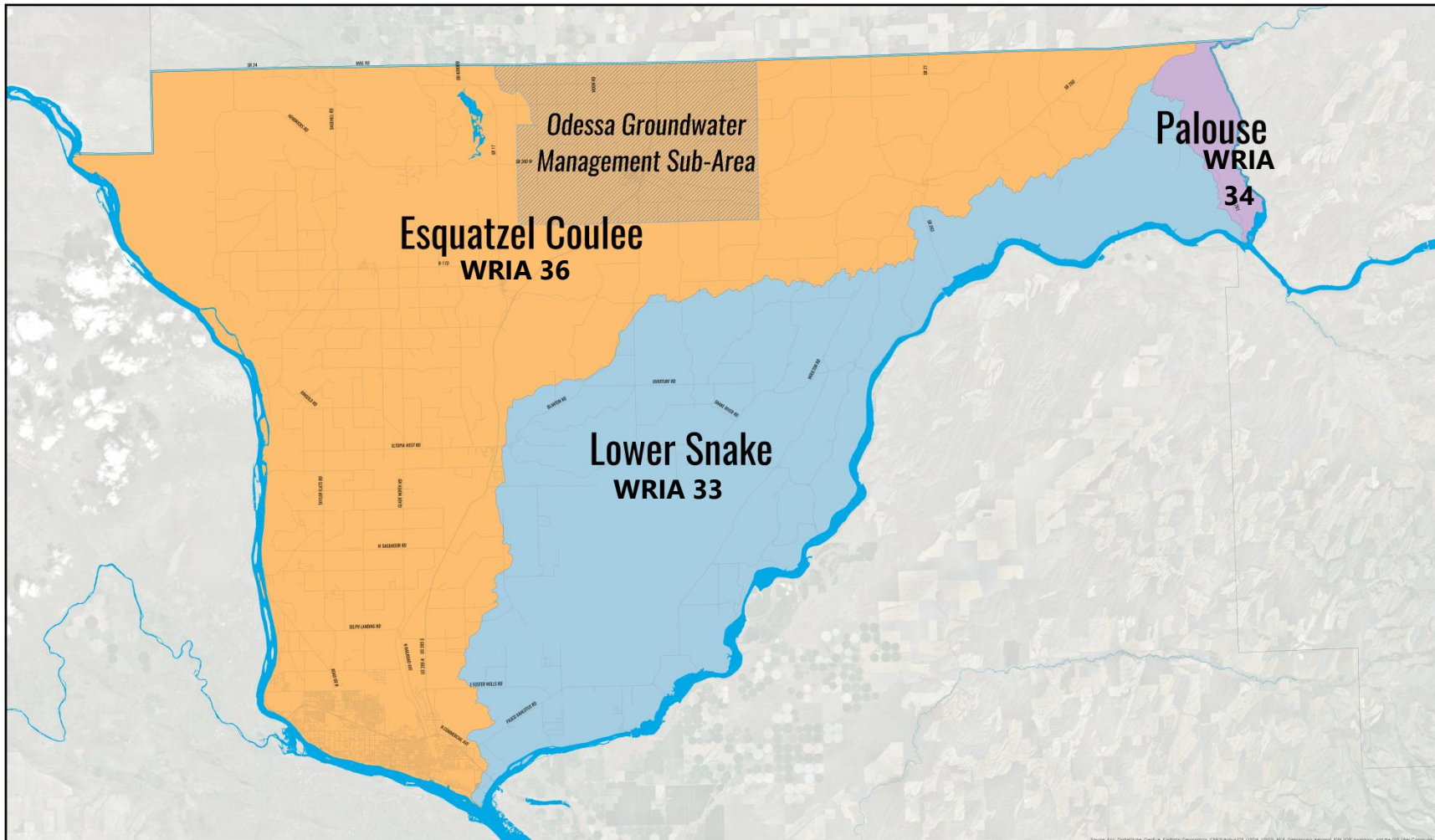
Many factors affect groundwater quality and quantity such as rapid regional growth, precipitation, and the location of watersheds. The quality and quantity of groundwater have a major impact on development, including costs. Areas lacking ready access to groundwater and areas without groundwater that qualifies as fit for human consumption will not be able to develop without some alternatives such as community water systems or other approaches that will enable them to have adequate water sources.

The State of Washington established the Watershed Planning Act² in 1997. The State is divided into 62 watersheds, known as Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs) for environmental management. There are portions of three watersheds in the county: WRIA 36 - Esquatzel Coulee, WRIA 33- Lower Snake, and WRIA 34-Palouse, shown on **Map 1**.

² RCW 90.82

FOR MORE INFORMATION:	Several publications document water availability, and future supply and demand needs: State of Washington Department of Ecology Water Resources Program, <i>WRIA 33 Lower Snake Watershed Water Availability</i> (Publication Number: 20-11-033: Revised September 2022) Available online at: https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2011033.pdf State of Washington Department of Ecology Water Resources Program, <i>WRIA 34 Palouse Watershed Water Availability</i> (Publication Number: 20-11-034: Revised September 2022) Available online at: https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2011034.pdf State of Washington Department of Ecology Water Resources Program, <i>WRIA 36 Esquatzel Coulee Watershed Water Availability</i> (Publication Number: 20-11-036: Revised April 2023) Available online at: https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2011036.pdf State of Washington Department of Ecology Office of Columbia River, <i>2021 Columbia River Basin Annual Water Supply Inventory Report</i> (Publication Number 21-12-010: April 2022) Available online at: https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2112010.pdf Office of Columbia River, WSU, Washington Water Research Center. 2021 Washington State Legislative Report. 2021 Columbia River Basin Long-Term Water Supply and Demand Forecast. Publication No. 21-12-006. Washington Department of Ecology, Olympia, WA. 216 pp. Available online at: https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/2112006.pdf Scott, T., J. Kohr, R. Granger, A. Marshall, D. Gombert, M. Winkowski, E. Bosman Clark and S. Vigg. 2016. Columbia River Instream Atlas (CRIA), FY2016. A component of the Columbia River Basin 2016 Water Supply & Demand Forecast. November 9, 2016. Funded by Washington Office of the Columbia River, Department of Ecology. 98 Pages Available online at: https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/1612006.pdf
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Map 1: Franklin County Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs) and the Odessa Sub-Area



Most of the county is located within the Esquatzel Coulee WRIA. The watershed extends into Adams and Grant counties, and the City of Connell is at the center. The watershed is further divided into two sub-areas: CB, or Columbia Basin, established via Chapter 508-14 WAC; and the Odessa Subareas. Each of the areas has their own set of rules and regulations and are managed with unique water and land practice policies.

The Odessa Subarea is located in the northern portion of WRIA 36, and Ecology has determined that groundwater is not available for any new uses. The Odessa Subarea Conservation Relinquishment Exception was passed in 2006 under Substitute Senate Bill 6151, to encourage conservation and more efficient use of the water. Under the law, groundwater users in the Odessa Subarea may use the water that they need and are not subject to the “use or lose” rules that could relinquish their water rights for prolonged periods of non-use.

The Lower Snake WRIA includes a portion of the Snake River and its tributaries. While the watershed is not “closed” by rule to new water users, it is unlikely that new water is available for consumptive use in most areas. The portion of the Lower Snake WRIA located within the county is part of the Columbia Basin GWMA.

Finally, the Palouse WRIA is located in a small northeastern portion of the county. The water is located under bedrock; hence the availability and yield of groundwater flow is extremely limited.

Water Cycle

Groundwater naturally occurs in the sheet-like zones at the top of a basaltic lava flow and the base of an overlying flow. Natural recharge to such confined aquifers occurs where the basalt crops out and where canyons and coulees have incised into the basalt, exposing the aquifers. In the Scooteney-Eagle Lakes area and in the vicinity of Washtucna Coulee, the basalt is folded, exposing the edges of the flows and allowing groundwater and surface water from the north to enter the basalt. Normal groundwater movement is south toward the junction of the Snake and Columbia Rivers, and radially inward toward the low point of the Pasco Basin.

Although when first implemented, the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project allowed for a rise in groundwater elevations in the western portion of the county, as of 2021, the trend appears to be reversing. The 2021 Columbia River Basin Long-Term Water Supply and Demand Forecast found that groundwater levels are declining in most aquifer layers and groundwater subareas across eastern Washington. Of particular note are large declines in groundwater occurring in the Grande Ronde aquifer layer in the Odessa Subarea, which includes the Esquatzel Coulee WRIA. This is largely due to well use within the subarea, which is an aquifer that has a slow infiltration rate. Franklin County is the southernmost area supplied by the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project.

Many activities within the county provide sources of pollutants such as nitrates³ (particularly from fertilizers) and pesticides. Some areas of the county are known to have high nitrate levels (over 10 mg/L) and/ or other pesticides in their drinking water that may make it unsafe. The Columbia Basin Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) Plan is a voluntary initiative that seeks to address elevated nitrate levels in groundwater in Franklin, Adams, Grant, and Lincoln counties. In many parts of the county, it is necessary to drill wells down into the basalt to obtain domestic water that meets the ten-ppm nitrate-nitrogen standard. The Pasco Basin is currently in a monitoring program from the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) called the *Regional Pesticide and Nutrient Monitoring Program*. This was founded in 2023 by the state legislature to provide support for communities whose drinking water may be affected by contaminants.

Smith Canyon and Esquatzel Coulee have become major pathways for wastewaters flowing south from irrigated areas towards the Pasco Basin. Water tables in the basin have risen dramatically, since the rate of inflow exceeds the rate of drainage in this regional low point.

There seems to be little flow of groundwater east of Smith Canyon. The wells in this area are deep and low producers. Primary sources of recharge in the eastern, dryland portion of the county are where the Snake River and smaller canyons and coulees dissect the underlying basalt.

The Franklin Conservation District identifies four primary areas of aquifer recharge:

1. The irrigated parts of the county;
2. The Scooteney-Eagle Lakes area;
3. Areas behind dams or other impoundments, particularly along the Snake River; and
4. Washtucna Coulee.

CRITICAL AREAS

The natural setting of Franklin County comprises natural areas, shorelines, and environmentally critical areas.

The GMA defines five critical areas that must be designated and protected (RCW 36.70A.170):

1. Wetlands;
2. Fish and wildlife conservation areas;
3. Frequently flood areas;
4. Geologically hazardous areas, and;
5. Critical aquifer recharge areas.

³ Although nitrates are naturally occurring and beneficial for plants, excessive nitrates from fertilizers may wash off agricultural products into drinking water sources, or other bodies of water.

All five types exist within the county. Protection and restoration of these areas is necessary for preserving water quality and quantity, soil health, protecting habitat and its associated fish and wildlife, and preventing hazardous conditions due to flood, erosion, and landslides. The state mandates that each jurisdiction must include best available science (BAS) when updating their critical areas designations (RCW 36.70A.172(1)). BAS can include guidance from State institutions such as Department of Ecology, and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) but can come from other qualified professionals as well. Best Available Science (BAS) is used to inform routine updates to development regulations, protecting the functions and values of critical areas.

Wetlands

Wetlands are defined in the State of Washington as areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas. Wetlands do not include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from non-wetland sites, including but not limited to irrigation and drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, canals, detention facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, farm ponds, and landscape amenities or those wetlands created after July 1, 1990, that were unintentionally created as a result of the construction of a road, street, or highway. Wetlands may include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from non-wetland areas to mitigate the conversion of wetlands.

Wetlands vary according to their origin, geographic location, water regime, chemistry, dominant plants, and soil characteristics. Wetlands improve water quality by filtering and trapping sediment and nutrients which prevent them from seeping into groundwater or flowing to nearby surface waters. However, they vary in their value for providing such functions as flood storage, sediment trapping, groundwater recharge and discharge, nutrient retention, food chain support, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation. To rate wetlands according to uniqueness, sensitivity, and ability to provide for these functions, the Best Available Science resources for wetlands should be utilized.

The Palouse, Snake, and Columbia Rivers form the east, south, and west boundaries of Franklin County, respectively. Wetlands occur along the margins, side channels, and islands associated with these river systems. In the interior of the county, wetlands occur in low-lying areas in the northwest portion of the county, in the vicinity of Eagle Lakes and Scooteney Reservoir. Other important wetland systems occur where subsurface water emerges in coulees and canyons, such as Esquatzel Coulee near Mesa and Washtucna Coulee near Connell and Kahlotus.

Areas with a high water table in Franklin County are also frequently associated with seepage from canals and ditches, irrigation runoff, and created stock ponds. Some of these areas are considered artificial wetlands under the Growth Management Act and some are not. A wetland

is considered artificial, and not subject to state or local regulation as a wetland, only if it meets both of the following characteristics: (1) Intentionally created and (2) Formerly non-wetland (upland) site. In irrigated agricultural areas, wetlands can result from localized conditions (e.g., a leaking irrigation ditch) or from a region-wide rise in groundwater resulting from regional irrigation projects. These types of wetlands are regulated by state wetland law and cannot be filled or drained without appropriate permits and mitigation. However, if the irrigation practices that led to the incidental wetland creation are changed (e.g., through implementation of water conservation practices), and the wetland dries up and no longer performs wetland functions, then no mitigation is required.

The Soil Conservation Service, with cooperation from the Franklin Conservation District, has prepared a detailed soil survey and wetlands inventory for the county. This information, in conjunction with site-specific wetland delineations, should be used to determine wetland boundaries on a project-by-project basis.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

WAC 365-190-130(2) identifies critical fish and wildlife habitat as the following:

- a) Areas with which endangered, threatened and sensitive species have a primary association
- b) Habitats and species of local importance
- c) Commercial and recreational shellfish areas
- d) Kelp and eelgrass beds; herring, smelt, and other forage fish spawning areas
- e) Naturally occurring ponds under twenty acres and their submerged aquatic beds that provide fish or wildlife habitat
- f) Waters of the state
- g) Lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers planted with game fish by a governmental or tribal entity
- h) State natural area preserves, natural resource conservation areas, and state wildlife areas.

Shrubsteppe, wetlands, rivers, and streams are the predominant habitats in the county and inland sand dunes, steep bluffs and coulees that also provide important habitats. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas are established and mapped to protect habitats for federal or state endangered, threatened, sensitive, candidate, and priority species of fish, wildlife or plants, following best available science. These areas are considered worth protecting not only for the health of fish and wildlife species but because the habitats themselves help improve water quality, increase soil health, preserve biological diversity, and affect hydrology which results in a reduction of flooding. The County regulates development in or near these habitats through the Franklin County Municipal Code Title 18 – Environment and the Franklin County Shoreline Master Program.

Franklin County can be characterized as a level-to-steep loessial upland steppe zone. Elevations range from about 300 feet above sea level at the southernmost part of the county to over 1,000 feet in the northeastern part. Even though rainfall amounts are small, the moisture that does fall escapes evaporation during winter months and seeps deeply into the soil. This provides water to sustain vigorous plant growth in the spring. The upland loams are dominated by Bluebunch Wheatgrass, Idaho Fesque, and Sandberg's Bluegrass. The sand soils support Indian Ricegrass and Sand Dropseed.

The remainder of the county's area is classified as "shrubsteppe", which is an arid ecosystem found in Eastern Washington. This habitat is dominated by rolling, grassy plains or "steppe," with an overstory of sagebrush and other woody shrubs such as big sagebrush or threetip sagebrush and occasional growth of rabbitbrush, horsebrush, and spring hopsage (according to WDFW, 2025). Dominance over most of the region is by non-native cheatgrass. Because of the turbulent floods that inundated the area, much of the soils are thin and stony, but they do support perennial Bluegrass as well as stiff Sagebrush and several species of Buckwheat.

The varied terrain and major river environments that cut through the steppe region of Franklin County create many unique habitats for wildlife. Areas such as the Juniper Dunes Wilderness Area, Scooteney Lake, Eagle Lake, the Lower Palouse, and the Snake River and Snake River Island are some of those.

Priority Habitats and Species

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) maintains a statewide Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) List. The list catalogs the habitats and species which are considered to be priorities for conservation and management purposes, and is available on WDFW's website [<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/phs/list>].

The Columbia and Snake Rivers are also an important ecosystem for Franklin County. The Columbia River between McNary Pool and Priest Rapids Dam is the only remaining free flowing segment in Washington, and the last spawning grounds of the fall Chinook Salmon. About 80 percent of the Great Basin Canada Goose population nest and live most of the year in the Columbia River region, which also provide wintering grounds for the rare Giant Canada Goose. Per WAC 365-190-130(2)(a), areas where endangered, threatened, and sensitive species have a primary association must be considered for classification as fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas. These designations are important for planning for development, such as ensuring that development densities are appropriate and that open space corridors are designated when necessary.

Frequently Flooded Areas

The most severe flooding in the unincorporated areas of the county occurs within the Esquatzel Coulee and Kahlotus Creek during the winter and spring months. This commonly results when

either an over saturated or frozen ground condition occurs simultaneously with an increase in rainfall and snowmelt runoff.

The Columbia River has a history of flooding events. Floods have occurred in 1894, 1948, 1964, 1974, 1979, 2017 and 2021. However, since several dams have been erected in the Columbia and Snake Rivers, the likelihood of river flooding occurring has been drastically reduced.

Additionally, the Esquatzel Coulee has a history of flooding. Newspaper articles and photographs recorded Esquatzel Coulee flooding in 1907, 1956 and 1969. Of the floods listed above, five have resulted in Disaster Declarations⁴:

- February 1956 – (Major Disaster Declaration #50) Flooding due to heavy snowfall followed by rapid rise in temperature. *No public or individual assistance records available.*
- March 1979 – (Emergency Disaster Declaration #3070) Flash Flood in Mesa. Locally declared emergency. *No public or individual assistance records available.*
- December 1996 – February 1997 (Major Disaster Declaration #1159) – Public Assistance \$350,912 (Does not include Individual Assistance or Small Business Administration Loans information)
- January - April 2017 (Major Disaster Declaration #4309-DR) – Total Public Assistance cost estimate \$26,612,080 (Does not include Individual Assistance or Small Business Administration Loans information)
- Dec 26, 2021 - Jan 15, 2022 (Major Disaster Declaration #4650-DR) - Total Public Assistance cost estimate \$16,094,227 (Does not include Individual Assistance or Small Business Administration Loans information)

It has been noted that since 1956, flood levels within the county have changed due to channel improvements and irrigation projects. Development in frequently flooded areas can pose a risk to people and property on the development site and/or downstream from the development.

For more information, refer to the latest Franklin County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Climate Element of this Plan.

Floodplain mapping

Franklin County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Frequently flooded areas include 100-year floodplains and floodways and other flood hazard areas such as creeks, wasteways, wetlands, canyons, and closed depressions. These areas are mapped on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for Franklin County. The maps should be used to determine if a potential development site is located within the floodplain.

⁴ Washington State Emergency Management Division files

Several counties in Washington State have replaced the FIRM paper maps with digital mapping. However, digital mapping is not yet available for Franklin County. When FEMA modernizes the mapping for Franklin County, they will first release **Preliminary DFIRM** maps to “provide the public an early look at a home or community’s projected risk to flood hazards....[this will give] homeowners, community officials, financial lenders and other industry professionals who want to understand how their current effective Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) may change when the preliminary data becomes effective.”

While the FIRM maps for Franklin County are not digitized for online mapping, the information is still available online for viewing and downloading, at the **FEMA Flood Map Service Center** website [<https://msc.fema.gov>]. The FEMA website also includes access to amendments, such as Letter of Map Amendments (LOMAs).

Geologically Hazardous Areas

Certain steep slopes, erosion prone lands, seismic hazard areas and landslide areas are considered Geologically Hazardous Areas because of potential threats to life or property. The varied geology of Franklin County that includes canyons, rock formations, and sand dunes means there are Geologically Hazardous Areas deserving of special consideration when development occurs in order to reduce threats to the health and safety of the county’s citizens. The county’s steep slopes and landslide areas are generally located in the eastern and northeastern portions of the county, along the Snake River. The main areas of concern related to erosion are located on the western edge of the county on ridges along the Columbia River where Ringold Erosive Slopes are found, and throughout the eastern portion of the county where areas have the potential for severe to very severe water erosion.

Critical Area Overlay maps, showing generalized areas which have been identified as potential critical areas, are accessible through the Franklin County Planning and Economic Development Department, to aid in preliminary research in assessing the likelihood for the presence of critical areas.

Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

Aquifer recharge areas that have an effect on, or are associated with, aquifers used for potable water are considered Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs). Groundwater resources are replenished by these areas and make up the majority of water used for irrigation, municipal, industrial, and domestic uses. Protection of CARAs is important for public health and safety. Preventing contamination is necessary to avoid exorbitant costs, hardships and potential physical harm to people, as contaminated water is difficult, costly, and often impossible to clean up.

These areas are classified and designated by Franklin County and any proposed development determined to contain critical aquifer recharge areas on site are reviewed for potential impacts to the critical function of the CARAs. The Columbia Basin Ground Water Management Area

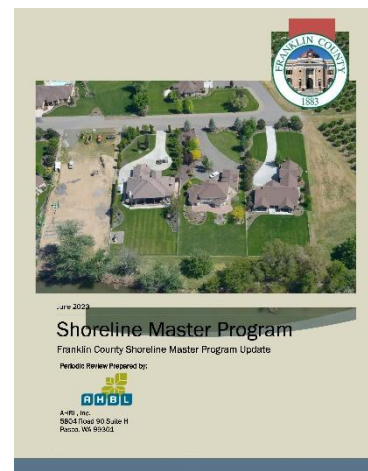
(GWMA) works to reduce nitrate concentrations in ground water in Franklin County, and the U.S. Geological Survey collects and analyzes ground water data to help reduce concentrations of nitrates and monitor the quality of the ground-water system.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND PROTECTION

Shoreline Master Program

This natural element hereby includes the Shoreline Master Program (SMP), as adopted in 2023 (and as amended) by which is incorporated by reference as a sub-element to this Plan. The goals and policies contained in the SMP are goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan. (See Appendix 3)

The SMP designates a shoreline jurisdiction that encompasses shoreline along three rivers and eighteen lakes within the unincorporated County. The three rivers are the Columbia, the Palouse and the Snake Rivers, each of which is considered a Shoreline of Statewide Significance.



The shoreline jurisdiction includes eight shoreline environments:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Aquatic; | 5. Recreation Conservancy; |
| 2. Natural; | 6. Recreation; |
| 3. Agriculture; | 7. High Intensity Industrial; and |
| 4. Rural Conservancy; | 8. Shoreline Residential. |

The SMP establishes regulations and requirements for development in each of the shoreline environments. The SMP implements the state's Shoreline Management Act (SMA) of 1971 within the unincorporated areas of the County.

In addition to the established shoreline environments, the SMP includes:

- An inventory of the natural characteristics and land use patterns along shorelines covered by the SMA;
- A permit system to further the goals and policies of both the SMA and the SMP; and
- A Restoration Plan that includes goals, policies, and actions for restoration of impaired shoreline ecological functions.

Voluntary Stewardship Program

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is a non-regulatory and incentive-based voluntary approach that balances the protection of critical areas on agricultural lands while promoting long-term agricultural vitality at the watershed level. The legislation became effective in July 2011 and included the expectation that critical areas will be protected as they existed at that

time, as baseline conditions. Franklin County opted into this GMA amendment (Resolution 2012-023), and it is applied to 91 percent of the County's lands located in unincorporated areas of the County which are privately owned and used for agricultural production.

The productivity of the land is a key factor in the success or decline of individual farms and a viable agricultural community. Certain agricultural practices can protect and enhance air, water, and soil quality while maintaining economic vitality. The VSP provides explanation and guidance on agricultural practices that can enhance land production and protect and enhance critical areas.

Counties opting into VSP were required to convene work groups to establish a work plan, subject to review and approval by the State Conservation Commission. Once a plan is established, the work group implements the work plan and must formally report progress and address established benchmarks every five years.

The Franklin Conservation District is the agency coordinating these activities for Franklin County. The VSP Watershed Work Plan for Franklin County was developed following a series of Work Group Meetings and was subject to a public review period and later approved by the Washington Conservation Commission in February 2018.

Partner Agencies

There is a wide range of services, programs and initiatives provided by partner agencies and districts, which include:

- **Washington State University Extension program** – Benton/ Franklin County: 4-H Youth development, Master Gardener Program, Food Safety / Food Preservation / Nutrition and Community Agriculture.
- **Franklin County Noxious Weed Board** – The board (also a taxing district) provides various programs, education, services, and performs management operations to control noxious weeds (such as cereal rye and kochia, which are of particular concern) and provide information about pesticides and herbicides.
- **Franklin County Mosquito Control District** – Fostering public health through the control of mosquito-borne diseases, the district also addresses the general nuisances that mosquitos present through an Integrated Pest Management program.



- **Horticultural Pest & Disease Board** – The board’s mission is to ensure unrestricted trade of local agricultural products, across the nation and in international markets. Controlling diseases (such as Little Cherry Disease) insects and other pests (such as the Japanese Beetle, Codling moth, and Cherry Fruit Fly), the board assists the community to proactively protect gardens, farms and parks.
- **Washington Department of Natural Resources** – In 2011 the Kahlotus Ridgetop was established as a National Natural Landmark (NNL)⁵. The 240-acre site is managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources and used for scientific research and educational activities. DNR also manages recreational sites, supports communities to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) and other agency services.
- **Franklin Conservation District** – As a non-regulatory, community-based organization dedicated to promoting the conservation and wise use of natural resources in the County, the district is a legal subdivision of Washington State government. Providing educational, technical, and financial assistance to landowners and resource users is central to their mission. They also support voluntary, non-regulatory programs for sustainable land use and environmental stewardship and foster cooperative and economically feasible solutions to natural resource challenges.



Figure 4: Kahlotus Ridgetop Natural Area Preserve
(Photo: US National Park Service)

Brownfield Site Redevelopment

The Benton-Franklin Council of Governments launched their Brownfield program in 2021. This was a collaborative effort in the community to identify and prioritize sites for environmental site assessments and cleanup/ reuse plans. Examples of brownfield sites include former manufacturing and industrial sites, former gas stations, buildings that were formerly occupied by dry cleaning businesses, old buildings with regulated materials (such as asbestos or lead paint) and more. A grant for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) supported this program, with the objective to foster economic prosperity and restore the environment. Although this program

⁵ NNLs are not national parks; the site is not open to the public.

is due to be soon completed, Franklin County and local landowners and stakeholders may benefit from monitoring for future phases and renewed opportunities through the BFCOG.

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HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

There are a number of properties of potential or known historic and cultural significance in Franklin County. Properties of historic and cultural significance are those properties meeting the national, state, or local criteria for historic and cultural significance.

HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS

Goal A *Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.*

HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES POLICIES

- HCR-1 Encourage the identification and designation of federal, state, and local historic, archaeological, and cultural lands, sites, and structures utilizing applicable designations and where appropriate in cooperation with the Native American tribes.
- HCR-2 Encourage the preservation of significant lands, sites, and structures through incentives and federal, state, and local grant opportunities.
- HCR-3 When available, utilize existing archaeological and cultural resource information from the DAHP and the Tribal Nations to determine culturally significant locations for protection.

- HCR-4 When the original or present use of a designated historic structure ceases to be feasible, encourage adaptive reuse of the structure if that use would encourage and facilitate rehabilitation and preservation of the landmark.
- HCR-5 Prior to demolition, moving, or alteration of any designated historic, cultural, or archeological landmark ensure that due consideration is given to its preservation or, at a minimum, documentation of its historic value.
- HCR-6 Encourage public education programs regarding historic, archaeological, and cultural lands, sites, and structures to promote historic preservation or historic programs within the borders of Franklin County through the use of the Franklin County Historic Preservation Grant Program, established in 2025.

HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES ANALYSIS

TRIBES AND HISTORY OF THE NATIVE PEOPLE

Franklin County is located on the traditional homelands of the palúspam (Palus, translated as “people from Palouse”) people, whose territory extended from the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers in the east to the confluence of the Snake and Columbia Rivers in the west.

The Palus people used this land for food gathering, hunting, salmon fishing, feasting, trading, and celebrations. The Palus Chief Kahlotus signed the 1855 Treaty with the Yakama; however, most of the Palus people stayed in the traditional territory until the eventual move of a majority of the Palus people to the Colville Indian Reservation, due to the pressures from Euro-American settlement. Descendents of the Palus people are now associated with the Colville Confederated Tribes.

Other Native American tribes were settled in nearby areas, including the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the Nez Perce Tribe. There are no Native American (Indian) reservations existing in Franklin County today¹; however, these Tribes are potentially interested parties in cultural and historic resources, natural resources, and climate and resiliency planning throughout the county.

Tribal Participation

Franklin County recognizes the value of coordinated, meaningful, intergovernmental planning with all interested tribes, particularly in regard to:

- Natural resources
- Cultural and archaeological preservation
- Climate and resiliency planning

¹ All of Franklin County lies within the territory of ceded lands from the Yakama Treaty of Camp Stevens, 1855

DESIGNATION OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

The most fundamental building block of historic and cultural preservation is having an inventory of properties of potential historic, cultural, and archaeological significance. The nomination of properties to the local, state, or national registers is, most often, preceded by surveying activity, which involves regular updating of the inventory containing properties of potential historic, cultural, and archaeological significance. Criteria for determining significance include that properties such as districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects embody some importance in American history, architecture, archaeology, or culture of state or local importance and possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Definitions

Historic Properties

A “historic property” is any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in the National, State, or local register of historic places. The term can also include artifacts, records, and remains, which are related to such a district, site, building, or structure.

Cultural Properties

A “cultural property” means a definite physical location and associated material remains, such as an archaeological or historical site, which has been found to be capable of contributing important scientific, historic, or management information, or that possess identified sociocultural, educational, or public importance.

Archaeological Properties

An “archaeological property” is any material remains of human life or activities which are of archaeological interest. These include all sites, objects, structures, artifacts, implements, and locations of prehistorical or archaeological interest, whether previously recorded or still unrecognized, including but not limited to prehistoric and historic Tribal burials, campsites, dwellings and habitation sites, including rock shelters and caves, their artifacts and implements of culture such as projectile points, arrowheads, skeletal remains, grave goods, basketry, pestles, mauls, grinding stones, knives, scrapers, rock carvings, paintings, and other implements and artifacts of any material.

Selected Inventory

Table 1 shows locations which have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places in Franklin County, Washington. Additional locations which are sensitive or have restricted or “withheld” locations (such as aboriginal or archeological sites) are not included on the list².

Table 1: National Register of Historic Places Sites in Franklin County (Selected)

PLACE NAME ON THE REGISTER	LOCATION	LISTED DATE AND REGISTER NUMBER	DETAILS
Box Canyon Viaduct	Spans Box Canyon near the Snake River, in Windust	December 31, 2018 (#100003280)	Built for the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railroad line, 1909.
Franklin County Courthouse	1016 N. 4th Ave. in Pasco	February 8, 1978 (#78002740)	National Register of Historic Places: Late 19th And 20th Century Revivals. Constructed in 1913 and designed by C. Lewis Wilson.
Kurtzman Park	313 S Wehe Ave. in Pasco	December 27, 2022 (#100008491)	A community built park in formerly segregated East Pasco.
Marmes Rock Shelter	Under Lake Herbert G. West in Lyons Ferry	October 15, 1966 (#6600074) National historic Landmark	The site is buried under water.
James Moore House	Off Hwy 395 in Pasco	May 31, 1979 (#79002532)	Also known as the “Moore Mansion”
Morning Star Baptist Church	631 South Douglas Ave. in Pasco	September 29, 2022 (#100008226)	Tri-Cities’ first Black church and a major civil rights center.
Pasco Carnegie Library	305 N. 4th Ave. in Pasco	August 3, 1982 (#82004212)	Constructed in 1911. The building is now used as a museum and serves as the home of

² Cultural Resource surveys and the information they contain are protected under RCW 42.56.300

			the Franklin County Historical Society.
Sacajawea State Park	2503 Sacajawea Park Rd. in Pasco	April 24, 2007 (#07000364)	267-acre site with 9,100 feet of shoreline; was a major meeting place for Native Americans. The Lewis and Clark expedition camped at the site in 1805.
Snake River Bridge	State Route 261 (at the confluence of the Snake and Palouse Rivers)	July 16, 1982 (#82004207)	Also known as the Lyons Ferry Bridge.

Properties included on the Washington Heritage Roster are listed in **Table 2**. The listing is an honorary designation to raise public awareness.

Table 2: Washington Heritage Roster Sites in Franklin County

NAME ON THE REGISTER	NOTES
First Presbyterian Church of Connell	Constructed 1904
Naval Air Station -Pasco	Constructed 1943
Pioneer Memorial Bridge “Blue Bridge”	Constructed 1954
Pasco- Kennewick/Columbia River Bridge	Constructed 1905; 1954
Leon Jaussaud Barn	State Road 261 Kahlotus, Constructed 1912 (Washington Heritage Barn Register)
Hans Harder Barn	State Route 260 Kahlotus, Constructed 1908 (Washington Heritage Barn Register)
Frank A. Hart Barn	5460 Lind Road Connell, Constructed 1912 (Washington Heritage Barn Register)
Neff Farm	10793 Pasco Kahlotus Road, Constructed in 1924 (Washington Heritage Barn Register)

Historic Preservation Grant Program

In 2025 the Franklin County Board of Commissioners established the Historic Preservation Grant Program to:

- Promote historic preservation or historic programs within the borders of Franklin County,
- Increase knowledge and service to residents, and
- Better preserve, exhibit, and interpret historic items.

This program is funded by the County's Historical Preservation Fund which is used to provide grants to interested entities to promote historic preservation or programs in the county. The program is funded by fees received from document recording per RCW 36.22.170.

Cultural Resource Review for State or Federally-funded projects

The Washington State Governor's Executive Order 21-02 sets out requirements for projects which use either state operating or capital funding; consultation with the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation and affected tribes on the potential effects of projects on cultural resources is required. Likewise, when federal funds are involved or a project is on Federal or Tribal land, the federal review process known as Section 106 (under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966) must be followed.

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