

Date: March 14, 2016
To: Planning Commission
From: Fred Evander, Senior Long Range Planner
RE: **Revisions to the Rural Element**
Attachments: Draft Rural Element (18 Pages)

The purpose of this staff report is to introduce a draft revision to the Rural Element of the Lewis County Comprehensive Plan.

ISSUE

As part of the Comprehensive Plan update, Lewis County is required to revise the Rural Element to ensure that six specific items are effectively considered. These six items, and a note of where these items are addressed within the draft, are described below.

- 1. A definition of rural character and rural development consistent with the Growth Management Act.** The proposed Rural Element depicts seven types of development that are found within rural Lewis County. These seven types of development are considered to be consistent with rural character, and are depicted in the illustrations and descriptions on pages 3 through 5. Goals and policies for the different types of development are also addressed on pages 8 through 11.
- 2. The allowance of forestry, agriculture and a variety of rural densities and uses.** The proposed Rural Element specifies the importance of allowing agriculture, mining and timber production in rural areas under the goal for rural economic development (on pages 7 and 8). Specific allowance of agriculture and forestry activities in the rural development district is also noted on page 11. The Resource Element, to be brought to the Planning Commission at a future meeting, will also address natural resource operations.
- 3. A written record explaining how the Rural Element harmonizes the planning goals and meets the requirements of the Growth Management Act.** The proposed draft, *does not* include a written record explaining how the Rural Element harmonizes with the planning goals of the Growth Management Act (at this point). If the Planning Commission believes that the draft is moving in a good direction, staff will begin to work on the written record.
- 4. A definition of rural governmental services.** The proposed draft defines and establishes policies for rural governmental services on page 8.
- 5. Measures protecting rural character.** The proposed draft Rural Element includes several items that are intended to protect rural character. Many of these items can be seen within the LAMIRD section (on pages 8 through 10), and its subsections related to Small Communities, Rural Commercial Crossroads, Rural Industrial/Employment Lands and Rural Residential Settlements. General policies related to the protection of rural character can be seen under the Rural Character goal (on pages 6 and 7).
- 6. Limited areas of more intense rural development (LAMIRDs) are designated consistent within the Growth Management Act.** The proposed draft continues the County's use of LAMIRDs, but slightly renames the different types (please note: no change to the extent or location of LAMIRDs would occur as proposed within the draft). The intent of this redefinition is to better articulate some of the characteristics of the various

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types of LAMIRDs (on pages 3 through 5) and more clearly specify the policies for the different areas (on pages 8 through 10). The draft would also remove several of the unnecessary policies for the various types of LAMIRDs, which are already articulated in the Growth Management Act, and would retain only those provisions that appear to be substantive.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF CHANGES

As written, the proposed draft is meant to simplify the current Rural Element. The draft includes three primary sections – a map, a depiction of the different types of rural development in Lewis County (pages 3 to 5), and a list of goals and policies (pages 6 to 12)– to address the six items required under the Growth Management Act.

The goals and policies section, as written, is based primarily on the existing Comprehensive Plan, though some goals and policies have been added, and the entire list has been reorganized to better group similar thoughts. All proposed additions are underlined, and all proposed deletions are struck through.

COMPARISON TO EXISTING ELEMENT

The existing Rural Element, last substantially reviewed in 2010, addresses many of the same requirements of the Growth Management Act, but also features a narrative that describes each of the different LAMIRD, and Rural Residential designations. The proposed revisions to the element would remove much of this narrative, which is not explicitly required under state law, and would replace the description with pictures and a matrix (pages 3 to 5). Narrative sections in the existing Comprehensive Plan have no policy implications.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission consider the document, comparing it with the existing Rural Element, and provide direction about the draft as written. The Planning Commission will discuss the document at its meeting on March 22, 2016. Additional outreach about the draft will occur after the meeting.