



# Lake Whatcom Management Program Five-Year Work Plan

**Preparation for 2025-2029 Work Plan Programming and Publication**

February 2024





Prepared by the Lake Whatcom  
Interjurisdictional Coordinating Team

# Lake Whatcom Management Program 2020-2024 Work Plan

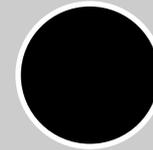
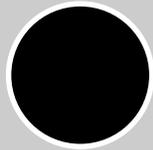
March 2020



**Today**  
 Introduction  
 Process Discussion  
 Summary of Program Areas

**June JPG**  
 Proposed Outline  
 Policymaker Input  
 Q+A w/Experts  
 Staff Reports

**September JPG**  
 Final Draft  
 Summary of Public Input



**Spring 2024**  
 Internal Coordination  
 Questions  
 “Homework”

**Summer 2024**  
 Draft for Public Comment  
 Coordination with Ecology

**Winter 2024**  
 Council(s) and Commission Adoption  
 Final Publication



# Lake Whatcom Management Program: Ten Program Areas

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1. Land Preservation
2. Stormwater
3. Land Use
4. Monitoring & Data
5. Hazardous Materials
6. Recreation
7. Aquatic Invasive Species
8. Utilities & Transportation
9. Education & Engagement
10. Administration

**PROPOSED NEW Actions and Metrics:  
Climate Action (2025-2029 Work Plan)**

# Program Area 1: Land Preservation

## Overview – Current Activities

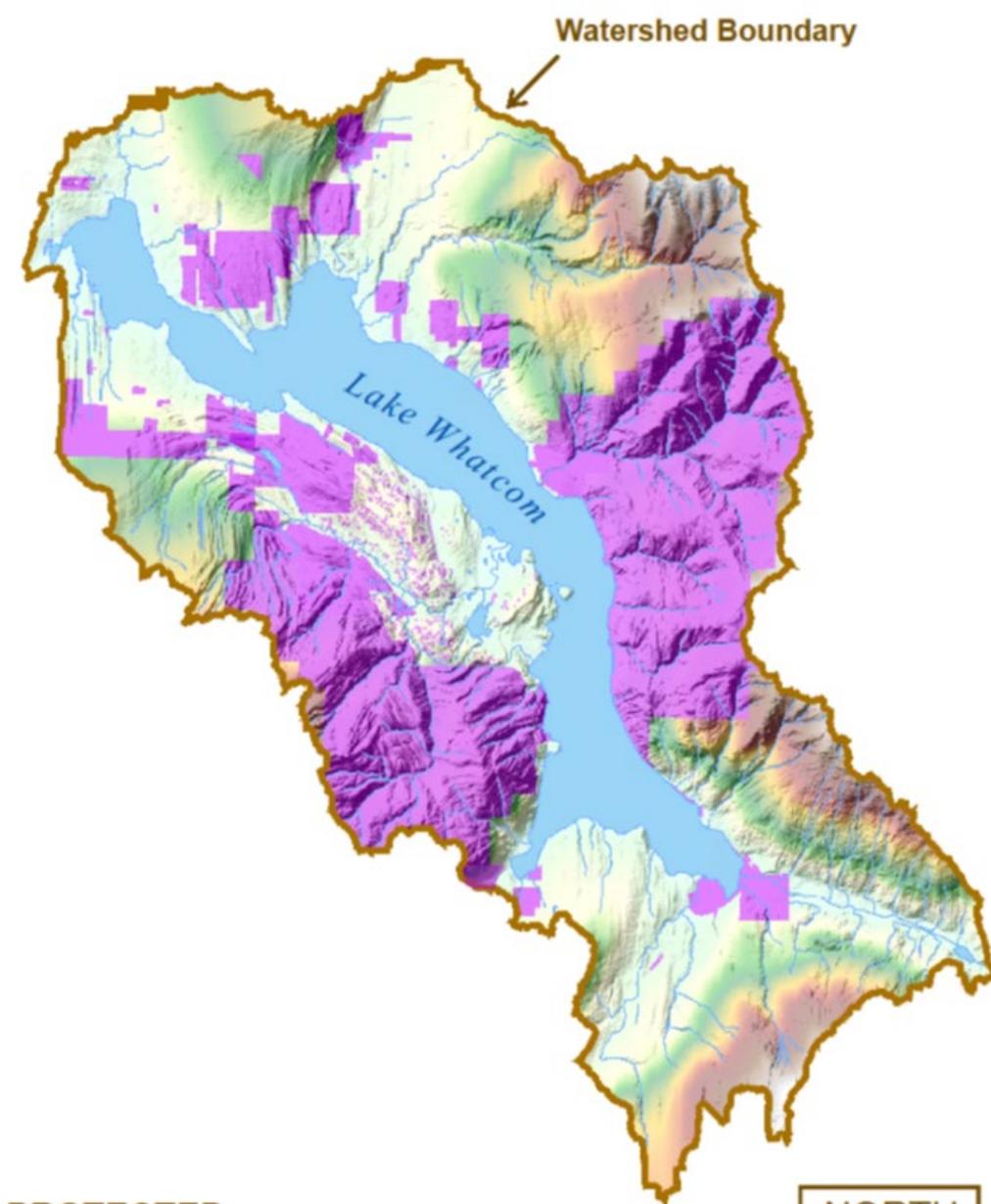
### Purchase/restore watershed lands for permanent protection

- Property Acquisition Program
- Re-conveyance lands
- Galbraith Mountain easement

### Preservation/restoration of forested processes

- Tree planting and invasive species management
- Riparian restoration
- Forest road decommissioning
- Forest health and successional growth

### Wildfire Preparedness



PROTECTED,  
CONSERVATION,  
AND PARK LANDS



# Program Area 2 Stormwater

## Overview – Current Activities

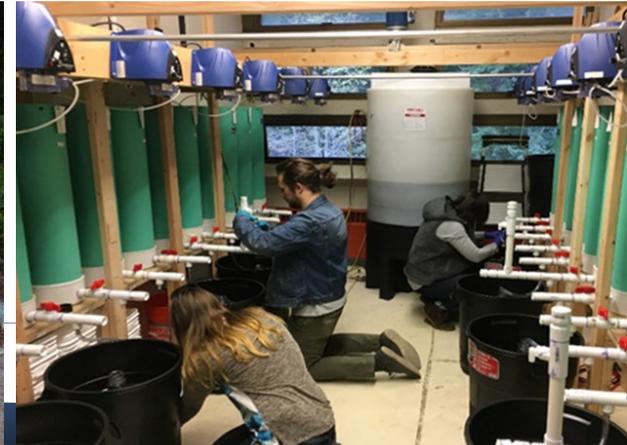
Capital stormwater system construction / retrofits

Public infrastructure maintenance

Support for residential projects (HIP and NNLP)

Research and studies re: effectiveness and efficiency

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) response



# Program Area 3

## Land Use

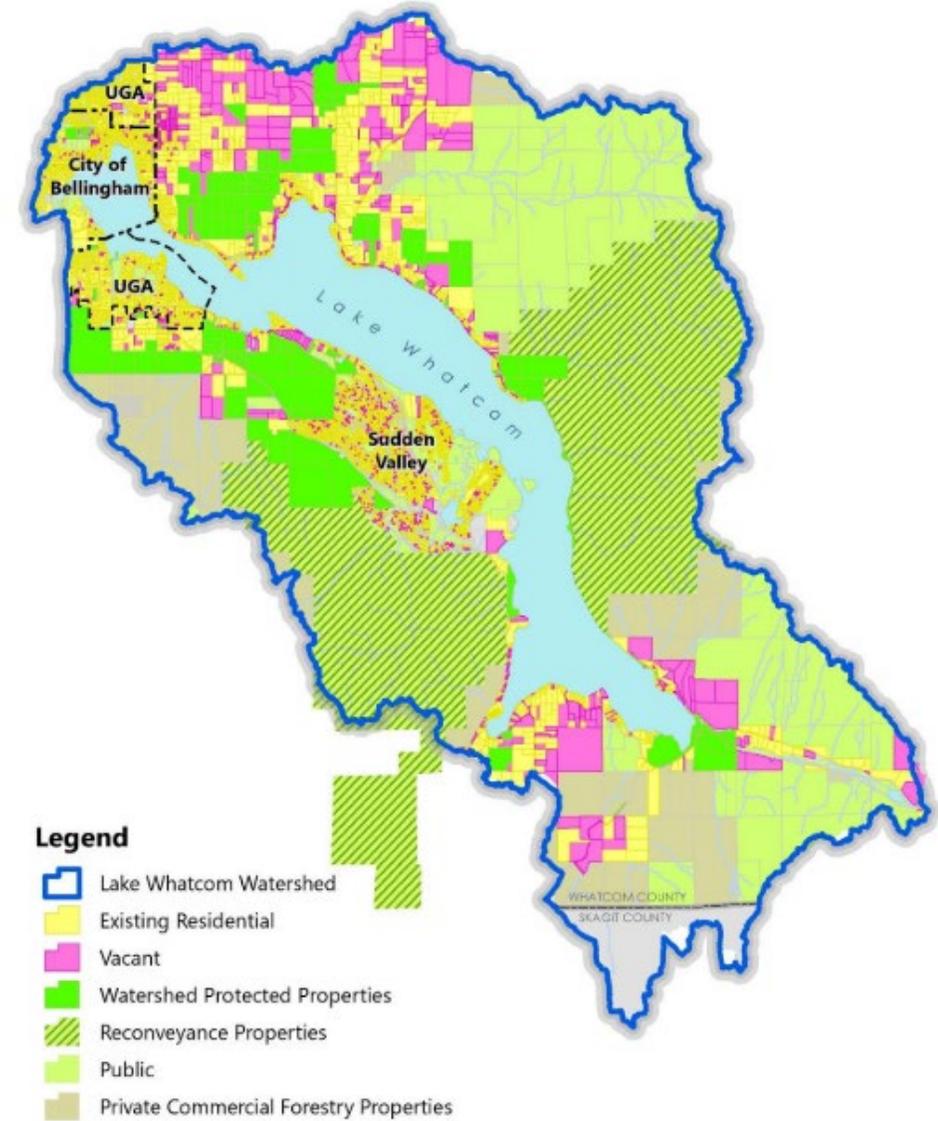
### Overview – Current Activities

City Regulations (BMC 15.42 / 16.80) apply to over 450 acres

County Regulations (WCC 20.51) apply to over 3,100 acres

Sudden Valley Stormwater Management Plan and covenants applicable to 2,300+ lots

City/County staff track Forest Practice Applications



# Program Area 4

## Monitoring and Data

### Overview – Current Activities

**Western Washington University Institute for Watershed Studies monitors the water quality of the Lake and tributary streams**

**Professional consultant monitors tributary streams**

**Department of Ecology partnership for TMDL compliance**

**Lake Whatcom Data Team identifies data gaps and manages ongoing research to fill these gaps**



# Program Area 5 Hazardous Materials

## Overview

Focus on preventing and responding to spills or overuse of chemicals that might harm water quality

City & County receive reports of stormwater issues, including spills (Stormwater Hotline, website)

Crews and trained staff respond to reports and oversee cleanup

Includes phosphorus-containing materials, such as fertilizer, for disposal outside of the watershed

**TAG IT &  
TAKE IT**



**MAKE A PLAN FOR PROPER DISPOSAL**

Protect the health and safety of your loved ones and the environment by properly disposing of household hazardous waste (HHW) items for free at the Disposal of Toxics Facility (DoT).



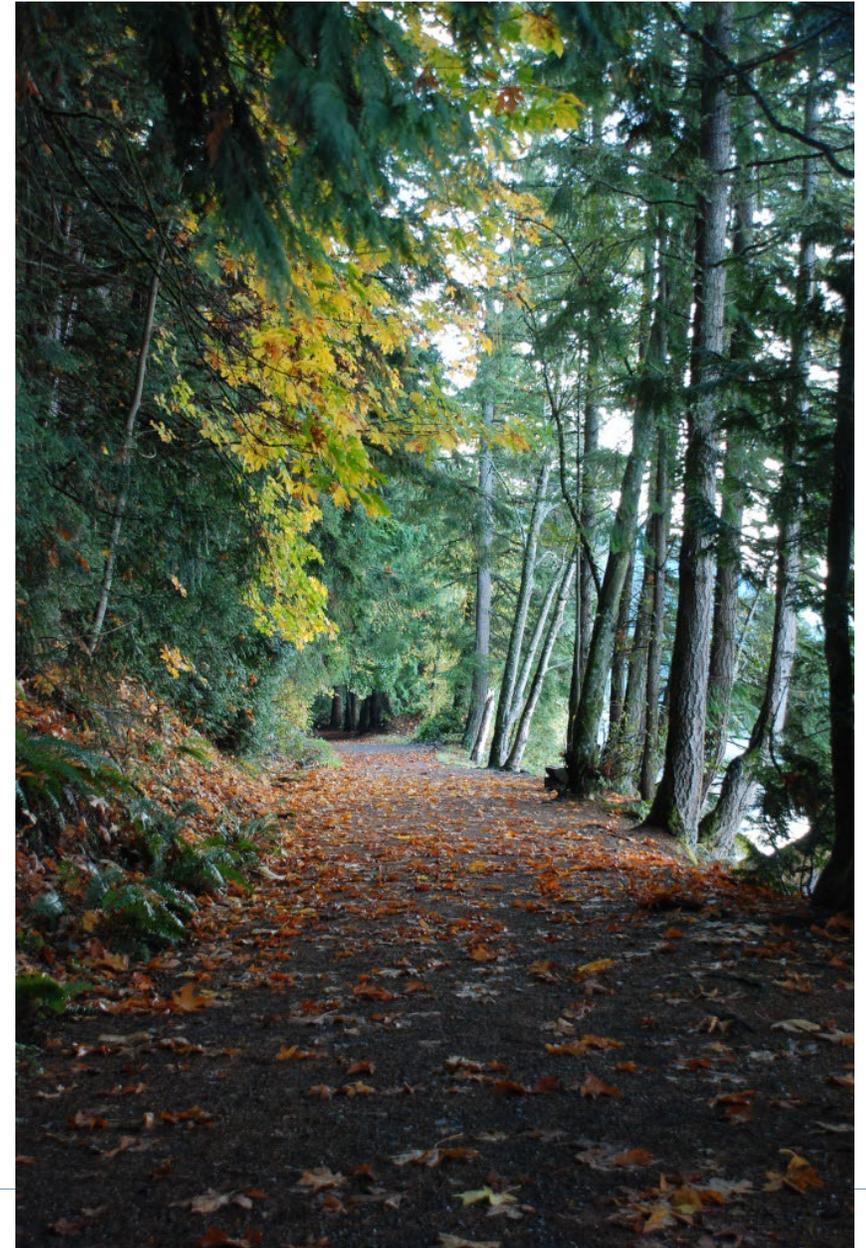
# Program Area 6 Recreation

## Overview – Current Activities

**Over 9,500 acres of recreation lands in Lake Whatcom watershed**

**15 miles of low-impact trails managed**

**Park hosts and ambassadors educate visitors**



# Program Area 7

## Aquatic Invasive Species

### Overview – Current Activities

Inspect watercraft (motorized and non-motorized) at launches and on private properties across the watershed to prevent spread or introduction of invasive species

- ~95,000 inspections since 2013
- ~15,000 AIS Awareness Course participants since 2014
- \$150,000+ Annual Permit Fees collected

Decontamination of high-risk watercraft

Monitoring for potential introductions + Response



**I CLEAN  
DRAIN  
DRY**



[WhatcomBoatInspections.com](http://WhatcomBoatInspections.com)



# Program Area 8

## Utilities and Transportation

### Overview – Current Activities

**Manage water, sewer, and transportation systems to conserve water & prevent impacts**

**City of Bellingham: water, sewer, storm, streets, alleys, bike lanes, communications, street lighting, traffic controls**

**Whatcom County: LW Stormwater Utility, On-Site Septic systems, county roads**

**Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District: water and sewer conveyance**

**Sudden Valley infrastructure O+M Program**



# Program Area 9

## Education and Engagement

### Overview – Current Activities

Raise awareness about Lake Whatcom and its watershed and promote stewardship

Support community engagement in LWMP program areas

Distribute *Stewards of the Lake* Guidebook and New Homeowner Packet and *Lake Whatcom Lowdown* Newsletter

Conduct Baseline Survey every 5 years to measure impacts of outreach programs



Photo by Lou Nicksic



**Hello Lake Whatcom watershed homeowner!**  
*You chose a beautiful place to own property.  
You are also in a special position to care for Lake Whatcom and its surrounding lands for our community.*



Stormwater - Understanding System Co... Watch later Share

**KYLE KULM**  
STORMWATER INSPECTOR,  
WHATCOM COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS

Watch on YouTube

# Program Area 10 Administration

## Overview – Current Activities

**Coordinate efforts and budget among three jurisdictions**

**Organize and publish annual reports**

**Ensure that programs meet regulatory requirements**



# Climate Action in the Lake Whatcom Watershed



## Lake Management and Climate Change

Drier summers

More intense fall, winter, and spring rains

Warmer water for bacteria and AIS

Changes in forest and aquatic ecosystems

## Proposed NEW Program Activities

### Actions and Metrics

- For 2025-2029 Lake Whatcom Work Plan

### Guiding Documents/Philosophies

- City and County Climate Action Plans

### City-and-County-Wide Companion Efforts

- Education and Engagement / Administration / Budgeting

# Climate Action in the Lake Whatcom Watershed



## Climate Actions in Current Work Plan

### Land Preservation:

- Choosing adaptable forest species for replanting
- Preparing for and responding to wildfire threat

### Land Use:

- Preserving native vegetation

### Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention:

- Participating in regional planning to prepare for the next invaders and protect ecosystem resiliency

### Utilities and Transportation:

- Promoting water conservation to address droughts and increasing population

# Climate Action in the Lake Whatcom Watershed



## Climate Actions in Next Work Plan

### Monitoring and Data:

- Lake Whatcom Climate Vulnerability Assessment

### Stormwater:

- Collecting new rainfall data for design instead of old models.

### Recreation:

- Minimizing impacts from increased pressures for forests and shorelines during heat waves

### Utilities and Transportation:

- Promoting public transportation and zero-carbon access to watershed lands



# 2025-2029 Work Plan Proposed Activities

## Continued Progress

Continue watershed management activities across the existing 10 program areas

## New, Improved, or Enhanced Actions

**Add Climate Action activities and metrics (All)**

**Whatcom County Forest Management Plan (Land Preservation, Land Use, Recreation)**

**Phosphorus and Bacteria Optimized O+M (PBOOM) Assessment (Stormwater)**

**TMDL Assistance Mini-Grant Program (Stormwater)**

**TMDL Data Gaps Research (Stormwater, Monitoring and Data)**

**Lake Whatcom Climate Vulnerability Assessment (Monitoring and Data, Climate Action)**

**Lake Whatcom Rapid Response Plan (AIS)**

**Other actions as introduced through planning process (now – September) (All)**

