

Profile of the Palouse Region

Topography

The Palouse RTPO is located in southeastern Washington. It is comprised of the four counties of Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Whitman. This is an area of over 4,320 square miles with a variety of topography and geological features. The region is bisected by the Snake River that consists of rugged bluffs and deep valleys. The northern portion of the region contains rich agricultural land that is well suited for the production of dry land wheat, peas, lentils, and barley. The southern section of the region consists of mountainous, forested terrain and is home to the Umatilla National Forest.

Snake River

The Snake River is the primary surface water in the region. Most of the creeks, streams and rivers within the region flow into the Snake River that in turn connects with the Columbia River and eventually to the Pacific Ocean. A series of Snake River dams supply the most prevalent source of energy through hydroelectric power. The reservoirs created by the dams enable recreational, scenic, and transportation features. The recreational and scenic features are a primary draw upriver from the Lewiston-Clarkston area on the Snake and Clearwater River systems, which provide boating, rafting, fishing, and other water-related sports opportunities. In addition to recreation the reservoirs also provide an economical barge transportation system to serve as a low-cost alternative for shipping the region's agricultural commodities, lumber, and manufactured products to the West Coast and beyond.

The Snake River is an important component of the transportation system serving the region. The river handles a significant amount of grain and other goods produced in the region. The construction of four major dams on the Snake River in the 1950's to 1970's, complete with lock facilities, enables ocean going cargo to travel inland as far as Lewiston, Idaho. Both the Little Goose Dam and Lower Granite Dam are located within the RTPO. There are four port Districts serving the region that have water-side facilities: the Ports of Clarkston, Columbia, Garfield, and Whitman. The Port of Whitman operates three industrial sites along the river: Ports of Wilma, Central Ferry, and Almota. Outbound shipments consist primarily of agricultural commodities and lumber. The Ports of Clarkston, Columbia, and Whitman also have contracted marinas at some of their locations. A fifth port, The Port of Lewiston located in Idaho, is an important factor to our regional economy with its water-side facility for grain and containerized shipments. Port facilities located along the Snake River are operated by Port Districts and grain grower cooperatives.

National Forest

The southern portion of the region is forest and timberland which includes the Umatilla National Forest, the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness, and the Blue Mountains. Asotin, Columbia, and Garfield counties all contain portions of the Umatilla National Forest. This area contains Camp William T. Wooten State Park, the Ski Bluewood ski area, and two peaks over 6,300 feet: Oregon Butte and Diamond Peak.

The Umatilla National Forest covers 1.4 million acres of diverse landscapes and plant communities within the Blue Mountains of southeast Washington and northeast Oregon. The forest has some mountainous terrain, but most of the forest consists of v-shaped valleys separated by narrow ridges or plateaus. The landscape also includes heavily timbered slopes, grassland ridges and benches, and bold basalt outcroppings. Elevation ranges from 1,600 to 8,000 feet above sea level.

Recreation

A wide array of recreation and tourism opportunities are available throughout the entire region to keep visitors and residents entertained through every season of the year. Activities include hunting, fishing, skiing, snowmobiling, biking, golf, and other outdoor endeavors. The area is home to the Umatilla National Forest and the Weneha-Tucannon Wilderness area, as well as numerous sandy beaches and boat launches on the Snake River.

The Snake River offers water-based recreation and fishing on miles of calm, uncrowded water. The Clearwater & Snake River National Recreation Trail offers ten miles of paved continuous trails, boat launches, marinas, and swimming beaches. Several parks and marinas throughout the region offer services and amenities such as: swimming, picnic areas, overnight lodging, RV sites, and many have utility hook-ups.

The region is also known as the gateway to Hells Canyon, North America's deepest gorge, and attracts more than 30,000 visitors each year to enjoy world-class whitewater adventures. The Port of Clarkston is the docking point for several cruise boat companies that originate in Portland, OR, and travel the Columbia-Snake River system following the Lewis & Clark water route. The Touchet and Tucannon Rivers are found in the western part of the region and provide additional recreational opportunities. In the northern end of Whitman County a series of lakes entices anglers. Whitman County is the home to Steptoe Butte State Park, Palouse Falls State Park and Kamiak Butte County Park. The county also operates several other smaller day use parks. Asotin County is the home to Fields Spring State Park, Chief Timothy Park, and several other park areas along the Snake River in Clarkston and Asotin. Garfield County is home to Central Ferry Park and is considered a gateway to the Blue Mountains. Columbia County is home to Camp Wooten State Park, as well as Lyons Ferry Park.

In addition to physical recreational opportunities, the region is also home to many local and nationally recognized events. These include rodeos; fairs and festivals highlighting the agricultural roots of the region; car shows and road races; and major college sports. Washington State University (WSU) also offers residents access to PAC 10 sporting events. The National Lentil Festival held each August in Pullman celebrates the regional title as the Pea and Lentil capitol of the world. Garfield County is the site of the developing Eastern Washington Agricultural Museum and the Wild West Road Rally. Columbia County has many activities such as the All-Wheels Weekend and fine arts events, and Asotin County now boasts an Aquatic Center.

Cultural opportunities flourish in the region as well. The largest art museum in the Inland Northwest is located on the WSU campus in Pullman, offering changing exhibits ranging from fine arts and fine crafts to architecture and design. In addition, several towns boast art galleries representing a wide variety of local, regional, and national talent. Theatre, dance, and music performances occur regularly at facilities across the area, including the 12,000 seat Beasley Coliseum on the WSU campus. Top-name comedians; rock, country, and jazz stars; and touring ballet, symphony, and theatre acts perform at the coliseum throughout the year. The area is in close proximity to the rich culture of the Nez Perce Nation. In Uniontown, a 1934 Dairy Barn turned Artisans workshop offers interactive opportunities to visit with artists while they create their work. The Tekoa Empire Theatre, a 1940, 280 seat, Art Deco Theatre, has been renovated and re-opened as a performing arts center. Regular performances throughout the year include local and regional talent.

Land Use

Existing and proposed land uses are an integral component of transportation planning. The Growth Management Act requires that the transportation element be consistent with

the land use element of the local comprehensive plan. It can be shown that land use and transportation are inter-related and that land use activities largely determine the travel demand and desire. When different land uses are segmented or separated, length of trips tend to increase. These longer trips are usually served more conveniently by the automobile thus reducing the use of transportation alternatives, such as walking or transit to meet mobility needs.

Sustained economic development and growth within a region is desirable because of the economic benefits that increased employment and a larger tax base can bring. However, while growth can contribute to the health of a region's economy, it can also have negative impacts. Unmanaged, fast rates of growth can have severe impacts on the ability of a community to provide needed infrastructure and services. The costs of growth can include worsening levels of traffic congestion, decline in air quality, degradation of infrastructure and overall degradation of the quality of life.

The need to maintain economic viability and, at the same time, quality of life is a challenge. Some components which contribute to a desirable quality of life include job employment opportunities, a healthy environment with clean air, and recreation opportunities. An efficient, safe transportation system also contributes to the quality of life for residents of a region and can act as an attraction for economic development.

The Palouse Region is heavily dependent on agricultural activity throughout. Many grains and vegetables are produced and shipped throughout the world. Lumber is also harvested and transported from the region.

Very few population centers exist for a region of its size, and only the City of Clarkston in Asotin County and the City of Pullman in Whitman County have populations that exceed 5,000 and are considered urbanized. In fact, Pullman, home of Washington State University, with a population of approximately 25,000 makes up over one-third of the population of the region.

Population Trends

From the 1950's to the 1990's, Columbia and Garfield Counties have lost population. Population has declined because of the lack of job opportunities. As farms became more mechanized, less labor was needed and there were no alternative jobs available in the area. Therefore, people moved from the area in order to find work. During the 1990's however, although meager, these two counties showed some population growth.

Asotin and Whitman Counties have gained population consistently over the last several decades. Asotin County has gained population because of job availability in the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley. The Ports of Clarkston, Lewiston, and Wilma have created many job opportunities over the past 40 years. Large firms, such as the Potlatch Corporation and Blount Inc., have consistently provided jobs for the area. Although the importance and contribution of agriculture is evident throughout the region, Whitman County population and economic diversity is influenced by Washington State University in Pullman.

Asotin County deals with the challenges of urban development in unincorporated areas of the county surrounding the City of Clarkston.

Tables 1 and 2 show population census data as well as future forecast projections. Forecast populations for counties are prepared by the Office of Financial Management, however, for cities the forecasts assume a constant percentage of county population for comparison only. Experience over the past several years has been that rural towns have not increased in population to a large extent.

Table 1. Historical Population by Jurisdiction

<i>County</i> <i>Municipality</i>	<i>Year of Incorporation or Formation</i>	Census				<i>Estimate</i>	% Change	
		1970	1980	1990	2000	2009	1990- 2000	2000- 2009
Asotin County	1883	13,799	16,823	17,605	20,551	21,500	17%	5%
<i>Asotin</i>	1890	637	946	981	1,095	1,230	12%	12%
<i>Clarkston</i>	1902	6,312	6,903	6,753	7,337	7,260	9%	-1%
Columbia County	1875	4,439	4,057	4,024	4,064	4,100	1%	1%
<i>Dayton</i>	1881	2,596	2,565	2,468	2,655	2,735	8%	3%
<i>Starbuck</i>	1905	216	198	170	130	130	-24%	0%
Garfield County	1881	2,911	2,468	2,248	2,397	2,400	7%	0%
<i>Pomeroy</i>	1886	1,823	1,716	1,393	1,517	1,520	9%	0%
Whitman County	1871	37,900	40,103	38,775	40,740	43,300	5%	6%
<i>Albion</i>	1910	687	631	632	616	610	-3%	-1%
<i>Colfax</i>	1873	2,664	2,780	2,761	2,844	2,910	3%	2%
<i>Colton</i>	1890	279	307	325	386	420	19%	9%
<i>Endicott</i>	1905	333	290	320	355	305	11%	-14%
<i>Farmington</i>	1888	140	176	126	153	135	21%	-12%
<i>Garfield</i>	1890	610	599	544	641	630	18%	-2%
<i>LaCrosse</i>	1917	426	373	336	380	345	13%	-9%
<i>Lamont</i>	1910	88	101	93	106	95	14%	-10%
<i>Malden</i>	1909	219	209	189	215	200	14%	-7%
<i>Oakesdale</i>	1890	447	444	346	420	420	21%	0%
<i>Palouse</i>	1888	948	1,005	915	1,011	1,010	10%	0%
<i>Pullman</i>	1888	20,509	23,579	23,478	24,948	27,600	6%	11%
<i>Rosalia</i>	1894	569	572	552	648	640	17%	-1%
<i>St. John</i>	1904	575	550	499	548	530	10%	-3%
<i>Tekoa</i>	1889	808	854	750	826	830	10%	0%
<i>Uniontown</i>	1890	310	286	280	345	335	23%	-3%

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management, June 29, 2009

Table 2. Population Forecasts by Jurisdiction

<i>County</i>	<u>Census</u>	<u>Estimate</u>	<u>Forecast</u>				
<i>Municipality</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2025</i>	<i>2030</i>
Asotin County	20,551	21,500	22,290	23,241	24,321	25,341	26,222
<i>Asotin</i>	1,095	1,230	1,241	1,294	1,354	1,411	1,460
<i>Clarkston</i>	7,337	7,260	8,426	8,785	9,194	9,579	9,912
Columbia County	4,064	4,100	4,103	4,096	4,096	4,096	4,088
<i>Dayton</i>	2,655	2,735	2,531	2,527	2,527	2,527	2,522
<i>Starbuck</i>	130	130	168	168	168	168	168
Garfield County	2,397	2,400	2,412	2,494	2,566	2,632	2,683
<i>Pomeroy</i>	1,517	1,520	1,588	1,642	1,689	1,733	1,766
Whitman County	40,740	43,300	43,151	44,274	45,581	46,786	47,743
<i>Albion</i>	616	610	686	704	725	744	759
<i>Colfax</i>	2,844	2,910	3,035	3,114	3,206	3,291	3,358
<i>Colton</i>	386	420	368	378	389	399	407
<i>Endicott</i>	355	305	354	363	373	383	391
<i>Farmington</i>	153	135	154	158	163	167	171
<i>Garfield</i>	641	630	651	668	688	706	721
<i>LaCrosse</i>	380	345	398	408	420	431	440
<i>Lamont</i>	106	95	106	109	112	115	117
<i>Malden</i>	215	200	222	228	234	241	245
<i>Oakesdale</i>	420	420	437	448	461	474	483
<i>Palouse</i>	1,011	1,010	1,050	1,078	1,109	1,139	1,162
<i>Pullman</i>	24,948	27,600	25,709	26,378	27,157	27,875	28,445
<i>Rosalia</i>	648	640	635	652	671	689	703
<i>St. John</i>	548	530	573	588	605	621	634
<i>Tekoa</i>	826	830	872	895	921	945	965
<i>Uniontown</i>	345	335	331	339	349	359	366

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management, June 29, 2009 for Counties (Projected Population Growth used OFM Medium series)

City Estimates are an average of historic 30 year percentage of County Population

Economic Activity

A major factor that is used as a determinate for land use impacts on transportation is employment. Increases in the employment base of an area can be used as a gauge of the growth of the area and emerging needs for access to and from the workplace.

Transportation models in urban transportation planning use “home to work” trips as the basic component when measuring the potential loads that transportation systems must bear in the future. While rural areas lack the magnitude of scale required to calibrate such modeling tools, employment data can still be useful to identify and project needed transportation improvements.

The location and concentration of jobs in a region can produce severe constraints on transportation facilities. A further study could be helpful when determining the basis for job location and concentration and provide information on development trends that will change transportation needs in the future.

While the region is generally rural in nature with agriculture as a staple industry several other occupations and industries are also improving the region’s economy. Current top employers of the region include: Government (43%), Out of State employment (13%), Manufacturing (10%), Services (9%), and Agriculture (8%). The majority of the employment for the region is in Whitman County (76%).

The unemployment rate for the region is relatively good with only Columbia County falling below the state average 8.7% at 10.1%. Whitman County has the lowest unemployment rate at 5% followed by Garfield and Asotin County at 7.0% and 7.6% respectively.

The overall economic outlook for the region looks relatively good over the next 5 years with the employment growth rate projected to be 2% higher than the state and federal rates at 9%. The top growth occupations in the region includes farmers and ranchers, postsecondary teachers, general office clerks, probation officers and correctional treatment specialists, miscellaneous agricultural workers/managers, and registered nurses.

Anticipated Growth Areas by County

The PRTPO considered existing land use and tried to visualize how these land uses might change over the next twenty years. By considering past growth and population trends, the PRTPO concluded that the following areas should incur up to moderate growth over the next 20 years:

ASOTIN COUNTY:

1. Parts of Sections 21 & 28 in T11N of R46E, adjacent to US 12 in the City of Clarkston (residential).
2. Part of Section 30 in T11N of R46E, near Ben Johnson Road and Evans Road west of Clarkston (residential).
3. Parts of Sections 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, & 18 in T10N of R46E, south of Peola Road and west of Peola Road southwest of the City of Clarkston (residential).
4. Parts of Sections 24, 25, & 26 in T11N of R45E west of Evans Road west of the City of Clarkston (industrial).

COLUMBIA COUNTY:

Short Term growth areas:

1. City of Dayton: Cameron & Cottonwood Streets (industrial & recreation), the Suffield property in North Dayton (residential), and the south 4th street area (residential).

2. West Dayton Urban Growth Area from city limits to Chandler Road - residential, commercial, industrial and Harlem Road/West Commercial Road area residential.
3. The North Touchet area (residential & recreation).
4. SR 12 from Dayton UGA to the Lewis and Clark State Park - residential and industrial.
5. South Touchet Road and Wolf Fork Road - residential.
6. Parts of Sections 1, 2, 11, 12, 13, 14 & 23 in T9N of R40E on Eckler Mountain - seasonal recreation and residential.
7. Construction of Lower Snake Wind Project and BPA substation.

Long Term Growth areas:

8. The area in the county that parallels the Dayton city limits between the Patit Creek Road and Mustard Hollow Road (residential).
9. The Patit Creek Road area to the first 90 degree curve (residential & industrial).
10. The area from Lyons Ferry to the mouth of the Tucannon River (recreation & industrial).
11. The Tucannon area from the Powers Road to Starbuck (recreation & industrial).
12. The Tum-a-Lum area in parts of Sections 5, 9 & 16 in T10N of R41E (recreation).
13. The Huntsville area north of US 12 in Section 6 in T9N of R 38E (residential).
14. North West area of Dayton north of Dayton Avenue - residential.

These growth areas will have traffic impacts particularly on 4th St. North, South Touchet Road, Eckler Mt. Road and US 12, particularly at the intersections of 4th St., 1st St., Front St., Cherry St., Wagon Road, Cameron St., Dayton Ave., Patit Rd., Chandler Rd., Main Rd, Gallaher Rd, Main Rd Cutoff and Lower Hogeeye Rd.

GARFIELD COUNTY:

1. The area east of Pomeroy to Pataha (industrial & residential).
2. Parts of Sections 26, 27, 28, 33, 34 & 35 in T10N of R42E (recreation) east of Mountain Road near the Umatilla National Forest.

WHITMAN COUNTY:

1. Pullman area: within ½ to 1 mile of the Pullman City limits (residential).
2. Pullman-Moscow Corridor: along SR 270, from Pullman to the Idaho border (commercial and industrial).
3. Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport corridor (light industrial, residential).
4. Locust Grove Industrial Park: North of Pullman on Pullman Albion Road (light industrial) - plat pending.
5. Port of Wilma Industrial Park: on SR 193, northwest of Clarkston (heavy industrial) - platted.
6. Colfax Airport Industrial Park (heavy industrial) - platted.