

3 Effects Analysis

3.1 Accommodating Growth

3.1.1 Population Projections

Okanogan County has had historically low population growth. Per the 2020 Census, approximately 60.8 percent of the total county population resides in unincorporated areas. This percentage has grown steadily over the past 50 years, with only approximately 47.7 percent in unincorporated areas in 1970.

The Office of Financial Management (OFM) provides a low, medium, and high range of growth projections for the future. Table 4 summarizes each of these projections in terms of persons and number of households relative to the County population from the 2020 Census of 43,084.¹

Table 4. Summary of low, medium, high OFM growth projections.

	Growth Scenario		
	Low	Medium	High
Total 2040 population	38,493	45,621	57,894
Change in population	-4,591	2,537	14,810
Change in households*	-1,929	1,066	6,223

* Based on 2020 Census data showing average of 2.38 people per household in Okanogan County.

3.1.2 Growth Capacity

Land availability does not appear to be a limiting factor on growth in the County as a whole in the next 20 years. To estimate the capacity of land in the County to accommodate projected growth, an analysis of existing developed and undeveloped land was performed. The analysis inventoried existing parcels in the unincorporated areas of each Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) in the County, classifying each as developed or undeveloped based on County Assessor land use codes.

Table 5 summarizes the number of existing developed and undeveloped land. Detailed results are provided in appendices to this DEIS.

Table 5. Summary of growth capacity analysis by WRIA.

WRIA	Total Existing Lots	Total Developed Lots	Total Undeveloped Lots
47 – Chelan	0	0	0
48 – Methow	9,324	4,612	4,712
49 – Okanogan			
50 – Foster*			
52 – Sanpoil*	1,936	691	1,245
60 – Kettle	2,353	680	1,673

* Located partially within the Colville reservation.

The number of existing undeveloped lots, without the creation of additional lots, accommodates all OFM growth scenarios because the number of undeveloped lots exceeds the project change in households under all growth scenarios. In addition to existing undeveloped lots, additional lots could be created in the future through subdivision, although the number of future lots varies by Alternative and

¹ Population statistics for the County vary slightly by source. According to the U.S. Census, the 2020 population of the county was 43,130.

may be constrained by the presence of critical areas or restrictions on water availability, which would limit developability.

3.1.3 Historic Rates of Development

The actual rate of development was estimated by reviewing building permit history in Okanogan County from 2010 through 2018. Total building permits issued since 2010 are summarized by WRIA in Table 3.

Table 6. Building permits issued by WRIA, 2010-2018

WRIA	Building Permits
47 – Chelan	0
48 – Methow	534
49 – Okanogan	652
50 – Foster	3
52 – Sanpoil	42
60 – Kettle	24

Since 2010 an average of approximately 122 building permits per year have been issued for single-family residences. Based on the 2020 Census average of 2.38 persons per household, that number correlates with a growth rate of approximately 290 people per year, or 5,517 people and 2,318 households by 2040.

The building permit analysis did not identify whether the homeowner was already a County resident and/or were moving from an incorporated area of the County, nor did it analyze whether the permitted residence was a second or vacation home. As a result this analysis likely overestimates the overall population growth rate the County should anticipate over the next 20 years.

3.1.4 Discussion

The number of existing undeveloped lots could accommodate any of the OFM growth scenarios, regardless of future subdivision of land. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many lots that were previously subdivided remain unsold and/or not developed after many years. Because the number of undeveloped lots that exists today could accommodate any of the OFM growth scenarios, the Alternatives considered would not constrain growth.

If population growth in the County tracked the growth rate predicted from past building permit issuance (290 people per year), the population growth would fall in between the medium and high growth OFM growth scenarios (5,517 people and 2,318 households by 2040). Several factors, however, may reduce the likelihood of a high growth scenario, including: lack of desirable area; subsequent lack of water; lot size does not support OSS; and lack of well-defined or constructed road access.

Therefore, the Board of County Commissioners has adopted the OFM’s medium growth scenario for the next 20 years, and the Alternatives considered offer different policy approaches to accommodate that growth scenario. This DEIS evaluates the impacts of each of the Alternatives assuming the medium growth projection. The Alternatives will influence the distribution of that growth throughout the County. Specifically, the Alternatives differ in the extent to which they direct growth to the urban centers and their expansion areas as compared to the unincorporated areas of the County. The rate and extent of impacts to the settlement patterns depend in part on the ability of cities and towns to secure