

From: [Oliver Orjiako](#)
To: [Sonja Wiser](#); [Jose Alvarez](#)
Subject: FW: Clark County Equestrians Deserve Elevated Stature in the Comprehensive Plan
Date: Tuesday, May 28, 2024 8:27:34 AM

FYI and for the record. Thanks.

From: Clark County Citizens United, Inc. <cccuinc@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 11:24 PM
To: Gary Medvigy <Gary.Medvigy@clark.wa.gov>; Karen Bowerman <Karen.Bowerman@clark.wa.gov>; Michelle Belkot <Michelle.Belkot@clark.wa.gov>; Glen Yung <Glen.Yung@clark.wa.gov>; Sue Marshall <Sue.Marshall@clark.wa.gov>; Kathleen Otto <Kathleen.Otto@clark.wa.gov>; Oliver Orjiako <Oliver.Orjiako@clark.wa.gov>
Subject: Fw: Clark County Equestrians Deserve Elevated Stature in the Comprehensive Plan

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of Clark County. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Clark County Council
May 25, 2024
P.O. Box 5000
Vancouver, Washington 98666

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD AND THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Re: Clark County Equestrians Deserve Elevated Stature in the Comprehensive Plan

Dear Councilors,

For many Clark County citizens, living, caring for and riding horses is a lifestyle that is important to them. They're in good company with prominent people from around the world; Teddy Roosevelt, South American Gauchos, Queen Elizabeth, Rudyard Kipling, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans to name a few. Winston Churchill wrote; ***"There is something about the outside of a horse, that is good for the inside of a man."***

In testimony given by the membership of Clark County Citizens United, there is often reference to the county's true rural culture. This has an important role to play in defining the unique rural character, stated in Comprehensive Plans. The rural and resource areas are not all commercial produce farms and forestry. In reality, the local horse enthusiasts are the majority of the farms. They are the heart of our unique character and comprise a long-established community of like-minded people that share a love for horses. The County's Comprehensive Plan needs to reflect this diversity and elevate their stature in importance when defining the Rural Character.

The Comprehensive Growth Plan's definition of Rural Character is now over 30 years

and is obsolete. In fact, the present characterization has never represented an accurate description of the patterns of development on the ground, the lifestyle activities and the culture of the people that live there. It's the activities of these people and how they have lived their lives over generations, that built the patterns of land development that are evident today. The avid gardeners, orchardists, hay fields, small family farms with children, 4-H animals, cows, steers, chickens, goats, and of course, horses.

The current definition of "Rural Character" is a problem because it's wrong. It is completely disconnected to the culture, the community of people and the various activities generations of people have conducted on their county properties for decades. Rather than elevate, highlight and strengthen the unique features that connect with the culture of the people, the definition is generic and fails to do justice for these folks. It may easily apply to any other county across Washington, but not here. Importantly, it overpowers the rural communities and controls an obscure land use and social agenda that is not beneficial to the community.

RCW 36.70A.030 Definitions

(35) "Rural character" refers to the patterns of land use and development established by a county in the rural element of its comprehensive plan:

(a) In which open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment;

(b) That foster traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in rural areas;

(c) That provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and Communities;

(d) That are compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat;

(e) That reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;

(f) That generally do not require the extension of urban governmental services; and

(g) That are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and groundwater and surface water recharge and discharge areas;

(36) "Rural development" refers to development outside the urban growth area and outside agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170. Rural development can consist of a variety of uses and residential densities, including clustered residential development, at levels that are consistent with the preservation of rural character and the requirements of the rural element. Rural development does not refer to agriculture or forestry activities that may be conducted in rural areas.

Clark County Comprehensive Plan 2015-2035 Rural and Natural Resource Element –

"As defined by **WAC 365-195-210(19)**, rural lands are those areas which lie outside of urban growth areas and do not include designated long-term resource lands (agriculture, forest or mineral resources). In Clark County, the rural area represents a lifestyle based on historical development patterns and resource-based industries such as commercial forestry, Christmas trees, dairies, berry farming, orchards and mining. Today much of the county’s rural lands include a mix of resource, small commercial, recreational and residential uses. "

CCCU NOTES: The referenced WAC in this Comprehensive Plan passage has nothing to do with rural land definitions. WAC 365.195. is in reference to Best Available Science. There are other passages in the Plan that have similar problems. The Comprehensive Plan is inconsistent and does not comply with the mandates of the Washington Growth Management Act.

Chapter 365-195 WAC
[| Show Dispositions](#) Last Update: 3/29/23

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT—BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE

WAC Sections

PART NINE

BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE

[HTML](#) [PDF](#) **365-195-**

(Clark County Comp. Plan)

"No single attribute describes the rural landscape. Instead combinations of characteristics which are found in rural settings impart the sense of what we commonly describe as rural. These factors are cumulative in nature and the more of these factors that are present influence feelings of whether a particular area is rural. In many cases these characteristics are subjective and frequently not all of them are found in each area. When describing rural conditions the public will often describe these areas in terms of a certain lifestyle. The factors listed below are those that usually describe "rural character."

- The presence of large lots;
- Limited public services present (water, sewer, police, fire, roads, etc.);
- Different expectations of levels of services provided;
- Small scale resource activity;
- Undeveloped nature of the landscape;
- Wildlife and natural conditions predominate;
- Closer relationship between nature and residents;

- *Personal open space;*
- *A sense of self sufficiency; and*
- *Rural commercial supporting rural area population.*

When the first 1994 Comprehensive Plan was written, the commercial dairy farms were already migrating out and there were approximately 20 left. When the 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan was updated 20 years later, the number of dairies had gone down to 3 or 4. Despite the obvious downward trend for dairy farms over 30 years, and increased equestrian numbers, the current plan still claim on Page 81, **Rural and Natural Resource Element**, the dairy farms as an industry along with forestry, Christmas trees, berry farming, etc. This is an alarming trend, happening in the rural areas, but isn't being captured in any Comprehensive Plan. The trend is what's important as it shows that a transformation in the Rural Character has been happening across a span of 30 years. This has implications to rural economies, culture, communities and social structures.

On Page 89 of the Clark County Comprehensive Plan 2015-2035, it states, *The Equestrian Community plays a vital role in Clark County's economy and rural character. . . According to the Clark County Equine Impact report (Clark County Executive Horse Council, 2009), 4.8% of Clark County households own equines. The estimated number of equines in Clark County is approximately 28,902.* Even though the equestrian community makes substantial economic and cultural contributions on par with the Christmas tree farmers, berry farmers and orchards, they fail to be recognized with equal importance. Despite only 2 or 3 Dairy farms, they still get recognized in the Plan, and the equestrians don't. This needs to be corrected.

Page 89 of the Plan states;

*. . . "Additionally, with the county's emphasis on preserving agricultural and forestry, lands within the Resource and Rural Districts, the development of large equestrian facilities of a size and scale that would be incompatible with agricultural and forestry. Practices within these districts **should be discouraged.**"*

CCCU NOTES: So what this is saying is that the raising and management of horses is not an agricultural endeavor. That can't be further from the truth. Clearly, whoever wrote and approved this passage has no idea as to the agriculture workings of a horse farm.

The county must change the way the county perceives rural character. Stop bullying and forcing the characterization to be something it never was. Respond to the inadequate, obsolete definition and write one that truly represents rural and resource, respects the community and recognizes the vital role the equestrian culture plays in shaping it's destiny. The honing of the county's genuine rural character dates back to antiquity. Many diverse elements have played parts, but none more crucial than the equestrians. Horsemanship thrives in Clark County and the Rural Character needs to reflect this basic elemental partnership

Sincerely,

Susan Rasmussen, President

Clark County Citizens United, Inc.

P.O. Box 2188

Battle Ground Washington 98604.