

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

SECTION B, ELEMENT 8

UTILITIES

July 2006

"Advanced interactive communication systems are encouraged Our community fosters resource and energy conservation Energy independence is encouraged."

ELEMENT 8

UTILITIES

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8.1 INTRODUCTION

8.1.A Purpose

The purpose of the Utilities Element is to set goals and policies which provide guidelines for the provision of utility services in San Juan County, and to facilitate coordinated, cost-effective planning and construction by the County and by individual utility service providers in a manner consistent with the goals and policies set forth in this *Plan*. This element consists of General Goals and Policies, Utility-Specific Goals and Policies, and a Utilities Inventory in Appendix 8.

The Utilities Element reflects certain key assumptions:

1. Utility providers are the best identifiers of utility problems and the solutions needed to overcome them.
2. Level of service (LOS) standards, concurrency, and capacity requirements do not apply to utility services addressed in this element.
3. Privately owned utilities are not public facilities although they provide a public service. Each utility bears the responsibility for providing services to San Juan County residents within the guidelines of their own policies and in a manner consistent with the regulatory bodies having jurisdiction over them.
4. County residents ultimately bear the majority of the costs associated with the provision of utility services through utility rates, taxes, land development costs, and impacts to environmental and aesthetic values.

8.1.B Relationship to Other Elements

The Utilities Element does not address water resources or services. These elements are discussed in detail in Appendix 4 and Element 4-Water Resources and Appendix 7 and Element 7-Capital Facilities.

While the Utilities and the Capital Facilities Elements both address utility planning issues, the Utilities Element differs from the Capital Facilities Element in some ways. The Utilities Element does not address financing issues. It presents policies concerning how utilities are to be located and, in general terms, their design.

The Utilities Element relies on information shared by the utility providers.

8.2 GENERAL GOALS AND POLICIES

The General Goals and Policies in this Element address the planning, location and siting of utilities, services to new development, and environmental protection - issues common to all utility services.

8.2.A Long-range Planning

Goal: To coordinate planning efforts between San Juan County and utility service providers and encourage the regular exchange of plans, maps, and other pertinent information; to aid utility service providers in anticipating and responding to growth by establishing land use policies and regulations to direct and manage future growth; and to maintain consistency between utility service plans and San Juan County plans.

Policies (8.2.A.1-6):

1. Provide utility service providers with appropriate plans and mapped information to help establish a common county-wide base map for utilities planning.
2. Maps and facility inventories, with text designating the approximate location of existing facilities and the general location of proposed new facilities, will be obtained from utility service providers and integrated into the county's Geographic Information System (GIS).
3. Review the utility facilities inventory annually and provide updates on a biennial basis or as necessary.
4. Provide utility service providers with annual updates and status reports for the six year capital improvement financing plan to aid in their ability to coordinate necessary system improvements.
5. Cooperate with utility providers in siting facilities for new and alternative technologies to save money and promote reliability of existing utilities by conserving existing energy resources, while promoting a feasible conversion to energy-saving technologies.
6. Cooperate with utility service providers in future comprehensive planning efforts, and in evaluating actual patterns and rates of growth and comparing such patterns and rates to demand forecasts.

8.2.B Project Coordination

Goal: To allow for the timely and cost-effective provision of utility services to county residents by enabling inter-agency joint project planning; and to ensure the availability and use of utility corridors within public rights-of-way for the placement of utility service facilities.

Policies (8.2.B.1-4):

1. Facilitate inter-agency coordination and planning for joint trenching, installation, upgrade, repair, maintenance, and construction of new utility facilities between the Public Works Department, the various utility service providers, and other agencies.
2. Provide timely notification of proposed projects in public rights-of-way to utility service providers and coordinate the placement of both above- and underground utility facilities which are necessary to provide adequate service, including transformers, switch vaults, telephone pedestals, utility equipment cabinets, and other necessary utility equipment or structures.
3. New dedications for public rights-of-way should allow for utility services.

8.2.C Location and Siting

Goal: To allow for the presence, continuing operation, maintenance, and expansion of the full range of utility services available as reflected in the facilities inventory; to accommodate future changes in conditions and technologies which may impact the character and operation of utility facilities; to recognize that the geographic character of San Juan County necessitates providing access and the ability to cross shorelines and waterways to utilities; and to recognize that utility facilities must occupy and traverse a broad range of areas and land use designations.

Policy (8.2.C.1):

1. Locate and site utility facilities to minimize negative impacts to the rural character and natural environment of the county. New transmission facilities, substations and submarine transmission cable terminal facilities should be located and sited to minimize adverse impacts to the county's shorelines and rural character.

2. New utility facilities should conform to the policies of the Land Use Element.

8.2.D Permitting

Goal: To foster predictability and timeliness in processing permit applications for new utility facilities or utility service work; and to allow for necessary maintenance, repair, improvement, and expansion of utility facilities in a timely and efficient manner.

Policies (8.2.D.1-3):

1. Priority should be given to maintenance and repair work required to restore utility service under emergency circumstances.
2. Identify utility installation, relocation and maintenance activities that are expected to have significant permanent or unmitigable impacts.
3. Identify utility installation, relocation and maintenance activities which are expected to have insignificant environmental impacts and will establish exemptions from permit requirements for those types of activities.

8.2.E New Development

Goal: To minimize adverse impacts of providing utility services to new development on the rural character of San Juan County; to allow for the provision of the full range of utility services to county residents; and to provide for new utility facilities which are compatible with or can be mitigated to minimize adverse impacts to adjacent land uses.

Policies (8.2.E.1-3):

1. New utility installations to serve new development should be installed underground, except that services for single-family residential construction on an existing parcel may connect with existing overhead utility facilities.
2. New development should be designed so that utility easements are accessible and have sufficient capacity for installation of the full range of required utility services.
3. Utility providers should be consulted during the permitting process for installation of utility systems.
4. New utility installations should provide vegetative screening or buffers for existing adjacent development.
5. New development approved adjacent to existing utility facilities should provide vegetative screening or buffers.

8.2.F Environmental Protection

Goal: To protect and preserve natural habitats and environments while also providing for the location and extension of necessary utility facilities.

Policies (8.2.F.1-4):

1. Environmental protection and a quality environment are viewed as one product of, and not a constraint on, good utility service, and are important components of operation in the public interest. Regulations for environmental protection should recognize both the significance and permanence of potential environmental damage and the cost to mitigate or avoid potential damage for proposed utility projects.
2. New utility facilities should be located away from, or constructed in a manner compatible with, critical areas, Resource Lands, and Shorelines. Recognize that physical and service constraints may not allow relocation away from or full compatibility with such areas and resources.
3. Condition the approval of new utility facilities so as to avoid or mitigate any significant adverse impacts, and to develop appropriate compensating measures where mitigation is not feasible.
4. Ensure that utility service providers are responsible for costs such as those associated with damage caused to the environment and public rights-of-way so that utilities will seek to minimize those costs in their planning, decision-making, and project execution.

8.2.G Energy Conservation

Goal: Encourage the exploration of innovative and alternative technologies regarding energy conservation.

Policy (8.2.G.1):

1. Encourage utility service providers to explore innovative and alternative methods of conserving energy.

8.3 UTILITY-SPECIFIC GOALS AND POLICIES

8.3.A Electricity

Goal: To assist the Orcas Power and Light Company (OPALCO) in achieving its goal as stated in the Cooperative's *Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation*: "to make electric energy available to its members at the lowest cost consistent with sound economy, good management, and the public interest."

Policies (8.3.A.1-6):

1. Assist OPALCO when necessary to respond to new, unforeseen conditions and technologies that may affect utility operations and facilities.
2. Coordinate planning to allow for the appropriate location and siting of all necessary existing and future facilities including overhead, underground, and submarine transmission and distribution systems, substations, cable terminals, standby generation, and any other necessary equipment or structures. Existing facilities are shown in Figure 1, *below*.
3. Consider electric power facilities to be essential public facilities.
4. New upland power transmission facilities, substations and submarine transmission cable terminal facilities should be located and sited to minimize adverse impacts to the rural character, shorelines and natural environment of the County.

5. Allow the testing of new alternative energy sources which are consistent with the goals and policies of this *Plan* and which comply with all attendant regulations.
6. Develop a process for locating sites deemed appropriate for the location of alternative power generation facilities.

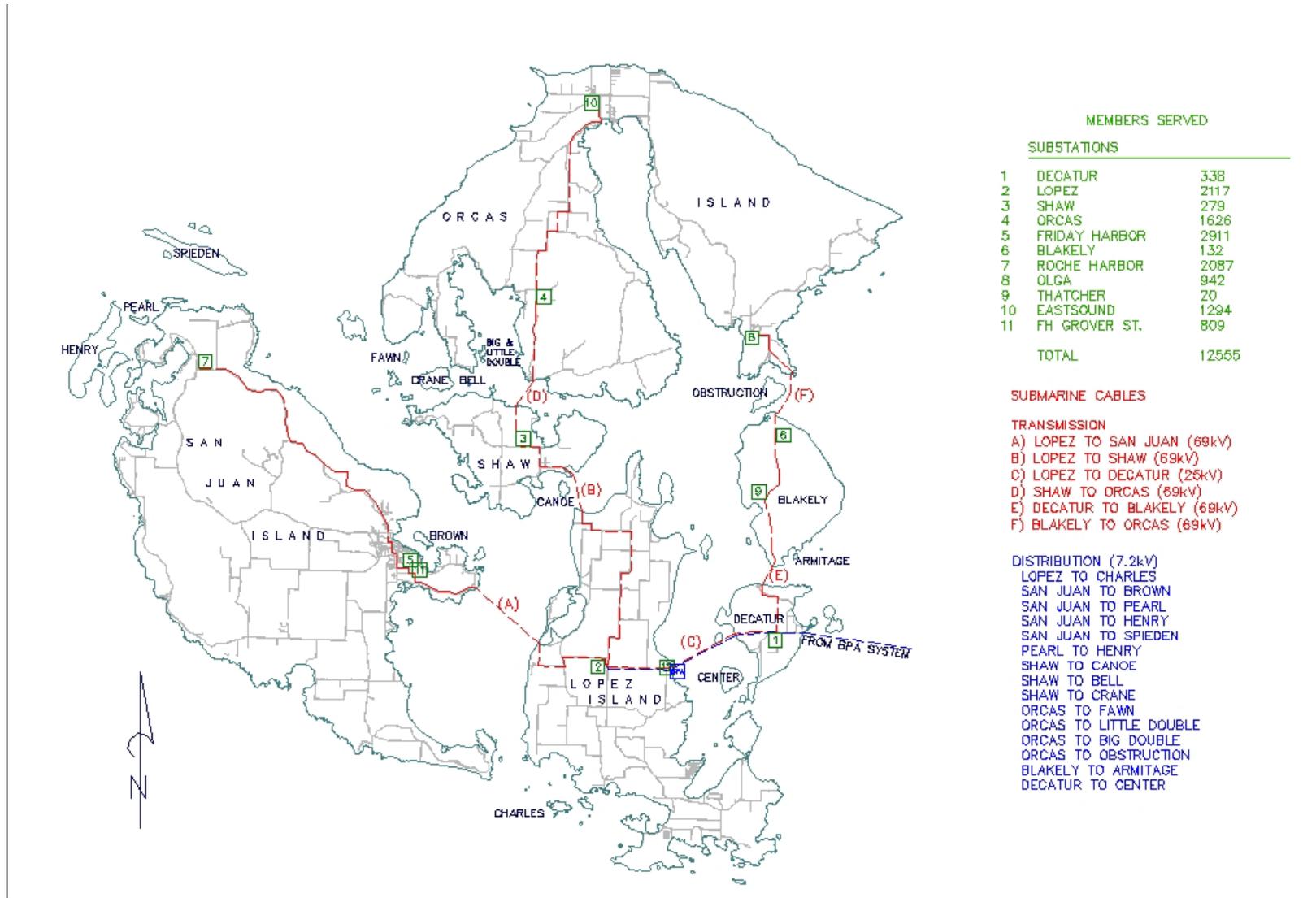
8.3.B Telecommunications

Goal: To promote the widespread availability of communication systems to facilitate communication among members of the public, public institutions, government agencies businesses, and to promote the public service and safety advantages and economic opportunities afforded to the community due to the availability of state-of-the-art telecommunications technology.

Policy (8.3.B.1):

1. Telecommunications facilities which are developed and operated expressly to carry out emergency services should be considered essential public facilities.
2. In keeping with the county's goal to promote the public service, safety advantages and economic opportunities of widespread availability of state-of-the-art telecommunications technology, potentially suitable personal wireless facility locations identified on the Official County Map, per SJCC 16.80.040, as (1) preferred, (2) potentially suitable and (3) conditionally suitable locations, should be reviewed and updated every five years.

Figure 1. 2005 OPALCO Service Territory in San Juan County



MEMBERS SERVED

SUBSTATIONS		
1	DECATUR	338
2	LOPEZ	2117
3	SHAW	279
4	ORCAS	1626
5	FRIDAY HARBOR	2911
6	BLAKELY	132
7	ROCHE HARBOR	2087
8	OLGA	942
9	THATCHER	20
10	EASTSOUND	1294
11	FH GROVER ST.	809
TOTAL		12555

- SUBMARINE CABLES
- TRANSMISSION
- A) LOPEZ TO SAN JUAN (69kV)
 - B) LOPEZ TO SHAW (69kV)
 - C) LOPEZ TO DECATUR (25kV)
 - D) SHAW TO ORCAS (69kV)
 - E) DECATUR TO BLAKELY (69kV)
 - F) BLAKELY TO ORCAS (69kV)

- DISTRIBUTION (7.2kV)
- LOPEZ TO CHARLES
 - SAN JUAN TO BROWN
 - SAN JUAN TO PEARL
 - SAN JUAN TO HENRY
 - SAN JUAN TO SPIEDEN
 - PEARL TO HENRY
 - SHAW TO CANOE
 - SHAW TO BELL
 - SHAW TO CRANE
 - ORCAS TO FAWN
 - ORCAS TO LITTLE DOUBLE
 - ORCAS TO BIG DOUBLE
 - ORCAS TO OBSTRUCTION
 - BLAKELY TO ARMITAGE
 - DECATUR TO CENTER