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ELEMENT 8. UTILITIES

Introduction

The Utilities Element includes the current and projected conditions of private utilities in San Juan County. Utility services included in this Element are electricity, propane, telecommunications, internet, and cable. San Juan County does not provide utility services discussed in this Element; therefore, this Element relies on information shared by utility providers.

This Element establishes goals and policies to guide the provision of utility services. Goals and policies aim to facilitate the coordinated, cost-effective provision of services, planning, and construction by utility service providers in a manner consistent with the goals and policies of other elements of the Comprehensive Plan (Plan). This document also identifies opportunities and challenges for utility services through the 2045 planning period. These opportunities and challenges stem from projected population increases, new technologies, and climate change.

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. Water, electricity, and telecommunications are essential to public health and well-being. Renewable energy, generation, and storage are Essential Public Facilities. 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; and the county must not inhibit the utilities from carrying out their duties as set forth in the RCWs and WACs.

4. County residents ultimately bear a large portion of the costs associated with the provision of utility services through utility rates, taxes, land development costs, and impacts to environmental and aesthetic values.

This Element supports the Plan Vision and fulfils the requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA) for utilities planning. Regarding energy, the Vision states, “Our community strives for energy independence...we use renewable energy.” Regarding communication systems, the Vision affirms that “Advanced communication infrastructure is encouraged...we encourage new ideas and new technology... [and] communication systems support our economy.”

The Utilities Element is oriented toward meeting the needs of the people of the County amid growth, climate change, and ever-advancing technologies. The GMA calls for comprehensive plans to include “the general location, proposed location, and capacity of all existing and proposed utilities” in RCW 36.70A.070(4). By fulfilling the GMA requirement, the County positions itself to use existing utilities infrastructure effectively, streamline development of needed new infrastructure to support the growing population's needs, and be responsive to inevitable change. Together, this Element and Appendix 8, Utilities Inventory, meet this requirement. Appendix 8 contains an in-depth inventory of utilities.

In Washington State, counties are mandated to ensure adequate infrastructure to support population growth under the Growth Management Act (GMA), codified in Chapter 36.70A of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW).

Relationship to Other Plan Elements

The siting and provision of utility services interacts with other topics in the Plan. Utilities information can be found in both the Utilities and Capital Facilities Elements and Inventories. Water, sewer, and solid waste utilities are discussed in the Capital Facilities Element and Inventory and are subject to concurrency requirements and Level of Service (LOS) standards. Services discussed in the Utilities Element and Inventory are not subject to concurrency requirements or LOS standards. The siting of utility facilities, such as propane storage, electrical substations, and telecommunication towers, is a land use issue. Telecommunication services are closely tied to issues discussed in the Economic Development Element. The Housing Element is also closely related, as the availability of housing—including affordable housing—is essential to support the workforce of private utility companies. The Utilities Element must be consistent with other Plan elements. No element can be enacted independently without consideration of other elements.

The County's shortage of affordable housing causes persistent difficulty recruiting staff for utilities like OPALCO and Rock Island Communications, as well as the County Government and other institutions with substantial workforces. Affordable housing is very limited for

low-income and middle-income islanders. Element 5, Housing, contains goals and policies to increase the availability of workforce housing in the County.

Current Conditions and Future Outlook

The following subsections summarize existing utilities conditions and provide a look at what the future may hold for the provision of those services. The outlook is based on the assumption that the County will grow according to the population projections in the Land Capacity Analysis, Plan Appendix 1. Both existing and future utility services are and will be operating in the context of climate change and the development of new energy and communication technologies to support that growth.

Electricity

Overview

OPALCO was founded in 1937 when it built its first electric generation and began wiring the county. One of the first crew members was a farmer. To serve the many islands of San Juan County requires continual innovation, including running submarine cables from the mainland and interconnecting 20 islands, storm hardening the grid by undergrounding distribution cables, and providing gigabit broadband.

Maintaining this complex electric grid is difficult, but the accelerating impacts from climate change bring the most significant challenge, including:

Mainland Energy Supply

- Recent projections show that, at a minimum, electric load would double by 2045
- Mainland electricity demand is outrunning supply
- Regional power outages are imminent, driven by cold snaps and heat domes
- Hydropower is in decline due to the accelerating reduction of snowpack.

San Juan County Load

- County load is projected to grow 30% by 2035 and 50% by 2045.
- Coupled with mainland supply-demand shortfalls, the county is at major risk of extended outages and rolling blackouts, especially during extreme weather events
- OPALCO's mainland submarine cables are very near capacity during extreme weather events
- The two mainland submarine cables will likely exceed their safe capacity by 2035
- Major drivers of load growth are population growth and the electrification of transportation and heating
- Most county energy use and GHG emissions come from transportation and heating

- To reduce GHG emissions, State mandates require the rapid electrification of transportation and heating with clean, renewable energy
- **The need for locally generated electricity from utility-scale renewables and other sources is vital to prevent economic disruption and achieve the County Vision of energy independence**

San Juan County Generation

- Rooftop solar is projected to supply only 5% of load, and doesn't work during outages
- Local utility-scale solar + storage microgrids are essential for reliability and energy independence
- Meeting that new load will require less than 1% of county land for solar microgrids
- These microgrids can power the county throughout the three sunny seasons and provide critical services and systems with power during extended winter outages
- Local generation helps the county meet its greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals, reduce fossil fuel pollution and costs, and mitigate mainland energy price shocks and outages

San Juan County Land Use Reform

- Climate change demands that time is of the essence.
- Electric utilities are Essential Public Facilities necessary to meet projected population growth and achieve county GHG reduction targets
- All projects still undergo SEPA review for environmental and community safeguards.
- Predictable permitting will accelerate energy resilience and independence goals
- A clear directive on priorities within the Comp Plan will help resolve Goal/Policy conflicts, ambiguities, and redundancy
- Clear priorities and predictable permitting will also aid in the actual implementation of facility development and reduce barriers to siting utility-scale renewable generation and storage facilities

For a more complete analysis with the latest energy information, see www.OPALCO.com/compplan

Current Conditions

Orcas Power and Light Co-operative (OPALCO) provides electricity in San Juan County. The majority of electricity is sourced from hydropower on the mainland. That electricity is generated by Bonneville Power Administration with Puget Sound Energy providing the final transmission connection to OPALCO's two submarine cables that power OPACLO's grid. Local renewable energy sources, such as rooftop solar currently supply about four percent

of annual energy use, mostly on sunny summer days. In winter months, when load more than doubles, grayer, shorter winter days mean rooftop solar only provides a very small fraction of the energy mix and does not work during outages.

OPALCO current energy efficiency and rooftop solar programs have been a success. It has achieved California levels of efficiency and rooftop solar production. The current OPALCO member rooftop solar production contribution to the county load is 13 times greater than the Washington state average. Despite that, member rooftop solar and impermeable surface solar (e.g., parking lots) will only supply a small fraction of what is needed, less than 5% of the projected 2035 load. The rest will need to be met by local utility-scale generation and storage.

At the start of 2025, OPALCO had about 15,900 co-op member accounts on 21 islands. About 88% are residential members, and 12% are commercial members, growing at about 1% per year.

Energy Outlook

Mainland Energy Overview

Globally, we face a climate crisis induced by human-generated greenhouse gas emissions. In recent years, we have observed wildfires, drought, lack of snowpack, and increased ocean acidification in the Pacific Northwest[1]. Governor Inslee's Executive Order 14-04 includes key areas for addressing climate change, including rapidly reducing carbon emissions and improving energy efficiency[2]. Washington state's 2021 Energy Strategy and Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA) call for a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. Washington state estimated this will double electric load by 2050.

[DELETED chart figure 8.1]

In 2019, Washington State Ferries (WSF) announced that it would begin transitioning its diesel ferry fleet to hybrid-electric.

- Ferry electrification is an effort to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Currently WSF account for more than one-third of all county GHG transportation emissions.
- On a typical summer day in the county, when an electric ferry plugs in to charge, it will double the county's load, increasing from 15 MW to 30 MW. Multiple electric

[1] https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/1902031.pdf, pg. x
[2] https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/exe_order/eo_14-04

ferries can triple or quadruple the load. This dramatic increase in load will require long-term investments in the electric grid to support the ferry electrification project.

Hydropower plays a crucial role in the 2019 WA Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA) and Washington's 2021 Energy Strategy by providing reliable energy to stabilize intermittent renewable sources like solar and wind.

- But hydropower is in decline, due to accelerating reduction of snowpack from climate change.
- Most snowpack in Washington is estimated to be gone in the next 50 years.

In 2024, BPA and the Northwest Power & Conservation Council (NWPCC) published an analysis showing regional mainland power supply shortfalls of 30 to 70 GW in the coming decade, with over 400 GW needed across the western region.[3] In May 2025, NWPCC accelerated its forecast, projecting that worst case load would double by 2045.

This northwest supply/demand shortfall is driven by several factors:

- Load is growing rapidly, driven by the electrification of transportation and heating, population growth, tech manufacturing, and data centers.
- Supply is decreasing – as coal power plant shutdowns are happening faster than replacement renewable energy projects can be permitted.
- NWPCC latest modeling confirms rooftop solar will play a limited role in offsetting the region's accelerating electricity demand over the next two decades.
- In the BPA region, for large-scale projects proposed since 2015, the success rate of reaching commercial operation is approximately 0.2%, the lowest among U.S. regions. Only 1 in 500 projects achieves completion.

San Juan County Energy Overview

OPALCO expects unplanned mainland outages and rolling blackouts to increase between now and 2035.

- OPALCO projects an increase in county electric load from 2023 to 2035 of 30% and 50% by 2045 (246 million kWh to 370 million kWh),
- OPALCO's submarine cables are very near capacity during extreme weather events such as cold snaps.
- OPALCO estimates the two mainland submarine cables will regularly exceed their safe capacity by 2035.
- Rooftop solar will only supply a small fraction of what is needed – less than 5% of the projected 2035 load.
- The rest will need to be met by local utility-scale generation and storage.

[3] NWPCC 6 August 2024 Planning and Analysis Study

- In San Juan County, about 70% of GHG emissions come from just two sectors, transportation and heating. The key to reducing pollution and carbon emissions in San Juan County is converting fossil-fueled heating and transportation to clean renewable energy sources.
- Over half of county residential energy use is for transportation. Thirty five percent of is for heating,
- Modern electric heat pumps and transportation costs up to 75 percent less than fossil- fueled heating and transportation, helping keep dollars in the local economy[4].
- San Juan County now has the state's highest per capita share of electric vehicles.

The need for locally generated electricity from utility-scale renewables and other sources is vital to prevent economic disruption and achieve the County Vision of energy independence, to meet projected population growth, and achieve applicable greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets.

The County Vision Statement states, "Our community strives for energy independence…we use renewable energy." To fulfill that vision and increase local energy resilience, it is necessary for OPALCO to deploy enough utility-scale microgrids (solar and storage) to meet all new load through 2035. This would:

- Power the county through the three sunny seasons, and power critical services and systems in the winter.
- The microgrids would typically be deployed on each ferry-served island, requiring about 875 acres (less than 1% of all county land).
- Siting electric facilities serving locally generated electricity also supports the deployment of electric ferry and public transportation systems while reducing the need for mainland GHG-emitting fossil-fueled generation facilities

More information about the future of electricity in San Juan County can be found in OPALCO's planning documents and at www.OPALCO.com/compplan

Streamlining Local Renewable Energy Permitting and Land Use

To prevent economic disruption and achieve the County Vision of increased energy independence, meet projected population growth, and achieve applicable greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets San Juan County and its updated Comprehensive Plan must address the urgent need to develop a resilient energy grid by creating a path that efficiently allows the development of essential local generation facilities. By providing a clear directive

[4] OPALCO analysis, US Department of Transportation, WA State Department of Transportation

on priorities, resolving ambiguities between uses, and reducing conflicting goals, the updated Comp Plan can add clarity to an implementation plan and reduce practical barriers to siting utility-scale renewable generation and storage facilities.

San Juan County has implemented permit streamlining before. Ten years ago, during the broadband crisis, OPALCO and the county collaborated on developing Joint Use Wireless Facilities. This shared infrastructure used by multiple wireless service providers fostered the rapid development of reliable, ubiquitous cellular service in the County, improving healthcare, emergency services, public safety communications, and economic activity.

County land use designations should be similarly reviewed and updated for siting renewables. Increasing energy independence from the mainland will require predictable permitting processes to ensure the timely deployment of new utility-scale energy generation and energy storage facilities. This is particularly so for agrisolar applications on Rural Farm, Forest, and agricultural land. Just as improved wireless land use designations fostered the rapid improvement of wireless services in the county, updating land use designations for local renewable energy sites can help accelerate the achievement of the vision of “energy independence.”

A streamlined permitting process provides permitting predictability while still retaining safeguards. All projects must already comply with existing building regulations and go through the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process that analyzes environmental impacts, including: Critical areas, Wetlands, Grading and clearing, Air quality, Ground water, Flood plain, Discharge of waste, Runoff, Invasive species, Comp Plan alignment, Light, Historical and cultural, Endangered species, Preservation, Storm water planning, Fire, and more depending on site specifications. Even with SEPA, the process can be slow unless permitting reforms occur.

Propane

There are no natural gas lines in San Juan County. Currently, the population relies heavily on propane. Propane tanks are not allowed on Washington State Ferries. Propane utility providers transport propane by barge from the mainland to their distribution centers on San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez islands.

There have been recent changes to the State building code and greenhouse gas emission reduction requirements in an effort to meet Washington State Greenhouse Gas targets for energy efficiency. Propane has been a helpful energy source during outages, for backup heat, and to power home and business backup generators.

Communications

San Juan County encourages the development of advanced communication infrastructure. Reliable, up-to-date communication services support everything from healthcare and public safety to economic opportunity and modern lifestyles. Geographic isolation and relatively small resident populations have historically inhibited the extension of telecommunication services to some islands in the County. Today, Fiber and LTE are providing faster and more expansive communication services.

- **Fiber:** The availability of fiber optic based services has grown extensively throughout the County in the past decade, meeting the growing needs of the electric grid, emergency communications, and residential and business broadband and cell phone service. Approximately half of County addresses are located within a serviceable distance of existing fiber optic facilities. As demand for higher bandwidth and additional improvements are made to public infrastructure, the availability of fiber optic services is expected to continue to grow.
- **Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP):** Anyone with a reliable internet connection can purchase VoIP service, which is becoming more common as internet access and speed increases. It is the predominant method for non-wireless voice communications around the nation, particularly for businesses.
- **Fixed Wireless:** Fixed wireless provides high speed internet service throughout the County by multiple providers.
- **Fixed Wireless – Cellular Service:** All major cellular carriers have coverage to an extent in the County; however, the geography currently limits coverage in some areas. For some residents and visitors, lack of cell service poses a safety concern because it would be difficult to call for help in the case of an emergency.
- **Plain Old Telephone Service (POTS):** Use of POTS has decreased in the recent years as consumers discontinue landline service or switch to VoIP.
- **Cable:** Cable internet and television services are available from multiple providers in parts of Friday Harbor and Orcas Island. Use of cable services is declining as fiber and wireless broadband become more popular.

Key Challenges

The key challenges for utilities provided below are based on the utilities inventory in Plan Appendix 8 and the energy outlook. Considering the assessment of electricity, propane, and communications services, the utilities goals and policies in the following section put an emphasis on:

- Preparing to serve the County's 2045 forecasted population in Plan Appendix 1;

- Meeting energy and telecommunications needs within and outside of population centers;
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- Reducing the environmental impact of all forms of energy we use;
- Achieving the vision of energy independence;
- Increasing energy efficiency; and
- Working with the challenges presented by the islands' unique geography.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Utilities goals and policies guide San Juan County's actions affecting the provision of utility services. This section aims to meet San Juan County's current and projected energy and communications needs in a cost-effective, efficient, and character-appropriate manner, while also being responsive to climate change. These goals and policies are informed by the 2022 Utilities Element, other Plan elements, information from utilities providers, community feedback, and by state climate directives.

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. These issues are common among all utility services.

Goal U 0
Ensure that all necessary utility infrastructure capacity is in place to maintain a safe population, and a vibrant, affordable, and sustainable local economy that meets the worst-case projected population growth through 2045, aligning with state and county climate mitigation and adaptation goals.

Policy U 0.1
Electric utility and broadband infrastructure are Essential Public Facilities necessary to meet projected population growth and achieve applicable greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets.

Policy U 0.2
Electric utility infrastructure, including operations facilities, substations, transmission, distribution, utility-scale renewable energy generation, energy storage systems, broadband facilities, and appurtenances to the foregoing, is each an Essential Public Facility.

Policy U 0.3
Climate action is fundamental to protecting and preserving the county's rural character, long-term vitality, and sustainability. In the event of any inconsistency, contradiction, or conflict within the Comprehensive Plan's narrative, goals, or policies, precedence and priority shall be given to those that most directly support the foundational health, safety, climate resilience, and adaptation, and Essential Public Facilities, of San Juan County communities.

Policy U 0.4

San Juan County shall adhere to RCW 36.70A.200(5) regarding the siting of Essential Public Facilities, including operations facilities, substations, transmission, distribution, utility-scale renewable energy generation, energy storage systems, broadband facilities, and appurtenances to the foregoing.

Policy U 0.5
UDCs will be updated by a date certain to codify this into the county code.

Goal U 1

Coordinate planning efforts between the County and utility service providers and encourage the regular exchange of information to aid utility service providers in anticipating and responding to growth and maintaining consistency between utility service plans and County plans.

Policy U 1.1

Provide utility service providers with appropriate plans and mapped information to help establish a common County-wide base map for utilities planning.

Policy U 1.2

Obtain appropriate maps and facility inventories, with text designating the approximate location of existing facilities and the general location of proposed new facilities from utility service providers and integrate them into the County's Geographic Information System (GIS).

Policy U 1.3

Provide utility service providers with the six-year capital improvement financing plan to aid in their ability to coordinate necessary system improvements.

Policy U 1.4

Cooperate with utility providers in siting facilities for new and alternative technologies to increase energy independence, save money and promote reliability of existing utilities by conserving existing energy resources, developing local utility-scale generation, and promoting energy-saving technologies.

Policy U 1.5

Cooperate with utility service providers in future comprehensive planning efforts to evaluate actual patterns and rates of growth and compare them to demand forecasts.

Goal U 2

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

Policy U 2.1
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.

Policy U 2.2
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 utility-scale renewable energy generation, transformers, switch vaults, telephone pedestals, utility equipment cabinets, and other necessary utility equipment or structures.

Policy U 2.3
Allow for utility services in new dedications for public rights-of-way.

Policy U 2.4
Encourage consultation between permit applicants and utility providers during the permitting process for installation of utility systems.

Policy U 2.5
Support community dialogue, planning, and proactive management of vegetation in right of ways and utility corridors, in a manner consistent with environmental policies within the County, while managing for fire risk hazard.

Goal U 3
Foster predictability and timeliness in processing permit applications for utilities to allow for necessary development, maintenance, repair, improvement, and expansion of utility facilities in a timely and efficient manner.

Policy U 3.1
Review permitting processes to identify ways to improve predictability, timeliness, and efficiency of utility permitting.

Goal U 4
Protect rural character while also providing for the location and extension of necessary

utility facilities.

Policy U 4.1
Require new utility distribution lines for new development to be installed underground. Services for single-family residential construction on an existing parcel may connect with existing overhead utility facilities.

Policy U 4.2
Require new development to be designed so that utility easements are accessible and have sufficient capacity for installation of the full range of required utility services.

Policy U 4.3
Require landscaping to buffer adjacent uses for new utility installations excluding above-ground utility facilities when located outside a public right-of-way.

Policy U 4.4
Where possible, locate and site utility facilities to minimize negative impacts to the rural character and natural environment.
[Comment: Utilities are essential and can be difficult to site.]

Policy U 4.5
New utility generation facilities, 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.
[Comment: Redundant with U 4.4 Utilities are essential and difficult to site. DELETE]

Goal U 5
Protect and preserve natural habitats and environments while also providing for the location and extension of necessary utility facilities.
[Comment: Redundant with above and Land Use element. EPFs are difficult to site. What is an adverse impact versus any other buildable thing? Solar is no different and more permeable than buildings.]

Policy U 5.1
Locate new utility facilities away from, or construct them in a manner compatible with, critical areas, and shorelines.

[Comment: Resource lands would prevent agrisolar. Utilities are essential and difficult to site. DELETE "resource lands"]

Policy U 5.2

Condition the approval of new utility facilities to avoid or mitigate any significant adverse impacts.

[Comment: Vague, general, etc. This would prevent agrisolar. Utilities are essential and difficult to site. Numerous standard permitting checks, including NEPA, SEPA, etc. accomplish this. DELETE]

Policy U 5.3

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 providers will seek to minimize those costs in their planning, decision-making, and project execution.

[COMMENT: This policy lacks specificity and is internally inconsistent. The County is both encouraging utility providers to use public rights-of-way yet imposing "damages" for such use. Additionally, you can have undue costs across counties.]

Policy U 5.4

Recognize that the geographic character of the County requires access to and the ability to cross shorelines and waterways to connect utilities and that utility facilities must occupy and traverse a broad range of areas and land use designations.

Policy U 5.5

Allow utility-scale renewable energy generation and energy storage systems on any lands that are not critical areas, shorelines, or conservancy lands.
[COMMENT: Deleted "resource lands," which would prevent agri-solar]

Utility-Specific Goals and Policies

Electricity

Goal U 6

Prioritize utility-scale local renewable energy and storage, which is essential for meeting projected population growth, ensuring grid adequacy, and achieving county GHG reduction targets. Ensure that all new electric load, up to 50 percent of the County's annual electrical energy consumption in the 20-year planning horizon, is produced locally from renewable sources.

Policy U 6. 1
Encourage utility service providers to explore innovative and alternative methods of producing energy such as agrisolar. Agrisolar is essential for achieving county GHG targets, ensuring grid adequacy, and meeting projected population growth.

Policy U 6.2
Work with OPALCO to educate and incentivize local renewable energy, including rooftop, utility-scale solar, and agrisolar projects.

Policy U 6.3
Encourage utility providers, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and the public to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy U 6.4
Adopt regulations that allow facilities that support the generation and distribution of electricity for cleaner transportation including electric vehicles and electric ferries.

Policy U 6.5
Encourage the provision of electric vehicle chargers at key destinations throughout the County.

Policy U 6.6
Increase energy efficiency of buildings and systems on the islands by:

a. Providing educational materials and supporting education on energy efficiency in buildings, beyond State energy efficiency requirements; and
b. Installing solar panels on new and updated County buildings when feasible.

Policy U 6.7
Work with utilities and the public to develop a specific solar siting policy for utility-scale solar projects that collaborate with farmers, and siting on urban core/ impervious areas rooftops, and already impacted developed land.
[Comment: DELETE. San Juan County lacks an urban core. Not needed with EPF. Above policy allowing any buildable land covers this. Solar is more permeable than buildings. The county's current implementation impedes agrisolar use.]

Goal U 7

Collaborate with the Orcas Power and Light Co-Operative (OPALCO) in achieving the County Vision of energy independence to meet projected population growth, ensure grid adequacy, and achieve county GHG reduction targets.

Policy U 7.1
Assist OPALCO when necessary to respond to new, unforeseen conditions and technologies that may affect utility operations and facilities.

Policy U 7.2
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 storage systems, and any other necessary equipment or structures.

Policy U 7.3
Where possible, locate and site new upland power transmission facilities, substations, and submarine transmission cable terminal facilities to minimize adverse impacts to the rural character, shorelines, and natural environment of the County.
[Comment: DELETE. Redundant with above. Not needed with EPF.]

Policy U 7.4
Allow pilot programs to evaluate new local renewable energy sources consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan and that comply with all regulations.

Policy U 7.5
Provide opportunities within land use designations for the development and use of renewable energy resources which are compatible with natural environment and rural character.
[Comment: DELETE. REDUNDANT. Not needed with EPF. Above policy allowing any buildable land covers this. Solar is more permeable than buildings.]

Policy U 7.6
Support the transition to up to 30 percent local renewable energy production on an annual energy (GWh) basis by the year 2035.

Policy U 7.7
Identify local utility-scale renewable generation and storage facilities as essential public facilities, recognizing that they ensure local energy resilience for other essential public facilities, including telecommunications systems, water utilities, public safety systems, and economic infrastructure.

[Comment: Excellent GMA tie-in. Recommend expanding to emphasize EPF status across infrastructure types. Redundant to U 0 Goal and Policies above, which are more specific.]

Telecommunications

Goal U 8

Promote the widespread availability of communication systems to facilitate communication among members of the public, public institutions, government agencies, and businesses.

Policy U 8.1

Identify telecommunications facilities developed and operated expressly to carry out emergency services as essential public facilities.

Policy U 8.2

Promote the public service and safety advantages and economic opportunities of widespread availability of state-of-the-art telecommunications technology by reviewing potentially suitable personal wireless facility locations as needed.

Policy U 8.3

Support development of telecommunications facilities to promote public safety and economic opportunity.

Propane

Goal U 9

Regulate and assure safe handling and distribution of propane within the County.

Policy U 9.1

Identify appropriate land use designations and safety criteria for the siting of bulk fuel storage.

Policy U 9.2

Support the use of historic barge landings that have served as landing sites for transporting bulk fuels.

Policy U 9.3

Work with the Ports, the Town of Friday Harbor, WSDOT, and propane distributors to develop safe transportation and circulation routes for the transport of propane.