

# 2025 – Stehekin Community Plan Feedback & Comments

**8/23/2025**

**Email to County Commissioners**

**County concerns:**

- Short-term rental regulations
- Zoning and land use designations
- Housing development policies
- Economic growth targets and sustainability

**NPS concerns:**

- NPS land acquisition policies

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

We are all Stehekin property owners, some of us with roots in Stehekin going back several generations. We are deeply concerned by the “Stehekin Community Plan” document released at the June meetings in Stehekin. This document does not capture Stehekin’s unique attributes, takes sides in highly contested community debates, and sets up further community fractures. Here are the elements that must be included in any successful Stehekin community plan:

1. Place front and center Stehekin’s location within the North Cascades National Park Complex and its wild, natural beauty as the draw for permanent residents and visitors and source of the economic wealth in the valley;
2. Address the fundamental dilemma facing the community, namely the conflict between private development and the wild, natural beauty that draws that development;
3. Acknowledge Stehekin as a place of tight geographic and resource limits that development has already begun to exceed (indeed the Plan incorrectly assumes a necessary “minimum ‘critical mass’” rather than the far more salient maximum carrying capacity or how different types of use result in vastly different carrying capacities—consider backpacking versus renting an air-conditioned house with accompanying SUV). Regulations should be structured to ensure that development does not exceed these limits;
4. Acknowledge that the current structuring of the many public subsidies from both federal and county government that the Stehekin community receives (from low-priced

public power to free garbage to road maintenance to firefighting to effective exemption from building codes) has created perverse incentives. The current structure of subsidies encourages private profit at the expense of the public good. A successful plan must address how to restructure subsidies to promote the public good and protect the Stehekin environment; and

5. Acknowledge the full spectrum of Stehekin stakeholders, including visitors from around the nation and the world, part-time residents, and seasonal workers, as well as year-round residents.

A final community plan that does not address these issues will ultimately fail. We urge you to include the elements above in your plan.

**11/2/2025**

**Email to Mike Kaputa and Teka Sellers**

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

Last week Ron sent out the 2011 response to the Park's "Land Protection Plan" to Stehekin Heritage members for a background in future planning. I had a chance to read through it this weekend, and it became even more clear why the voices on this side of the aisle aren't a lot louder. This battle and these arguments have been brought up over and over again in attempts to keep the community alive. This response is one of many battles with the park, but it is one I hadn't seen the specifics of the response before. I couldn't help but wonder if you have seen it. It is worth reading if you have not.

I have to wonder if the same old approach has any value. I know many people feel it will go nowhere and is not worth the effort. My successes in life have come from getting over the hangups and going for the gold. What if the county did the same? Instead of timidly tacking a plan for hopeful survival on the wall and incorporating some zoning changes, what if it proposed a thriving community involving a buyback program that would also support the mission of the park, along with a threat to sue for the destruction of a historical community (and anything else it can come up with) if not implemented? It might not happen, sure, but you might get an agreement to not buy any more land if you'll just leave them alone... and who knows, maybe you'll get more than you think.

I also believe that if the cards are played right, Stehekin can actually increase county revenue. It is a jewel in the rough. I don't believe in or want the kind of development that involves condos and T-shirt shops. I've seen plenty of places ruined going down that road. But kept as an outdoor adventurer's paradise with family owned business that offer the opportunity to experience America's Dolomites... the dollar per visitor rate can go through the roof, and due to it's limited access points, many of those dollars will land in the rest of Chelan County as well.

That thought brings me to transportation. I appreciate your recognition of Reed's issues as far as a barge landing. The problem goes deeper than that, and, I believe, if recognized and planned for sooner than later, a solution for not only the barge, but the ferries could be found. Safe, reliable, efficient access will pay for itself. That I am sure of, as that is how I make a living. Having provided that in several countries and states, I recognize the issues and would love to have a discussion that led somewhere on that subject. Once again, why not build a comprehensive plan for a thriving community and go for the gold? It can't be wrong for a county to propose a success story for one of its communities.

**County concerns:**

- Short-term rental regulations
- Zoning and land use designations
- Building codes and standards
- Housing development policies
- Economic growth targets and sustainability
- Floodplain development restrictions
- Power consumption policies and coordination with PUD

**NPS concerns:**

- Reopening Golden West Visitor Center
- Upper valley road reconstruction
- NPS garbage/recycling services
- Public transportation
- Campgrounds

**HOUSING:**

Short-term rentals need to be regulated, whether you postpone that issue beyond this planning effort or not. There need to be regulations in place to prevent loss of housing availability for long-term rentals. This loss would (already is!) affect the local economy, making it difficult for low-wage earners to live there. Unregulated short-term rental market will drive up the price of houses, creating an environment for speculation rather than serving the community of people who have chosen to live there. Unregulated short-term rental market fuels demand for rapid housing expansion, which is not sustainable and degrades the natural, wild character of the Stehekin Valley, which is contrary to the protections envisioned by including it in the North Cascades National Park Complex.

**PUBLIC SERVICES & UTILITIES:**

Please have incentives for conservation and home power generation via wind and solar as a key element in your planning. CCPUD cannot, and should not, anticipate unlimited power

consumption growth. Such growth would undermine the natural, wild character of the Stehekin Valley, the reasons that it was included in the North Cascades National Park Complex as a special area to be protected from the kind of unchecked growth found elsewhere. Consider a moratorium on new electrical power hookups until growth limits are established and the current impending power shortage is addressed. The National Park Service, rightfully, subsidizes solid waste disposal in Stehekin. Please cooperate with them to provide and enforce guidelines to limit abuse of this subsidy by a few individuals that generate disproportionately-large quantities of solid waste or dispose of large items.

### **ECONOMIC STABILITY:**

People choose to live in Stehekin. Those who live there are choosing to abide by its economic limitations, which are amply compensated by the wild, natural character of the Stehekin Valley, the slow pace, and the quiet, safe, lifestyle based on trust and mutual assistance. As such, nobody in Stehekin should be guaranteed "economic stability," if that stability comes at the price of growth to achieve some perceived "critical mass." Economic growth in Stehekin must always be limited if it threatens to compromise the wild, natural character of the Valley. This was implicitly envisioned when Stehekin was included in the North Cascades National Park Complex. The vision when this Complex was created was to protect this natural, wild character, which had been lost nearly everywhere else in the U.S. due to economic growth and natural resource exploitation, while allowing the local community to remain, in its traditional relationship to the land, and in much its traditional size. As such, only minimal increases in the natural resource "footprint" of that traditional community and economy are compatible. The need to protect the wild, natural character of the Stehekin Valley is as urgent and needed now as it was back then!

### **PARCEL OWNERSHIP:**

The County must resist zoning changes which would increase the housing density in the Valley. As I have stated several times elsewhere, growth in the overall "footprint" of housing or of natural resource exploitation contributes to a degradation of the wild, natural character of the Valley, the very features that make Stehekin a special place and which are the reason people choose to live there. In fact, the County should consider buying certain critical parcels and putting them into county park or protected area status in order to enhance the protections that are in place elsewhere in the Valley due to federal ownership.

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

The upper valley road should not be rebuilt. The road, back when it existed, was a tiresome, dusty, bumpy ride, and visitors going up the valley in vehicles missed much of the natural beauty of the river and the mountain scenery that is now abundantly visible from the trail. This road has morphed into a beautiful hiking and horseback-riding corridor that is distinctly more easy to walk than most or all of the other trails of comparable length in the area. Please do not use this planning exercise as a tool for advocacy of rebuilding the upper valley road.

The County should pressure the National Park Service to provide some subsidy for public transportation along the lower valley road, whether this is operated by Park staff or by private concession. There are currently not enough busses during the day in the summer, and the cost of a bus ride has grown too expensive for the busses to provide a realistic alternative to the ever-increasing automobile traffic.

## **PARKS & RECREATION:**

The County should pressure the National Park Service to re-open the Golden West Visitor Center. The County should pressure NPS to fully staff it with experienced rangers, trained in managing the trails and campgrounds, and trained in emergency rescue and public protection. Campground administration and maintenance needs to remain an NPS responsibility and a priority for them. The best thing the County could do for "Parks and Recreation" is to insist that the NPS complies with its mission, and includes adequate staff and resources in its budget to do so.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL & CRITICAL AREAS:**

The county needs to do a better job at screening and conditioning building permits to ensure that new structures are not built in the channel migration zone and flood-prone areas. The county should actively discourage development that fosters a demand for river-bank hardening, river engineering or flood control (e.g. removal of logs from the active channel, which is destructive and illegal).

**County concerns:**

- Zoning and land use designations
- Building codes and standards
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- Critical areas protection
- Power consumption policies and coordination with PUD

**NPS concerns:**

- Reopening Golden West Visitor Center
- Upper valley road reconstruction
- Ranger staffing and interpretive programs
- Trail maintenance in wilderness areas

**HOUSING:**

I would like a clear understanding of what the current need is, assuming that there is a shortage. For what kind of housing is there a shortage and for how many? Is it for tourist season help? How many units are thought to be needed? Could short term rental density limits help make more long-term rentals more available? Are there unrealized creative ways to work with public and private property owners to address worker housing needs that could help and not increase new structures? (Is there housing that the NPS owns but is not using that could be made available to business employees? Can NPS prioritize hiring local residents with appropriate training and expertise that have housing.

**PUBLIC SERVICES & UTILITIES:**

I understand that the PUD is making plans to add batteries to the hydro power plant for the valley. I would like to understand what their capacity will add. What can the valley expect for the capacity of these batteries. Will they increase the cost? Are they durable for this environment? How far into the future, what level of "development/growth" will they

support? How aggressive would conservation need to be to make a measurable difference? What resources might the PUD be willing to put into it to help create a culture of conservation?

Could it be that it could make good economic sense to promote Stehekin as a "less is more" experience. Maybe that won't appeal to every potential visitor, but perhaps it would appeal to plenty. Maybe if you require air conditioning, you go elsewhere, but if you love a tent cabin or a sleeping porch, you come to Stehekin. Are full and part time residence prepared to turn the corner on electric conveniences? I wonder if the new smart meeting information could inform the homeowner on ways to decrease consumption?

### **ECONOMIC STABILITY:**

Plans to "grow" the economy by 10% to meet sustainable business goals is unsettling to me, though to be honest I don't know exactly what that looks like. But, assuming this is a meaningful number, it seems disconnected to place. Unique to Stehekin are the steep dynamic valley walls, the almost wild river at home anywhere on the narrow valley floor, and its isolation from connecting roads. There is simply not space nor electric power for persistent growth while also honoring the natural, scenic characteristics of the valley that the NPS is charged to protect. This goal needs to be rethought to fit this valley. Expectations for growth can't outpace the valley itself.

Perhaps, it could be useful to understand specifically what changes current business owners are needing. Is there a way to address this need without negatively changing the character of the valley and the visitor experience? I note that the LCRA plan indicates that the NPS sees its mandate to be more in support of businesses that enhance the visitor experience rather than totally unrelated businesses.

I hope this plan can find a more helpful way to articulate workable expectations for business in Stehekin than a growth rate that suggests unwelcome change.

Business growth cannot be more important than the protection of nature and its enjoyment well into the future. What is the vision 20 years from now for current business owners? Is it or could it be consistent with the purpose and goals of the LCRA. Are there business opportunities that positively support the LCRA that don't exist but could?

I understand the impact of the upper valley road on the tourist experience. However, I also appreciate the decision that the NPS came to after studying its options. I wonder if the Forest Service, managing the Glacier Peak Wilderness could partner to upgrade its trail maintenance to make taking horses on its trails possible again?

## **PARCEL OWNERSHIP:**

Overall, it appears that existing housing has ignored with tacit acceptance by Chelan county building codes and current zoning, or acquired variances in many cases. Very little buildable land exists outside of the critical areas. It is really tricky to look at the maps and really nail down where is there buildable private lots outside of the Critical Areas Can you all make this easier to sort out? Just exactly where could new housing be permitted without a variance?

In general, the LCRA purpose to protect the natural, rural character of Stehekin is best realized with very little additional building. I urge this to be a guiding light to view any new proposals. How will this really advance the mission of the LCRA beyond the particular businesses operating today, or the desires of property owners? Changes in Land Use Zoning needs to be cautious of putting the valley at risk of land owners in the future attempting to bring a totally different aesthetic/experience to Stehekin. Planning for the Stehekin Area is NOT the same as anywhere else in the county because Stehekin IS in the LCRA and its mandate by law supersedes all other uses. I can see that the planning documents of the NPS do acknowledge some need for building growth and increased tourism to be likely. But, it needs to be done honoring the LCRA mandates and management plans. Any new building needs to be done with a keen eye toward not exposing the tourist to any visual increased density, nor negatively impacting the river, etc.

I note that the LCRA Management Plan states that the existing Land Use codes are likely compatible with its mission. It seems necessary to hear from the NPS if newly floated codes would also be. (The NPS is currently acting like it has no roll to play in this process, but they do. ) I do not want to see RV parks, multifamily dwellings, additional piers in the lake, etc. that would potentially be allowed with the RV or RRR with zones. In a quick reading, The Planned Unit Overlay District made me curious. It has not been the character of independent minded Stehekin "do it yourselfers" to embrace a planned coordinated development area. So, it seems kind of out of character, but it makes me curious.

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

I would like to see the number of boats servicing Stehekin stay as it is, or less.

The isolation, the quiet that used to be overwhelming and peaceful at the landing is harder to come by now. Boats are coming or going all day long. This is enough. Please, plan to keep this as the maximum. More boats arriving and the Stehekin landing with the chance to be

there in the quiet with the still lake waters and the high majestic peaks will be lost. This is what people come for...the quiet. If the plan makes it possible to bring as many as people possible, we will have spoiled it for all.

I want the speed limit to stay low, the roads to stay narrow and those that are not paved to stay that way. This is in the NPS management plan and it fits. The visual experience for the visitor and everyone needs to remain one that goes from rural to wilderness with no new building along the road. This has been unwelcome change over recent years. The visitor should get to experience the wonder of traveling into a rugged land without the visual of human development intruding in increasing numbers along the road. This vision is consistent with the NPS legislation.

### **PARKS & RECREATION:**

The NPS needs to reopen the Golden West. Visitors want to go there and deserve to get to. The locals need a place to enrich the visitors experience with a Gallery of their Art. The public needs to interface with trained Rangers who know about the flora and fauna, the area, the trails, the risks, etc. Rangers, many who have been locals, are people whose mission it is to educate the public and help guide them to having a positive safe experience. Relying on local businesses who don't have this focus or training is not appropriate. Citizens deserve a park system that values its own resource treasures. The County and community could pick up the pace to advocate with the National Park Service to SHOW UP and DO THEIR JOB! I believe that the County moving along as if it's OK that the NPS is not present, is a mistake. It is a partner that is shirking its job right now in this process and I hope the County will say so!

A variety of new trails have been mentioned in various plans. I support them. With the upper valley less accessible, it makes sense to improve the variety of walking opportunities in the lower valley.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL & CRITICAL AREAS:**

Planning for fire evacuation for Stehekin residence and tourists in high season needs to be part of any comprehensive plan. Awareness of boat transport numbers is important. So far, the valley has had sufficient warning, but this cannot be counted on to always be the case.

Life in Stehekin is a dance with the river. It owns all the land, but we get to pretend we do. It's important that it stays like that. I understand that the Japanese have implemented good strategies to live with a wild river. Perhaps there is more to learn about how to live with a river before we inadvertently kill it.

Could there be better strategies for how to "protect the road"? Is the current apparent "crisis" management the best approach? I believe that it was concern about the flooding river that is part of what brought the focused planning energy to Stehekin ( County, NPS, PUD). Might this process, create a more thoughtful, knowledge seeking approach that could even consider, if doing less could be better than doing something. Where is the energy or leadership to even think about this?

Reviewing Land zoning with out the overlay of flood plane and channel Migration Zones seems useless. Being in Stehekin is to be in the flood plane and the Channel Migration Zone. It's a conundrum. The community as a whole has not and really can not escape the flood plane and exist. So, what then? Whatever compromise is considered, the river ultimately rules if the mandate to safeguard the river for all time is honored.

**11/26/2025**

## **Community Survey Response**

- Short-term rental regulations
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- Floodplain development restrictions
- Critical areas protection
- Vehicle regulations and parking

### **NPS concerns:**

- Reopening Golden West Visitor Center
- Upper valley road reconstruction
- NPS garbage/recycling services
- Ranger staffing and interpretive programs

### **GENERAL COMMENTS:**

From the legislation that created the National Recreation Area: "In order to provide for the public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment of portions of the Stehekin River and Lake Chelan together with the surrounding lands and for the conservation of the scenic, scientific, historic and other values contributing to public enjoyment of such lands and waters, there is hereby established, subject to valid existing rights, the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area."

Stehekin is the gateway to the North Cascades National Park. We need a park presence and a reminder that this area was protected as a national recreation area because it is unique, not so that people can make money off of it. I want the county plan to limit development and population growth, to protect plants, and animals, and wild areas along the road, so that it retains the look and feel of a settlement on the wild edge of the mountains. I want the plan to protect the wild animals that visitors come to see and hear. I want it to protect the wildflowers and the groves of maple and dogwood that turn pink, red, and golden along the road in the fall. Do not disturb the outdoor museum quality of the artifacts of human settlements of 100 years ago, sited in the place where they were used. Create a brochure about the Stehekin way, outlining behavior expectations of visitors and an explanation of valley culture (e.g. do not feed the bears!). I am not suggesting we create

a Living History presentation, but put in place a plan that allows our life on the edge of wilderness to exist in a beautiful and sustainable way.

I'd like the NPS to provide interpretive ranger staff at a desk at the landing to enhance the visitor experience, especially for people with young children or mobility issues that make a walk to the Golden West difficult.

Do not encourage the NPS to open the upper valley road. It would be too expensive, cause too much damage to the land and the river while building it; it would be available to a very small portion of visitors and require too much yearly maintenance.

## **HOUSING:**

From the 1981 Environmental Assessment Compatibility standards:

Incompatible:

-Any use of mobile homes sited after adoption of the standards

-Any multifamily residential dwellings, including apartments, condominiums and townhouses, and any fill of Lake Chelan, any modification of the landscape (natural resource extraction, clear cutting, etc.) or conspicuous siting of structures that would significantly alter the natural and scenic qualities along the lakeshore, main valley road, or river corridor.

These standards were proposed for all areas of the valley in 1981, and

I think they are still appropriate. I am also of the opinion that we need to provide housing for critical workers like Post office and PUD employees. I think four additional long-term rental units would be enough. Several property owners I talked to who know the valley well expressed the rarely-heard opinion that there is plenty of housing in Stehekin.

The plan should create zoning to preserve the rural character of Stehekin with space between houses and less-visible buildings. People like their privacy in Stehekin. We get along well in part because we are not crowded together. The plan should address outdoor lighting: keep outdoor lights shining down at night and at a minimum brightness level (for example, no high-pressure sodium lights) to help wildlife, moths, insects, and migrating birds, and so your neighbors can see the stars (and maybe even the Aurora Borealis!)

Is co-housing a good option?

I don't want to have houses lining the road all the way to Rainbow Falls.

## **PUBLIC SERVICES & UTILITIES:**

We will know more about electrical power after a year's worth of smart meter data from the PUD. I am not in favor of a rebate calculation for wood heat. That would shift the energy use from electricity and create pressure on fire wood stock, or increase use of propane. Instead, create a rate structure to promote conservation, like peak demand pricing. There should be building codes that require insulation for houses, especially ones that rely on electric heat. The building code could limit electricity use per occupant.

We should use less petroleum-based fuel which is all brought into the valley via barge. Stehekin could be an example of a community that lives within the limits of the local environment.

Many public support services are provided, for free, by the NPS: garbage and recycling, public restrooms, marina, road maintenance, Buckner orchard apples, flood mitigation, and more. My prediction is that if these services were privatized, we would pay higher prices for a lower level of service. The school district has been generous in allowing community use of their facilities for meetings and potlucks. The Community Building could use some insulation and Carpenter Ant control.

We need a first aid station (there was one in the Golden West!) and a way for residents and visitors to access emergency medical services.

## **ECONOMIC STABILITY:**

Bring back the park! No polluting businesses.

The valley has always been a three-season employment economy where people need multiple sources of income. People fill in the off-season with a variety of part-time jobs, or leave the valley to make money. Life in the valley is also more difficult in the winter, and lower winter population will help reduce electrical use. Self-employment is important; the county could offer business advice, like SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) does in the cities. The usual business model of constant growth is not sustainable or reasonable in Stehekin. The clean and wild environment is what makes Stehekin a destination in the first place; we cannot trade this for economic growth.

We should not focus only on economic opportunities for full-time residents, as part-time residents are a very important sector of economic activity in the valley. Each part-time resident spends money in Stehekin and contributes to community vitality. We may have reached or even exceeded the valley's capacity for full-time residents.

The county should put pressure on the NPS to reopen The Golden West with park staffing, interpretation programs, and the art gallery. Gallery openings are a social event where locals and visitors mingle, strengthening the community and fostering communication and friendships. They serve a function similar to other community events like the Harvest Festival and potluck.

We are primarily a tourist economy. We must preserve the natural environment that makes Stehekin a destination: the river, wildlife, stars at night, and the smell of the ceanothus in the hot sun. It is often quiet enough to hear wolves howl. A bear sighting is worth a lot in tourist dollars. It is family-friendly, and visitor-safe.

### **PARCEL OWNERSHIP:**

I want the plan to regulate development by stipulating

- No building in the flood plain
- No land trades of non-buildable lots for buildable lots.
- no transfer of public land into private ownership.
- Allow flexible setbacks for siting buildings closer to property lines when the adjoining property is public property, and the setback would help hide the structure.
- No new marinas, no trailers or RVs sited next to the river or visible from the road.
- Establish high visual sensitivity areas, with visual standards to mitigate the effects of development.
- No subdivisions that create lots smaller than 2.5 acres.

As I wrote in the Economic stability section above "Do not focus only on sustaining economic opportunities for full-time residents because part-time residents are a very important sector of economic activity. Each part time resident spends money in Stehekin and contributes to community vitality. We may have reached or even exceeded the valley's carrying capacity for full time residents."

Building codes must address these issues: energy use in dwellings, fire safety, and building spacing to allow wildlife corridors for animal access to food and water.

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

I value Stehekin as a quiet place to escape the hectic down-lake way of life. I want the Valley plan to improve the visitor experience of walking on the Stehekin Valley Road by limiting bus trips; they make lots of noise and dust and make it less friendly for families on bikes and hikers. There are too many vehicles for the current infrastructure. It seems like every ADU and STR comes with a large SUV. I suggest that the plan encourage bike use and encourage the supply of safe working bikes for each vacation rental. I want the plan to limit the cars, trucks, and other vehicles that come into the valley. I'd like to see a deposit equal to the cost of removal required for each vehicle brought into Stehekin, or consider a one in/one out policy to start decreasing the abandoned or non-working vehicles. Parking at the landing is difficult. There is too much congestion at boat time. We need long term parking at the landing, and we need to stop people from leaving cars and trucks parked at the side of the road in the landing area for longer than the posted time limit. There are too many cars parked under the trees at the airstrip. There are too many abandoned cars all over the valley; most of them don't run and are still full of automotive fluids. We need to protect snakes, toads, and lizards from being killed on the road (one of my favorite Stehekin memories is of finding a rubber boa on the roadside across from the ATV rental area!) We need to protect insects that provide bird and fish food and that nest in roads and driveways, like ant lions (which are rare in some places) and solitary bee and wasp nests which are wrecked by being run over.

There should be an interpretive ranger or volunteer on every shuttle bus trip to encourage visitors to see this place as worth preserving, and to encourage a good attitude towards proper Stehekin behavior.

Do not encourage the NPS to open the upper valley road. It would be too expensive, cause too much damage to the land and the river while building it; it would be available to a very small portion of visitors and require too much yearly maintenance.

Renters should sign a safe-use agreement for driving cars and riding bikes. For example: no bikes allowed on park hiking trails, bicycle riders must wear helmets. No excessive speed in cars; share the road. Warn visitors about the lack of a nearby hospital and resulting evacuation times in critical situations. Limit the number of vehicles that come with rentals, and promote bicycle riding and electric bikes. This would also help with the valley transportation issues.

## **PARKS & RECREATION:**

I think it would be great to offer a “no internal combustion engine vehicles needed after you get off the boat” vacation in Stehekin. We could provide more bike, e-bike, and walking opportunities between incoming and outgoing boat for day visitors.

I want a bike/pedestrian lane on the road shoulder in places where there is enough room for it.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL & CRITICAL AREAS:**

I want the county plan to protect wild animals and natural habitats so we can continue to attract visitors and provide an experience appropriate to the gateway of a national park.

To achieve this I want the plan to address the following:

Protect our clean water by requiring spill pans and cleanup kits at every fuel tank in the valley. Our soils are porous, and the water table is close to the surface.

Protect our lake shore, river, and stream banks, enforce the shoreline act.

No building in the flood plain.

Inspect septic systems and keep E. coli out of the lake.

Protect endangered and uncommon species and habitats. The whole Stehekin Valley is a critical area; it is a reservoir habitat that helps mitigate climate change. Some areas are more sensitive than others. The head of the lake is a biologically diverse and productive area rich with life. There are owls at Weaver Point, Pileated woodpeckers in undisturbed woods near the end of Company creek road, and cliff nesters (Goshawks, falcons) on Buehler’s Bluff. Harlequin Ducks nest along less populated stretches of the river.

Protect visually sensitive areas, provide access to the river without eroding river & stream banks, keep people out of wetlands, and during nesting season warn visitors about birds nesting on sandbars.

Keep mobile homes, trailers, and RVs out of sight and away from the river. If there is a flood, keep them out of the river because it will create a mess which is hard to clean up: household chemicals, cleaners and solvents, plastics, canned paint and food, fiberglass insulation.

Create a poster and brochure about effect of humans on wildlife (the presence of a dog, especially if off leash, silences birds) and put it on the boat.

Enforce leash laws.

Overfishing can cause a decline in the health of our fish population; even catch and release affects fish size and health. A boat visiting a fishing hole on the river five times in one day does have an adverse impact.

**11/26/2025**

## **Community Survey Response**

### **County concerns:**

- Housing development policies

### **GENERAL COMMENTS:**

I am a Stehekin property owner and while not on the committee, I've been quite involved with the process and connected with many who are. My comments map a set of guiding principles I wrote when thinking about Stehekin in 20 years to each of the themes provided. I've included the full list below.

1. Stehekin is a place where the trappings of modern life are made starkly that to its visitors - trappings. Reaching Stehekin and staying in Stehekin remains a challenging and rewarding experience for your average American.

2. Stehekin is a place where nature - its beauty and its whims - dominates the landscape and balances the activity the of humans within it. Modern comforts are not guaranteed and its visitors value that.

3. Stehekin remains a place where those who value its uniqueness, natural beauty, and contribute to the community which sustains it remain the stewards of its limited private property - i.e., NOT outsider or international private dollars.

4. Stehekin is a place where the chance your glance in any direction remains free of human, car, or other evidence of human activity is high. And restorative.

5. Specifically...Stehekin is a place where my children's phones do not have internet connectivity save for designated locations.

**County concerns:**

- Zoning and land use designations
- Housing development policies
- Vehicle regulations and parking

**HOUSING:**

A variety of housing options are needed.

**ECONOMIC STABILITY:**

As connectivity increases, the Stehekin economy will continue to shift to a service economy.

**TRANSPORTATION:**

Private vehicles have worked well in the past, but require parking that is no longer available. 4-wheeler rentals have no accountability and are often driven by people unfamiliar with one lane road protocol. A shared vehicle system is possible with dedicated parking.

**ENVIRONMENTAL & CRITICAL AREAS:**

The beauty of Stehekin is largely connected to the natural world where it is located. Any changes or growth must preserve the habitat and coexistence of wildlife, and preserve the scenic views.

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

- Bullet 1: It seems appropriate that the planning outline include an overview of the Stehekin Community's history. This wouldn't require a detailed encyclopedic account but rather a summary of the community's heritage of providing visitor services since the late 1800s. Links to more detailed histories could be provided for those interested in exploring Stehekin's history further. Stehekin Heritage is happy to collaborate with Anchor QEA to share relevant historical information. The planning team has likely considered a community history already; however, it's not entirely evident in section 1.1 of the draft outline.
- Bullet 1 - Stehekin Heritage appreciates that a clear "Purpose" for this planning effort is provided in the online materials accessible to the public. Bullets 2-5 are necessary; however, the planning team must include the following foundational documents throughout the planning process: PL 90-544 and the House and Senate Reports that accompany PL 90-544, the 1981 GAO Report, the NPS Land Protection Plan, and Stehekin Heritage's 2011 response to the LPP. These are all essential documents to reference and review during the planning process.
- 4 We recommend that the title 1.4 be "Public Engagement." Public Engagement has two components. One is the "Existing Community " (Bullets 3 & 5). The second component aims for a broader category of public engagement (Bullets 2 & 4).
- 4.1 Stehekin's demographic information is necessary as indicated.
- 1.4.2 should be titled: "Engagement Opportunities," and 1.4.3 "Ongoing Engagement Opportunities." While Stehekin Heritage is committed to the ideal of "Community," the bullets really identify broader engagement opportunities.
- Section 2: Community Priorities. We recommend renaming it 'Stehekin Community Sustainability Priorities' and suggest reordering the subcategories to make 2.6 (Parcel Ownership) the first priority. This would be followed by 2.5 (Economic Sustainability), 2.4 (Public Services and Utilities), 2,7 (Transportation), including bullet points for Necessary Services for a Sustainable Community, such as passenger ferries and barge services. Next, 2.8 Parks and Recreation, and 2.2 Climate Resiliency (recommended change: "Community Resiliency," adding "Effects of Continued Land Acquisition" as a bullet). Section 2.1 mainly pertains to NPS jurisdiction.

## **HOUSING:**

- 3 Fig. 1&2 - A historical listing showing the loss of private property since 1968 is important if the general "public" is to understand the limited amount of private property remaining in the Stehekin Valley. Anchor QEA should be encouraged to create dynamic charts visually displaying the reduction of private property since 1968. The record of land acquisition since 1968 is available from the National Park Service (NPS).

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

- 1.1 Bullet 4: Access - It is crucial that passenger boat and barge services are maintained to ensure Stehekin's sustainability. Additionally, references to the passage of PL 90-544 and its relevant House and Senate Reports are key to understanding the Stehekin Community's mandate to provide visitor services.

**County concerns:**

- Zoning and land use designations
- Housing development policies
- Floodplain development restrictions
- Upper valley road reconstruction

**NPS concerns:**

- NPS land acquisition policies
- Fire spending decisions
- Upper valley road reconstruction

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

Some people were concerned that we were too focused on rezoning as a solution. They cautioned to be careful looking at zoning solutions without a cohesive community vision.

**HOUSING:**

The community has expressed that there is a housing shortage, and any available housing sells for more than younger generations may be able to afford. Affordable housing would be appreciated to accommodate people that want to come back and start families here. A lot of private parcels and housing occurs within the floodplain.

Flooding is a big issue in Stehekin because there have been 3 big floods in the last 15 years that have impacted houses, and in some cases wiped out residential development in areas.

Interest by people to consider generational shifts in the community from older community members and continuing to make Stehekin an attractive place to be for younger generations.

## **PUBLIC SERVICES & UTILITIES:**

The road is currently owned and maintained by the Parks Service; Cragg Courtney currently plows it, but the Parks Service slashed his payment making it a financial burden, but he still plows the road more than he has to out of obligation to the community.

We discussed that there are specific services - indicator services - that need to remain viable, and can only be viable if there is an active population up here that is utilizing them. For example, Tom needs to have enough people up here purchasing gas to make it worthwhile for him to maintain a pumping station; the post office, school, and other facilities need enough people - and for the school, young people - to make it worthwhile to retain those services here.

## **ECONOMIC STABILITY:**

Concern about more flexible zoning allowing resort type development to occur, which is counter to the Stehekin identity.

One community member was interested in zoning that could be applied near the river in non-fish bearing areas that would allow for extraction of gravel to be used for local development and landscaping.

## **PARCEL OWNERSHIP:**

It was stated that a lot of the parcels are currently subdivided below their minimum acreage thresholds and that there may be some recalibration of existing zoning required.

The forest service has been purchasing property, but not as aggressively in recent years. The more recent purchases have been intended to prevent development within the floodplain; so most purchases are undevelopable property.

The group discussed zoning options, including downzoning Rural Residential parcels, or considering recently added rural zoning options RRR and RV. People asked if zoning changes would apply to individual parcels or multiple parcels, and it was suggested that it could be both, but with a preference for multiple parcels in order to make a stronger case to the state for rezoning. Mike had suggested that we could consider a new zoning type specific for Stehekin, or an overlay for the area that would provide some additional flexibility specific to Stehekin.

**PARKS & RECREATION:**

Interest from the community to involve the Parks Service in the advisory committee and decision-making process.

It was discussed that the Parks Service does have their own planning processes and doesn't always involve the community. An example was spending millions on Fire Caches that have no benefit to the community and remain unused.

**ENVIRONMENTAL & CRITICAL AREAS:**

Cynthia would like us to consider sandbars with Sand Piper habitat; development and disturbance to species; and other environmental impacts.

The group discussed the benefits of density and that it can be more environmentally friendly by reducing sprawl and clustering development; it can also be more defensible from a fire protection standpoint so that fire stops can be installed in specific areas and not have to address a ton of disparate development, which can be difficult and time consuming during an emergency situation.

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

Some people were concerned that we were too focused on rezoning as a solution. They cautioned to be careful looking at zoning solutions without a cohesive community vision.

**HOUSING:**

- Postal person-specific housing
- Young people and young families
- Rural Village
- RRI
- Young people and workers need housing – explore ways to discourage absentee home ownership.
- Better lodge housing for Employees
- Minimal Restrictions
- Zoning overlay w/ RV & RRR permissible uses
- It is difficult for young people to find and afford property.

**PUBLIC SERVICES & UTILITIES:**

- Update power plant for better output
- Update power plant
- More Power
- Power plant update/overhead
- PUD install dynamic switching to each home to allow better use of power during have load times
- Restrooms at Landing at Ground Level
- Highschool
- Fire district active role in fire line maintenance
- Address high power draw of unoccupied cabins in winter

## **ECONOMIC STABILITY:**

- How to insure – RRR better use of private property
- Worker housing
- RRR – mixed use Residence/ Business
- Private Prop. RRR & RV
- Housing for employees
- Create Stehekin-specific overlay district to allow for mixed use zoning
- Mixed use for R zoning & small commercial zoning
- Year round business not based in tourism
- We used to have a major employer there – The Park Service – brought families in & provided housing for them. We need to bring back the Park presence.
- RRR & RV
- We need to be able to Opportunities for expanding private business to enhance permanent residence year around. Enhancing visitor’s experience.

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

- Upper Valley Rd.
- Landing Traffic – one way road up behind Golde (sp?) West
- Open Upper Valley Rd (referenced with exact or near-exact phrasing 5 times)
- Landing traffic one way at boat time
- Landing parking and circulation
- Landing parking (referenced 4 times – one with emphasis “yes!!)
- Diagonal parking @ landing
- Open upper road to Cottonwood (referenced 3 times)
- Bike type of lane?
- Barge support (Chelan & Stehekin)

## **PARKS & RECREATION:**

- Extend Lakeshore Trail to Chelan end of lake
- Shutter from Weaver Point to Stehekin for family hikers
- Toilet at 1 mile dock
- Music performance venue for rock bands
- Bike trail w/ power lines underneath up to Bakery
- Valley trail, expanded campgrounds

- Bike/walk trail
- Valley trail
- Stop land acquisition
- Open End of Road (more trails)

**ENVIRONMENTAL & CRITICAL AREAS:**

- Enable land swap to previously private owned lands if in critical areas
- Fish “nursery” and breeding arena; room for Reds!
- Wester Sandpipers on Sandbars

## **Comments from May 2025 NPS Worksheet Handout**

### **County concerns:**

- Loss of private property
- Community viability
- Upper Valley Stehekin Road
- Flooding
- Parking at Landing
- Congestion Lower Stehekin Valley Road
- Emergency Response

### **NPS concerns:**

- Loss of private property
- Loss of visitor services
- Upper Valley Stehekin Road
- Flooding
- Fire/Forest Health
- Lake Chelan Vegetation Management
- Grizzly Bear Recovery
- Golden West Closure
- Parking at Landing
- Congestion Lower Stehekin Valley Road
- Hunting Access
- Recreational Angling
- Solid Waste Management and Fees
- Lower Valley Loop Hikes
- Winter Access and Recreational Opportunities
- Lake Chelan Access
- Emergency Response
- Rainbow Lake Fish Eradication
- Bull Trout Recovery

## **GENERAL COMMENTS:**

- Issue/Concern: Lack of info/follow-up on NEPA compliance and proposed NPS activities. "Our comments never seem to be considered or included in park planning. Where do our comments go?"
- Potential Resolution: Quarterly newsletter distributed via email. More frequent informal updates when projects are planned or implemented.

## **HOUSING:**

- Issue/Concern: Community viability and loss of visitor services.
- Potential Resolution: Easements vs. purchase. Revise Land Protection Plan and Stehekin Corridor Implementation Plan.

## **PUBLIC SERVICES & UTILITIES:**

- Need to comply with law and policy.
- Issue/Concern: Concerns about brown outs. Loss of future power due to decreasing snowpack and glaciers.
- Potential Resolution: New Right-of-Way for Company Creek needed. Can we utilize more kwh? Battery packs and other sources? Increase efficiency of existing use.
- Issue/Concern: Need to increase preparedness for multiple incidents.
- Potential Resolution: Increase season. Train additional NPS staff for EMT. Additional cooperation and integration with community emergency responders. Emergency response communications (down lake radio). Allow non-LE NPS staff to use LERN to facilitate communications with Life Flight.

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

- Issue/Concern: Loss of access and economic opportunity due to closure of road. Incompatible uses of road if road opens to multiple uses.
- Potential Resolution: Evaluate the potential to reopen road to some combination of bikes, personal vehicles, shuttle service; reroute road to Wagon Road, develop new PCT. Contact Rivers & Trails Program w/in NPS Federal highways. Assess amount of current use (trail counters and game cams). Wilderness Stewardship Plan. Also need Region Director support. Need to provide visitor support/SAR, maintenance funding etc. Fed Highways/NPS Long-Term access and Resiliency Strategy 2022-2023.
- Issue/Concern: Loss of long-term parking due to wastewater treatment plant. Aesthetic impacts of parking lot effect. Access to waterfront.
- Potential Resolution: Community developed parking plan and enforcement. Identify new locations and options for short, mid, and long term parking. Move parking away

from the waterfront side of the road. Restrict number of concession and NPS seasonal vehicles, Improve tour bus turnaround.

- Issue/Concern: Vehicle, pedestrian, bike congestion: incompatible uses.
- Potential Resolution: Develop Lower Stehekin Valley "frontage". Trail/bike path.

## **PARKS & RECREATION:**

- Issue/Concern: Safety and loss of access (residents and visitors) to NPS lands due to closures.
- Potential Resolution: Public outreach including specialists who work and live in grizzly country. 10j status and ensure plan reflects community concerns.
- Issue/Concern: Loss of central contact point for visitors. Loss of economic opportunity for artisans. GW gallery closure. NPS capacity.
- Potential Resolution: Reopen Golden West
- Issue/Concern: Loss of access to areas for hunting (deer and waterfowl) due to safety closures. Noise and safety related to ongoing hunting.
- Potential Resolution: Review safety zones. WDFW involvement.
- Issue/Concern: Increased angling pressure and reduced number of large fish. Bigger fish equals more fish. Anglers appreciate diverse fishery including native cutthroats.
- Potential Resolution: Change regulations to catch and release in lower river. Creel survey. Increase length of season. Food web and bioenergetics study. Fish habitat use study. BT reintroduction.
- Issue/Concern: Lack of hiking opportunities in the lower valley (especially loops) and access to SW side of Stehekin River.
- Potential Resolution: Open/improve fire line to hiking from Purple Point to Rainbow Loop, or behind Buehler's Bluff and Rainbow Loops to the Ranch. Provide hiking swing bridge or via ferrata across river at USGS cableway.
- Issue/Concern: Lack of opportunities for winter visitor activities. NPS capacity to support increased winter use.
- Potential Resolution: Groom winter trails in the valley. Provide yurts or Bridge Creek Cabin. Redevelopment of Upper Valley Stehekin Road. Staff Highbridge.
- Issue/Concern: Concerns over loss of fishing opportunities related to eradicating Rainbow Trout (non-native) from Rainbow Lake. Stunted fish provide an unrewarding fishery.
- Potential Resolution: Lake will be restocking in 2023 or 2024 with a non-reproducing strain of trout.
- Issue/Concern: Negative impacts of Rainbow and Cutthroat Trout populations. Loss of fishing opportunities due to closures to protect ESA species.

- Potential Resolution: Involve stakeholders in Structure Decision Making. Experimental population. Bull Trout predation may increase fish size above High Bridge. Education: predators equal healthier fish populations.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL & CRITICAL AREAS:**

- Issue/Concern: Damage to infrastructure and private property. River responding to increased bedload and changes in precipitation. Roads and development in the floodplain.
- Potential Resolution: Review CRCIP and update. LiDAR and/or SfM every [xx] years. Aerial photos after every flood event. Fed highways Long-Term access and Resiliency Strategy 2022-23. Evaluate flood proofing vs moving maintenance facilities.
- Issue/Concern: Wildfire preparedness, future stand structure (habitat & aesthetics), climate change (RAD), firewood supply. NPS capacity and subject matter expert. Prescribed burns impact aesthetics in lower valley.
- Potential Resolution: Stehekin Valley Forest Management Plan. Wilderness Stewardship Plan. Revision to Fire Management Plan (2024). Continue implementation of Forest Fuels Reduction Plan. Potential fuels reduction on valley walls. Better communication and frequent updates when burns are planned. Mechanical treatments? Evacuation and safety zone planning.
- Issue/Concern: Use of chemicals, loss of viewshed from road at the head of the lake, loss of amphibian habitat and sounds of frogs at night. How high will new vegetation get?
- Potential Resolution: Provide information on FY22 activities, future plans. Maintain view at head of lake. Involve community on what will be planted and herbicides treatments.
- Issue/Concern: Provide better swimming access for families with children.
- Potential Resolution: Create access points with graded lakeshore and improved foot friendly substrates.

**County concerns:**

- Social and economic impacts of continued land acquisition on the Stehekin community

**NPS concerns:**

- Social and economic impacts of continued land acquisition on the Stehekin community

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

PL 90-544 supports a sustained, vibrant community, public access and recreation.

**HOUSING:**

Private land base is imperative as it supports and protects the Stehekin community now and into the future. Without private land, there is no community.

**PUBLIC SERVICES & UTILITIES:**

A private land base supports elements for the Stehekin community and visitors:

- Recreation opportunities  
Gathering locations - bakery, post office, community hall, church
- School property and building
- Resources (water, sand, rock, gravel, timber)
- Private local service providers: carpenters, heavy equipment, freight barge, ferry access, fuel, well drillers
- Power supply - Chelan Co. PUD
- Emergency services and communications and local knowledge in emergency situations

## **ECONOMIC STABILITY:**

A private land base supports elements for the Stehekin community and visitors:

- Commerce - the ability to make a living
- Families that wish to stay and reside in Stehekin, committing time here now and in the future, wanting to raise a family
- The determination to live the lifestyle of a Stehekin resident
- A unique one-room school and excellent education program
- Stehekin Heritage, Stehekin Choice, local social events
- Individuals tied to the past through pioneering generations
- Private land enables permanent residents to support visitors and the NPS with established businesses and local knowledge
- Private land provides opportunity to enhance the visitor experience with quality overnight accommodations and diverse recreational opportunity.

## **PARCEL OWNERSHIP:**

Private land equals community. Preserve and protect what remaining private lands exist in Stehekin, "no net loss of private land base value" to sustain and secure the permanence of a unique and valuable community into the future.

Land acquisition is and will continue to negatively impact the foundation of the community if not managed appropriately, and the NPS should agree to a moratorium on land acquisition. Every piece of private property remaining is essential to long-term viability of the Stehekin community.

Stehekin residents living on private land provide numerous services and support for the visiting public to the LCNRA, which was the intent of PL 90-544 (enabling legislation), valley residents and the NPS, historically and currently, creating a quality experience hosted by an authentic mountain community.

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

A private land base supports elements for the Stehekin community and visitors:

- Roadway and access
- Airstrip
- Trails
- Transportation up lake, boats and barges (including supplies for the NPS)

- Stehekin Valley Road
- Bike Rentals

### **PARKS & RECREATION:**

A private land base supports elements for the Stehekin community and visitors:

- Supports PCT hikers as the last re-supply before Canada

### **ENVIRONMENTAL & CRITICAL AREAS:**

- Separate the NPS Land Protection Plan from river management
- Keep road in existing locations to protect private lands
- Encourage land exchanges from critical areas to viable areas, specifically properties threatened by flood path of the river