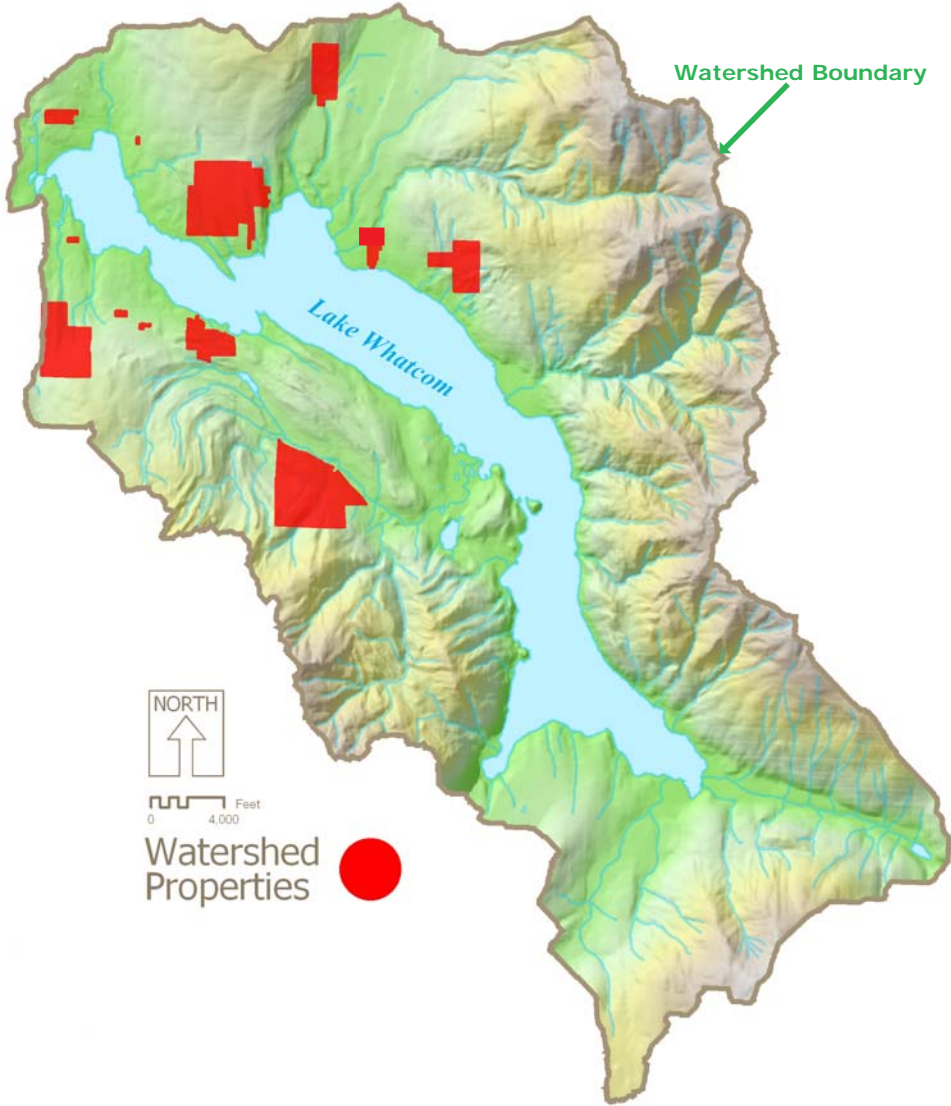


# Lake Whatcom Watershed Property Acquisition Program



*The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on the land.*

*Luna Leopold*

To contact City of Bellingham staff about this program:

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A program to protect our drinking water through the acquisition of land in the Lake Whatcom Watershed

City of Bellingham [www.cob.org](http://www.cob.org)

# LAND ACQUISITIONS

## Protecting Water Quality



Our duty to provide clean water for 95,000 residents begins with careful land management.

Watershed protection is the first and most basic step in a multi-barrier approach to insuring pure drinking water.



Natural forest cover is the best means of protecting water quality. This finely balanced system with its canopy of trees, shrubs and groundcover can slow rainwater and filter pollutants. Because forests are essential in providing a continuous supply of clean water, control of the land is one very effective way to achieve beneficial, enduring results.

In 2001 the City of Bellingham began a program to purchase available land in the Lake Whatcom Watershed. The City's Property Acquisition Program is financed by water usage fees, for the purpose of protecting our drinking water source, which includes the conservation and management of the acquired land.

This action comes at a crucial time and faces substantial challenges. Because Lake Whatcom has historically been used for industry, housing, and recreation many past practices must be reevaluated to reduce their impact on the reservoir. Current studies indicate that Lake Whatcom is experiencing an accelerated rate of decline in water quality, with decreasing levels of dissolved oxygen and increasing levels of phosphorus. This condition, coupled with continued growth, requires urgent attention.

### Progress Report (2001–2007)

To date, the City has purchased approximately 1178 acres of land at a cost of \$16.2 million dollars. The City has also protected an additional 116 acres of land through conservation easements or restrictive covenants (both of which serve to restrict development). Total acreage protected now stands at 1,342 acres. See the map on the back page for property locations.



Development of the watershed creates a four-fold challenge from:

- 1 Land disturbance
- 2 Loss of forest cover
- 3 Urbanization and increased impervious surfaces
- 4 Contaminants from daily activities

### ANSWERING THE CHALLENGE

#### The Property Acquisition Program

##### Selection Criteria:

The City has set essential criteria to rate properties for acquisition. These ratings include density potential, slope and physical features of the land which relate to drainage, proximity to the lake, and the parcel's potential water quality benefit.

##### Strategy:

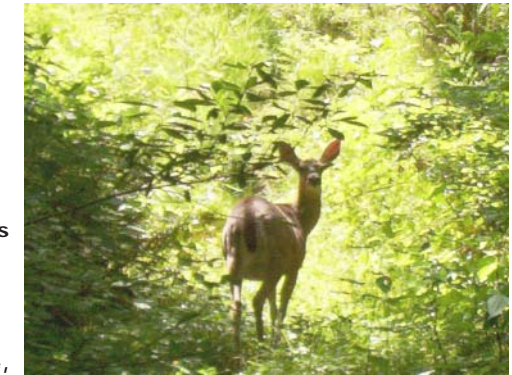
In order to make the best use of available funds for property purchase, the City has employed a strategy of first obtaining large parcels with the most development potential. In addition, for efficiency and effectiveness, the City considers properties that are adjacent to already protected lands or very sensitive areas.



## How you can help...

- ◆ Consider donating, selling, or placing a conservation easement on your watershed property.
- ◆ Sell or transfer development rights to other properties outside the watershed.
- ◆ Become a Watershed Steward.

The citizen Watershed Advisory Board has recommended implementing a Stewardship Program to educate residents about watershed issues, such as roads, hazardous waste, forestry, and streams. This program is soon to become available and anyone who is interested may call Bellingham Public Works Environmental Resources Division for further details.



The City of Bellingham has made a firm commitment to control non-point pollution now. Efforts include significant investment in stormwater management improvements in the watershed. It is understood that it is more prudent to protect the water source than pay for treatment. We believe this is a significant time in our city's history, one that will define the future of our drinking water and the quality of the Lake Whatcom Watershed. If you would like to participate in the process or need more information, please contact the City of Bellingham's Public Works Department at (360) 676-6961.