



*Port of Whitman County*  
**COMPREHENSIVE  
SCHEME**  
*of Harbor Improvements*



*2021-2025  
Draft for Comment*



# INTRODUCTION

## PORT COMMISSION

The Port of Whitman County is governed by a three-person elected Board of Commissioners that sets policy, approves all expenditures and appoints the Executive Director and Port Attorney. Commissioners serve six-year terms and while they are elected countywide, each must live in a specific district within Whitman County. The current Commissioners are Karl Webber (District 1), Kristine Meyer (District 2) and Tom Kammerzell (District 3).



KARL WEBBER



KRISTINE MEYER



TOM KAMMERZELL

## PORT PLANNING PROCESS

This Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements was prepared in accordance with the Revised Code of Washington (RCW).

RCW 53.20.010 requires all port districts to give the taxpayers a detailed view of their plans for acquiring and developing property and spending tax dollars.

The Port of Whitman County utilizes several documents to fulfill the intention of the state statute. The Port's Strategic Plan, together with the Annual Budget and this Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements, describe the Port's plans and intended future improvements for the purposes of satisfying RCW.20.010.

The Port Commission held a public hearing on XX, XX, 2020 to obtain public opinion on the 2020 Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements. The report was also informed by economic analysis reports conducted by University of Idaho economist Steve Peterson.

It is amended, as necessary, to authorize improvements, acquisition of property, surplus of property, and/or adoption of plans and programs; making it a living document. Amendments occur through formal resolutions adopted by the Port Commission.

If you have any questions or would like to review supporting documents to the Port's Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements, please visit the Port of Whitman County's website at [www.portwhitman.com](http://www.portwhitman.com) or call our offices at 509-397-3791.

## DEDICATED TO DAN BOONE (1927-2017)



*This report is dedicated to the memory of Dan Boone (1927-2017), who served as a District 2 Port Commissioner from 2000 to 2017. His steadfast service to the Port for nearly two decades will not soon be forgotten.*

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## WHAT IS A PORT?

A port district is a geographical area that may be as large as an entire county or as small as a city or town; its boundaries are defined when the district is formed. Voted into being by an election of the people who live in the district, law creates port districts as “municipal corporations” of the state. Often referred to as “special purpose districts,” ports are different from counties, cities and towns.

Almost all powers of the port district are vested in a board of commissioners or “commission.” Elected from the district to serve six-year terms, the governing body of commissioners assures local control and accountability. The port commission, like a city council or county commission, is the legislative body responsible for making the policies and decisions of the district in both internal and external matters.

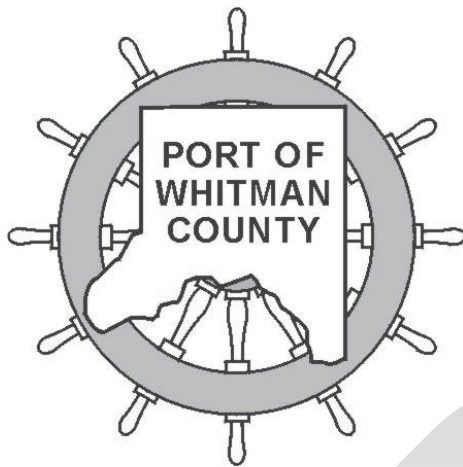
Such policies or decisions might involve adoption of plans, establishing positions, setting employment policies, purchasing or disposing of real estate and other property, setting rates, adopting budgets, levying taxes

and more. The commission appoints an executive director who administers the policies and decisions made by the commission and hires/manages a professional staff.

Law empowers Washington’s ports with broad economic development authority to bring business and jobs to their communities. Almost every Washington port pursues an aggressive program of industrial and economic development to promote employment and otherwise enhance the economy of the state and district. Some ports deal with all aspects of the subject, others with only one or two. Ports may:

- Develop lands for industrial and commercial needs
- Provide general economic development programs.
- Buy, lease and sell property.
- Provide air and water pollution control works.
- Operate trade centers and export trading companies.
- Establish and operate foreign trade zones.
- Promote tourism.
- Build telecommunications infrastructure and provide wholesale telecommunications services.





**Port of  
Whitman  
County**

## PORT OF WHITMAN COUNTY THROUGH THE YEARS

As early as the 1880s, long before the organization of the Whitman County Port District, steamboats carried orchard and grain products on the Snake and Columbia rivers to coastal markets in the west.

On November 4, 1958, an election held in conjunction with the general election approved a port district in Whitman County to be known as the Port of Whitman County. There were 6,653 votes cast in favor of the district and 2,503 votes against. On November 20, 1958, the County Commissioners established a Port District in Whitman County.

The people of Whitman County formed the Port for three specific purposes:

- Provide access to slack water navigation on the Columbia/Snake River system
- Promote industrial development
- Provide recreational opportunities on the Snake River

The first meeting of the Port was held on January 15, 1959, in the County Commissioners' room in the Courthouse. The Port Commission (having been duly elected to the position the previous year) elected D. I. Hopkins as President, Walter N. Nelson as Vice President and Lawrence Hickman as Secretary. There have been only 14 commissioners since 1959, providing the Port with continuity and strength of leadership.

Actual development and improvement of the on-water sites began in 1969, at the Port of Almota. Since then, the Port of Central Ferry, the Port of Wilma, Boyer Park & Marina, the Pullman Industrial Park, Pullman Industrial Park West (PIP West) and the Port of Whitman Business Air Center have been constructed.

Beyond industrial real estate, the Port has continued to deepen its economic impact by investing in various types of infrastructure, from transportation to telecommunications.



## MISSION

The Port of Whitman County is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all citizens of Whitman County through industrial real estate development, preservation of multi-modal transportation, facilitation of economic development and provision of on-water recreational opportunities.

## VISION

We are valued for our ability to operate sustainably; move strategically, decisively and effectively; and make the Palouse a great place to live and a better place to work.

## CORE VALUES

- » **Integrity**—We deliver on our commitments and inspire public trust.
- » **Sustainability**—We make business decisions that ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- » **Stewardship**—We are responsible stewards of community resources and the environment.
- » **Collaboration**—We seek partnerships that drive economic development.
- » **Leadership**—We are a model of leading decisively in the public interest.

## STRATEGIC PLAN (2021)

The Port's Strategic Plan, which provides direction on how to carry out the Port's mission, identified seven long-term goals.

- Diversify the economy of Whitman County.
- Encourage a balanced and economical multi-modal transportation system.
- Collaborate with regional partners to drive economic growth.
- Acquire, develop and maintain Port properties.
- Improve the Port's financial position.
- Expand broadband access.
- Enhance community outreach and engagement efforts.

### Economic Contributions of the Port of Whitman County

Firms associated with the Port of Whitman County and related business operations created 5,369 jobs in 2019.

This includes:

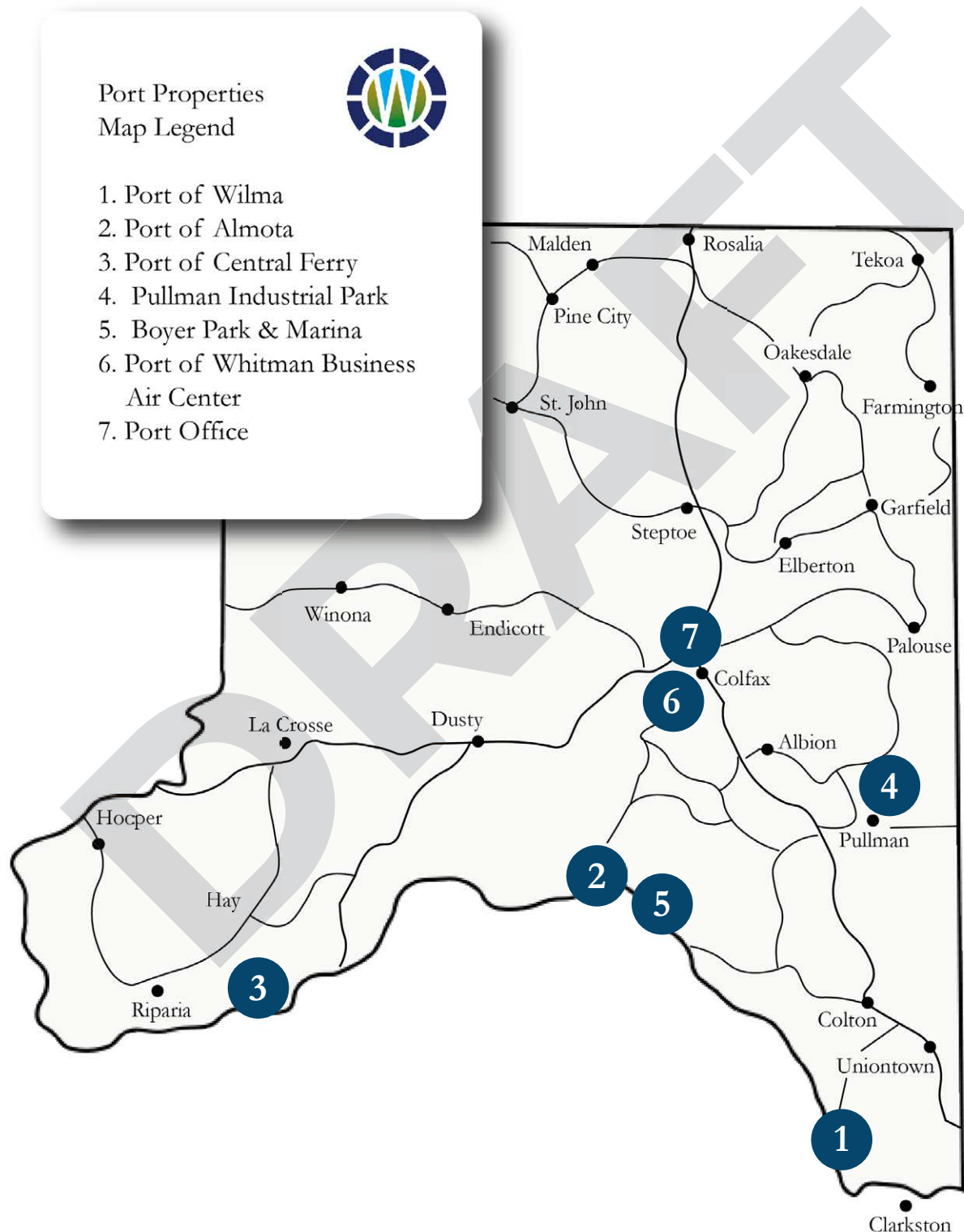
- 3,232 direct jobs
- \$1.35 billion in sales
- \$548 million in gross regional product
- \$368 million in payroll earnings
- \$22.6 million in tax revenue

The Port strives to continually improve these figures. From 1996 to 2019, the direct jobs associated with Port of Whitman County firms and related business operations increased 334% cumulatively.

*Source: 2020 Economic Contributions of The Port of Whitman County*

# PORT OF WHITMAN COUNTY PROPERTIES

Situated in the southeastern corner of Washington, the Port District of Whitman County encompasses the entire county (see map). The Snake River forms the south boundary of the district where the Port's three on-water port/industrial sites (Almota, Central Ferry & Wilma) are located. The Port also has off-water sites located in Pullman and Colfax. The versatility of these properties offers a wide range of exciting opportunities for economic development within the Port's district.







## PORT OF WILMA

### Facility Description

The Port of Wilma is located near the terminus of the Columbia-Snake River inland waterway. Only the Ports of Clarkston (Washington) and Lewiston (Idaho) are further upriver. The Wilma site also has the distinction of being the most diverse in function of the three active Whitman County port sites.

The site is comprised of 279.9 acres of developed industrial property and 76 acres of undeveloped property. About 230 acres of the developed acreage are divided into 24 lots and one public port site with 14.7 acres. The site can be accessed via Camas Prairie Railroad, a Port-owned spur line, a county road and the public port area with dock and dolphins.

### Primary Use

The Port of Wilma is a crucial transportation hub for agricultural chemicals, wood products, grain and other commodities to a market ranging from the Tri-Cities in Central Washington State, to the ports of Portland, Seattle, and the international markets beyond. Approximately 10 to 12 million bushels of wheat pass through the Port each year.

The Port's diverse tenant base ranges from grain shipment and storage companies to concrete block manufacturing businesses. The remaining 76 acres, located across State Highway 193 to the north, is zoned agricultural and remains undeveloped.

### Future Plans

- » Partner with the County to construct a turnout at the main entrance of Wilma drive.
- » Possible rezone upland land trade acreage.
- » Develop quarry site of upland land trade acreage.
- » Obtain more land from the Corps west of Wilma on the river.
- » Develop proactive plan for watershed improvement and preservation in conjunction with industrial development.
- » Maintain all existing port facilities and improvements in good order and repair, including replacements.
- » Improve and repair the public port site dock and booms.
- » Continue to market to and potentially develop or improve vacant land for potential tenants.



# PORT OF ALMOTA

## Facility Description

The smallest of the Port of Whitman County's three ports, the Port of Almota serves as a major Whitman County trans-shipment point for local white wheat. Formerly, it was the site of the now submerged town of Almota.

The Port is located south of the Camas Prairie Railroad and north of the Snake River in Section 13 in Township 14 North of Range 42 East of the Willamette Meridian. The 10.5-acre site includes utilities, approximate storage capacity of 3.7 million bushels, a public port with sheet pile dock and dolphins and a maintained access road.

## Primary Use

The Port of Almota primarily serves as a major grain terminal for the Palouse region. Tenants include grain storage and shipping companies.

## Future Plans

- » Maintain all existing port facilities and improvements in good order and repair, including replacements.
- » Develop proactive plan for watershed improvement and preservation in conjunction with industrial development.
- » Improve roadways.
- » Maintain river bank.



# PORT OF CENTRAL FERRY

## Facility Description

Centrally located on State Route 127 between Walla Walla and Colfax, Central Ferry is the most rural of all the port sites and allows access to a wide geographic area. Like the Port of Almota, the Port of Central Ferry serves as a major grain terminal for the Palouse region. It is also a major site for the manufacturing and wholesaling of fertilizer.

The site consists of 147 acres of developed land, divided into 18 industrial lots. It includes utilities and 7.2 million bushels grain storage.

## Primary Use

This site services a very wide area including the eastern Washington region and parts of Idaho and Montana. The land is leased to various grain storage/shipping companies and fertilizer companies.



## Future Plans

- » Acquire additional land near or adjoining present site as the need arises.
- » Continue to level, prepare, and improve undeveloped sites as needed.
- » Develop proactive plan for watershed improvement and preservation in conjunction with industrial development
- » Maintain all existing port facilities and improvements in good order and repair, including replacements.
- » Enhance and maintain the existing wells.



# PULLMAN INDUSTRIAL PARK

## Facility Description

Located on the north end of Pullman, Pullman Industrial Park is home to several technology and manufacturing firms. It is located adjacent to Washington State University and within an easy drive of the University of Idaho. The Park comprises 100.5 acres of fully developed sites on its east end, as well as 8.36 acres of undeveloped land at its west end. This undeveloped acreage is zoned light industrial and includes City water and sewer, as well as Port-owned fiber infrastructure in the right-of-way on Pullman-Albion Road. The eastern developed sites, zoned heavy industrial, include City water and sewer, roads and electrical, gas and telephone services. A wetland mini-park and trail are also located on the site.

## Primary Use

Tenants/occupants range from high technology firms to a locally sourced winery. Some of the region's top employers, including Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories, are located at Pullman Industrial Park.

## Future Plans

- » Lease or sell approximately 8.6 acres in Phase III of the Park.
- » Construct rental buildings and associated infrastructure when feasible and needed.
- » Within reason, do whatever engineering is necessary to encourage the occupation of the sites.
- » Continue to work with local developers that have an interest in constructing rental buildings in the Park.
- » Maintain all existing Port facilities and improvements in good order and repair, including replacements.





# BOYER PARK & MARINA

## Facility Description

From awe-inspiring views from the top of Almota grade to green shady lawns and campsites in the park itself, Boyer Park is truly an oasis on the Snake. The Port funds, operates and maintains the park and marina as a public service to the citizens of Whitman County, as it is the only port facility that is appropriate for use by everyone in the county.

It features long term or transient boat moorage, shaded campsites for RVs with full and partial hookups, camp cabins, a small on-site motel and tent sites. The Park also has an onsite convenience store, restaurant, laundry room, restrooms, shower facilities and a swimming beach. A pedestrian and bike trail, the 3.5-mile Snake River Trail, stretches from historic Almota Creek, through Boyer Park and on to the base of Lower Granite Lock and Dam.

## Primary Use

The 56-acre full-service marina and campground caters to a wide spectrum of recreational activities. From boating to fishing to biking, Boyer Park & Marina expands recreational opportunity on the Snake River to residents of Whitman County and beyond.

## Future Plans

- » Maintain all existing park improvements and Port park equipment in good order and repair including replacements.
- » Add income producing infrastructure when feasible.
- » Seek opportunities to improve the marina facilities.
- » Acquire additional land near or adjoining present site as the need arises.





# PORT OF WHITMAN BUSINESS AIR CENTER

## Facility Description

The Port of Whitman Business Air Center is a small general aviation airport and industrial park. It is located on Airport Road approximately one mile from State Route 26. Phase I included 19.84 acres divided into 13 lots, and Phase II includes 12.73 acres, which are currently being farmed. Phase I was completed in 1997 and Phase II will be completed as needed. Onsite are 6-bay t-hangars, private hangars and Port-owned pole buildings. The site also offers a water system, drain field and electricity, natural gas and telephone services.

## Primary Use

Tenants at the Port of Whitman Business Air Center include general aviation companies, fertilizer and agriculture businesses, storage owners, transportation companies and private hangar users.

## Future Plans

- » Lease property and recruit new businesses.
- » Conduct general airport infrastructure improvements.
- » Negotiate use of Colfax City water infrastructure.
- » Develop remaining 12.73-acre parcel as needed.
- » Build/lease rental building.





