



## Final Environmental Assessment

Sedro-Woolley Fire Station

Grant Request EMW 2009 FC 01076R

City of Sedro-Woolley

April 26, 2010



**FEMA**

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**

FEMA Region X

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## Executive Summary

The Sedro-Woolley Fire Station project is intended to expand and enhance fire protection capability for Sedro-Woolley and the surrounding area. The proposed location will not only create an additional fire station, thereby expanding the total fire-fighting capacity of the Sedro-Woolley Fire Department (SWFD), but will also distribute this capacity over a broader area. This will enable the SWFD to reduce response times, and have redundant capability in case a response route is blocked by a passing train, damage from a natural disaster, or other incident.

The proposed action is to use a City-owned property (about 2 acres) located on 1218 North Township Road (also known as SR 9), on the north side of Sedro-Woolley, and build a new 6,000 square foot fire station and associated parking and stormwater management features. This property, due to its location, would provide a more direct response-capability to areas north of State Route (SR) 20. The existing fire station, located at 325 Metcalf Street, would continue to cover areas south of SR 20, especially the portions of Sedro-Woolley nearest the Skagit River.

The project is expected to impact resources present within the project vicinity; all anticipated impacts will be avoided, minimized, and mitigated as is feasible and appropriate. The main impacts anticipated as a result of this project are the 0.72 acre increase in impervious surface area as well as noise from emergency sirens and fire station activity. The proposed expansion in fire response capability will have a moderate beneficial affect on public health or safety in Sedro-Woolley and the regional emergency response system it supports.

Conservation and mitigation measures incorporated into this project to minimize impacts include: (1) The City shall secure and comply with applicable permitting, (2) The City is responsible for selecting, implementing, monitoring, and maintaining best management practices to control erosion and sediment, reduce spills and pollution, and provide habitat protection; consistent with permitting requirements, (3) Site soils will be covered and/or

wetted during construction as needed to minimize fugitive dust, (4) Construction activities will be conducted during the daytime, to reduce adverse noise impacts, (5) In the event that archaeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity shall be discontinued, the area secured, and the SHPO and FEMA notified, (6) If any hazardous materials are found during construction; these shall be characterized, remediated, and disposed of as appropriate, and otherwise handled in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations, (7) The site stormwater management system shall be operated and maintained consistent with its intended design, (8) Any change to the approved scope of work stated in the FEMA grant application and described in this EA as the proposed action will require re-evaluation for compliance with NEPA and other laws and Executive Orders.

A public notice was printed in the Skagit Valley Herald and the public, tribes, and public agencies had the opportunity to comment on the draft EA for 30 days after notice publication. The notice identifies the action, location of the proposed site, participants, location of the draft EA, and who to write to provide comments. No comments were received. Public involvement also included discussion with the Sauk Mountain View Estates property owner's association, during consideration of an alternative location.

This EA evaluated the potential impacts to environmental, cultural and historic resources from the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives. The EA has also addressed the compliance requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, Executive Orders 11988 (Floodplain Management), 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), and 12898 (Environmental Justice), and other related environmental statutes along with considering issues such as hazardous and toxic wastes, infrastructure, and socioeconomics. The evaluation was based on the grant application, site review, proposed action scope of work and site/building design, resource studies, agency consultations, public involvement, and mitigation and conservation measures. The findings of this EA indicate there are no significant impacts to the resources discussed herein, and therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. A Finding of No Significant Impact has been prepared and is included in Appendix G.

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARRA	American Reinvestment and Recovery Act
AFG	Assistance to Firefighters Grant
EA	Environmental Assessment
EO	Executive Order
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NPDES	National Pollution Discharge Elimination System
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SR	State Route
SWFD	Sedro-Woolley Fire Department
T&Es	Threatened and Endangered Species
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

## **1.0 Introduction**

The proposed project is intended to expand and enhance fire protection capability for Sedro-Woolley and the surrounding area. The proposed location, at 1218 North Township Road in Sedro-Woolley, Washington, will not only create an additional fire station, thereby expanding the total fire-fighting capacity of the Sedro-Woolley Fire Department (SWFD), but will also distribute this capacity over a broader area. This will enable the SWFD to reduce response times, and have redundant capability in case a response route is blocked by a passing train, damage from a natural disaster, or other incident.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is involved in this project as a funding agency, providing an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Assistance to Firefighters Station Construction Grant (AFG). The City of Sedro-Woolley was selected for an award in October of 2009. The ARRA is an economic stimulus package and the purpose of the Fiscal Year 2009 funds is to create or save jobs in recession-hit areas which includes supporting 'shovel-ready' projects. Moreover, ARRA will further help achieve AFG goals of firefighter safety and improved response capability/capacity based on need, through the construction, renovation, or modification of fire stations.

Prior to the FEMA application, the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) completed review of the proposed project location as part of the Fruitdale and McGarigle Road transportation improvements project. Action included use of the parcel to stockpile soil unsuitable for road improvements. Some of the FHWA completed environmental review documentation will be incorporated herein.

Because the FHWA action did not consider fire station construction or require completion of an Environmental Assessment, this has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations to implement NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 1500 through 1508), and FEMA's regulations implementing NEPA (44 CFR Part 10). FEMA is required to consider potential environmental impacts before funding or approving actions and projects. The purpose of this Environmental Assessment (EA) is to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Sedro-Woolley Fire Station.

## **2.0 Purpose and Need**

The objective of the AFG station construction initiative is to provide financial assistance directly to fire departments on a competitive basis to build new or modify existing fire stations in order for departments to enhance their response capability and protect the community they serve from fire and fire-related hazards. One priority considered is

whether the grant will be used to expand fire protection coverage to meet increased service demands in the applicant's community.

The problem being addressed by this project is the increase in demand that growth in the Sedro-Woolley area has placed on the fire department. In just the last decade, Sedro-Woolley has grown from a population of 8,658 in 2000 to 10,030 in 2008 (U.S. Census data). According to the SWFD, callouts have increased from 1,553 in 2005 to 1,755 in 2008. Additional development has also occurred toward the north end of Sedro-Woolley as indicated by a newer residential subdivision to the east of the proposed fire station.

The existing station is located at 325 Metcalf Street in Sedro-Woolley, and is staffed by a Chief, Assistant Chief, 4 part-time positions, and 35 volunteers. According to SWFD statistics, 77.55% of calls are for rescue and emergency medical response.

### **3.0 Alternatives**

A number of alternatives to achieve Sedro-Woolley's stated purpose and need have been evaluated over the past few years, taking into account key emergency response operational factors.

#### **3.1 No Action Alternative**

Under the no action alternative, no FEMA funding would be available. If the City of Sedro-Woolley were to not expand their existing fire station or build additional capacity at a different location they would have to wait until a later date to implement an action alternative, or attempt interim operational enhancements. However, this would not address the existing problems of increased response-times and potential blockage of response-routes.

#### **3.2 Proposed Action**

The proposed action is to use a City-owned property (about 2 acres) located on 1218 North Township Road (also known as SR 9), on the north side of Sedro-Woolley, and build a new 6,000 square foot fire station and associated parking and stormwater management features. The project area is rural and consists mostly of grazing or crop land-uses. Although no longer present, the project site recently had a home and garage/barn on it. The parcel is bound to the north and east by residential properties; and to the south and west by a field and woods. Willard Creek is about 250 ft to the east of the property. This property, due to its location, would provide a more direct response-capability to areas north of State Route (SR) 20 as shown by Figure 1. The existing fire station, located at 325 Metcalf Street, would continue to cover areas south of SR 20, especially the portions of Sedro-Woolley nearest the Skagit River.

Plans have been prepared for the fire station and an architectural drawing is shown in Figure 2.

### **3.3 Other Alternatives Considered but Dismissed**

Two Action Alternatives have also been considered, and one or both could be implemented if the preferred and Proposed Action is not used. However although both alternatives would expand on the fire department's existing capacity, they have operational constraints that would limit their effectiveness.

#### Expand and Re-Model the Existing Fire Station

The existing fire station, located at 325 Metcalf Street, in downtown Sedro-Woolley, has multiple bays for fire engines and other equipment, training rooms, living quarters, and administrative office space. Fire trucks return to the station and are able to pull in to the back of the engine bays, so that backing is not required. Figure 1 shows the location of the existing station as well as the locations of the Proposed Action and Alternative Action.

The existing fire station could be expanded by building an addition to the existing building. However, a nearby city park limits the scope of any such expansion. Assuming that additional fire trucks and staff were available, this would enable the fire department to respond to additional calls at the same time, but would not reduce the distance they would need to travel to respond to calls in the outlying areas of the city. It would also not provide redundancy in response capability from the equipment and personnel being distributed throughout the city. An expanded fire station would also require additional parking, resulting in impacts on adjacent properties.

#### Build a New Fire Station off of Portobello Avenue

The SWFD could build a second fire station off of Portobello Avenue, near its intersection with Fruitdale Road. This property is smaller than the one being used for the Proposed Action and would not have the ability for fire engines to pull into the engine bays through a back entrance. The lack of a pull-thru ability is not a minor matter for a fire department. Backing a fire truck takes additional time and, even with a ground guide, exposes the fire department to increased risk of accidental damage to equipment, facilities, and personnel. It also forces the fire truck to maneuver in front of the station, possibly in conflict with street traffic.

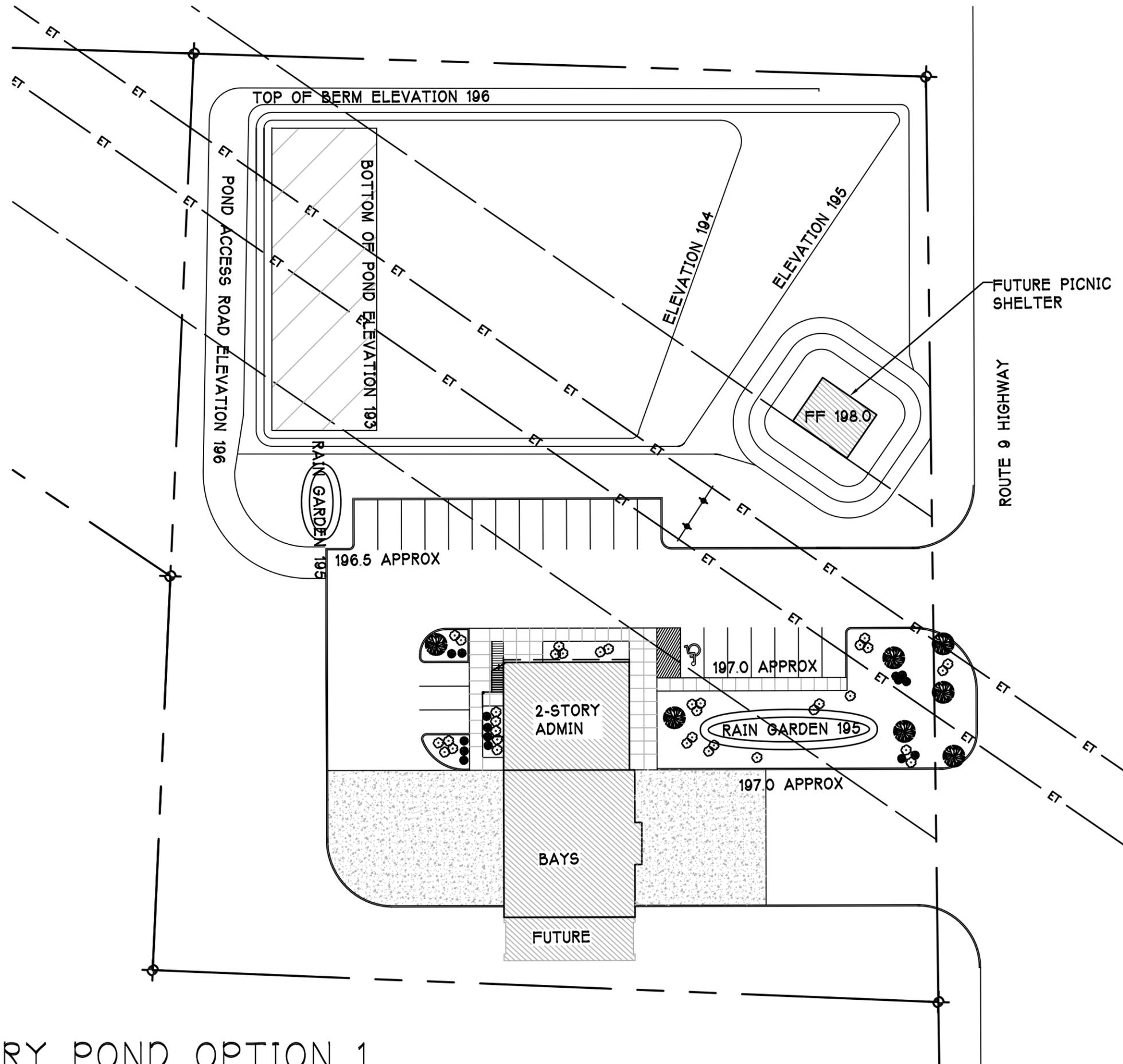
A new fire station at this location would also reduce response times to areas that the Proposed Action would serve. However, the Portobello Avenue location does not have as good a connection with the city's arterial roadways. It would have longer response times than the Proposed Action.

No other alternatives besides those discussed above were considered. The Proposed Alternative was the only alternative considered to fully meet the Purpose and Need.

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SITE PLAN-DRY POND OPTION 1

SCALE= 1"=40'

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## 4.0 Affected Environment and Potential Impacts

For each resource category, the impact analysis follows the same general approach for the No Action and Proposed Action Alternatives. When possible, quantitative information is provided to establish impacts. Qualitatively, these impacts will be measured based on small, moderate, or large impacts as outlined in the chart below.

Impact Scale	Criteria
Small	Environmental effects would not be detectable or would be so minor that they would neither destabilize nor noticeably alter any important attribute of the resource.
Moderate	Environmental effects would be sufficient to alter noticeably, but not to destabilize, important attributes of the resource.
Significant	Environmental effects would be clearly noticeable and would be sufficient to destabilize important attributes of the resource.

Impacts are disclosed based on the amount of change or loss of the resource from the baseline conditions. Impacts may be direct or indirect. Direct impacts are caused by an action and occur at the same time and place as the action. Indirect impacts are caused by the action and occur later in time or are farther removed from the area, but are still reasonably foreseeable (40 CFR Part 1508). Cumulative impacts are discussed in Section 4.7.

### 4.1 Physical Resources

#### 4.1.1 Geology and Soils

Construction of the proposed fire station will not require substantial alteration of nearby soils or topography. The site is on a gradual slope, with higher ground to the north and a forested drainage area to the west. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service website, the soil type in the vicinity of the proposed fire station is Skipopa silt loam, with a 3 to 8 percent slope<sup>1</sup>. It is found on terrace-like landforms, and is composed of volcanic ash and loess over glaciolacustrine deposits<sup>2</sup>. This matches the local topography, including the presence of a nearby lake.

This type of soil has a low permeability, having a drainage classification as being 'somewhat poorly drained', and tends not to be in areas where flooding or ponding occurs. Furthermore, as previously noted, portions of the proposed project site are being used to stockpile imported spoil material.

<sup>1</sup> <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Glaciolacustrine refers to sediments that are deposited into lakes from glaciers

There is no evidence of nearby faulting or the tell-tale escarpment of landslides. Construction standards will comply with local seismic design codes.

### Environmental Consequences

#### *No Action:*

Because there would be no construction, a No Action scenario would have no change on local soils and geologic conditions. The existing station would support emergency response operations as it currently does.

#### *Proposed Action:*

Given the relatively low level of disturbance to local topography, the proposed fire station will have a small impact on local soils and geologic conditions. The project would not likely be impacted by geologic conditions as the surrounding soil appears to be stable. Consistent with a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit in effect for the site, best management practices (BMP) will be employed during site construction to minimize soil erosion offsite during site work. Although the project area is predominantly agricultural land uses, because the project site is within the city limits of Sedro-Woolley, review per the Farmland Protection Policy Act is not required.

## **4.1.2 Air Quality**

Sedro-Woolley is not within a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency designated Attainment or Maintenance Area for air quality.

### Environmental Consequences

#### *No Action:*

With no construction under this alternative fire-response operations will continue as they are now, presumably with a gradual increase in activity given increased population and development in the Sedro-Woolley area. A No Action scenario would have a small effect on air quality.

#### *Proposed Action:*

Given the low level of traffic associated with fire station operation, and that an expanded capacity to extinguish fires would protect air quality, the proposed fire station will have a small adverse effect on air quality from operation and small beneficial effect from shorter response times. Site soils would be covered and/or wetted during construction to minimize fugitive dust.

### **4.1.3 Climate Change**

The climate in the Skagit County area, and throughout much of the neighboring counties, is characterized by a transition from low coastal areas to the Cascade Mountain Range. This transition in elevation is accompanied by a variation in rainfall. For example, the average annual rainfall in a coastal city like Anacortes, in western Skagit County, is 26 inches, with rainfall increasing to 32 inches in Mount Vernon and to 65 inches per year in Concrete in eastern Skagit County. Sedro-Woolley is about halfway between Anacortes and Concrete.

A second fire station will likely result in expanded service through additional fire-fighting equipment, such as fire trucks, and through increased travel by paid and volunteer staff. However, such increases in vehicular traffic, on a large scale, will be the same whether the traffic were concentrated at the existing fire station or distributed over two or more stations.

Additionally, a second fire station will require additional energy for lighting and heating, and result in additional emissions from construction equipment on a temporary basis. This increase in energy usage, and emissions from fire fighting equipment and staff vehicles is inconsequential compared to existing conditions in Skagit County, and is likewise inconsequential in its effect on climate change.

## **4.2 Water Resources**

### **4.2.1 Water Quality**

Stormwater in Sedro-Woolley either infiltrates into the ground or flows into local waterbodies such as Willard Creek, which is approximately 250 feet west of the Proposed Action, either directly or indirectly through the city's stormwater collection system. The storm drain system, as described by the City, is intended to prevent flooding by conveying rainwater away from buildings, roads and other places. Because storm drains ultimately convey water to surrounding rivers, the city ordinance prohibits anything other than uncontaminated rain water from entering the storm drain system. Willard Creek is listed on the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) 303(d) list, with a classification of 'w' for fecal coliform. In accordance with the Strahler stream-order classification system used by the DOE Willard Creek, being a headwater stream in the vicinity of the project, has a stream-order of 1.

#### Environmental Consequences

##### No Action:

Because there would be no construction, a No Action scenario would have no change in water quality conditions.

Proposed Action:

The proposed project will result in approximately 36,590 square feet (0.84 acres) of impervious surface, between 7,400 square feet of roof space and sidewalk (0.17 acres), and 24,400 square feet (0.56 acres) of pavement surrounding the fire station. The existing surface, totaling 101,060 square feet (2.32 acres), consists of plowed fields, lawn and pasture, and compacted dirt or gravel roadway. The existing amount of impervious surface, from the driveway and compacted areas formerly under structures, is estimated to be 5,000 square feet. The net increase in impervious surface will, therefore, be 31,590 square feet (0.725 acres). Approximately 64,470 square feet (1.48 acres) will still be available to infiltrate stormwater or wastewater. The project will not result in more than 1 acre being disturbed and will therefore not trigger NPDES requirements beyond those already in place with the FHWA action.

In accordance with state and local standards, the fire station will have an on-site stormwater collection and treatment system which will treat stormwater with a rain garden, and use a detention pond to attain flow-control (see Figure 2). This treated stormwater will then be discharged through a control structure to an existing drainage ditch along the north side of the property that discharges into Willard Creek. The proposed project would have a small effect on Willard Creek's water quality.

#### **4.2.2 Wetlands**

The property being used for the Proposed Action has one non-jurisdictional wetland, covering approximately 900 square feet. This wetland is located toward the north boundary of the property and will not be affected by construction of a fire station. A wetland investigation in June of 2009, found that the wetland is a closed depression, and has no connection with 'waters of the U.S.'. As such, the isolated wetland is not under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (see Appendix B).

In addition, as defined in Sedro-Woolley Municipal Code 17.65.025, wetlands "do not include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from non-wetland sites, including, but not limited to irrigation and drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, canals, detention facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, farm ponds, and landscape amenities, or those wetlands created after July 1, 1990, that were unintentionally created as a result of the construction of a road, street or highway." As the wetland area does not receive sufficient hydrology to maintain the saturated soils necessary without input from drainage ditches and swales, it would be considered an artificial wetland by the City of Sedro-Woolley and is, therefore, not regulated as a critical area.

#### Environmental Consequences

No Action:

With no construction, the No Action scenario would have no effect on wetlands.

*Proposed Action:*

Because the wetland feature on the parcel has been impaired by past agricultural uses, and does not meet pertinent regulatory definitions, and is avoided by construction; consistent with Executive Order 11990, Wetlands Protection and the Clean Water Act; the proposed action avoids wetlands.

### **4.2.3 Floodplains**

Siting for a fire station is of particular concern relative to floodplains, as these are considered 'Critical Actions' under Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management. Federally-assisted critical actions must be located above the 500-year floodplain, unless there are no practicable alternatives; because even a small risk is too great relative to emergency response service the community depends on with a fire station. The proposed station site is located upland from the Skagit River, and toward the top of a hill on a gradual slope. The parcel is designated a flood zone X according to FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Map, outside the 500-year floodplain. In addition, the Sedro-Woolley Municipal Code, 17.66.190, requires that, "Construction of new critical facilities shall be, to the extent possible, located outside the limits of the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) (one hundred year floodplain)."

#### Environmental Consequences

*No Action:*

With the No Action scenario there would be no change in existing conditions. The absence of a second fire station, if the existing fire station or its fire-response routes were susceptible to flooding, would not alleviate such issues. Thus the No Action scenario could have a small adverse effect on services, because of the lack of local back-up, should they be disrupted by flooding.

*Proposed Action:*

Due to its upland location, construction of the fire station will not act as a constriction on any floodplain. And due to its on-site stormwater system, will not substantially change drainage patterns. Therefore, affects to any downstream floodplains are small.

### **4.3 Coastal Resources**

Although the City of Sedro-Woolley is not near the coast, Skagit County is designated a coastal county by the WA Department of Ecology. This designation is due to various portions of Skagit County being on the coast of Puget Sound, including the City of Anacortes and numerous river deltas.

#### Environmental Consequences

##### *No Action:*

If no work is undertaken there will be no change to the area in regards to coastal resources or to the county's designation.

##### *Proposed Action:*

The proposed project is not within the portion of Skagit County that has coastal resources. Construction and operation of a fire station will have no effect on coastal resources or on the county's designation.

### **4.4 Biological Resources**

#### **4.4.1 Vegetation**

The project area can generally be characterized as rural residential and agricultural land uses. The existing site is covered by grasses and weeds, or bare dirt from prior agricultural plowing. Adjacent site vegetation includes shrubs and trees lining Willard Creek, and landscaping planted by adjacent property owners.

#### Environmental Consequences

##### *No Action:*

If no construction work is undertaken then there will be no change in existing vegetation.

##### *Proposed Action:*

The project will remove most, if not all, of the few remaining trees and replant new trees as part of the landscaping plan. Much of the grasses will remain as these areas are being left undeveloped. New plantings will include native trees, shrubs, and lawn; mostly in between the fire station building and North Township Road. This will tend to replicate what will be removed to construct the facility. The proposed project would have a small effect on vegetation.

#### **4.4.2 Threatened and Endangered Species and Critical Habitat**

Per Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the Proposed Action has been evaluated for effects to threatened or endangered species (T&Es) and designated critical habitat. The Proposed Action will take place within an area that is already highly disturbed from past farming activities. This area is also surrounded by residential and agricultural development. A review of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife data yielded no occurrence records for T&Es or critical habitat

on the project site. FHWA's review for placement of stockpiled materials on the site determined there would be No Effect to listed species, given the scope of work and species absence from the project site. Willard Creek, located 250 feet west of the project site, supports Coho salmon further downstream.

#### Environmental Consequences

##### *No Action:*

If no work is undertaken the No Action scenario would cause no changes to existing conditions relative to threatened and endangered species.

##### *Proposed Action:*

Because there will be no in-water work and the potential for sediments to reach the creek due to stormwater treatment and vegetated buffer area are minimal, No Effect to Coho salmon are anticipated.

### **4.4.3 Wildlife and Fish**

There are no lakes or fishbearing streams on the property. There are forested areas to the west of the property which could provide habitat for wildlife, such as deer, raccoons, songbirds, and rabbits. Willard Creek provides some connectivity to similar habitats, north and south of the project limits. Nearby roads such as Bassett Road and Sapp Road present breaks in this connectivity, but are not barriers to wildlife.

#### Environmental Consequences

##### *No Action:*

If no work is undertaken, the No Action scenario would have no change in existing conditions for wildlife and fish.

##### *Proposed Action:*

Because the proposed site retains little habitat value since it has been under agricultural use, effects to wildlife will be small from construction and operation of a new fire station. Additionally, construction of the fire station will not alter adjacent wooded areas.

## **4.5 Cultural Resources**

As part of the FHWA action and per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, a cultural resources investigation was completed for the proposed action site. The report includes a prehistoric and historic context for the project area, research methodology, and findings (see Appendix E).

### **4.5.1 Historic Properties**

#### Environmental Consequences

##### *No Action:*

If no work is undertaken there will be no effect on cultural resources.

*Proposed Action:*

A total of nine test pits were dug on the Proposed Action site during a field investigation for archaeological resources. No cultural resources, artifacts, or features were identified during this surface and subsurface investigation. Cultural resource work also included a pedestrian survey and background research regarding the property. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), by letter dated February 25<sup>th</sup>, concurred that this project would result in No Historic Properties Affected. In the event that archaeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity should be discontinued, the area secured, and the SHPO and FEMA notified.

#### **4.5.2 American Indian / Religious Sites**

The property is owned by the city so is, therefore, not a tribal land, nor is it on or near a reservation. According to the US National Park Service (2010), tribes with historical interests in the project region include the Upper Skagit, Swinomish, Stillaguamish, Lummi, and Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. The cultural resources investigation completed for the FHWA action provides an overview of tribal occupation patterns in the region (see Appendix E).

##### Environmental Consequences

*No Action:*

If no work is undertaken there will be no effect on American Indian / Religious Sites.

*Proposed Action:*

The cultural resources investigation completed on the site found no evidence of cultural material or features that may be of tribal interest. Thus the proposed fire station is not expected to affect any sites with religious or cultural significance. Tribes had an opportunity for comment as part of the public involvement process of the draft EA.

## 4.6 Socioeconomic Resources

### 4.6.1 Environmental Justice

Executive Order (EO) 12898 clarifies existing Title VI requirements of federal officials and those receiving federal funds to consider possible disproportionate and high adverse environmental effects to minorities and low-income populations. According to U.S. Census data<sup>3</sup>, the population in Sedro-Woolley, in 2000, consisted of the following:

Total	8658	100.0 %
Non-minority	7963	92.0
Minority	1321 <sup>4</sup>	15.26
Low-Income	950	11.3

U.S. Census maps indicate that some minorities live north of SR 20, with some in the vicinity of the proposed fire station. However, these maps do not mean that there are distinct minority neighborhoods, nor do they imply that reported populations live in public housing.

#### Environmental Consequences

##### *No Action:*

If no work is undertaken there would be no change in socioeconomic conditions. All people, including any minority and low income populations present, would not benefit from a second fire station. Thus the No Action scenario could have a small adverse effect on minority and low income populations depending on their proximity to the existing fire station and the effect that constraints on outreach might have on safety education. As many non-minorities and higher income populations would share this same lack of benefits any impacts of a No Action scenario would not be disproportionate.

##### *Proposed Action:*

Given the diverse population in the Sedro-Woolley area, and the age of the data (none was available for 2008, the latest update), it is safe to assume that some minority or low-income populations could live near the proposed fire station property. However, demographics were not part of the city's site selection criteria for a new fire station location. Furthermore, the new fire station will provide equal benefits to the community through expanded fire protection coverage. Thus, given the nature of the project there will be no 'high adverse and disproportionate' effects to minority and low income populations associated with the project.

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<sup>3</sup>[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFacts?\\_event=Search&geo\\_id=&\\_geoContext=&\\_street=&\\_county=Sedro-Woolley&\\_cityTown=Sedro-Woolley&\\_state=04000US53&\\_zip=&\\_lang=en&\\_sse=on&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&show\\_2003\\_tab=&redirect=Y](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFacts?_event=Search&geo_id=&_geoContext=&_street=&_county=Sedro-Woolley&_cityTown=Sedro-Woolley&_state=04000US53&_zip=&_lang=en&_sse=on&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&show_2003_tab=&redirect=Y)

<sup>4</sup> This includes double reporting, such as someone who is white and Hispanic

## 4.6.2 Noise

Fire stations can generate a wide range of noise levels, from quiet most of the time to loud when equipment sirens are activated during call-outs. According to a research paper submitted to the National Fire Academy in 2003, sirens were measured, for the purpose of firefighter exposure levels, at between 86 and 92 decibels when in close proximity to the siren. Call-outs typically involve a fire truck and support vehicle or Medic van, which would be expected to use both lights and a siren. Residents and businesses in the immediate vicinity of a new fire station would be briefly subjected to this noise at approximately half the current call-out rate – presuming that each station responds to half the service demand. This would equate to nearly 900 call-outs per year, or 2.5 per day. In addition, exposure to this noise could come at any time during the day or night. Also, as stated in the City of Sedro-Woolley’s Municipal Code<sup>5</sup> sounds created by emergency equipment are exempt from the noise ordinance.

### Environmental Consequences

#### *No Action:*

If no work is undertaken there will be no change in noise patterns around the existing fire station, other than a possible small increase in call-outs commensurate with Sedro-Woolley’s population growth. The No Action scenario would have a small effect on noise.

#### *Proposed Action:*

The project area along SR 9 would be characterized as quiet because of the dominant land uses of rural residential and agricultural. Construction of the fire station will temporarily increase ambient noise levels from site preparation through facility completion as a result of additional traffic and equipment use. Because construction activities will be conducted during the daytime, adverse noise impacts to adjacent residents is expected to be small.

Noise conditions in the project area will change as a result of the new fire station, in particular because activation of emergency sirens is inherent to such a facility. It should also be noted that the sirens are intended for public safety. Because call-outs are not expected to be frequent and nearby residents are likely to be away at work during the day, day-time adverse noise impacts from the sirens are expected to be small. Night-time sirens could adversely affect most nearby residents and could wake people who are sensitive to night-time noise. This would be considered a moderate impact since night-time operations would be limited to emergency events that may not occur on a daily or even weekly basis, and the noise interruption would be brief in duration. According to the city’s assistant fire chief, night-time call-outs have recently averaged approximately 250 per year. These call-outs would be distributed between both fire stations.

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<sup>5</sup> City of Sedro-Woolley’s Municipal Code Chapter 9.46.030

Other noise associated with the new fire station would be staff arriving at and departing from the fire station. Though more frequent than call-outs, this noise would not involve sirens and would blend in with existing traffic noise from the adjacent roadway, thus a small adverse affect.

Finally, by moving some of the emergency response function to a different location, a commensurate reduction in adverse noise effects can be expected from the existing fire station operation in downtown Sedro-Woolley.

### 4.6.3 Traffic

Most of the vehicular trips associated with the fire department as a whole will still be associated with the existing downtown fire station. These trips include call-outs, and arrivals/departures from staff, volunteers, visitors, and deliveries. A second fire station would have its own localized traffic, resulting from call-outs and a reduced level of staff, volunteers, and deliveries. Fire fighters start their shifts at 6 a.m., and end them at 6 p.m.; which is not during the p.m. traffic peak.

#### Environmental Consequences

##### *No Action:*

If no work is undertaken then there would be no change in existing traffic patterns, other than what would be expected from more call-outs associated with Sedro-Woolley population growth. The No Action scenario would have a small adverse effect on traffic.

##### *Proposed Action:*

The proposed new fire station site is located on SR 9, which is considered an arterial at this location. Coordination will be required with the Washington State Department of Transportation for an Access Connection Permit. The level of trip generation for the new fire station could be expected to add up to 24 trips per day, broken down as follows:

Call-outs	3 out, 3 back, times 2 vehicles	12 trips
Staff / volunteers	2, on average, 4 trips / day	8 trips
Deliveries	2 per day, 2 vehicles	4 trips

As shown above, trips associated with a new fire station are minimal – approximately equal to the impact of two homes sharing a common driveway. In addition, call-out trips originate from the fire station but do not have consistent destinations. Furthermore, at the proposed location, the trips will blend in with a state highway, instead of impacting a neighborhood local roadway. Thus, the fire station will have a small adverse impact on local traffic.

Also, by moving some of the emergency response function to a different location, a commensurate reduction in emergency response related traffic volume can be expected at the existing fire station in downtown Sedro-Woolley.

#### **4.6.4 Public Service and Utilities**

Public services include police and fire protection, animal control, and street maintenance. Utilities include electrical, natural gas, water, sewer, refuse collection, and communications.

##### *Environmental Consequences*

###### *No Action:*

If no work is undertaken there will be no change on utilities. The absence of a second fire station, considering the purpose and need of the project, would continue to place a strain on delivery of fire response as a public service. Therefore, the No Action scenario would have a small to moderate adverse effect on public services.

###### *Proposed Action:*

As the fire station would be manned 24 hours a day, no additional police protection would be needed, and there would be no need to augment other public services as a result of the new fire station beyond what is already provided. The above listed utilities are either buried or supported overhead by utility poles. Other than tie-in, no additional utilities would need to be installed as a fire station would not need anything beyond the above listed utilities. Operation of the fire station will not exceed the existing capacity of the existing utilities in the project area. Accordingly the new fire station will cause only small adverse effects to local public services and utilities.

#### **4.6.5 Public Health and Safety**

By its nature, a fire station provides benefits to public health and safety. Such facilities are often used to provide flu shots, blood pressure checks, and other services that promote public health. In addition, these facilities are also used to educate youth about fire and bicycle safety and as headquarters for disaster response. Similarly vehicles responding to calls typically use emergency beacons, lights, and sirens so as to warn approaching vehicles.

##### Environmental Consequences

###### *No Action:*

If no work is undertaken the existing fire station will continue to perform its public health and safety functions from its current location and from borrowed locations or using vehicles. As described in the Purpose and Need Section, the No Action scenario would likely have a small adverse effect on public health and safety capabilities. These effects could worsen over time with Sedro-Woolley's population growth and development patterns.

###### *Proposed Action:*

The proposed expansion in fire response capability will have a moderate beneficial affect on public health or safety in Sedro-Woolley and the regional emergency response system it supports as a result of the expanded capacity.

Response times will be reduced for call-outs in the north end of the City, providing a particular benefit to residents and business in that area.

#### **4.7 Hazardous Materials and Wastes**

Aside from the use of common lubricants and cleaning agents, no additional pollutants would be dispersed by operation of a fire station. Consideration of potential site contamination was considered during development of alternative sites.

##### Environmental Consequences

###### *No Action:*

If no work is undertaken there will be no change to existing conditions as they relate to hazardous materials and wastes.

###### *Proposed Action:*

The proposed site was most recently used for residential and agricultural purposes. Typical hazardous materials associated with these uses include: drain cleaning chemicals such as sodium hypochlorite and sodium hydroxide, herbicides such as Roundup (a post-emergent) and Ronstar (a pre-emergent), motor oil and similar lubricants, gasoline and diesel fuels, lead-acid batteries, and fertilizers with ammonium nitrate and potassium. A review of US EPA and WA Department of Ecology hazardous materials and site contamination databases indicated that Voluntary Cleanup Program sites, as well as sites with Leaking Underground Storage Tanks and Underground Storage Tanks, are within a half mile of the proposed fire station. Two Confirmed or Suspected Contaminated sites are within a mile of the proposed fire station. The stockpiling of materials done as a FHWA Categorical Exclusion did consider whether hazardous materials or wastes would be encountered or generated by that project, in accordance with questions in Part 4, Section 5, on the project's Environmental Classification Summary. A letter, regarding the Fruitdale-McGarigle road project, amended its ECS to account for the stockpiling of material at the proposed fire station location; and disclosed the above database findings.

No hazardous materials or wastes were observed on the site or immediately adjacent to it, either before or after the stockpiling of materials from the other project. Furthermore the spoil material that has been imported to the site from the FHWA project – from a variety of locations along Fruitdale-McGarigle Road – is not known to contain contaminants. Accordingly, based on past use and site evaluation, the new fire station is not expected to generate any hazardous materials or wastes or be affected by them.

## **4.8 Cumulative Impacts**

No development is pending expansion of fire protection services. In addition, planned growth is already happening toward the north end of Sedro-Woolley. A second fire station has been part of the City's capital improvements plan and it will not accelerate growth or change zoning.

## **5.0 Project Conditions and Mitigation Measures**

Project conditions and mitigation measures include:

- The City shall secure and comply with applicable permitting (see Section 6).
- The City is responsible for selecting, implementing, monitoring, and maintaining best management practices to control erosion and sediment, reduce spills and pollution, and provide habitat protection; consistent with permitting requirements.
- Site soils will be covered and/or wetted during construction as needed to minimize fugitive dust.
- Construction activities will be conducted during the daytime, to reduce adverse noise impacts.
- In the event that archaeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity shall be discontinued, the area secured, and the SHPO and FEMA notified.
- If any hazardous materials are found during construction; these shall be characterized, remediated, and disposed of as appropriate, and otherwise handled in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations.
- The site stormwater management system shall be operated and maintained consistent with its intended design.
- Any change to the approved scope of work stated in the FEMA grant application and described in this EA as the proposed action will require re-evaluation for compliance with NEPA and other laws and Executive Orders.

## **6.0 Agency Coordination, Public Involvement and Permits**

As part of the FHWA action, the City coordinated with WSDOT Local Programs and consulted with the State Historic Preservation Officer and nearby tribes.

The SWFD has complied with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) as implemented by the City of Sedro-Woolley, the lead SEPA agency. This act, or

process, involves disclosing proposed actions, their potential impacts, and identifies mitigations as necessary to avoid and minimize expected impacts. The SEPA process distributes a checklist summarizing the proposal's actions and effects to local and state agencies who are provided an opportunity to comment on the proposal. Other interested parties and individuals can also use this time to comment or express their concerns.

Public involvement about the proposed fire station completed to date included discussion with the Sauk Mountain View Estates property owner's association, during consideration of an alternative location.

A public notice was printed in the Skagit Valley Herald on March 13, 2010 and again on March 27, 2010. The public, tribes, and public agencies had the opportunity to comment on the draft EA for 30 days after notice publication. The notice identifies the action, location of the proposed site, participants, location of the draft EA, and who to write to provide comments (see Appendix F). No comments were received.

Construction at the Proposed Action site will require a clearing and grading permit, building permit, and approval by those utilities connected to the new fire station. As North Township Road is also a state highway, re-development of the property will also require an Access Connection Permit from the Washington State Department of Transportation, Northwest Region.

## **7.0 List of Preparers**

John C. Heinley, P.E.  
Christina Neff  
Ann Weckback  
Ross Widener

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