

of forested hillsides, mountain lakes (project reservoirs), and distant volcanic peaks. Large numbers of visitors pass through the study area on Lewis River Road (State Route 503) on their way to the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument (Monument). Visual resources in the vicinity include the landscapes visible from State Route 503 and the reservoir surfaces. The combination of extensive timber management activities, forested slopes, open meadows, and low-density residential development in this area creates a rural setting with ever-present signs of human modification of landscape characteristics. Primary features of the viewshed include the rolling, forested hills that encompass the Lewis River valley; Merwin, Yale, and Swift reservoirs; and Mount St. Helens.

The Clark, Cowlitz, and Skamania county planning departments have primary jurisdiction over lands in the project vicinity. The USFS and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manage extensive holdings around Yale and Swift reservoirs. Their management practices affect the reservoir's viewsheds.

Visual resource issues related to the project include:

- Visual character of project features, including hydroelectric generation, transmission, and recreation facilities;
- Visibility of project features from locations of high public use such as Lewis River Road, and recreation areas;
- Visual effect of reservoir water level fluctuations, particularly during periods of high recreation use;
- Visual effect of instream flows in sections of the Lewis River controlled by the project;

- Consistency of the project with existing and proposed federal, state, and local plans and policies regarding the visual resource; and
- Opportunities to enhance the scenic landscape characteristics of the Lewis River Valley viewshed.

Environmental Impacts

As described above, improving watershed conditions will provide direct and substantial benefits for aquatic species and terrestrial species associated with protected riparian communities. These improvements in the natural setting should result in improved aesthetic qualities in and around project features, and should result in a more natural setting in such areas. At this point, no construction or project alterations are proposed at this time that could result in construction-related impacts to aesthetic qualities. Therefore, the Proposed Action should result in enhanced aesthetic qualities relative to the No Action alternative.

7.6 Land Use

Affected Environment

Existing land uses in the project vicinity include timber production, agriculture, hydroelectric generation, recreation, small commercial businesses, and residential housing. Land ownership in the project vicinity is a combination of large and small holdings by public and private entities including the USFS, DNR, Weyerhaeuser, Longview Fibre, Clark County, Cowlitz County, PacifiCorp, and private residents.

The projects are located east (10–40 miles) of the community of Woodland; in recent years, there has been a considerable increase in residential

development in the Woodland area and in areas adjacent to the projects along Lewis River Road.

Land use regulations in the project vicinity are under federal, state, and local jurisdiction. Agencies with land management responsibilities in the project vicinity include the USFS, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DNR, WDFW, WDOE, Cowlitz County Planning Department, Clark County Planning Department, Skamania County Planning Department, and the City of Woodland.

Environmental Impacts

Proposed watershed improvement measures are consistent with existing land use regulations. Conservation efforts with regard to the acquisition of Eagle Island reduces potential for land use conflicts as Eagle Island will be unavailable for development due to the conservation easement. Likewise, conservation easements for riparian habitat will provide long-term benefits for existing landowners, particularly with regard to aesthetic values as land within an easement is not likely to be developed. The Proposed Action provides opportunities to enhance the land use practices and benefit efforts to protect listed species.

7.7 Socioeconomic

Affected Environment

The Lewis River Projects occupy lands located in three counties: Clark, Cowlitz, and Skamania. Information presented in this EA is based on information from the Economic Development Network Web site titled County Profiles for Washington. (<http://www.wa.gov/esd/Imea/pubs/profiles/profiles.htm>). County demographic data are summarized in Table 7.7–1.

TABLE 7.7–1.—COUNTY AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

County	Area (square miles)	Population	Population density per square mile
Clark	628	332,000	537
Cowlitz	1,139	94,100	83
Skamania	1,657	9,900	6

Clark County

For the past decade, Clark County has had one of the most dynamic economies in the state of Washington. Clark County's demographics and economy have been shaped by its status as a suburb, by its diverse industrial base, by a steady flow of high tech investment, and by the differing tax structures between Washington and Oregon.

Clark County is a suburban county within the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area. It shares many of the characteristics of not-yet-fully-mature suburban counties, such as rapid population growth and an imbalance in commuting patterns. Close to one-third of the county's work force commutes across the Columbia River to Portland every day. The county's role as a bedroom community means that many

of the jobs there cater to consumers, in the form of retail trade, social and health services, and personal services. Conversely, most of the (high wage) corporate services such as finance, advertising, law, engineering, *etc.*, are located in Portland. While the county has strong economic and cultural ties to Portland, it also has a unique identity due to the barrier of the state border and the Columbia River. Transportation