

CHAPTER 3

LA CONNER PROFILE

INTRODUCTION

Community History And Profile

LaConner is a historic rural town settled in the 1860's that has preserved much of its small town character. It is located approximately 12 miles southwest of the City of Mount Vernon, Washington between the Swinomish Channel, Sullivan Slough, and Skagit Bay in the agriculturally rich Skagit Valley of Washington State. Most of the community is at or near sea level. The topography of the Town area is characterized by a basaltic hill with flat agricultural lands to the east and the Swinomish Channel to the west

The arrival of Indian groups in the Pacific Northwest cannot be dated with great precision. However, archaeological investigations at the Manis mastodon site near Sequim on the Olympic Peninsula indicate man was in the area as early as 12,000 years ago.

Swinomish, Samish, Sauk-Suiattle, and Upper Skagit Indians are the native tribes to the Skagit River valley and each have reservation lands in the Valley.

The Swinomish Tribal Community has a reservation across the Swinomish Channel from LaConner. Members of the community attend schools in LaConner and participate in various recreational opportunities within the town. The Town and the Tribal Community recently began a tradition of meeting annually to celebrate Native American Day and to promote goodwill between the communities. In the future, opportunities to share in the development of recreational facilities will be explored.

Although the Town currently has an official population of 795 people, its infrastructure serves residents outside the Town limits from Pleasant Ridge to Kiket Island (approximately 5,000 people within 30 square miles). The Town has a potential growth of 1,019 people by 2025¹ and a total residential capacity of 1,226. In addition, LaConner is a popular tourist destination with an average daily visitation of 1,400 people (500,000 annually). LaConner town limits covers

¹ Population and Land Use Analysis 2002, John Doyle

255 acres, of which 51 acres is within a National Historic Preservation District. The LaConner Comprehensive Plan provides for increased population densities by encouraging in-fill, and no expansion of the Town limits is planned.

Climate and Geography

Washington State's climate is strongly influenced by moisture-laden air masses created in the Pacific Ocean. The airflow from the Pacific Ocean is interrupted first by the Olympic Mountains and then significantly by the Cascade Mountains. As a result of the mountain ranges, the west or windward sides of the Cascades receive moderate to heavy precipitation. Due to its unique location in the "rain shadow" of the Olympic Mountains, LaConner receives less precipitation than areas outside the "rain shadow", an average of only 30" of rain a year. This location and mild marine temperatures help make LaConner a popular recreation area, and a pleasant tourist destination.

Mean temperatures vary from a high of 60 degrees in July to a low of 40 degrees Fahrenheit in January with extreme variations recorded at -3 to a high of 102 degrees Fahrenheit. The average annual growing season is about 170-190 days. Approximately 80 percent of the precipitation occurs from October through March

Topography ranges from 0 to about 100 feet above Puget Sound on the hills. The main residential hill, facing the Downtown district, drops off abruptly in places with slopes ranging from 40 to 100 percent.

Increased population density and tourist activity will place greater demands upon existing parks, open spaces and public spaces. Additional land for recreational use may be desired but not available or affordable in the future.