

Environmental Health Work in Columbia Valley

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Joint PHAB/ Health Board Meeting

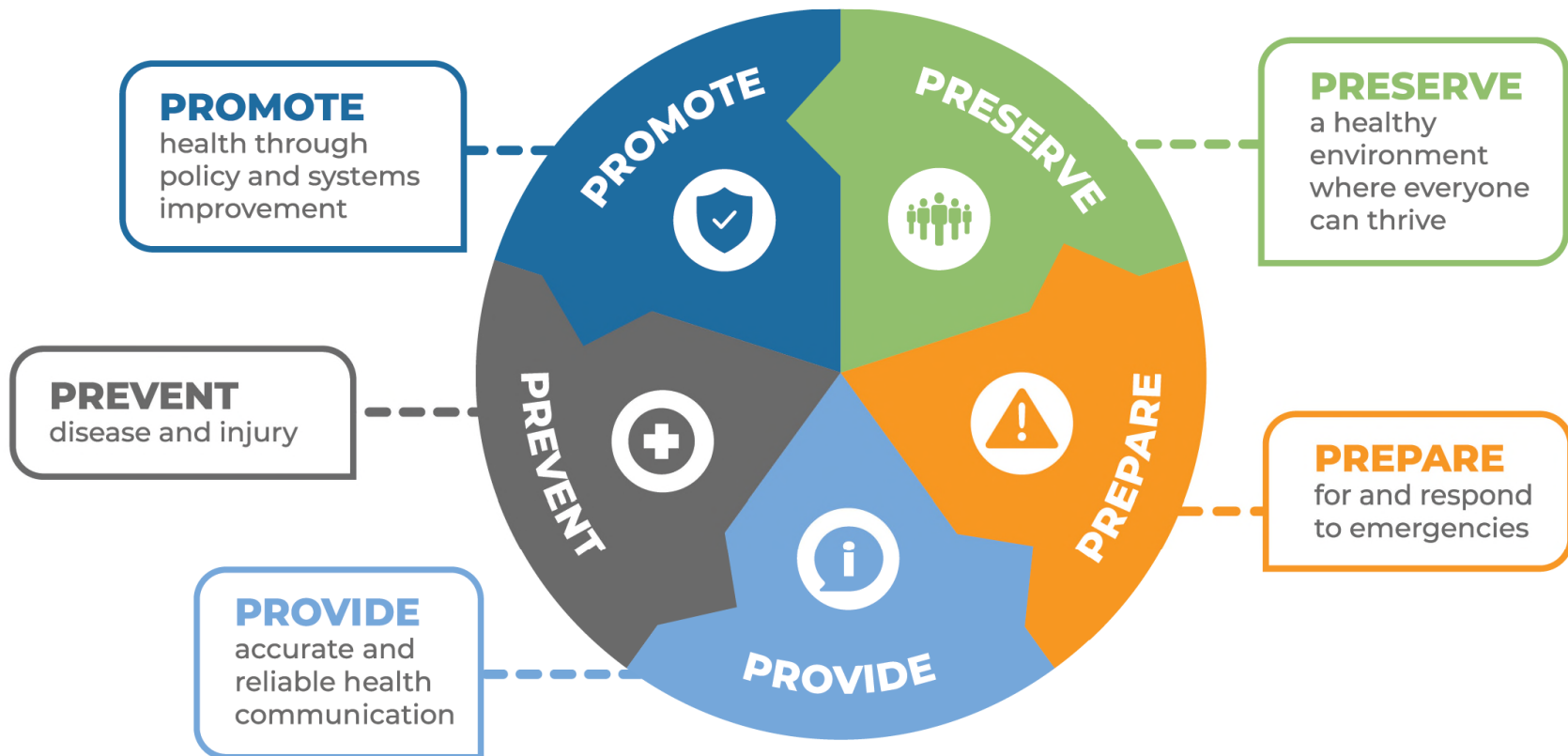


WHATCOM COUNTY
**HEALTH AND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES**



OUR PURPOSE:

We serve Whatcom County by
ADVANCING EQUITY & **PARTNERING WITH OUR COMMUNITY** to:



Env. Health Mandates and Requirements

- Whatcom County Code
- WA Admin Code
- FDA
- And many others!



Focus on Disease and Injury Prevention

- Sanitation
- Safe food and water
- Proper disposal of wastes and toxics



Environmental Health Division

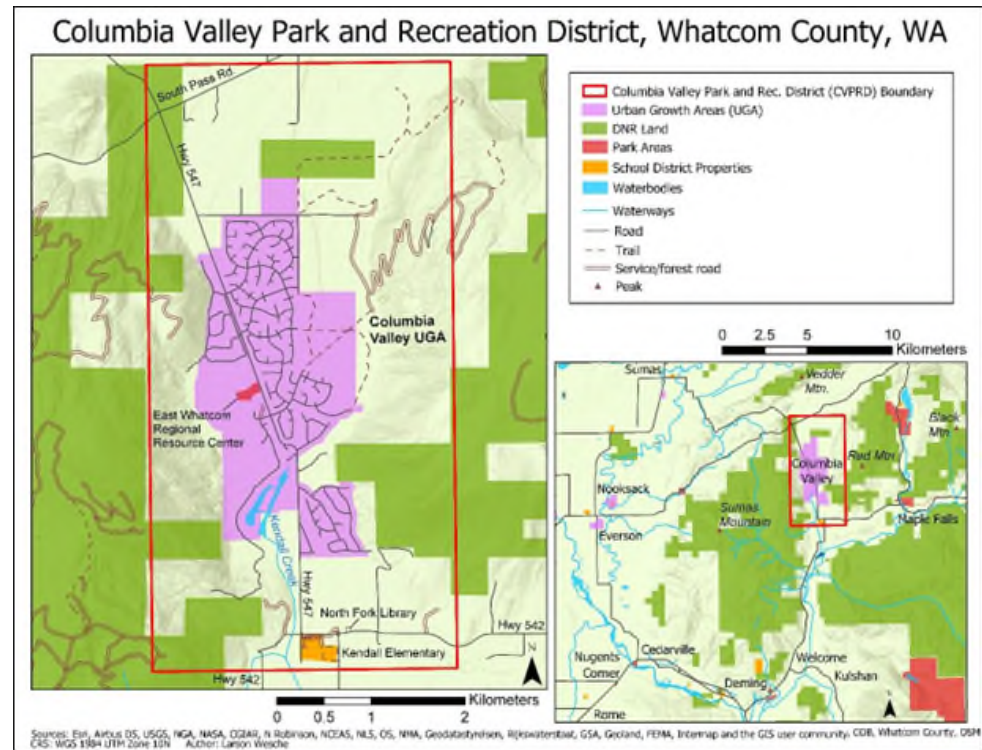


Six programs: Food Safety, Living Environment, On-Site Sewage, Drinking Water, Solid Waste, FPHS

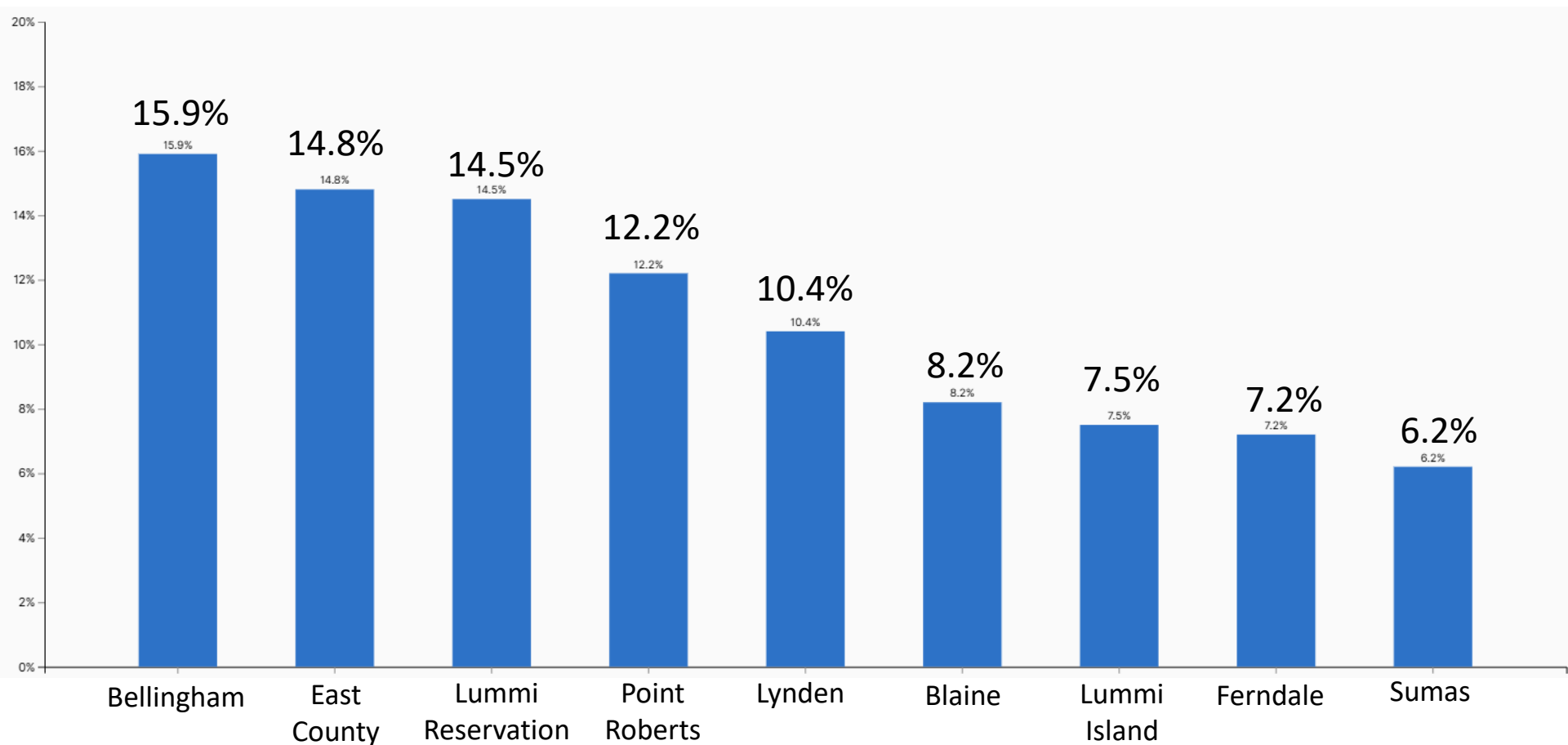
- FTE: 28.5
- \$5.8M division budget
- Supported by fees, Foundational Public Health Services funding, general fund

Columbia Valley

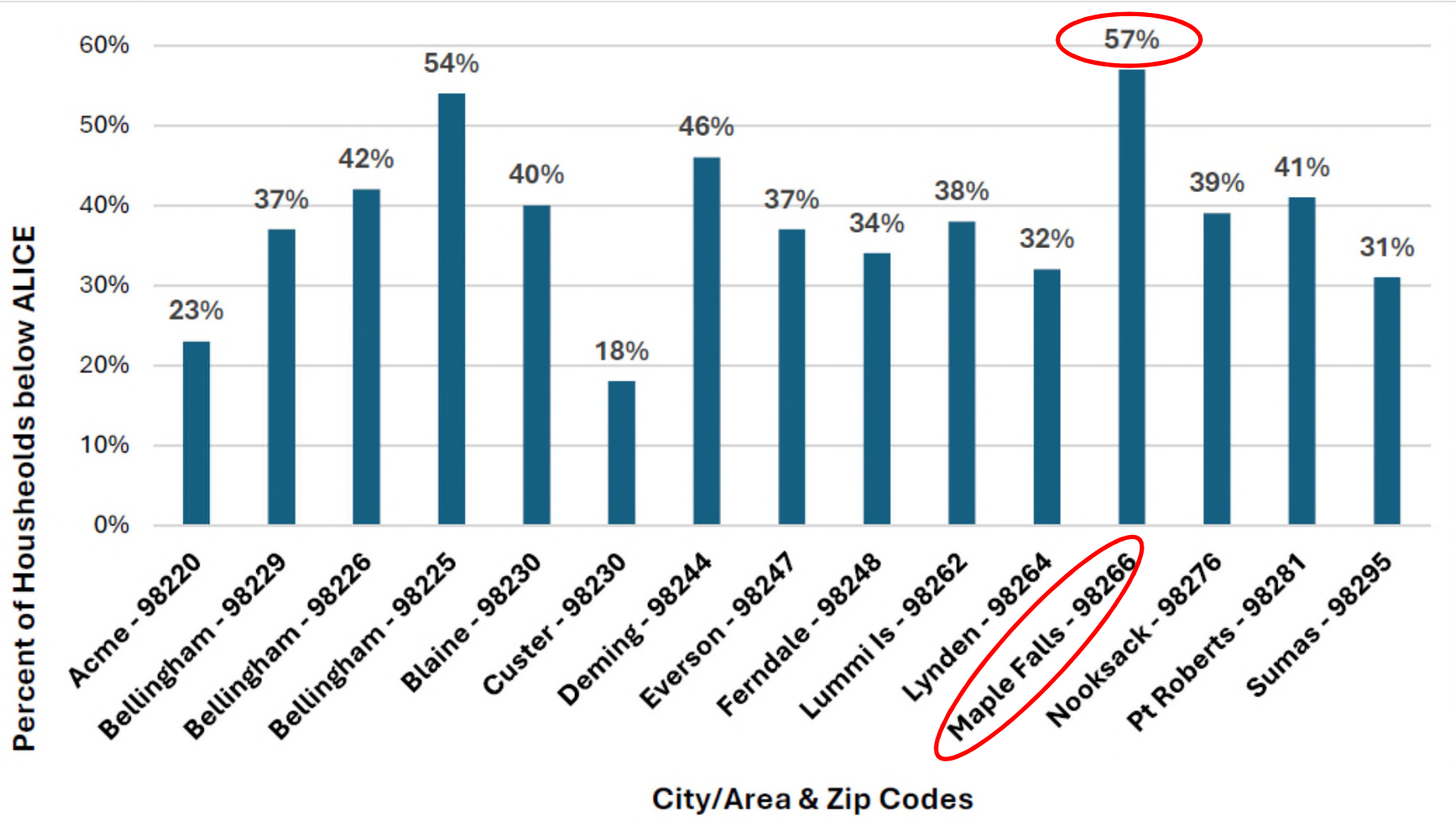
- Estimated 2023 population: 3,577
- One of the ten UGA's in Whatcom County
- Has a Parks & Rec District
- Since 2013, CV has seen a 1.6% annual pop growth*
- Proximity to basic services
- 14.8% of population living below the poverty level



Poverty status in census designated county subdivisions



ALICE Households



Public Health Issues



When responding to complaints/ concerns in Columbia Valley, we focus primarily on:

- **Vectors (i.e. rodent infestation)**
- **Exposure to sewage**
- **Hazardous materials and waste release**



On-Site Sewage Program

- **Compliance**
- **Education**
- **Collaboration**
- **Data**

- **One Supervisor**
- **Five EHS staff**

Onsite Sewage Community Concern Stats



- **Estimated OSS: 1,543**
 - 128 community concerns in Columbia Valley since 2020 | 120 unique properties | 27% Community Generated | 73% County Generated



**Flexible Enforcement with a
Step-Up Approach**

OSS Community Response Process



- **Time spent on each complaint**
 - Minimum 4 hours/ complaint
 - Includes drive time, **correspondence (multiple modes and people)**, site assessment, etc.
- **Focus on mitigating and resolving public health threat**

Strategies for Reducing Public Health Barriers



- Homeowner evaluations of OSS
- Rebate for evaluations and pumping
- Complaint follow-up/ not fee supported
- In person & online trainings
- Portable holding tanks, port-a-potties, temporary tanks allowed



Solid Waste Enforcement

- Permit and inspect solid waste handling facilities
- Pollution Prevention Assistance for businesses
- Methamphetamine Decontamination Guidance
- Respond to complaints
- One Supervisor
- 3.5 EHS staff

Solid Waste Complaints

- **31 open complaints in Columbia Valley**
 - 19% of all open complaints.
 - Many complaints tied to poverty, hoarding, homelessness, speculative accumulation, lack of garbage service.
 - Focus on mitigating and resolving public health threat such as hazardous or putrescible waste concerns



Solid Waste Work in Columbia Valley



- **Adopt-A-Block program:**
Ongoing dumpster placement and disposal at EWRRC
- **COVID Clean Up Event – June 2021.**
 - Event cost ~ \$10,000 (planning, labor, disposal)
 - 76,000 pounds of waste received
 - Event space was not ideal for community need



Solid Waste Work in Columbia Valley

- 2021 and 2023 tire recycling events at Cedarville Drop Box Facility
 - Served over 1,000 customers
 - Recycled ~20,000 tires



Solid Waste Work in Columbia Valley



- **2022 Assessment on improving solid waste management**
 - Low survey response rate (n=10)
 - Those who responded reported low-income and lack of transportation as major barriers to disposing of solid waste regularly
- **Solid Waste staff have regularly attended, at least annually, community meetings in Columbia Valley addressing myriad resident concerns, including solid waste, sewage, safety and illegal activity, and alleged illegal vehicle dismantling.**

Solid Waste Voucher and Dumpster Costs



- **2025*** - **\$57,938 total**
 - \$6,580 in Columbia Valley - 11.3%
- **2024** - **\$54,284 total**
 - \$30,903 in Columbia Valley – 57%
- **2023** - **\$45,821 total**
 - \$24,503 in Columbia Valley – 53%
- **2022** - **\$56,667 total**
 - \$21,745 in Columbia Valley – 38%
- **2021** - **\$32,223 total**
 - \$17,222 in Columbia Valley – 53%



*\$34,729 of voucher funds were used in January to help clean up the Bakerview encampment

Other EH Projects



- **Collaboration with Partners**

- NWCAA on DIY air cleaner distributions every summer
- DOE & Sustainable Connections. FREEDGE project. Food waste reduction and food access.

- **EWRRRC**

- Septic homeowner education
- Commercial kitchen development

Concluding Remarks



As HCS continues to work on our initiatives in Columbia Valley, we call upon all sectors of society to join us in fostering a compassionate and equitable community where everyone has the opportunity to live with dignity and security.

The logo features a circular emblem containing stylized human figures in various shades of blue and green. Below the emblem, the text "Thank You!" is written in a large, bold, dark blue font.

Thank You!

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