June 17, 2026

Stevens County:
Climate Policy Advisory Team





Objectives

- Discuss health, wellbeing, and emergency management and generate ideas on how to build resilience
- Review policy audit and consider gaps

Agenda

- Recap of key climate hazards and assets
- People and climate hazards
- Key issues related to community wellbeing
- Discussion
- Policy audit results
- Next steps

Key Climate Hazards Facing Stevens County



Flooding

- Increased flooding due to increases in peak streamflows



Extreme Precipitation & Storms

+ landslides

- More intense storms
- Higher total annual precipitation



Wildfire, Smoke, and Air Pollution

- Increased wildfire frequency and severity
- Increased smoke and poor air quality

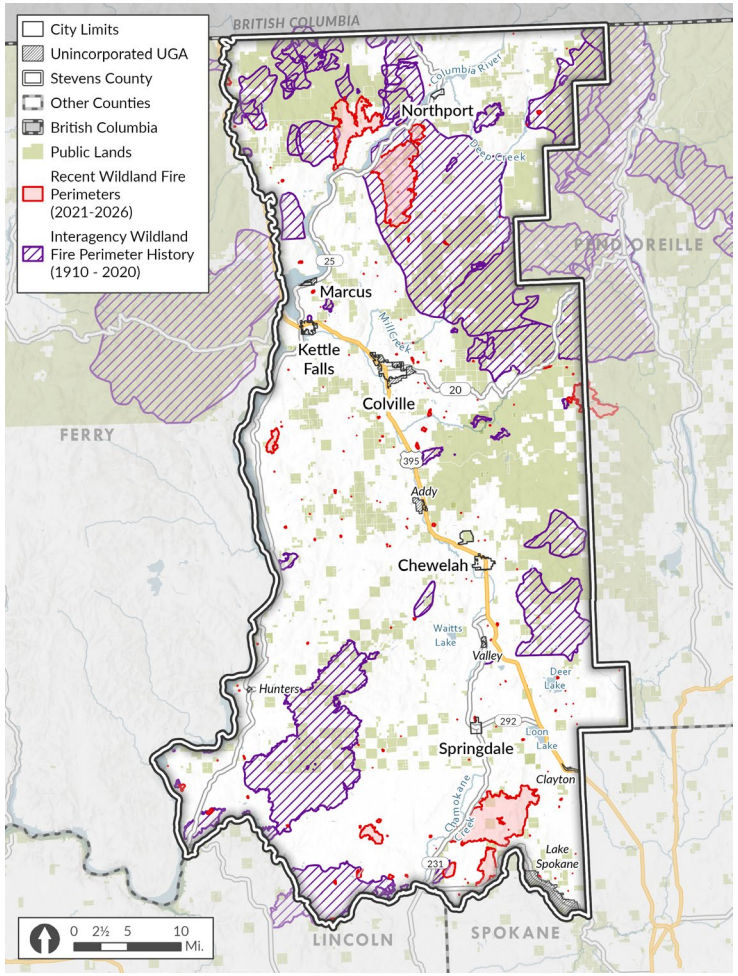


Extreme Heat and Drought

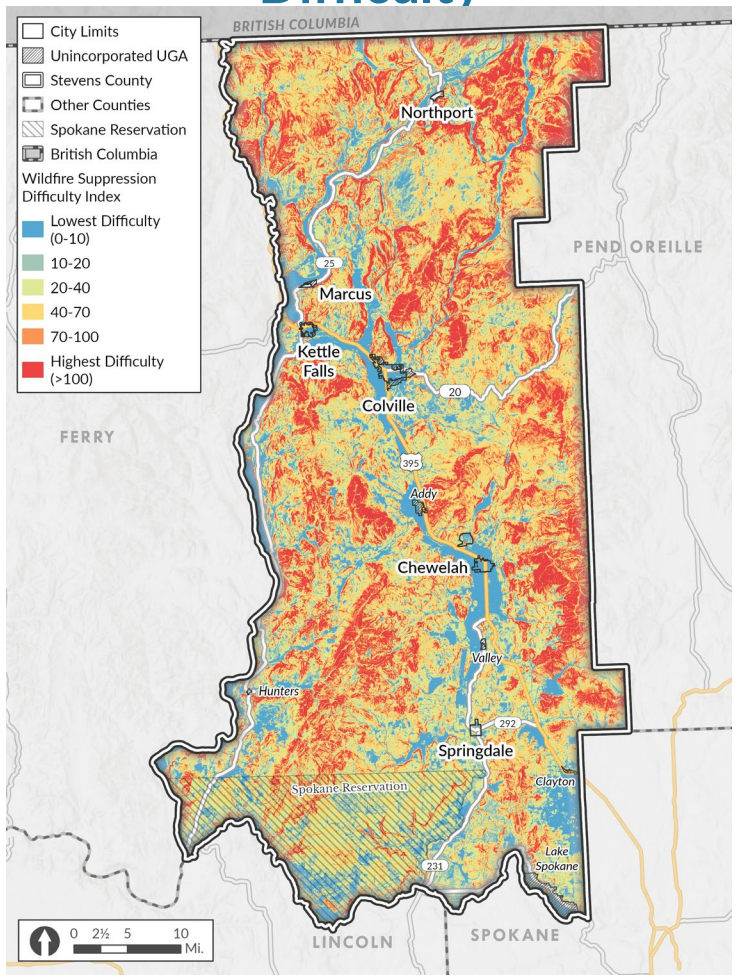
- Declining summer precipitation
- Regional droughts
- Higher annual average temperatures
- High summer temperatures

Key Topic for CPAT / Community – Wildfire & Smoke

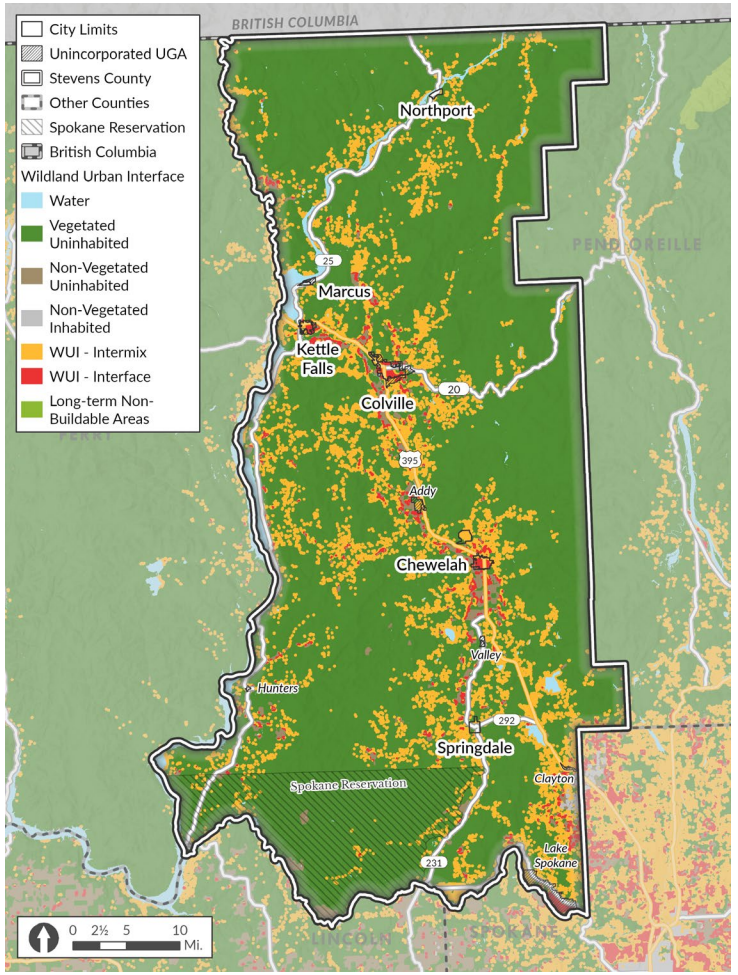
Fire History 1910-2026



Wildfire Suppression Difficulty



Wildland Urban Interface



Future Policies & Code to reduce risk in WUI Intermix & Interface – e.g., vegetation clearance, roofing, etc.

Community Assets

Theme	Sector
Community Wellbeing	Health & Well-being
	Emergency Management
Cultural & Natural Resources	Agriculture & Food Systems
	Cultural Resources
	Ecosystems
	Water Resources
Buildings & Infrastructure	Buildings & Energy
	Waste Management
	Transportation
Land Use & Economic Development	Zoning & Development
	Economic Development

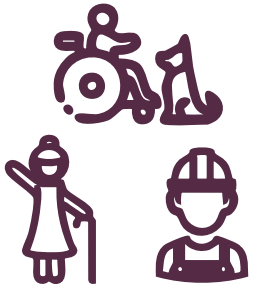
Who is most affected by climate hazards?



People under 5 years old (5% of county population), over 65 years old (25%)



People with health sensitivities affected by heatwaves, pollution; pregnancy



People with less socioeconomic resources, those living alone, those with disabilities, outdoor workers, and others

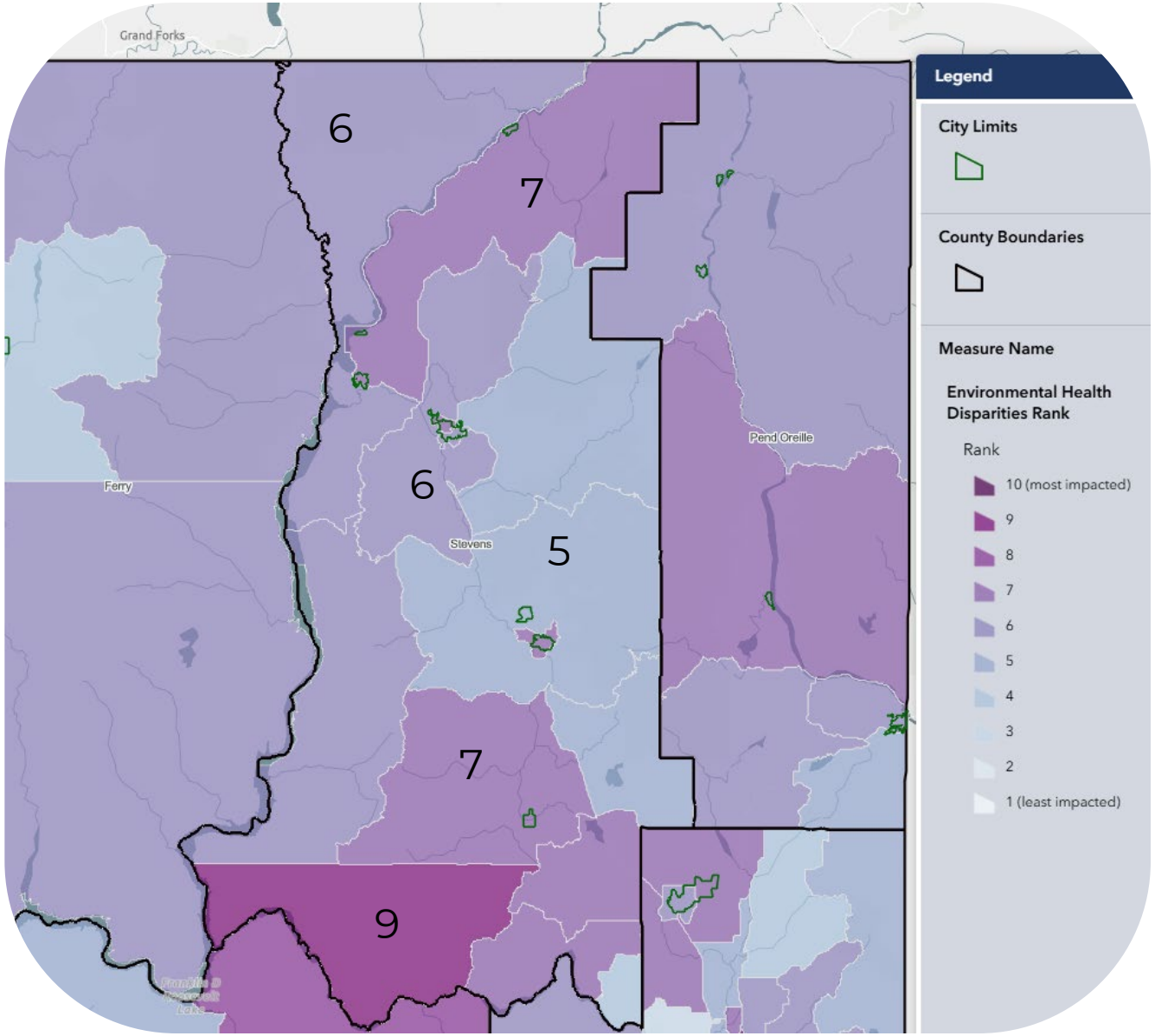
Health Hazards

- Aggravated cardiovascular illness
- Aggravated respiratory illness
- Increased allergy-related illnesses
- Waterborne illness
- Dehydration
- Heat stroke
- Mental health

Environmental Health Disparities

This rank is calculated by averaging the ranks for 25 different topics, or measures.

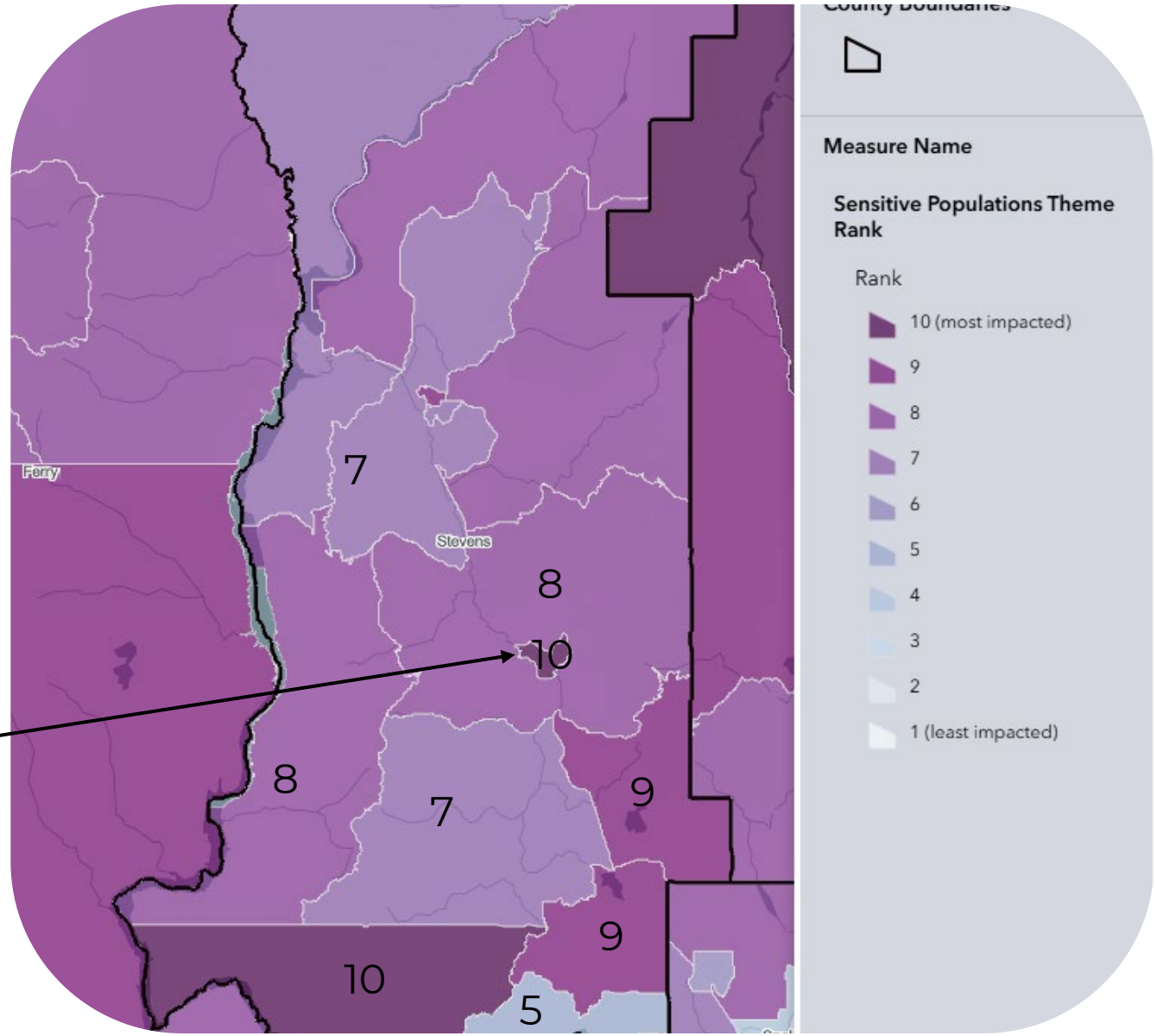
These include data on pollution, socioeconomic factors, and health data.

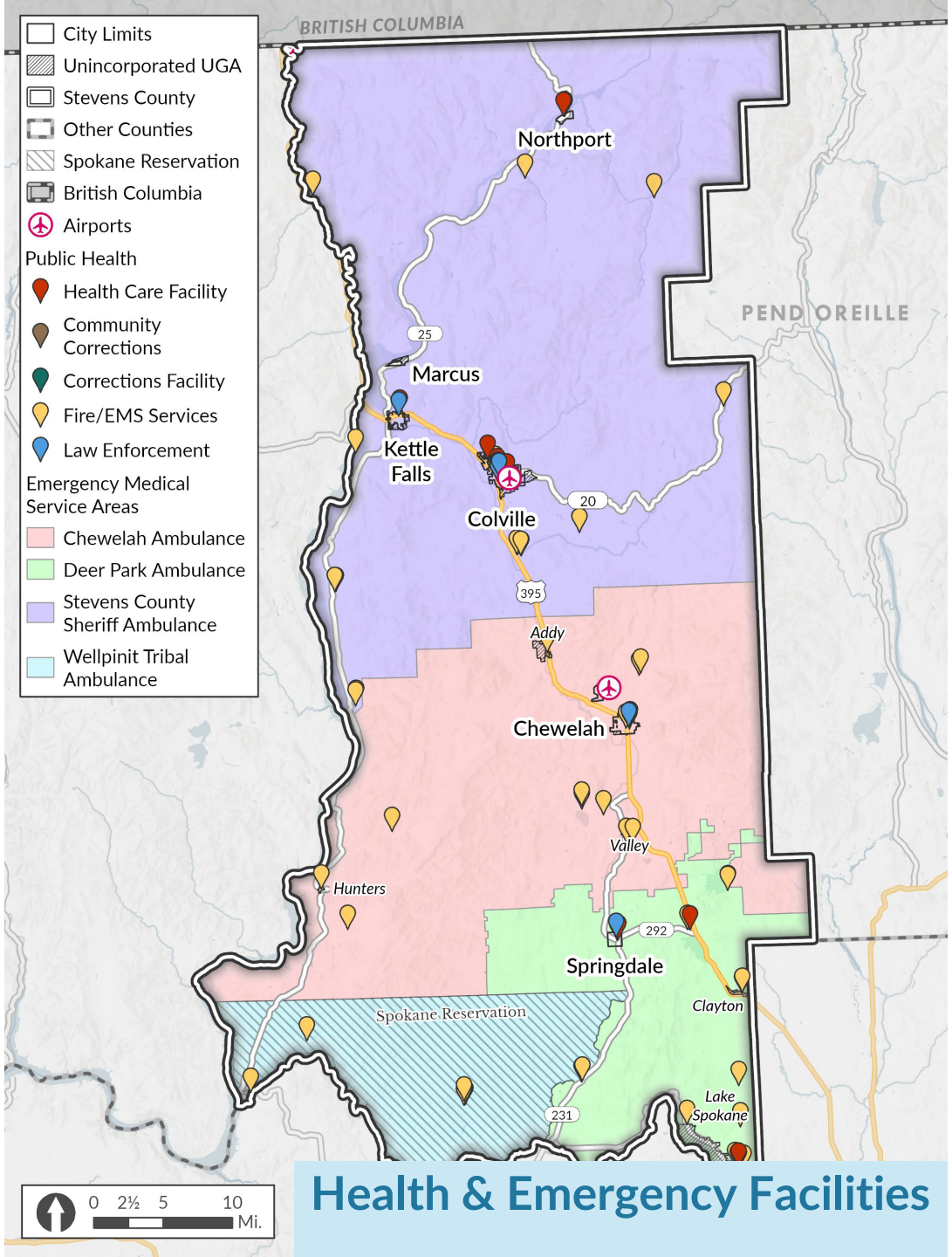


Sensitive Populations

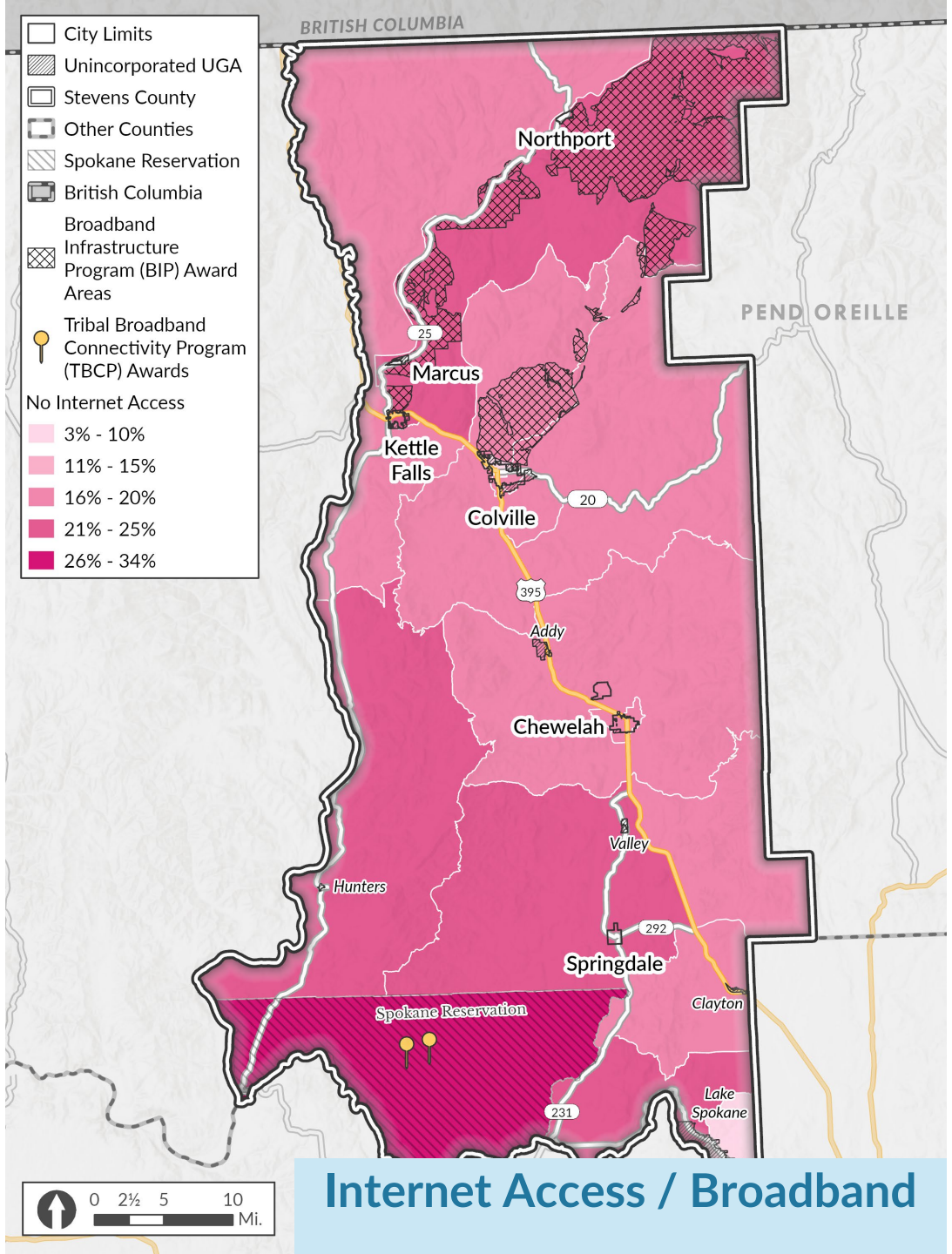
Census Tract 53065950700, Stevens County

Sensitive Populations	
Measure Name	**Rank**
Sensitive Populations Rank	10
Air Quality Related Respiratory Disease Rank	9
Death from Cardiovascular Disease Rank	8
Low Birth Weight Rank	9
People with a Disability Rank	9





Health & Emergency Facilities



Internet Access / Broadband



Community Wellbeing – Key Issues

The population is getting older.

- 25% of the population is over age 65 in 2024 (compared to 20% in 2015 and 16% in 2010)
- 14% of households are adults over 65 living alone.
- If in rural parts of the county, may have less support or access to services in an emergency
- Evacuation may be a challenge for older adults who don't drive or who have disabilities

18% of residents have one or more disabilities. (compared to 14% statewide)

- Some people with disabilities may need support with evacuation

Stevens County has higher rates of asthma, COPD, diabetes, and high blood pressure than the state.

- Smoke can worsen symptoms of asthma and COPD
- Heat impacts diabetes (inflammation, thermoregulation issues, medication being degraded), asthma and COPD (inflammation, irritation), high blood pressure (dehydration, blood pressure spikes)



Community Wellbeing – Key Issues (continued)

Lack of ambulances

- Limited ambulance service options in an emergency, with long waits
- Possible impacts to service if demand is high during countywide heat/smoke/fire events

Lack of housing for seasonal firefighting

- Creates a barrier to effective fire season planning and response

Lack of emergency hubs

- Limited options of places to go during heat/smoke

Communication challenges

- Some parts of the county lack high-speed internet so may have less access to information



Discussion

- **What opportunities are there to improve resilience for health, wellbeing, and emergency management?**

- **What might the needs be of the most sensitive and exposed populations?** (for example, older adults, young children, people with health conditions, pregnancy, disability, limited financial resources, living alone, outdoor jobs)

- **What might some challenges be in implementing policies and programs that support resiliency?** (for example, creating emergency hubs, improving ambulance service, improving internet access, supporting housing for firefighting)



Policy Audit Results



Questions to think about

- From your point of view, what are important topics to address in climate policies?
- What are unique community or environmental conditions in Stevens County that should be addressed in climate policies?
- What policies could help the quality of life for all people, and particularly vulnerable or overburdened populations?

After sharing results, we'll discuss these questions

Plans Reviewed

Included in the Policy Audit:

- Comprehensive Plan, as amended (2022)
- Shoreline Master Program (2023)
- Hazard Mitigation Plan (2019)
- Countywide Planning Policies (1995)
- Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 59 Watershed Plan (2007) and WRIA 59 Watershed Plan Addendum (2019)
- City of Chewelah Comprehensive Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan Work Plan (2025)
- NE Washington Regional Transportation Plan (2021)

Referenced:

- Tri County Economic Development District Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2022-2026) and Appendix F – Economic Recovery and Resilience Plan
- DNR's Plan for Climate Resilience (2020)
- 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan Eastern Washington Department of natural Resources
- Forest Action Plan Department of Natural Resources (2025)
- Washington State Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan Department of Natural Resources (2019)
- Stevens County Voluntary Stewardship Program Work Plan (2017)

Policy Review

527
total policies

353
climate related policies

Element	# Policies	%
Land Use	134	40%
Transportation	42	12%
Housing	9	3%
Economic Development	36	11%
Parks and Recreation	28	8%
Utilities	19	6%
Capital Facilities	25	7%
Natural Resources	44	13%

Policy Review Takeaways

Strengths

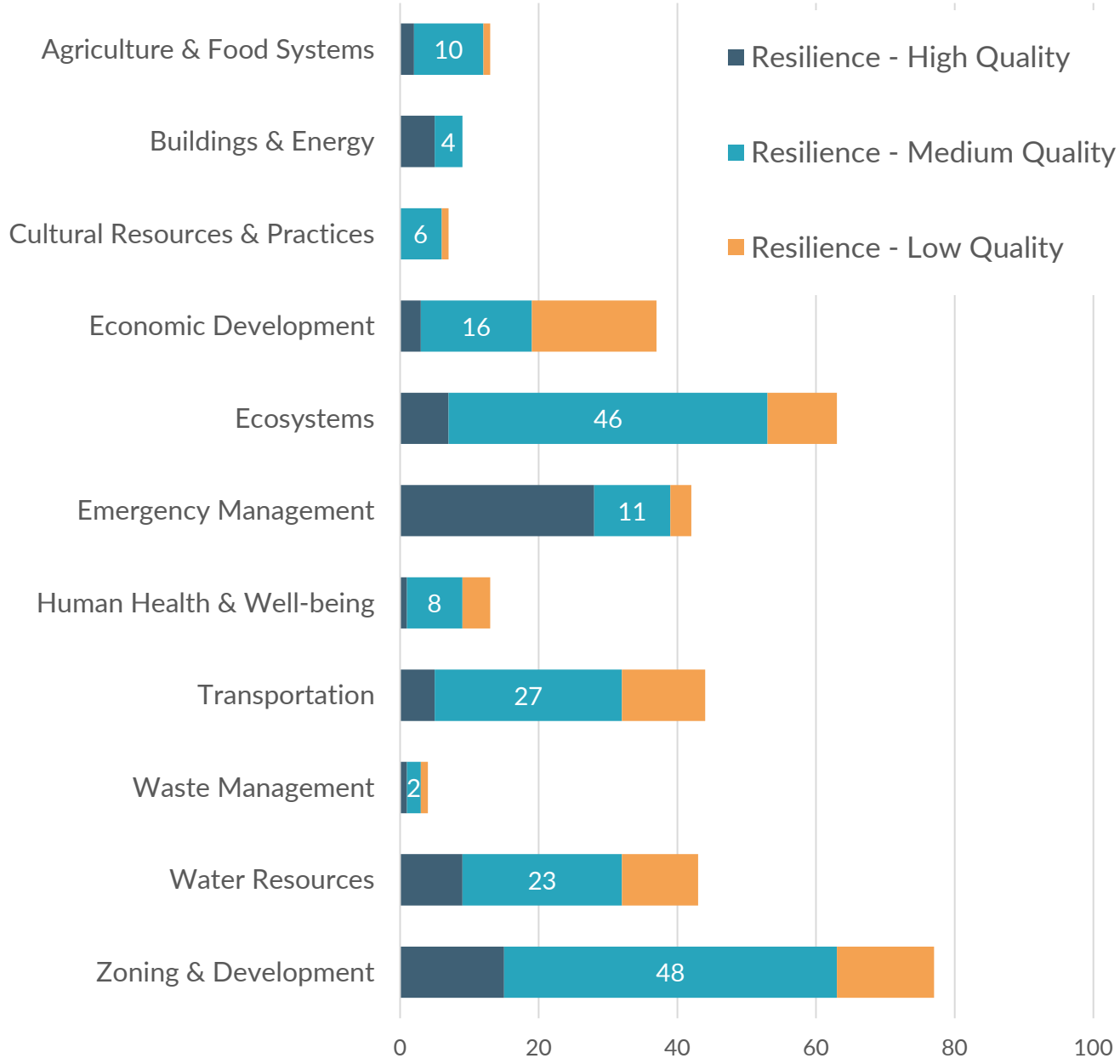
- Climate policies across a range of County and partner plans
- Robust built environment and land use planning related climate policies
- Strong ecosystem and flood protection policies

Opportunities

- Make climate impacts and climate connection explicit
- Strengthen community and social resilience focus
- Add policies addressing extreme heat
- Add policies addressing wildfire smoke
- Better integrate climate resilience into agriculture and food systems policies

Resilience Policy Quality

- **Most policies are medium quality** – they could be strengthened by actively improving, expanding, or increasing capacity or benefits beyond the current state.
- Emergency Management, Zoning & Development, Water Resources, and Ecosystems had the most high-quality policies.



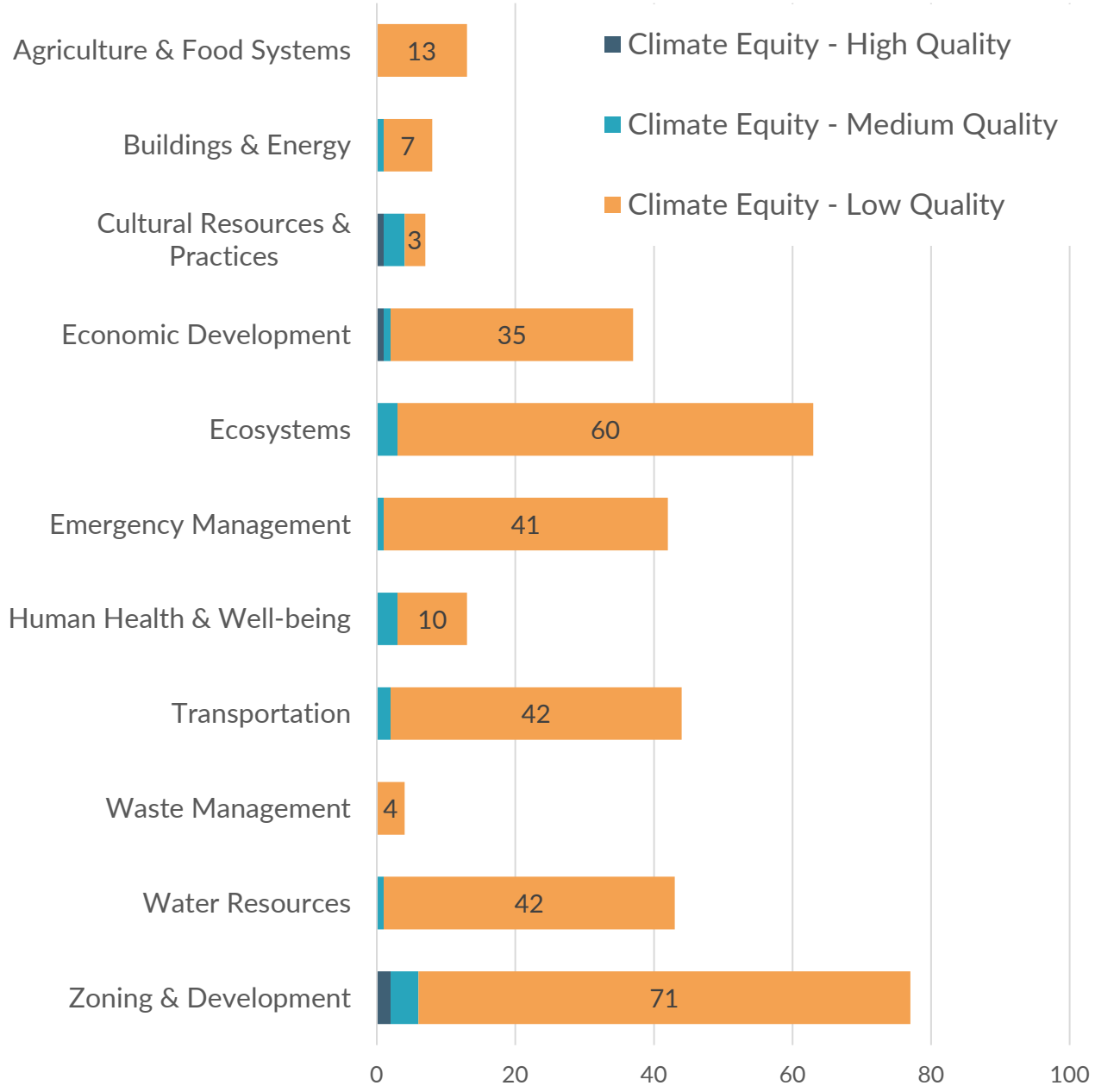
Hazard Related Policies

- Most policies are general and do not relate to a specific hazard.
- The Climate Element presents an opportunity to be more specific and link sectors and policies directly to specific climate hazards.
- Where a hazard is specifically addressed it tends to be about flooding.



Community and Social Resilience Quality

- Climate resilience elements "...must include efforts to ... avoid creating or worsening localized climate impacts to vulnerable populations and overburdened communities." (RCW 36.70A.070(9))
- Policies could be strengthened by directly addressing vulnerable or overburdened populations and to help them prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate impacts.



Sector Policy Ideas



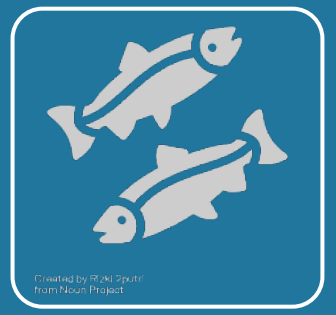
Agriculture & Food Systems

- Directly connect agriculture and food system policies to climate impacts such as drought, extreme heat, and water scarcity.
- Voluntary Stewardship Program Work Plan could serve as a valuable foundation for aligning agricultural priorities.



Buildings & Energy

- Limited policies on renewable energy development, building retrofits for extreme heat resilience, grid resilience, energy efficiency, and reducing heating and cooling demands.
- Stronger connections between building codes, allowances for alternative energy sources, and climate resilience.



Cultural Resources & Practices

- Existing policies primarily use general language focused on conserving, preserving, and protecting historical, cultural, and archaeological resources. Opportunity to strengthen by incorporating more specific recognition of Tribal communities, cultural practices, and stewardship priorities.

Sector Policy Ideas



Economic Development

- Opportunity to establish an economic resilience framework that explicitly connects climate risk to economic planning.
- Refer to the Tri-County CEDS



Ecosystems

- 62 ecosystem related policies, the second highest of any sectors reflecting a strong recognition and focus on natural environment protection.
- Opportunities to strengthen and align with DNR Wildland Fire Protection Plan, Forest Action Plan, Forest Health Strategic Plan.



Emergency Management

- Notable gaps and opportunities include a stronger focus on specific climate hazard events, such as wildfire smoke and extreme heat.

Sector Policy Ideas



Health & Well-being

- Address dispersed population, outdoor workers, aging population, and older housing stock.
- Expand policies related to extreme heat, and wildfire and smoke response resources, such as air filters and clean air shelters, and to address limited mobility.



Transportation

- Directly address climate hazard adaptation – examples:
  - extreme heat impacts on roads and transportation infrastructure,
  - strengthening connections to evacuation route planning.



Waste Management

- Further develop waste management policies, including emergency operations planning, climate resilience considerations for waste facilities, expanding composting and food waste reduction efforts and generally addressing system vulnerabilities.

Sector Policy Ideas



Water Resources

- Surface and groundwater rights, instream flows, water storage, infiltration, water bank, and flood management *could be advanced in the policies of the Climate Element*. For example, integrate WRIA 59 watershed addendum; address other watersheds.
- Key resiliency strategies for Comp Plan.



Zoning & Development

- Requires few new policies; instead, existing policies should be refined to add specificity and explicitly connect to climate resiliency (wildland urban interface standards, green infrastructure, adaptation techniques for heat, drought).



Discussion

- From your point of view, what are important topics to address in climate policies?
- What are unique community or environmental conditions in Stevens County that should be addressed in climate policies?



Action Items/Next Meeting

Next Meeting

Other To Dos