

APPENDIX A
Background and Existing Conditions

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The City of Kelso is located at the confluence of the Columbia and Cowlitz Rivers, and includes a portion of the Coweeman River and a portion of Owl Creek. The western border is shared with the City of Longview. The City covers 8.4 square miles, with a population of 11,925, according to the 2010 US Census.

The Comprehensive Plan for the City of Kelso was adopted in 1980, with Chapter updates in 1987, 1992, and 2015. Goals in the Comprehensive Plan are directed toward ensuring economic growth and security, public access, and environmental protection. The City is currently in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan, including regulations applicable to environmentally sensitive areas outside the jurisdiction of the Shoreline Management Act.

The NWI identifies wetlands on approximately 53 percent of shoreline jurisdiction in the assessment unit. Within the City of Kelso city limits, levees occupy 65 percent of the total shoreline length, including 100 percent of the Cowlitz River shoreline upstream of the Coweeman River and the entire west bank of the Coweeman River downstream from Allen Street Road. These levees preclude functioning floodplains in much of the City; however, a portion of the Coweeman River within the City has an active floodway, as well as in Columbia Reach 20. In total, 69 percent of the shoreline area within the assessment unit is in the mapped floodplain, of which, an additional 9 percent is within the floodway.

The levees in Kelso are owned and maintained by Cowlitz County Drainage Improvement District No. 1 (North Kelso) and Cowlitz County Consolidated Diking District No 3 (South Kelso). Both Districts are in the process of having their levees certified by the US Army Corps of Engineers and are participating in the FEMA PAL program for provisionally accepted levees. While under review for certification, US Army Corps maintenance standards apply as if a levee is certified. In the event certification is not approved, the Diking District will continue to require the same maintenance standards as US Army Corps of Engineers.

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