

Environmentally Critical Areas Update

PLUZ Committee
September 20, 2016



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Department of Construction &
Inspections

Presentation Overview

1. What are Environmentally Critical Areas?
2. Requirements for ECA update
3. Best Available Science
4. Summary of identified issues

What are Environmentally Critical Areas?

Aquifers

Landslide-Prone and Steep
Slope Areas

Peat bogs

Streams/Riparian Corridors

Small lakes

Wetlands



ECA Background

1990 – Washington State’s response to rapid growth was the 1990 Growth Management Act (GMA)

1992 – GMA-required protection of Environmentally Critical Areas

1995 – New requirement to use **Best Available Science** to protect ECAs with “special consideration” for protecting anadromous fish (e.g., salmon)

2016 – No new requirements; update ECA regulations for clarity and continued compliance with GMA



Requirements for the ECA Update

1. Review regulations for compliance with GMA
2. Best Available Science
3. Public participation plan
4. Develop policies and regulations

Best Available Science

- RCW 36.70A.172(1) requires best available science to be used in developing policies and regulations to protect functions and values of critical areas.
- This also requires measures to conserve and protect anadromous fisheries (salmon), including the protection of habitat for all life states of these fish.



Best Available Science

Best Available Science Documents - available on SDCI's [ECA update website](#):

- Best Available Science Review for Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (2013);
- Best Available Science Review for Wetlands (2014);
- Best Available Science Review for Geologic Hazard Areas (2014);
- Best Available Science documents for the 2006 - 2012 ECA amendments;
- Best Available Science for the City of Sammamish Critical Areas regulations;
- Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development's Critical Areas Assistance Handbook: Protecting Critical Areas within the Framework of the Washington Growth Management Act (2007);
- Department of Ecology's Wetland Rating, Delineation, Buffer, Mitigation, and Protecting and Managing documents (2005 - 20016).

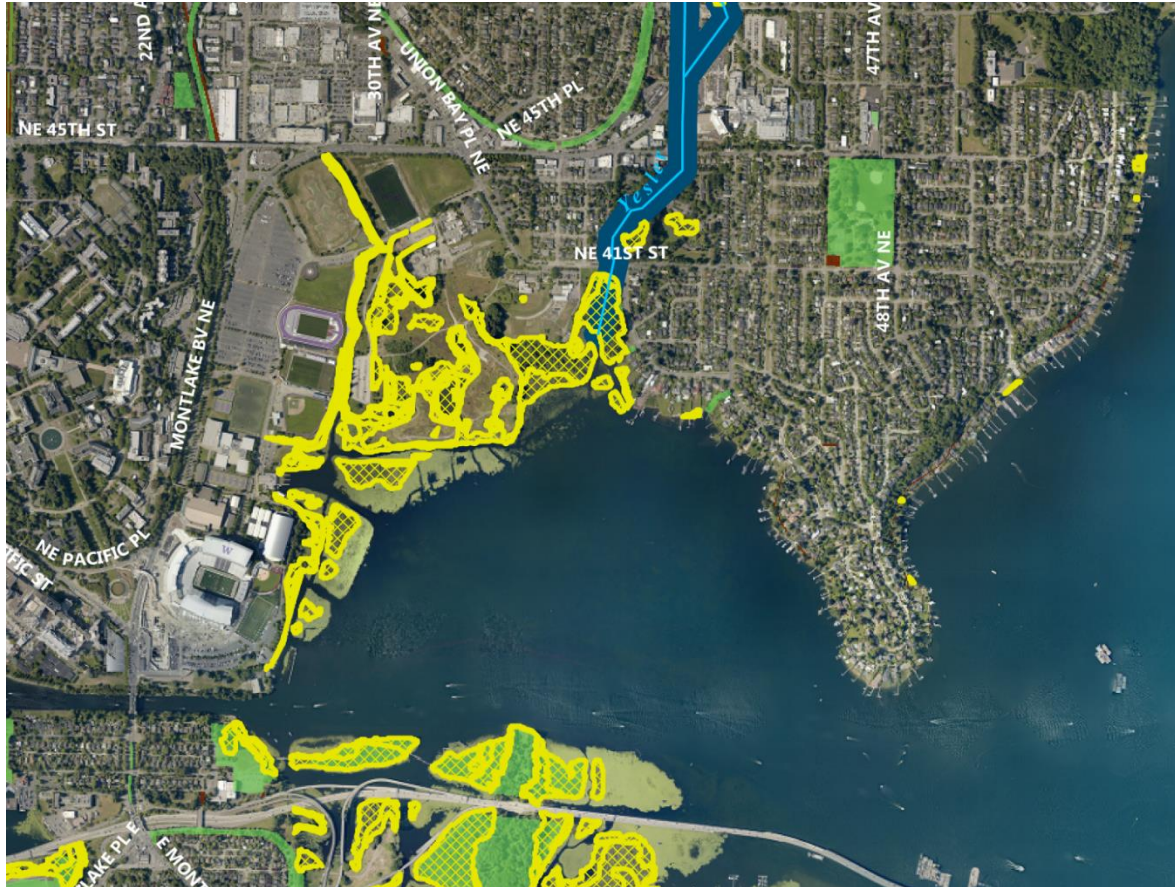
Mapping & Regulations



-  Known Slide Area
-  Potential Slide Area
-  Steep Slope (40%)
-  City of Seattle Park
-  City Property

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 HARN StatePlane
Washington North FIPS 4601 Feet
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
Datum: North American 1983 HARN
False Easting: 1,640,416.6667
False Northing: 0.0000
Central Meridian: -120.8333
Standard Parallel 1: 47.5000
Standard Parallel 2: 48.7333
Latitude Of Origin: 47.0000
Units: Foot US

Mapping & Regulations



-  Wetland
-  Riparian Corridor
-  City of Seattle Park
-  City Property

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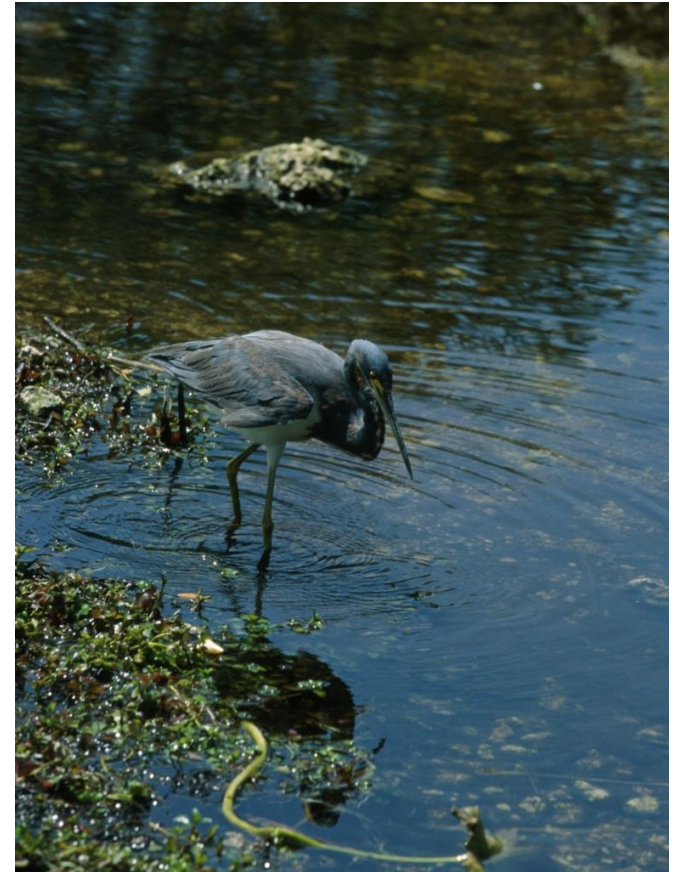
Priority Species Protection

Priority species

- Bald Eagle
- Heron

Options for compliance

- Standard Management Plan
- WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) site-specific plan



Proposed Changes

- Include greater protection for great blue heron based on WDFW's 2012 Priority Habitat and Species guidance for great blue heron.
- Increase wetland buffers from 85 to 110 feet for Class III wetlands that have moderate to high level habitat value.
- Replace State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review with clear and predictable ECA regulations for certain projects that are exempt from SEPA under Section 25.09.800.
- Amend the ECA/SEPA Director's Rule to allow vegetation management as a SEPA exempt activity if it meets the SEPA exemption thresholds and ECA regulations.

Proposed Changes

- Apply standards to achieve better fit in existing neighborhoods in subdivision processes. New houses would be required to meet the single-family lot coverage based on the non-ECA area and regulations include building separation standards.
- Include a new section that establishes the steps in mitigation sequencing as set out in the 2007 Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development's *Critical Areas Assistance Handbook: Protecting Critical Areas within the Framework of the Washington Growth Management Act*.

Thank you

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