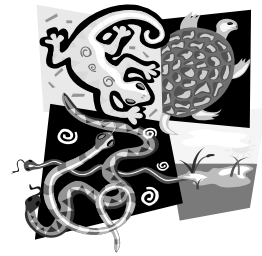


Wetlands



A Kitsap County Critical Areas Ordinance Fact Sheet

The Kitsap County Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) regulates development affecting wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, streams, aquifer recharge areas, and frequently flooded and geologically hazardous areas. This CAO fact sheet is one in a series which describes the above types of environmentally critical areas protected by Kitsap County under the *Critical Areas Ordinance*, Title 19, Kitsap County Code. This has been provided to you as general information and is not intended as a substitute for the actual codes and regulations. For more information, contact the Kitsap County Department of Community Development at (360) 337-5777 or visit our website at www.kitsapgov.com/dcd.

What is a wetland?

Wetlands are those areas inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.

Wetlands can be identified by three characteristics:

- *Hydric Soils* – soils saturated with water
- *Water* – the presence of standing water at least part of the year
- *Plants* – water tolerant or water dependent species

They generally include, but are not limited to, ponds, marshes, bogs, wet meadows and swamps.

Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands perform a variety of functions that are important to the environmental and economic well being of Kitsap County, such as:

- Control flooding by acting as natural reservoirs for incoming storm flow
- Improve water quality by filtering contaminants
- Maintain stream flows by gradually releasing stored

water after floods and wet seasons

- Recharge groundwater
- Stabilize shoreline areas
- Provide fish and wildlife habitat
- Create places for recreation, education, scientific study and aesthetic appreciation

Does my property contain a wetland?

To assist you in determining if your property contains a wetland, you may contact the Kitsap County Department of Community Development (DCD). They can provide you with inventoried wetland maps. Since not all County wetlands have been identified in the wetland inventory, these maps should only be used as a general guide for property owners. Your property may still contain a wetland that requires protection under the County's CAO. In this case, a qualified wetlands specialist should visit your property to determine the presence, type, extent and boundary of any wetland(s). You may contact Kitsap County DCD for a list of qualified wetland specialists.

Wetlands Classification

To classify wetlands, Kitsap County relies on the Washington State Department of Ecology's Wetlands Classification and Rating System for Western Washington (2004).

The County's wetlands are classified into four categories based upon their size, function and value. Category I wetlands receive the highest level of protection because they are the most biologically complex and contain the most functions and values performed by wetlands. On the opposite end of the spectrum are Category IV wetlands which receive considerably less protection. They are often smaller, perform limited functions and provide less value than the other categories.

All wetlands, regardless of their category, are regulated.

Buffers and Building Setbacks

Buffers are undisturbed areas of native vegetation which surround and protect the functions and values of wetlands or other critical areas. In Kitsap County, no activity is allowed within a regulated wetland or its buffer, unless otherwise specified. Buffer widths range in size according to wetland category:

Category I Wetland = 50' - 250'

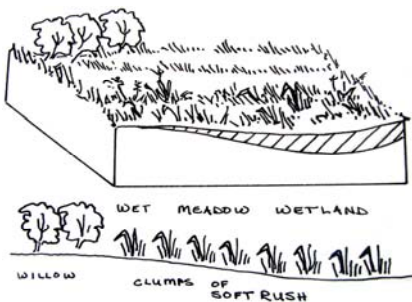
Category II Wetland = 50' - 200'

Category III Wetland = 40' - 150'

Category IV Wetland = 25' - 50'

Under certain conditions, Kitsap County allows modification of buffer widths by granting agreements for buffer averaging and decreases in buffer widths. The County also has the authority to require larger buffer widths when necessary to protect a particular wetland's functions and values.

A building and impervious surface setback line of 15 feet is required from the edge of any wetland buffer.



Wet Meadow Wetland

Deviations from this setback must be approved by Kitsap County DCD.

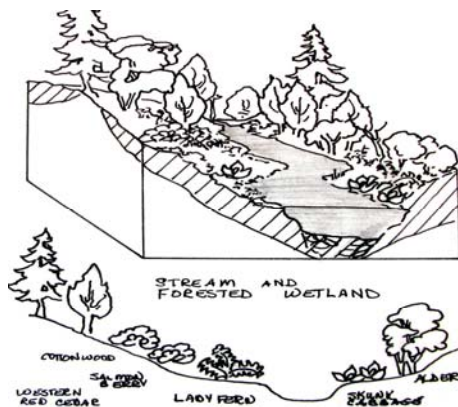
Existing structures within a wetland or the buffer may be remodeled, reconstructed or replaced. However, a structure cannot further intrude upon the critical area or its buffer, nor can the building footprint expand by more than 20% without requiring review by Kitsap County Environmental Review.

Other Restrictions and Provisions

Examples of activities that are subject to the standards contained in the CAO and other applicable federal, state and local ordinances include:

- Building and clearing activities adjacent to wetland areas
- Forest practices
 - Class IV General
 - Conversion Option Harvest Plans (COHPs)
- Livestock restrictions
- Land divisions
- Land use permits

For specific information on these and other restrictions and provisions, consult the Kitsap County Code or call DCD at (360) 337-7181.



Stream and Forested Wetland

Wetland Protection

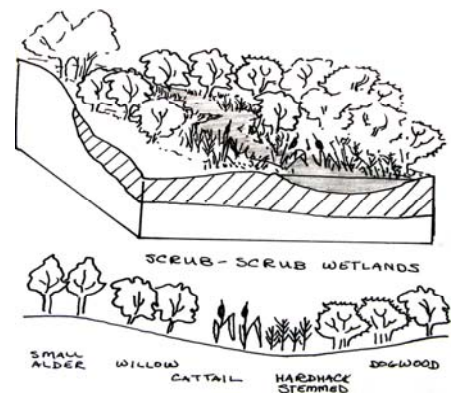
Protecting wetlands requires public education, involvement and cooperation. You can learn more about them by visiting wetland sites and familiarizing yourself with local wetland ordinances.

If your property contains a wetland, there are many ways you can protect it, such as:

- Avoid dumping near your wetland - even yard waste can degrade a wetland's functions and values.
- Respect wetland animals' need for the benefits provided by a wetland buffer.
- Consider marking or fencing off a buffer area around your wetland.

To learn more about wetland regulations and additional ways to preserve and enhance your wetland, contact Kitsap County DCD or the Washington State Department of Ecology at (360) 407-6000.

Prepared by the Kitsap County Department of Community Development



Scrub - Shrub Wetland

Three of the most common wetlands found in Kitsap County