

Chapter 3 – Environment



Discussion

Kitsap County recognizes the importance of protecting the natural environment, while providing for the needs of the growing number of residents and businesses that call this place home. Intact ecosystems, forest lands, shorelines, freshwater systems, and other critical areas all make up the natural environment of Kitsap County. Human-well-being depends on a healthy, natural environment to provide for clean air, clean water, food and overall high quality of life. The quality and abundance of Kitsap County’s natural environments are well documented and are what define Kitsap County as the “natural side of Puget Sound.”

Since the last Comprehensive Plan update and with a keen eye on planning for the future, Kitsap County has placed a higher priority on environmental sustainability in public policy. A community that embraces sustainability must continually improve the relationship between the developed and natural environment. This includes managing the natural environment as an essential asset alongside other assets like roadways, buildings, capital facilities and revenue. The natural environment provides services and economic benefits which require planning, coordination, monitoring, and supportive fiscal policies and strategies. The County’s formal participation in the Puget Sound Partnership and the adoption of actions at the local level to restore and protect Puget Sound is an example of policy and practice for a sustainable environment.



Environment Guiding Directives

- Kitsap County protects the natural environment in part through its adopted Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), Shoreline Master Program (SMP) and Stormwater Ordinance.
- The goals and policies of the SMP are hereby incorporated by reference in this update to the Comprehensive Plan.
- In addition to adopted regulations, Kitsap County provides measurable environmental results in protecting and restoring ecological functions and values, including ensuring adequate consideration of anadromous fisheries and recovery of endangered salmon stock.
- Kitsap County is an active participant in the state-federal Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) and is involved in identifying and prioritizing local actions to recover Puget Sound and its shellfish, habitat and water quality.
- Kitsap County continues to carry out its programs under the “Water as a Resource” policy (Kitsap County Resolution 109-2009) that cooperatively addresses water as a resource not a waste stream. The policy supports and is in keeping with continuing the Comprehensive Plan Internal Review Team as a vital coordinating body.
- Kitsap County’s programs that affect and address public water supply work in partnership to provide for protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater.
- Kitsap County works with area Tribes and with other involved groups and agencies to protect important natural environments that are priority tribal treaty rights.



A growing array of tools and strategies exist to help Kitsap County with sustainable development, as well as for environmental protection and restoration. Other tools, strategies and practices are needed, especially related to integrating natural features into the built environments and to address the impacts of climate change.

Key elements of the natural environment in the County are regulated as critical areas, including geologically hazardous areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, wetlands, frequently flooded areas, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas. These elements are defined, mapped and regulated in the Kitsap County Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO). This Chapter conveys these concepts and provides the goals, direction and path for the future of sustaining natural environments in Kitsap County.

Environment Goals and Policies

Environment Goal 1. Formally treat natural environments, including forest lands, shorelines, freshwater systems, intact ecosystems, and other critical areas, as an essential asset that is planned for, managed, and invested in to meet the needs of current and future generations.

Environment Policy 1. Working in cooperation with applicable Internal Review Team members and the Board of County Commissioners, adopt a mechanism to acknowledge Kitsap County’s natural environment and the need to manage it as an essential asset. Mechanisms may include but are not limited to plans, ordinances, resolutions and/or official policy directives.

Environment Policy 2. Establish a formal mechanism to coordinate, prioritize actions, report on and continually improve processes to treat the natural environment as an essential asset. Leverage established programs in land use, transportation, economic development and other areas to achieve managing the natural environment as an essential asset.

Environment Policy 3. Identify, document, and evaluate how the natural environment is measured or categorized in land use, transportation, stormwater utility, parks and other County plans.

Environment Policy 4. Use the Internal Review Team or other entities to develop and implement climate change adaptation strategies that create more resilient communities against negative impacts of climate change such as changes in storm frequencies and intensities and other impacts not currently planned for which may affect citizens and infrastructure. This may include actions to protect public health, safety, economy, utility assets, water resources and habitat, in balance with other Growth Management Act required elements.

Environment Policy 5. Support projects that increase air quality, reduce carbon emissions, or reduce climate change impacts.

Environment Policy 6. Work toward the implementation of life cycle cost analyses in County projects and programs to ensure the most efficient and effective use of the natural environment and of public financial resources.

Environment Policy 7. Regularly review relevant codes, development regulations and implementing programs to assure that the natural environment is being managed as an essential

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asset. Adaptive management strategies will be part of this regular review.

Environment Goal 2. Coordinate with internal and external partners on natural environment management and recovery.

Environment Policy 8. Use the Internal Review Team or establish other formal coordination for natural environments across all County programs that supplies data, analysis and support for managing natural environments as a County essential asset.

Environment Policy 9. Provide regional leadership with cities, tribes, and County-wide programs to identify priority environmental issues that affect the Kitsap Peninsula.

Environment Policy 10. Coordinate the County’s goals and priorities on environment essential asset management planning with the Puget Sound Partnership, Puget Sound Regional Council, the West Sound and Hood Canal Lead Entities for Salmon Recovery, Recreation and Conservation Office, Tribes and other regional coordinating bodies as appropriate.

Environment Policy 11. Identify areas of joint interest among County programs, state agencies, tribes, conservation land trusts, and federal departments, including Defense, which may facilitate partnerships in data sharing, funding and stewardship for the environment.

Environment Policy 12. Continue to consult Puget Sound Regional Council and Puget Sound Clean Air Agency for guidelines on carbon emissions.

Environment Goal 3. Reduce the risk of damage to life, property and the natural environment through appropriate regulatory and incentive-based approaches in land use, transportation and development engineering programs.

Environment Policy 13. Use the best scientific information available to direct how functions and values of critical areas are preserved or enhanced.

Environment Policy 14. Explore opportunities for creating additional mitigation banks in Kitsap County.

Environment Policy 15. Maintain, and periodically review and revise, scientifically sound maps and

Would you like to be more involved?

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There are citizen committees and volunteer groups who assist with environmental restoration. Please call Kitsap County at 360-337-5777 to learn how to get involved.

data to provide optimal information during the development review process and planning efforts, as well as information regarding barriers to fish passage and other inventory items.

Environment Policy 16. Train staff on the use of emerging best practices in the area of sustainable land use practices, including green building and site design, and create awareness of these preferred practices through the use of pilot programs, model ordinances, education, and incentives, while in balance with other Growth Management Act required elements.

Environment Policy 17. Safeguard the quality and quantity of long-term water supplies by identifying and protecting critical aquifer recharge areas, and utilizing Low Impact Development (LID) site planning principles to the greatest extent possible for reducing stormwater runoff.

Environment Policy 18. Compensatory mitigation shall be the last option of resort in mitigation sequencing, following documentation of avoidance and minimization of any impact to the natural environment that triggers compensatory mitigation. Replacement of altered or displaced natural environments (including critical areas and buffers) must be mitigated either on-site, within the watershed, or service area as defined through an approved mitigation bank or in-lieu fee program.

Environment Policy 19. Explore the possible use of tax incentives to protect beneficial open space, forestry, and agriculture areas through agreed commitments with willing landowners.

Environment Goal 4. In support of, and not as a substitute for, the above goals, the County will continue to provide opportunities for stewardship, education and public dialogue regarding the management and protection of the natural environment.

Environment Policy 20. Provide education to County residents and businesses about the functions and benefits of a healthy ecosystem. This may be through, but not limited to, support of existing efforts with County partners and encouragement of an open public dialogue on natural environment management.



Environment Policy 21. Support and coordinate voluntary stream, wetland and shoreline restoration and preservation efforts.

Environment Policy 22. Engage in environmentally preferable purchasing practices and support product stewardship to reduce waste to landfill and carbon emissions.

Environment Policy 23. Coordinate and share data with conservation land trusts and other



voluntary organizations to identify and preserve priority areas for environmental protection and preservation.

Environment Policy 24. Consider and identify the vital connection between protection of Kitsap County's rural character, environmental essential assets and environmental benefits and economic opportunities.

Did You Know?



Salish Sea Orca depend on healthy salmon from Kitsap streams.

Environment Strategies

Strategy 1 – Ecosystem services and life-cycle cost analysis

Supports policies 1-3, 6, 12, 17

- Programs or Projects: Develop a framework to determine life-cycle costs for the natural environment. This includes methods to identify, describe, and evaluate the quantifiable services provided by intact natural environments.

Strategy 2 – Calibration of ecosystem service valuation for urban and rural lands.

Supports policies (3, 4, 15, 19)

- Programs or Projects, Finance and Budget, Measuring, Monitoring, and Evaluation: Evaluate the various Comprehensive Plan designations and adopted zoning density needs and, utilizing the framework noted above, identify and evaluate the bulk and dimension of ecosystem services as calibrated for more urban versus rural scenarios.

Strategy 3 – Ensure that the functions of the natural environment receive first consideration in planning and review.

Supports policies 2, 8, 12, 15-19

- Programs or Projects, Partnerships: Coordinate an improved development planning and review system that maintains the functional values of the natural environment with other Growth Management Act standards for land use, housing, and economic development, and considers other regional planning efforts such as the Puget Sound Partnership Implementation Strategy for the recovery of Puget Sound.

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Strategy 4 – Compliance reporting for FEMA

Supports policies 1, 3, 7, 15

- Programs or Projects, Measuring, Monitoring, and Evaluation: Submit required annual report to Federal Emergency Management Agency regarding Kitsap County's status on review of projects for compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Biological Opinion Puget Sound, as well as progress towards achieving programmatic compliance.

Strategy 5 – Develop monitoring program to report on changes to natural environments.

Supports policies 1, 2, 7, 15, 18

- Measuring, Monitoring, and Evaluation: Develop a monitoring program to systematically produce annual reports on the quantitative changes to natural environments based on land cover changes, development projects constructed, types and bulk of mitigation, or other appropriate metrics and the net result for natural environmental essential asset management.

Strategy 6: Create an adaptive management plan.

Supports policies 7, 15-17

- Programs or Projects: Create an adaptive management plan with benchmarks based on the consistent measures of the above mentioned monitoring program. As threshold benchmarks are realized, assess whether changes are warranted to development standards or other environment or land use classifications.

Strategy 7: Coordination on conservation and restoration strategies.

Supports policies 1, 4, 8-11, 19-24

- Programs or Projects, Finance and Budget, Participation: Convene the Internal Review Team and other entities to strategize on prioritization, funding and regulatory and non-regulatory incentives to acquiring, restoring and managing public lands for conservation purposes.



References

- Shoreline Master Program
<http://www.codepublishing.com/wa/kitsapcounty/html/Kitsap22/Kitsap22.html>
- Critical Areas Ordinance
http://www.kitsapgov.com/dcd/lu_env/cao/cao.htm
- Water as a Resource
www.kitsapgov.com/sswm/pdf/Water_resource_policy.pdf