



San Juan County Workshops on Amendments to Upland and Shoreline Critical Area Requirements

San Juan County is revising its development codes to better protect public health, safety and our natural resources including *Critical Areas*. Because the County has some of the most diverse and productive fish and wildlife habitat in the region and a human population that has increased by nearly 50% since the current code was adopted, these updates are necessary if we are to protect the environment that defines our community.

Types of Critical Areas



Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas



Fish and Wildlife Conservation



Geologically Hazardous Areas



Wetlands



Frequently Flooded Areas

Critical Area Amendments

Protection of *Critical Areas* is required by the Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) and the Federal Endangered Species Act. State law requires counties to review the available science and adopt policies and regulations that protect these areas. Federal law requires that we protect habitat for salmon, orca and other endangered species. Over the past two years a County Council appointed Citizen Review Committee worked with staff to review the science & draft regulations for upland areas. Proposed changes will effect development near streams, wetlands, frequently flooded and geologically hazardous areas, however, they will not apply to agricultural uses which are currently exempt.

Shoreline Amendments

A recent Supreme Court ruling required counties to adopt shoreline *Critical Area* policies and regulations into the shoreline sections of their comprehensive plan and development code. County staff are preparing a discussion draft for this section, based in part on recommendations from the Citizens Review Committee, the San Juan Initiative and State and Federal agencies with jurisdiction.

Key Changes to Land Use Regulations

Reasonable Use Exceptions: The regulations will continue to include a reasonable use exception for parcels that are nearly or totally covered by wetlands, buffers or protected habitat. To comply with the GMA however, allowable development will be less than current levels. It is proposed that parcels <2 acres in size could develop as much as 5,490 sq. ft. of wetlands or protected habitat, with more development allowed on larger parcels. Development of up to 2,500 sq. ft. could be accomplished without mitigation of impacts. Development exceeding that amount would need to be offset with restoration of degraded habitat or payment into an approved restoration fund.

Vegetative Buffers: Vegetative stream, wetland and shoreline buffers absorb runoff, remove toxic chemicals, maintain bank stability, moderate temperatures, supply woody debris, and provide food

and shelter for fish and wildlife. Existing and proposed buffer requirements are shown below. As an alternative to these buffers, property owners will also have the option of preparing a site specific Conservation Area Stewardship Plan (CASP).

Streams		Shorelines		Wetlands	
Existing	Proposed*	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed
Not Required	Type N-100 ft. Type F-150 ft.	Variable 0-100 ft.	100 ft.	Cat. I – 150 ft. Cat. II – 75 ft. Cat. III – 50 ft. Cat. IV – 35 ft.	180 ft. 180 ft. 90 ft. 30 ft.

*Type F streams are streams capable of supporting fish. Type N streams are perennial and intermittent streams shown on County maps that are not capable of supporting fish. Water courses that are not mapped are considered drainageways not subject to these buffer requirements.

Shoreline Docks and Bulkheads: Existing codes need to be revised to better protect soft shore and eelgrass habitats which act as nurseries for the marine food chain. On non-ferry served islands, it is proposed that docks continue to be allowed when necessary to provide reasonable access to property. On ferry served islands, when there is alternate moorage available, new docks may no longer be allowed in areas with eelgrass. New and expanded bulkheads will still be allowed to protect existing structures, but it is anticipated that more protective regulations will be adopted for other situations.

Workshops

Workshops will be held to provide information and begin public review and discussion on the proposed changes. Maps will display the location of *Critical Areas*, scientists will be available to answer technical questions, and CD copies of scientific reports and draft documents will be provided. It is anticipated that additional workshops will be held in August, and that public hearings with the Planning Commission will begin in September. Suggestions and input will be accepted throughout the review and adoption process.

San Juan Island

June 15, 2009
5:30-7:30 p.m.
District 3 Fire Station
1011 Mullis Street
Friday Harbor

Lopez Island

June 16, 2009
4:30-6:30 p.m.
Community Center
204 Village Road
Lopez Village

Orcas Island

June 17, 2009
3:45-6:15
District 2 Fire Station
45 Lavender Lane
Eastsound

For More Information or to Provide Comments:

- See ordinance drafts and science reports at: <http://www.sanjuan.co.com/cao>.
- For public meetings and hearings see: <http://www.sanjuan.co.com/calendar.aspx>.
- To be included on the project e-mail list contact: shireeneh@co.san-juan.wa.us.
- Call: **Shireene Hale, Community Development & Planning Dept. 306-370-7569**
- Mail written comments or suggestions to: P.O. Box 947, Friday Harbor, WA 98250
- Stop by to chat with the project planner at the following times.

San Juan Island

June 22, 2009
8 - noon
CD&P Office, 135 Rhone Street
Friday Harbor

Lopez Island

June 24, 2009
10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Library Meeting Room

Orcas Island

June 25, 2009
9:45 – 11:45
Orcas Senior Center
Eastsound