

Critical Areas Ordinance Quiz

How well do you understand the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO)? Take the quiz below

In 1990, the state legislature responded to Washington's rapid growth by passing the Growth Management Act ("GMA") to guide future development in a predictable, environmentally-sensitive manner. See how well you understand the CAO...take the Quiz.

To stay informed...read the draft ordinance, reports, and find out about CAO meetings posted at: www.sanjuanco.com/cao.

Q. 1 What does the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) protect?

- a. People from building in a frequently flooded area.
- b. People from building in geological hazards.
- c. Fish and wildlife.
- d. Drinking water in our critical aquifer recharge areas.
- e. Wetlands.

Answer: all of the above

Q. 2 Why should I care?

- a. I want economic certainty for my property.
- b. I want to protect ground water, for my own and future generations.
- c. I moved to the San Juans for their beauty and natural abundance, and want to keep it that way.

Answer: all of the above.

Q. 3 How many of the 12 Puget Sound Counties have completed their Critical Areas Ordinance?

- a. 11
- b. 9
- c. 5
- d. none

Answer: b (Only San Juan, Thurston and Island County are incomplete)

Q. 4 What does the current proposed CAO say can be done if a home is already built within 200 feet of a shoreline, a stream, or a wetland?

- a. Continue to enjoy it as it is.
- b. Expand it by 20% landward.
- c. Rebuild in its original location if there is a fire.
- d. Tear the house down or relocate it inland.
- e. all but d.

Answer: e. (However, you are free to relocate your home inland if you want to "d").

Q. 5 Can San Juan County protect critical areas in marine shorelines now ?

- a. No, the State Supreme Court said in 2008 that counties can only do that during their Shoreline Master Program update.
- b. Yes! the State Shoreline Management Act (SMA) allows counties to move forward with protection for shoreline critical areas as segment of our Shoreline Management Program update.

Answer: b. The Department of Ecology has told San Juan County that they may do a shoreline critical area segment concurrently with the CAO update.

Q. 6 What's the harm if the County continues to delay in passing a CAO update?

- a. Procrastination may limit opportunities for state funding.
- b. Procrastination leaves people and property unprotected and exposed to hazards.
- c. Procrastination leaves fish, wildlife, wetlands, and our aquifers with inadequate protections.

Answer: all of the above.

Q. 7 What do buffers protect?

- a. The risk of damage to property, by reducing the risk from flooding or erosion.
- b. Areas for fish and wildlife to feed and reproduce.
- c. Fresh and marine waters from sediments and pollutants.

Answer: all of the above.

Q. 8 What is Best Available Science (BAS) ?

- a. Making predictions, observations, and recommendations forming and testing hypotheses.
- b. The most accurate and current information available to base decisions.
- c. Information from anywhere that is applicable to San Juan County.
- d. Only information that has been collected in San Juan County.

Answer: All but d. BAS is produced by a valid scientific process that generally includes peer review, a clear testing methods, logical conclusions with reasonable inferences, quantitative analysis, proper context and references. State regulations require BAS and suggest consulting with state, federal and tribal natural resources agencies when developing it.

Q. 9 Geohazards include:

- a. Earthquakes
- b. Floods
- c. Landslides
- d. Avalanches
- e. Tsunamis

Answer: All of the above. "Geohazards" are events caused by geological features and processes that present severe threats to humans, property and the natural and built environment. Landslides, caused by heavy rainfall, flood, saturated soils, earthquake, excessive vegetation removal, erosion, and human activities, are the most common geohazards on land. Scientists studying global climate change have warned that rising sea levels will increase coastal flooding and shoreline erosion.

Q. 10 How many species in San Juan County have been listed as endangered or threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA)?

- a. 21
- b. 11
- c. 8
- d. 5
- e. none

Answer: b. There are 11 species found in SJ County that are protected under the Federal ESA These include: Southern Resident Orca, Stellar sea lion, humpback whale, gray whale, Chinook salmon, steelhead, brown pelican, common loon, marbled murrelet, peregrine falcon, Taylor's checker-spot butterfly.

Q. 11 A local favorite food for endangered salmon and sea birds is forage fish. Which of the fish below is not a forage fish?

- a. Surf smelt
- b. Sand lance
- c. Herring
- d. Halibut

Answer: d. Surf smelt and Sand lance spawn on beaches while herring spawns on nearshore vegetation, preferably eelgrass.

Q. 12 Have there been any toxins found in waters surrounding San Juan Island?

- a. No, San Juan County's waters are pristine.
- b. Yes, high detergent levels have been documented in Friday Harbor's marine waters.
- c. Yes, high bacteria levels have been found in numerous county streams.
- d. Yes, pesticides and herbicides have been found in marine waters, sediments and shellfish.
- e. All but a.

Answer: e. Healthy wetlands and vegetated buffers along marine and freshwater shorelines keep our water and shellfish healthy by filtering sediments, toxins, and nitrates. Things that can help at home include: not using chemicals on our gardens and lawns, not washing cars in the driveway where water runs into storm drains, and picking up your dogs waste.

TRUE OR FALSE STATEMENTS:

Q. 13 I have to move my house if it's in a critical area or buffer.

Answer: FALSE. Your home would be non-conforming, but you would not need to move it. You could also rebuild it if it were destroyed by fire, storms, etc.

Q.14 This is a government land grab?

Answer: FALSE. Our "government" does not want your land. Water, air, fish and wildlife area vital part of our common heritage. The County is entrusted by the people to prevent individual citizens from harming these public resources, and that is what the CAO does.

Q. 15 We can use Land Bank and San Juan Preservation Trust lands as mitigation for building in a critical area?

Answer: FALSE. The San Juan County Land Bank protects properties with funds previously approved by the voters for conservation purposes. Using these lands for mitigation would in effect subsidize development and is not legal under state law. The Preservation Trust is a private non-profit organization which protects properties using private donations.

About Friends of the San Juans

FRIENDS of the San Juans is a public interest non-profit organization that has been preserving the qualities that make our community a great place to live, work, retire and recreate since 1979. We recognize that the health of our community and environment are two key forces that shape our economic prosperity today and in the future. We work with citizens, local, state, federal, and tribal decision makers to ensure that land use decisions are based on sound science, comply with existing laws, and promote stewardship of our islands. For more information, please visit www.sanjuans.org or call (360)378-2319.

***Want fairness and certainty for our environment and our economy?
Tell you elected officials you want critical areas protected in the shoreline and uplands.***

Stay informed...Read the draft ordinance, reports, and find out about CAO meetings posted at:
www.sanjuanco.com/cao.

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