



**Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington**  
Working Together for Excellence in Local Government

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## Critical Areas

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### Introduction

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All cities and counties in Washington are required to adopt critical areas regulations by the Growth Management Act ([RCW 36.70A.060](#)). The GMA was amended in 1995 to require counties and cities to include the best available science in developing policies and development regulations to protect the functions and values of critical areas ([RCW 36.70A.172](#)). All jurisdictions are required to review, evaluate, and, if necessary, revise their critical areas ordinances according to an update schedule. MRSC's webpage on [GMA Plan/Development Regulations Updates](#) provides additional information on the schedule and required updates.

### Critical Areas Updates

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- Bellevue [Critical Areas](#) - Update adopted 06/2006
- Clark County [Critical Areas Update](#)
- Des Moines [Critical Area Ordinance Update Complete](#)
- Ellensburg [Critical Areas Review Process](#)
- Kitsap County [Critical Areas Ordinance](#)
- Renton [Critical Areas Ordinance Regulations](#) - Adopted 2004
- San Juan County [Critical Areas Ordinance](#)
- Seattle Department of Planning and Development [Environmentally Critical Areas Update](#) - Adopted May 2006
- Sequim [Critical Areas Ordinance Update](#)
- Tacoma [Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance Update](#) - Adopted 2008
- Thurston County [Critical Areas Update](#)
- Walla Walla [Critical Areas Update](#)

## State Information

- [Examples of Regulatory Language for Nearshore and Marine Shoreline Protection](#), (PDF), prepared for the Puget Sound Action Team by GeoEngineers, 01/2005
- [Critical Areas Ordinance Implementation Guidebook for Small Cities](#), Department of Commerce, 02/2007 - Links to guidebook, appendices, and other useful information on critical areas and best available science
- [Critical Areas Assistance Handbook: Protecting Critical Areas Within the Framework of the Washington Growth Management Act](#) (PDF), Washington State Department of Commerce, Growth Management Services, November 2003.
- [Critical Areas and Best Available Science Ordinance Examples for Small Cities and Towns](#), Washington State Department of Commerce, Growth Management Services.
- Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife [Priority Habitats & Species \(PHS\)](#) - List of Priority Habitats & Species, including county-specific list, management recommendations, etc.

## Best Available Science

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- [Critical Areas and Best Available Science Information Page](#), Washington State Department of Commerce, Growth Management Services. *Page includes Critical Areas Assistance Handbook, Appendices, Findings of Fact and Local Examples*
- [Citations of Recommended Sources of Best Available Science for Designating and Protecting Critical Areas](#) (PDF), Washington State Department of Commerce, Growth Management Services, 03/2002
- [Best Available Science for Wetlands](#), Department of Ecology
- Local Government Documents
  - Bainbridge Island
    - Bainbridge Island, Geologically Hazardous Areas, [Summary of Impacts of Best Available Science - Geologically Hazardous Areas](#) (PDF)
    - Bainbridge Island [Nearshore Assessment Best Available Science](#)
    - Bainbridge Island [Shoreline Critical Areas Best Available Science Consistency Review](#) (PDF), by Peter Namtvedt Best, Steve Morse, and Josh Machen
  - Bellevue [2005 BAS Review - Streams and Riparian Areas](#) (PDF), Herrera Environmental Consultants, 03/2005
  - Black Diamond [Sensitive Areas Ordinance Best Available Science Review and Recommendations for Code Update](#) (PDF), Parametrix, September 2008
  - Bremerton [Critical Areas Ordinance Best Available Science References](#) (PDF)
  - Edmonds [2004 Best Available Science Report](#), Draft (PDF) Prepared by EDAW, 11/2004
  - Island County, [Best Available Science for Wetlands of Island County](#) (PDF), by Paul R. Adamus, 05/2007
  - [Issaquah Best Available Science Report Draft](#) (PDF), Planning Department, 2004
  - Jefferson County [Review of Best Available Science for 2004 Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations Update](#) (PDF) 09/2004
  - King County [Best Available Science](#) - Links to reports
  - Kitsap County [Best Available Science Technical Review Committee](#)
  - Lake Stevens [Best Available Science Review and Critical Area Evaluations/Characterizations](#) (PDF), 2008
  - San Juan County [Best Available Science for Critical Areas](#) (PDF), Draft, 2008
  - Thurston County Critical Areas Update, [Best Available Science](#)

## City Ordinance Provisions

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- Anacortes [Ordinance No. 2702](#) (PDF), 2005
- Bainbridge Island [Municipal Code Ch. 16.20](#) - Critical Areas
- Bellingham [Municipal Code Ch. 16.55](#) - Critical Areas
- Bothell [Municipal Code Ch. 14.04](#) - Critical Areas Regulations
- Bremerton [Municipal Code Ch. 20.14](#) - Critical Areas\*

- [Cashmere Ordinance No. 1020\\*](#) (PDF), 09/2002
- [Edgewood Municipal Code Title 14 - Critical Areas Regulations\\*](#) (PDF)
- [Edmonds Final Critical Areas Ordinance](#), 2004
- [Ellensburg Critical Areas Amendments](#), Draft, May 2010
- [Everett Zoning Code Ch. 37 - Critical Areas](#)
- [Index Critical Areas Ordinance No. 361,\\*](#) 2002 (PDF)
- [Kent Municipal Code Ch. 11.06 - Critical Areas](#)
- [Mill Creek Ordinance No. 2004-603 - Critical Areas](#) (PDF)
- [Mount Vernon Ordinance No. 3353 - Critical Areas\\*](#) (PDF), 2007
- [Mukilteo Municipal Code Ch. 17.52 - Critical Areas\\*](#)
- [Olympia Municipal Code Ch. 18.32 - Critical Areas](#)
- [Port Angeles Municipal Code Title 15 - Environment\\*](#)
- [Pullman Ordinance No. 03-18\\*](#) (PDF 32 MB)
- [Port Townsend Municipal Code Ch. 19.05 - Critical Areas\\*](#)
- [Redmond Zoning Code Ch. 21.64 - Critical Areas](#)
- [Sammamish Critical Areas](#)
- [Shoreline Critical Areas Ordinance Ch. 20.80](#) (PDF)
- [Stanwood Ordinance No. 1164](#) (PDF) - Critical Areas, 2004
- [Steilacoom Ordinance No. 1380](#) (PDF) - Critical Areas, 2004
- [Sumner Ordinance No. 2071\\*](#) (PDF), 2003
- [Vancouver Ordinance No. M-3692](#) (PDF) - Critical Areas
- [Yakima Municipal Code Ch. 15.27](#) (PDF) - Critical Areas.

\*Local example recommended by Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, Growth Management Services

## County Ordinance Provisions

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- [Cowlitz County Critical Areas](#)
- [King County Critical Areas, Stormwater, and Clearing and Grading Ordinances](#)
- [King County Code Chapter 21A.24 - Critical Areas](#)
- [Lewis County Code Chapter 17.35A - Critical Areas](#)
- [Okanogan County Code Ch. 14.12 - Critical Areas](#)
- [Pacific County Critical Areas and Resource Lands Ordinance](#) (PDF), 1999
- [Pierce County Code Title 18E](#) (PDF) - Development Regulations-Critical Areas
- [Skagit County Code Ch. 14.24](#) (PDF) - Critical Areas Ordinance
- [Spokane County Code Ch. 11.20 - Critical Areas](#)
- [Thurston County Draft Critical Areas Regulations](#), 2010
- [Whatcom County Code Ch. 16.16 - Critical Areas](#)
- [Yakima County Code Title 16A - Critical Areas.](#)

\*Local example recommended by Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, Growth Management Services.

## Other Ordinance Provisions

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- [King County Model Critical Areas Ordinance for Snoqualmie Watershed Cities\\*](#) (PDF), July 2004.

## Application Forms and Handouts

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- [Burien Critical Area Review Application](#) (PDF)
- [Edmonds Critical Areas Checklist](#) (PDF)
- [Kent Critical Areas Reasonable Use Variance Application](#) (PDF)
- [Lynnwood Critical Areas Permit Application](#) (PDF)
- [Normandy Park Critical Areas Ordinance Citizens Guide](#) (PDF), 2010

- Snohomish County [Critical Areas Regulations for Residential Projects, Bulletin 15](#) (📄)
- Wahkiakum County [Critical Areas and Resource Lands Assessment Application](#) (📄)
- Whatcom County [Critical Areas Ordinance Handout](#) (📄)
- Woodinville [Critical Area Information](#) (📄).

**Related MRSC Resources**

[MRSC Index – Sensitive areas, critical areas, Best Available Science, BAS](#)