

City of Seattle

Environmentally Critical Areas Update



Maggie Glowacki
City of Seattle
Department of Planning and Development
(206) 386-4036
Margaret.Glowacki@seattle.gov

Nick Welch
City of Seattle
Department of Planning and Development
(206) 684-8203
Nicolas.Welch@seattle.gov

Overview

1. What are Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA)?
2. Reasons for ECA update
3. Components of the update
4. Update process
5. Summary of identified issues

What are Environmentally Critical Areas?



- Aquifers
- Landslide-Prone and Steep Slope Areas
- Peat bogs
- Streams
- Small lakes
- Shorelines
- Wetlands

ECA Background

- **1990** – Washington State's response to rapid growth was the 1990 Growth Management Act (GMA)
- **1992** – GMA-required protection of Environmentally Critical Areas
- **1995** – New requirement to use **Best Available Science** to protect ECAs with “special consideration” for protecting anadromous fish (e.g., salmon)
- **2015** – No new requirements; update ECA regulations for clarity and continued compliance with GMA

Requirements for the 2015 ECA Update

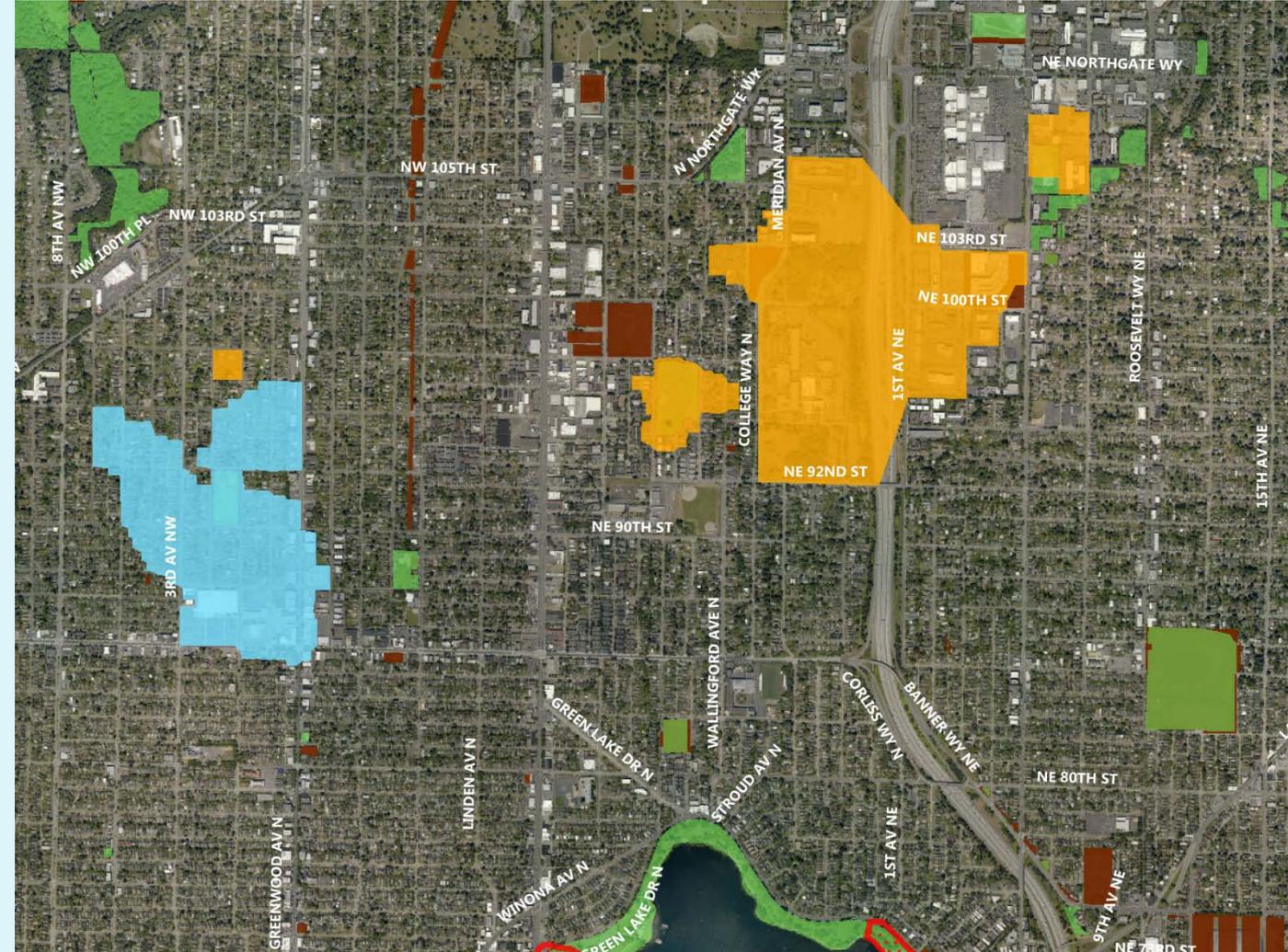
1. Review regulations for compliance with GMA
2. Best Available Science
3. Public participation plan
4. Develop policies and regulations



Process

- Public outreach via website and meetings
- Public Open House
- Summary of identified changes – February 2015
- Proposed policy changes – February 2015
- Proposed regulatory changes – March 2015
- Public input throughout February and March 2015

ECA Mapping

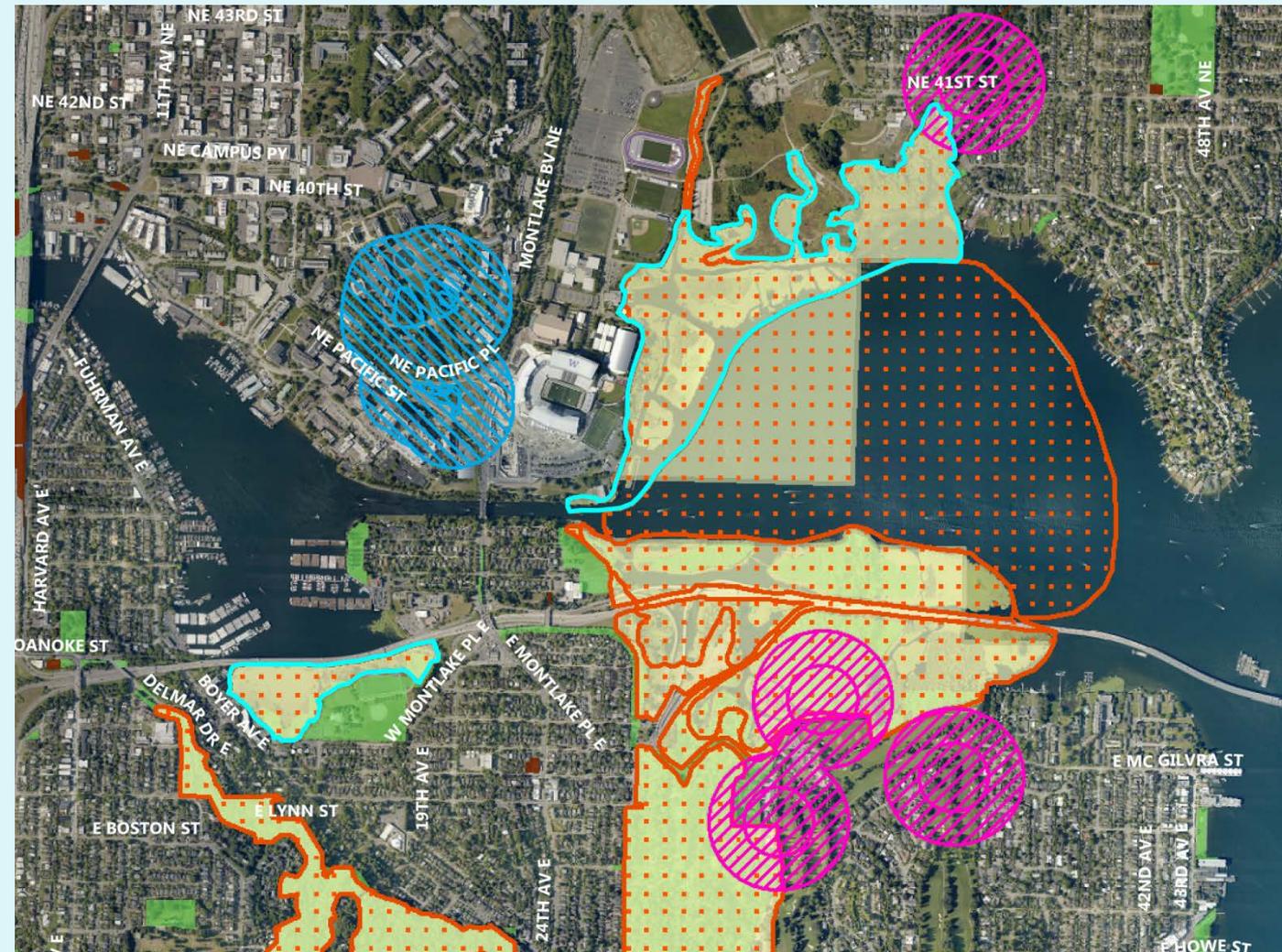


Peat Settlement-Prone Area

-  Category 1
-  Category 2
-  Abandoned Landfill
-  1000' Methane Buffer
-  City of Seattle Park
-  City Property

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 HARN StatePlane
Washington North FIPS 4601 Feet
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
Datum: North American 1983 HARN
False Easting: 1,640,416.6667
False Northing: 0.0000
Central Meridian: -120.8333
Standard Parallel 1: 47.5000
Standard Parallel 2: 48.7333
Latitude Of Origin: 47.0000
Units: Foot US

ECA Mapping



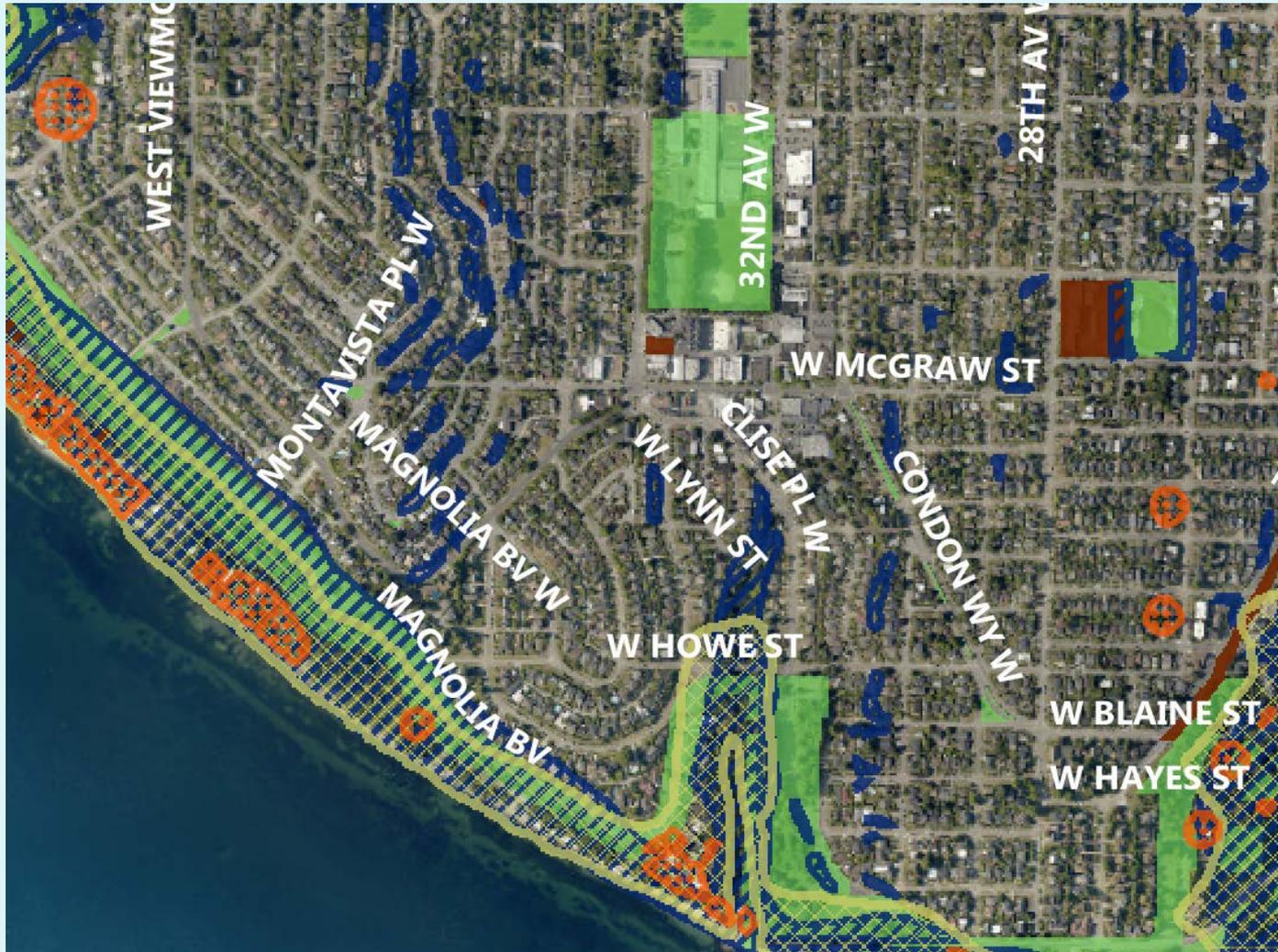
-  Great Blue Heron Management Area
-  Bald Eagle Management Area

Biodiversity Area and Corridor

-  2015 WDFW Data
-  Existing WDFW Data
-  City of Seattle Park
-  City Property

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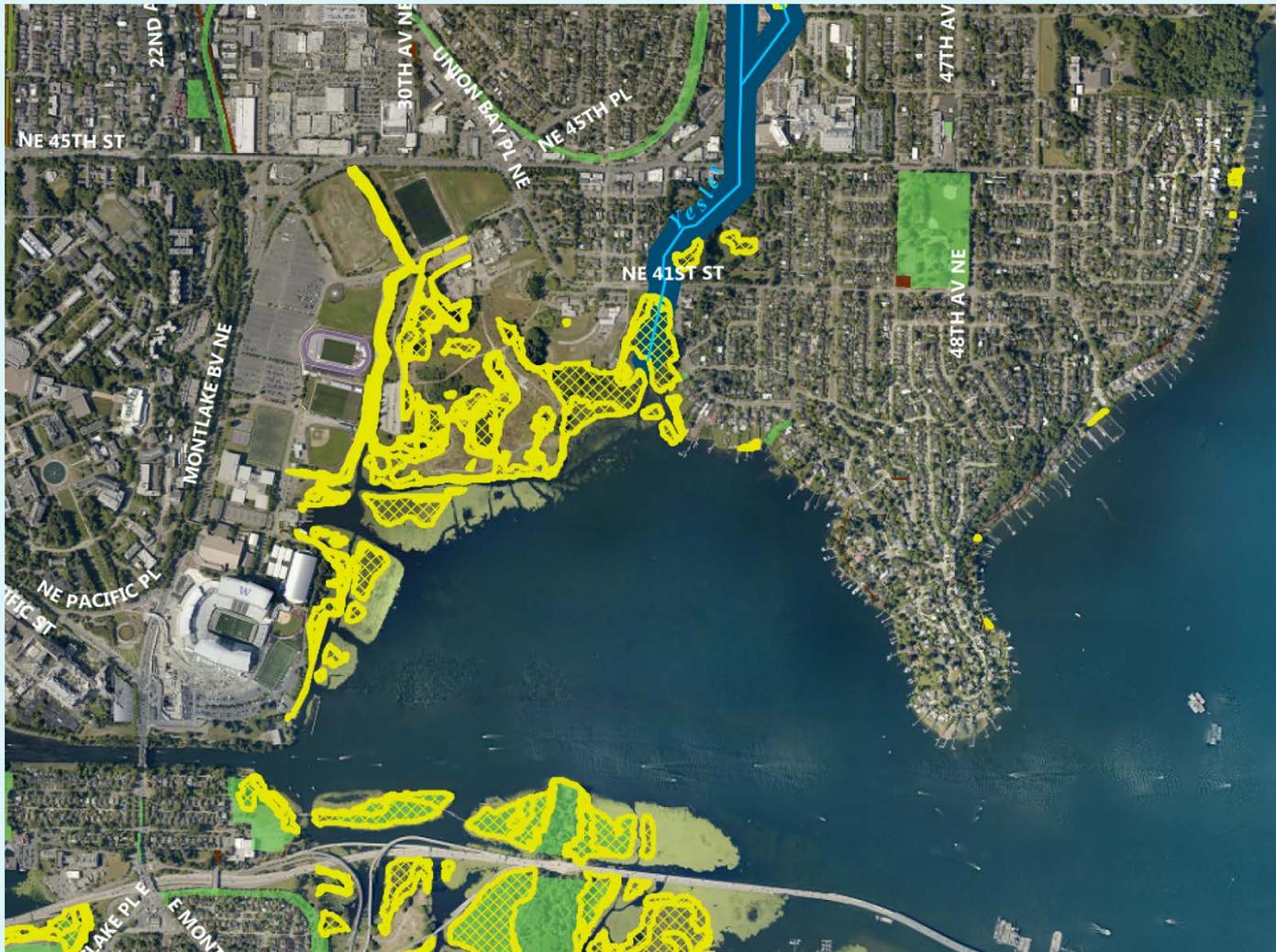
ECA Mapping



- Known Slide Area
- Potential Slide Area
- Steep Slope (40%)
- City of Seattle Park
- City Property

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ECA Mapping



-  Wetland
-  Riparian Corridor
-  City of Seattle Park
-  City Property

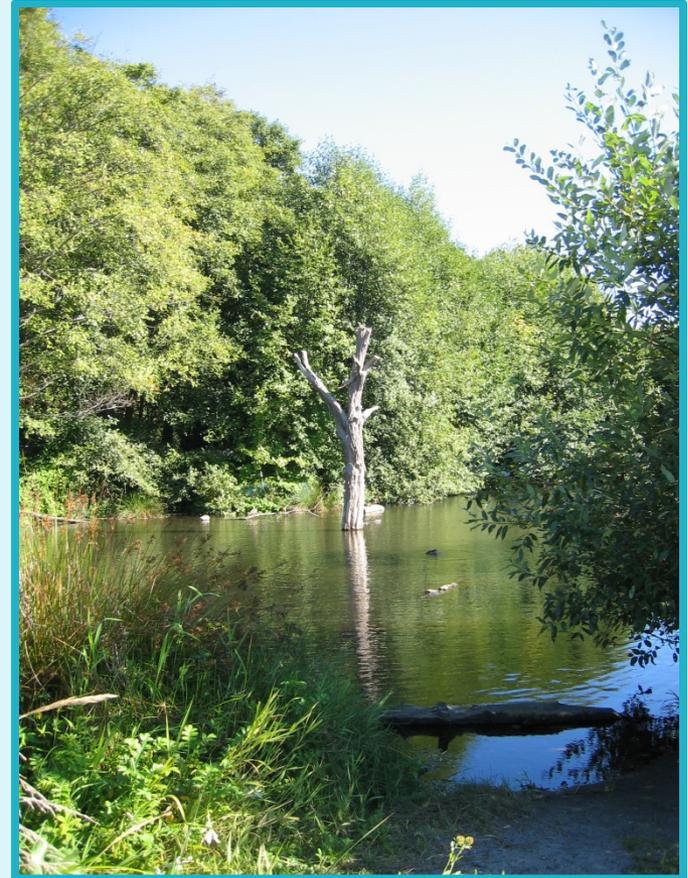
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Existing ECA Regulations

Section **25.09** of the Seattle Municipal Code

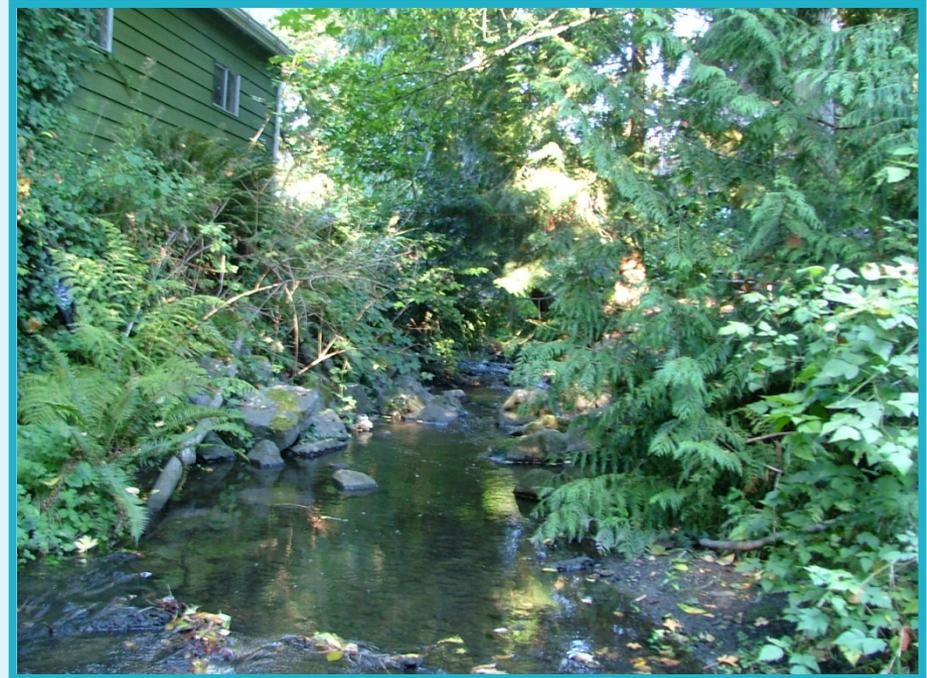
The current regulations:

1. **Define** ECAs
2. Establish **exempt** development (e.g., maintenance and repair)
3. Specify **submittal** requirements



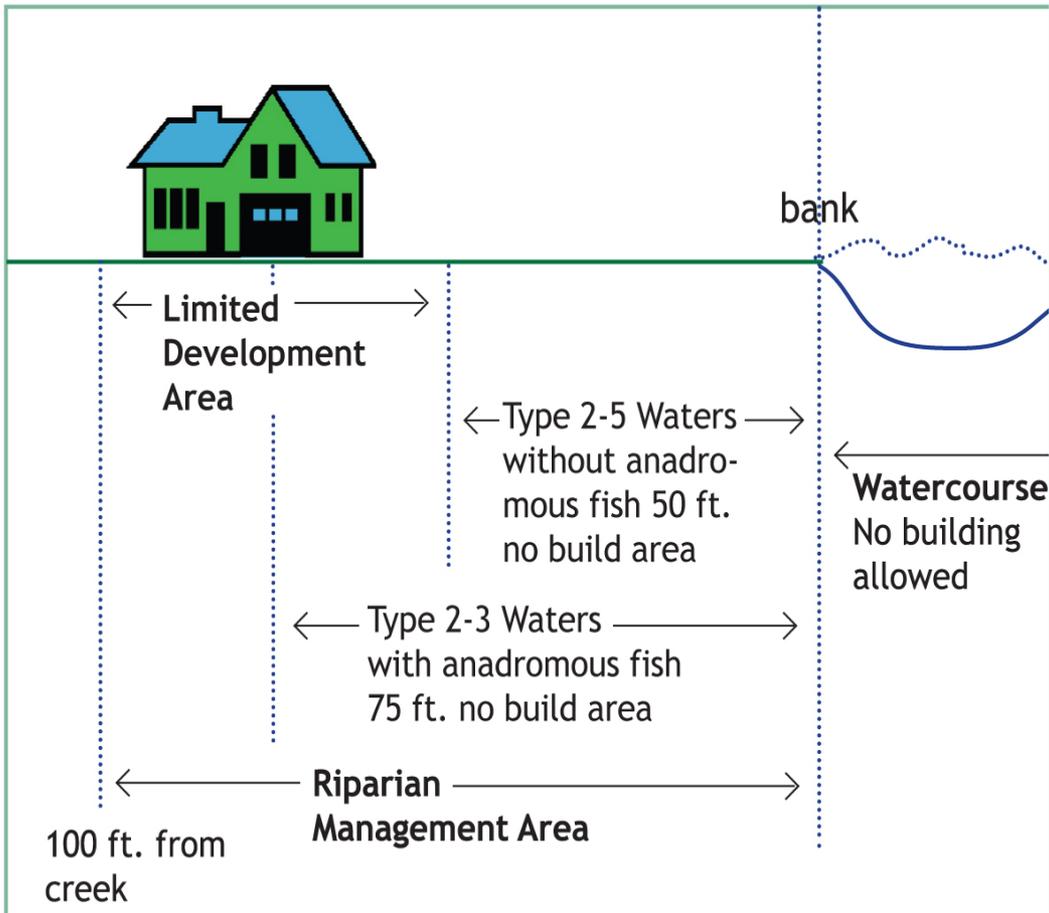
Existing ECA Regulations

4. Establish specific **development standards** for each ECA type
5. Outline **variance** process for development on steep slopes
6. Outline **exception** process for lots predominantly ECA



Riparian Corridor Regulations

Riparian Corridors (streams, small lakes)



Wetland Regulations

Buffer Requirements

Wetland type	Buffer (feet)
• Category I and II wetlands with high level of habitat function	200
• All other Category I and II wetlands	100 / 110
• Category III wetlands with high/mod level of habitat function	85
• All other Category III wetlands	60
• Category IV wetlands	50

Standards for Steep Slopes

- **25.09.180** Stabilization of slope
- **25.09.180** Water quality and erosion protection
- **Variance** allows up to 30% disturbance of slope



Priority Species Protection

Bald Eagle

Heron



Standard Bald Eagle Management Plan (WAC 232-12-292)

- Within 400' requires individual plan from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
- 400-800' of eagle nest and/or within 250' of shoreline and 0.5 mile of eagle nest:
 1. Retain all known perch trees and all conifers ≥ 24 " DBH
 2. Retain all cottonwoods ≥ 20 " DBH
 3. Retain at least 50% of pre-clearing or pre-construction conifer stand
 4. Windowing and low-limbing of trees acceptable provided no more than 30% of live crown removed
 5. Topping of trees not allowed



Standard Bald Eagle Management Plan (WAC 232-12-292)

Construction timing

- Within 400-800' of nest:
February 1–April 15
- Within 400' of nest: February
1–July 15

Site-specific plan – WDFW



The Standard Great Blue Heron Management Plan

Construction timing: February 15 – July 31

Retaining trees: All 22" dbh or larger during nesting season

Building location: As far as possible from colony perimeter

Alternative conditions: WDFW site-specific plan



Exemptions

- 25.09.045 of the Seattle Municipal Code outlines exemptions
- **25.09.045.A.3.b:** City agencies do not need to make an application provided that:
 - They comply with all provisions
 - Meet all conditions required by the Director
 - Maintain records documenting compliance with all provisions



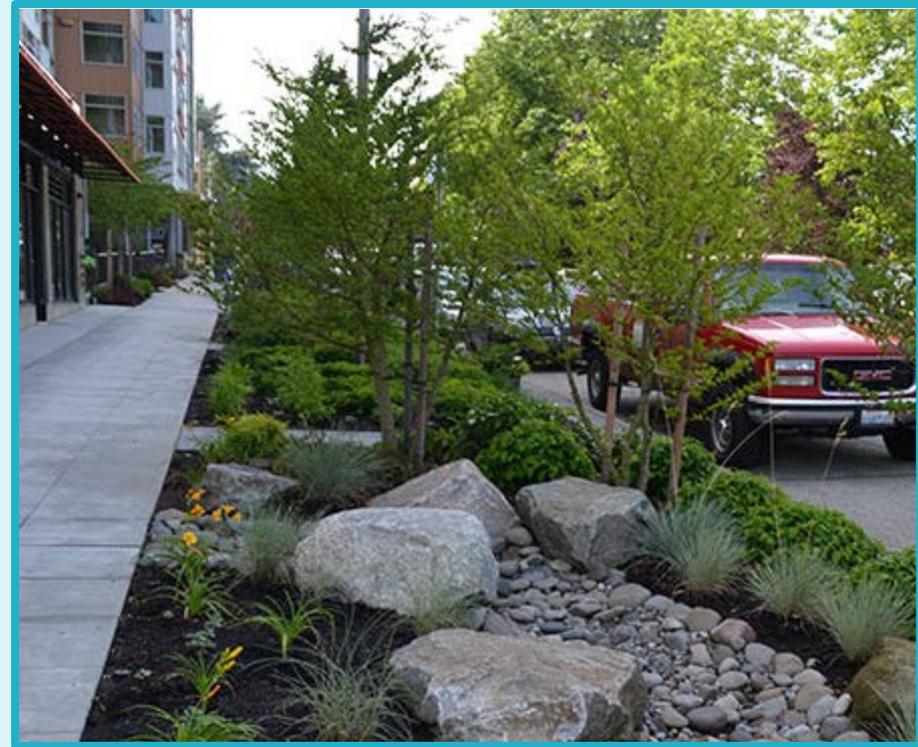
Exemptions

- All exempt activities must use **best management practices** (25.09.045.B)
- Normal and routine operation, maintenance, repair, renovation etc. are exempt if not disturbing, encroaching further into or increasing impact to ECA or buffer (25.09.045.F and 25.09.045.G)



Low Impact Development Code Changes

- New requirement for municipal stormwater permit from Washington State Department of Ecology
- Review development-related codes and standards to encourage LID and remove unintentional barriers in code



What is Low Impact Development?

- Stormwater and land use management strategies that mimic natural hydrology
- Reduced impervious surface, bioretention, preservation of native vegetation

What changes are proposed?

- Changes to the land use code would encourage LID by:
 - Making it easier to do rain gardens
 - Clarifying that bioretention qualifies as “landscaped open space”
 - Allowing some flexibility for landscaping or setback requirements to accommodate bioretention and GSI
 - Requiring Green Factor for certain institutional lots



Proposed Changes: ECA and LID

- See summary handout of ECA and LID code changes
- Visit the project websites:
 - www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/changestocode/ecaupdate/whatwhy
 - www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/changestocode/lowimpactdevelopment/whatwhy
- Email us:
 - Nick Welch
nicolas.welch@seattle.gov
 - Maggie Glowacki
maggie.glowacki@seattle.gov

