

Seattle Environmentally Critical Areas Regulations FAQ — December 2014

1) What are Environmentally Critical Areas?

Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) include wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas (including riparian corridors and shorelines, small lakes and other priority habitat and species areas), geologic hazard areas (including landslide-prone, steep-slope and liquefaction-prone areas), flood-prone areas, peat bogs, and abandoned landfills. Many of these areas provide opportunities for enhancing the urban environment through protection of areas that possess unique ecological values such as wetlands, wildlife habitat, erosion control on steep slopes, and stream and shoreline environments, whose health and well-being are valuable indicators of the overall health of the urban and natural environment. Some critical areas create hazards to development owing to the inherent vulnerability associated with unstable soils or flooding.

2) Why is Seattle revising its ECA Regulations?

Regulations designating and protecting ECAs are required by [RCW 36.70A.170](#), [RCW 36.70A.060\(2\)](#) and [RCW 36.70A.172\(1\)](#)

The Washington State Legislature requires local jurisdictions to review and revise ECA regulations pursuant [WAC 365-196-610](#) by June 30, 2015.

The overall ECA regulations were last updated in 2006.

3) Where do the Environmentally Critical Areas regulations apply?

Throughout the city, in all areas that meet the definition of a “critical area” in Seattle Municipal Code Section 25.09. 020, Environmentally critical areas definitions. In the Shoreline District, environmentally critical areas regulations are applied through the Shoreline Master Program.

4) How are Environmentally Critical Areas regulated within the Shoreline District?

At the completion of Seattle’s Shoreline Master Program (SMP) update all ECAs located within 200 feet of the shoreline will be regulated by the SMP rather than by the ECA regulations as mandated by the state legislature. The existing ECA regulations were incorporated into the SMP regulations with changes to meet the requirements of the Shoreline Management Act. The level of protection of the critical areas in the SMP regulations will be equal to the regulations in the ECA regulations.

5) Will DPD have any public meetings?

A public meeting will be held on proposed draft changes to the ECA regulations. It is anticipated that a public meeting will be held in the winter of 2015.

Additionally, beginning the fall of 2014, DPD will be available by invitation to attend community group meetings to discuss any proposed changes to the ECA regulations. Please contact Margaret Glowacki via e-mail at margaret.glowacki@seattle.gov or by calling 206-386-4036.