



Critical Area Variance Narrative

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This narrative must be completed and uploaded as part of your application submittal. Please select the type of Critical Area Variance being requested. The questions below are meant to help you demonstrate compliance with [SCC 14.10](#) and [SCC 14.24](#).

- ☐ Critical Area Reasonable Use Exception
- ☒ Critical Area Variance

1. Describe the specific buffer reduction you are requesting.

It is proposed to reduce a 110ft wetland buffer to 60ft for a 54.5% buffer reduction. A 100ft stream buffer (stream is found meandering within wetland) will be reduced by approximately 45ft for a 45% buffer reduction.

2. Describe why the variance is needed to allow for reasonable use of the property.

A small addition is proposed for the small existing home of the site to afford it the same standards enjoyed by the majority of homes in rural Skagit County. A wetland buffer encompasses the existing home and the addition would require modification of the buffer. Due to the location of the addition within the buffer, wetland buffer averaging would not work as it would require a greater than 25% modification, and due to the existing site development, a Reasonable Use Exception would not be applicable, leaving a variance the only viable permit pathway.

3. Describe how the variance will not grant the applicant a special privilege that is not enjoyed by other property owners within the same zone.

Granting the variance will only afford the landowner a minimal consolidation in relation to the greater community, the addition of a bedroom and bathroom of a size afforded in routine construction today, bringing the home to a 3 bedroom, 2 bath home that is the standard minimum for a family home in Skagit County. The size will still be in line with the local community, and still considered small for homes in the rural zone.

4. Describe how the actual interpretation of the code requirements would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zone.

Strict interpretation of the code requirements for wetland and habitat conservation area buffers would preclude the ability to add a bedroom to this small home. The location of the addition is the only feasible location for such that would afford the landowners a "normal" size bedroom and bathroom that is believed necessary for the landowners to age in place in their upcoming retirement years.

5. Describe how the issuance of a variance from standard zoning setbacks will not provide sufficient relief to avoid the need for a variance of the critical area setback.

The variance is requested for the addition to an existing home found centrally within the subject property. A zoning variance would not apply nor provide relief.

6. The granting of the variance must be justified to address a special circumstance and is not simply for the economic convenience of the applicant.
- a. Describe the existing limitations based on the lot size, lot configuration, or easements.
The limitations are based upon the location of critical areas and the orientation of existing home and associated appurtenances. Construction is functionally limited to one location only due to the home layout and location.
 - b. Describe how existing utility infrastructure such as septic system or water source create limitations on the lot.
The property is currently served by public sewer with all other utilities connected to existing home
 - c. Describe how locations of existing buildings or structures create limitations on the lot.
The existing home on the property was built and configured prior to the adoption of any version of the Critical Areas Ordinance with original construction as approved by Skagit County placing it within a critical areas buffer pursuant to relatively recent regulatory adoption.
 - d. Describe any existing topographic or critical area constraints that are specific to the lot.
A wetland and small stream cross the northwest portion of the property, the regulatory buffer of which encumbers the property fully around the existing, legally established home.
 - e. Describe how the existing special condition or circumstance is not the result of actions by the current or previous owner.
The home onsite was constructed and permitted by Skagit County pursuant to the regulations in place at the time by previous owner. The circumstance is not the result of landowner action, but adoption of stricter critical area regulations.
 - f. Did the special condition arise from adjusting the parcel boundary line or subdividing the property after June 13, 1996?
No, not applicable.
7. Development of the subject parcel must have the least impact on critical areas as demonstrated in a site assessment and mitigation plan prepared by a qualified professional ([SCC 14.24.080\(5\)\(b\)](#))
- a. Describe the efforts taken to avoid impacts to critical areas.
Impacts to the regulated buffer area cannot be avoided to proceed with the proposal as no area of addition would be outside of the buffer, and building up is not structurally feasible in the existing footprint. The proposal is for an addition to a long existing, legally established home. The home is 1176sf, notably smaller than the normal in the area, with 2 bedrooms and one bathroom, with the bedrooms extremely small at roughly 10x10ft. The applicants are nearing retirement age and desire adapting their home for said retirement and older age, with a larger bedroom and bathroom to facilitate such, and making the home a standard 3 bedroom, two bathroom home as is consummate with the neighborhood.

- b. Describe how the project is designed to minimize impacts to critical areas.

The addition has been designed as minimally as possible to still be functional for the homeowners needs. Structurally the home could be added onto on any side with potentially less impact, but adding to the front would also involve needing to add further parking which would create more impact to the property, adding to the rear would be greater encumbrance to the buffer, and adding to the east side would then entail redoing the parking and deck, not judged to be a benefit. All other potential additions would also entail significant interior redesign which would likely be infeasible due to the very small size of the home.

- c. Describe how any temporary impacts to critical areas will be restored.

No temporary impacts to critical areas are foreseen. All impacts will be within lawn vegetated buffer only, with construction implementing sediment and erosion control to prevent water quality issues in addition to the sizable vegetated filter distance that will remain undisturbed between construction and the critical area.

- d. Describe how the mitigation plan will reduce or eliminate the impacted area over time.

As above, no temporary impacts are foreseen.

- e. Describe how unavoidable impacts to the critical areas are compensated (e.g. replacing, enhancing, or providing substitute resources or environments).

All impacts are fully mitigated via compensation via a significantly larger area of buffer than the impact area will be vegetatively enhanced. As proposed, the impact area that is currently lawn will have a total impact of ~694sf of new development to be compensated by enhancing ~5300sf of wetland buffer adjacent to the home. Regardless of code requirements for same, the ratio (approx.. 8:1) is anticipated to fully compensate for the minor impacts proposed.

8. Describe how the variance will not create significant adverse impacts to the associated critical areas. This is a determination that is made by the qualified professional ([SCC 14.24.140\(3\)\(f\)](#)).

Significant adverse impacts are not foreseen with this proposal. No forested buffer will be removed, the proposal is minimal within an existing homesite, and all spatial impacts are mitigated via compensatory mitigation at a much higher rate/amount that is proposed to be lost. This is described in much greater detail within the supplied "Wetland Assessment/Fish & Wildlife Assessment" prepared by Skagit Wetlands & Critical Areas (April 2026) and authored by a qualified professional as defined by Skagit County Code that had an ultimate finding that the proposal as mitigated would not be foreseen to have adverse impacts.

9. Is the proposal in a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)? If yes, describe how the proposal will not adversely affect species protected under the Endangered Species Act, or their habitat.

The proposal is not in a Special Flood Hazard Area.