



SKAGIT COUNTY 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) Update Work Session



FACET



Kimley»Horn
Expect More. Experience Better.



Draft CAO and Supporting Documents

- Visit the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Website:
<https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa>
- Available on the website:
 - CAO Gap Analysis
 - Best Available Science (BAS) Review
 - Facet Stream Buffer Memo
 - 3rd Draft Critical Areas Ordinance Proposed Changes
 - Memos and Staff Reports
 - Planning Commission Recorded Motion and Recommendation



Critical Areas Ordinance

Pursuant to WAC 365-196-485, counties and cities are required to designate critical areas and adopt development regulations to protect them.

Critical areas include the following areas and ecosystems:

- Wetlands
- Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs)
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWCHAs)
- Frequently Flooded Areas (FFAs)
- Geologically Hazardous Areas



CAO Process so Far

- Planning Commission review April – June
 - April 21 - May 8 Comment Period
 - May 6 Public Hearing
 - June 17 PC Recommendation to Board of County Commissioners
- Board of County Commissioners Review July – Present
 - July 10 – July 28 Comment Period
 - July 28 Public Hearing
- Commerce 60-Day Hold for Mediation with Swinomish Tribe



Highlight of Policy Changes

- BAS recommendations across all critical areas
 - Incorporation of “no net loss”
 - Updates to references and mapping sources
 - Updates for critical area designations and classifications
 - Critical Areas Report criteria
 - Riparian Buffer Width Increases
- Clarity, Efficiency, Accountability
 - Readability and administration
 - Updated Reasonable Use and Variance language
 - Improved content and organization (e.g. CARA section)



Summary of 2nd Draft Public Comments

- 25 Public Comments Received
- Common Themes Seen in Comments
 - Stormwater
 - Standard Riparian Buffer Widths
 - Ongoing Agriculture
 - Restoration Projects



Changes in Response to Comments

- Relaxing Ownership Restriction of Protective Critical Area (PCA) subdivision tracts or easements
- Activities allowed without standard review – Buffer enhancement activities
- Adding forage fish spawning areas to Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
- Ongoing Agriculture
- Corrections of minor grammatical and terminology errors



Next Steps & Public Comment

- Public Comment Period: October 30 – November 14, 2025 at 4:30 PM
- BoCC Possible Adoption November 25 at 10:15 AM

Questions & Discussion

