

COUNTY PROTECTIVE MEASURES



Critical Areas Ordinance

The Skagit County Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) protects salmonids and other fish habitats by protecting stream buffers. Buffers provide food, shelter, and shade for both fish and wildlife. Buffers also reduce the levels of sediment and contamination that enter the water bodies through stormwater run off. Maintaining or enhancing buffers can greatly reduce water quality impacts to the affected water bodies. Therefore, the CAO requires that developments either be located outside critical areas and their buffers, or mitigate for impacts through specific planning. All developments within 200 feet of wetlands and fish and wildlife riparian areas are reviewed to ensure vital salmon habitat is protected. Setbacks range from 50 feet to 200 feet depending on the type of water body and its functions.

Skagit County revised the CAO to incorporate a Managed Agriculture Riparian Plan (MARP) option that provides an adaptive management approach for agricultural lands adjacent to salmon bearing waters due to the varied in-stream habitat and riparian conditions throughout the Skagit watershed. A provision includes a five-year lease by the County for a buffer complex on commercial agricultural land that abuts salmonid bearing watercourses. The buffer complex will consist of three contiguous zones: a riparian buffer zone (RBZ), a grass filtration strip (GFS), and an agricultural management zone (AMZ).

The objective of the RBZ is to establish a functional, forested, perennial, self-sustaining vegetative buffer adjacent to the waterway within seven to ten years. The GFS will provide the necessary nutrient and sediment filtration and achieve water quality standards mandated by the Clean Water Act. The AMZ will ensure that the best management practices are in place and that pasturing of livestock does not occur in the winter months from November to April.

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Note: At the time of publication, setback distances of the riparian zones were undergoing revisions due to findings of the Growth Management Hearings Board.

Watershed

Skagit River (WRIA 03 and 04)

Cost

Eight full-time employees

Partners

Skagit County
Washington Department of Ecology
Citizens of Skagit County



Samish Island

