



Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) Update

City Council Workshop

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— Critical Areas

Cities and counties in Washington state are required to designate critical areas and adopt development regulations to protect them.

(WAC 365-195-485)



Critical Areas *(cont.)*

Critical areas include the following areas and ecosystems:

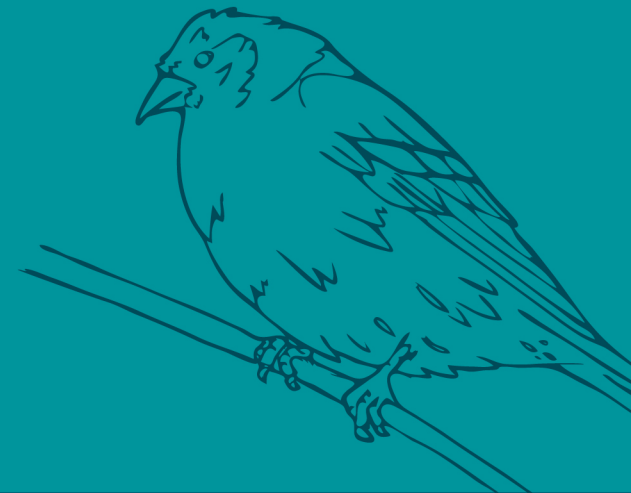
- **Wetlands**
- **Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARA)**
- **Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA)**
- **Frequently Flooded Areas (FFA)**
- **Geologically Hazardous Areas**



Growth Management Act Mandate

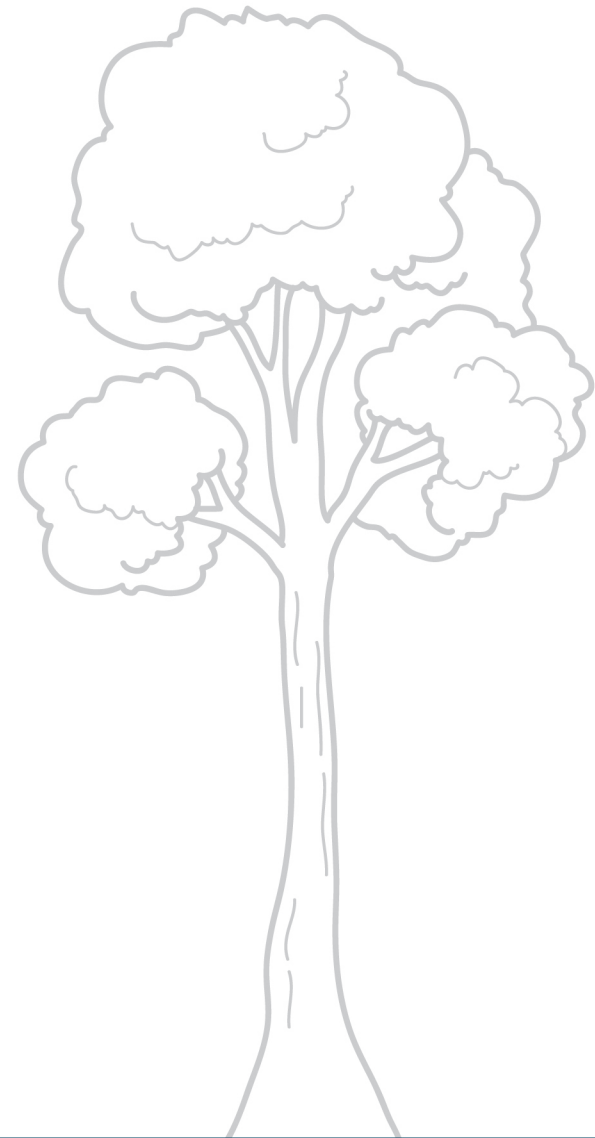
RCW 36.70A.172.

Critical areas–
Designation and
protection–
Best available science
to be used.



Growth Management Act Mandate

(1) In designating and protecting critical areas under this chapter, counties and cities shall include the best available science in developing policies and development regulations to protect the functions and values of critical areas. In addition, counties and cities shall give special consideration to conservation or protection measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries.



— What is Best Available Science?

- **Best Available Science (BAS)** is the best science that is available. It is produced through a valid scientific process.
- **Reviewing BAS** allows local jurisdictions to develop a science-based regulatory approach without having to conduct new scientific studies.



— Criteria for Including BAS

(WAC 365-195-900)

Through 925 defines BAS and requirements for jurisdictions to include the BAS in the Comprehensive Plan CAO period updates.



Criteria for Including BAS *(cont.)*

Demonstrate inclusion of BAS in policies and regulations:

- **Protect functions and values of critical areas**
- **Include relevant BAS in decision-making**
- **Identify and document any non-scientific information and rationale for incorporating in the update. Identify and resulting potential risks to critical area functions and values and the measures to limit those risks.**



Science and Planning

- **BAS informs planning decisions.** Science helps us understand and consider how land use decisions affect critical areas within the City.
- **BAS provides a framework** for managing critical areas in a systematic manner that addresses functions and values while considering practical implementation.
- **The City must balance BAS** with other substantive goals and mandates of the GMA.

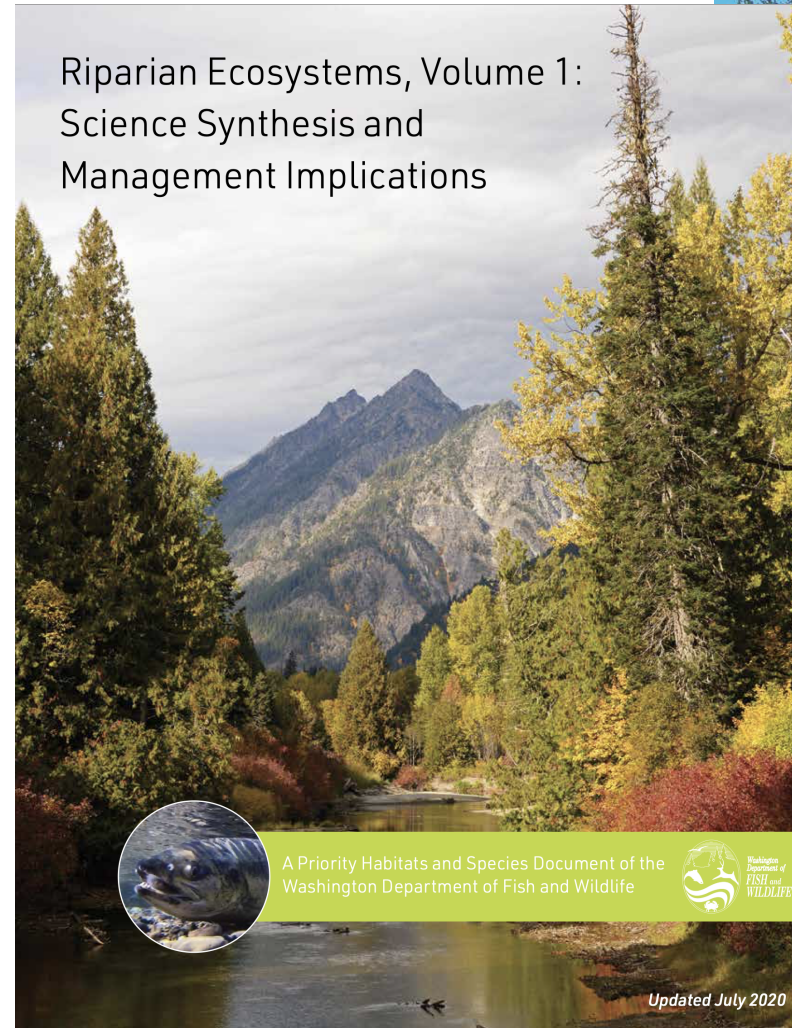


— CAO Update Process

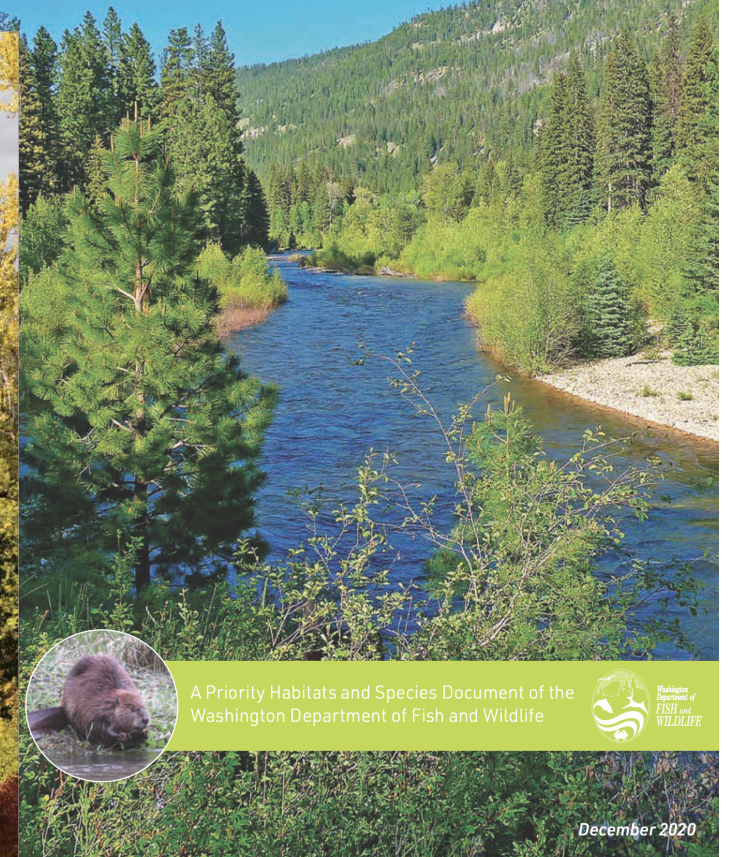
- **BAS Review**
- **Gap Analysis**
- **Draft Code Update**
- **Engagement: Planning Commission, City Council, the Public**
- **Final draft CAO**
- **Adoption by City Council**



Riparian Ecosystems



Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 2: Management Recommendations

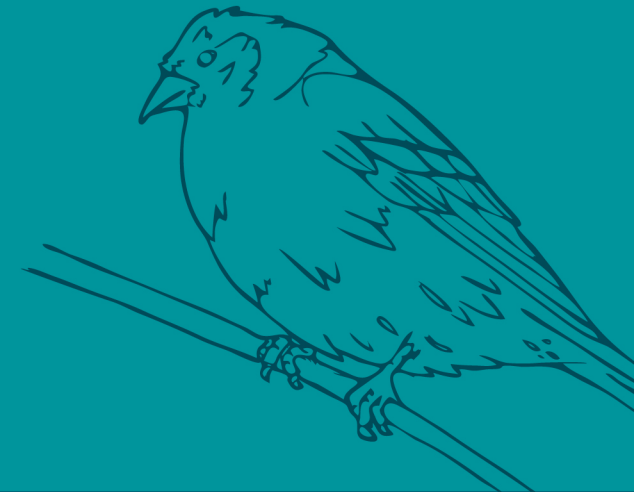


Riparian Habitat Areas in Walla Walla

**City of Walla Walla is a
Dryland Ecosystem.**

WDFW Recommends:

- 100-ft minimum
for water quality
- Preserve extent
of intact riparian
vegetation



City Stream Analysis

Riparian Habitat.

Results:

- 43.2 stream miles
- Approximately 30% of streams with impervious surfaces/ disconnected from buffer
- Approximately 70% are currently vegetated



Overview of Changes

Simplified where feasible

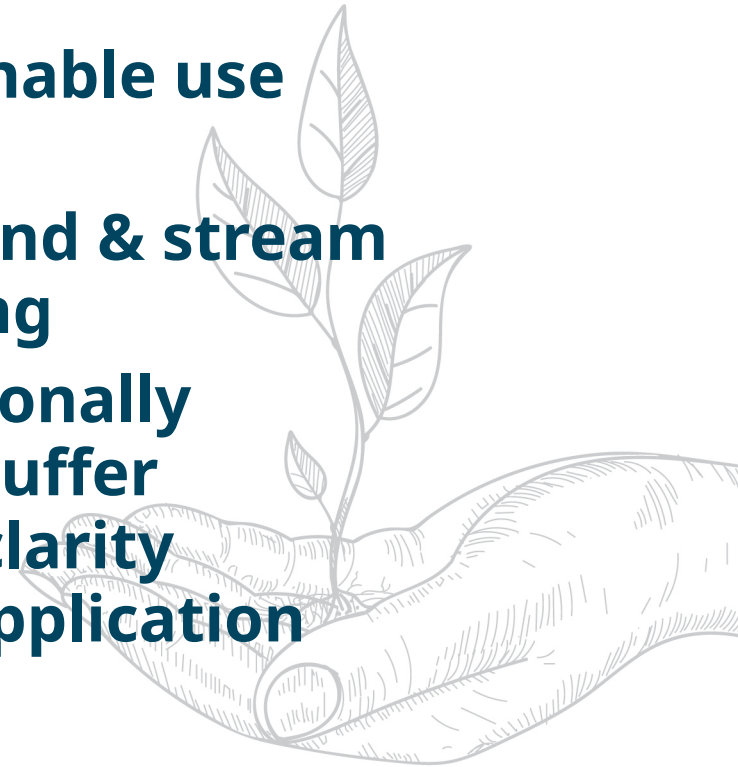
- Remove SMP regulations from the CAO
- Minor edits to improve clarity and consistency

WAC Alignment

- Definition updates
- New code references to the WAC

Added Flexibility

- Fencing as allowed activities
- Clarified reasonable use review process
- Retained wetland & stream buffer averaging
- Updated functionally disconnected buffer provisions for clarity and practical application



Overview of Changes_(cont.)

Incorporate BAS

- New language to ensure reasonable use applications are consistent with zoning and adhere to mitigation sequencing
- Update mitigation plan requirements
- Update building setbacks to align with purpose and intent
- Added reference to current publications
- Updated Riparian Habitat Area regulations based on BAS



An aerial photograph of a river winding through a lush green valley. The river is surrounded by dense trees and vegetation. In the background, rolling hills are visible under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Questions?