

SMP FACT SHEET #3

Shoreline Environmental Designations (SEDs)

Q: What are Shoreline Environment Designations (SEDs)?

- SEDs categorize shorelines based on their characteristics. Are they developed? Expected to be urban? Are they in a natural state? Shoreline protections are based on type of SED.

Q: Why Does Thurston County Use SEDs?

SEDs are required by the State's Shoreline Management Act.

- The County used Department of Ecology guidelines to establish draft SEDs.

Q: Are SEDs Based on Science?

- Yes. Thurston County used aerial photographs, site visits, and other data to guide the proposed SEDs. [The Inventory and Characterization Report \(I&C\)](#) details information collected.
- Thorough studies were done to ensure that no net loss of shoreline ecological functions occur through time.
- Ecology accepted Thurston County's I&C report in 2013 for use in this SMP update.
- Details on how SEDs were assigned can be found in the [Shoreline Environment Designation Report](#).

Q: Did my Designation Change?

- Current SEDs may be viewed using the [Thurston GeoData Center](#) maps. GeoData offers trainings for citizens to learn how to use these.
- Proposed SED maps [may be viewed online](#).

Q: Are There More Details on SEDs?

SEDs are based on information in the [I&C report](#).

- Segments of shoreline (i.e., reaches) are proposed as "Natural" if they have characteristics of high-quality habitat and/or minimal shoreline modification.
- Reaches are designated "Shoreline Residential" if they were platted and/or developed for more intense residential use.
- All other shorelands upland of the ordinary high-water mark are proposed as "Urban" or "Rural Conservancy".
- An "Aquatic" designation is proposed for all areas waterward of the ordinary high watermark.

The [ordinary high-water mark](#) is found by examining bed and banks and determining where the presence and action of water is common and usual.



THURSTON COUNTY
WASHINGTON
SINCE 1852

Shoreline Master Program (SMP)

***NOT YET ADOPTED - OPEN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT.**

ASK STAFF

Thurston County's SMP covers most shoreline building projects.

[Contact Us](#) about your site and which permits may still be required.

READ THE CODE

Title 19

[TC Current Shoreline Codes](#)

FIND IT ONLINE

[Shoreline Master Program Webpage](#)



Shoreline Environmental Designations

Shoreline Residential

- Single or multi-family residential development around area lakes and Puget Sound.
- Accommodates development, public access, and recreational use in areas where medium to high-density residential development and services exist or are planned.

Urban Conservancy

- Areas that are or will be developed in urban settings.
- Allows for low-intensity water uses that don't cause big, negative impacts to shoreline functions.
- Allows a variety of compatible uses, while protecting and restoring ecological functions of open space, floodplains, and other sensitive lands.

Rural Conservancy

- Areas like farms, forests, or properties next to steep banks, bluffs, or flood-prone land. Can support low-intensity water-dependent use without large, negative impacts to shoreline functions.
- Provides for resource use, public access, and recreational opportunities while protecting ecological functions.
- Protects existing ecological, historical, and cultural resources.

Natural

- Undeveloped areas currently performing important, irreplaceable ecosystem-wide functions that would be damaged by human activity.
- Protects shorelines performing ecological functions that are intolerant of human use and that are also intact, relatively free of human influence, or minimally degraded.
- Very low-intensity uses are allowed.

Aquatic

- Lands waterward of the Ordinary High-Water Mark (OHWM).
- Protects, restores, and provides for management of the unique characteristics and resources of areas waterward of the OHWM.



Proposed Buffers by Shoreline Environmental Designation (SED) of the Shoreline Master Program (SMP)

	Marine	Lakes	Streams
SED	Buffers in ft.	Buffers in ft.	Buffers in ft.
<u>Shoreline Residential</u>	50	50	250
<u>Urban Conservancy</u>	100	100	250
<u>Rural Conservancy</u>	125	125	250
<u>Natural</u>	200	200	250

Q: How are SEDs Proposed to Change With the SMP Update?

- Some shorelines are proposed to change designation.
- Some parcels not currently in shoreline jurisdiction may fall under shoreline jurisdiction in the update. Changes are based on the most current data regarding location of the ordinary high-water mark, stream flows, and location of associated wetlands and floodplains.
- Some parcels are proposed to be removed based on these same considerations.
- Whether a parcel is subject to the SMP is determined during application review.

Q: What is the Significance of a Change in SED?

- A change in SED may result in a change in shoreline buffer requirements.
- A change in SED is best understood at the site level because parcels in shoreline jurisdiction may already be protected by the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO). There are new proposed flexibility measures in the SMP for rebuilding and expanding legally non-conforming structures.
- Whether a shoreline buffer increases or decreases under the updated SMP depends on how the designation is changing. In some cases, buffers may change even if the SED does not.
- The SED of your property location will affect whether a use is permitted, type of permit required, and the rules a proposed project must follow.