



# Shoreline Master Program

2023 Proposed Update

Thurston County Community Planning and Economic Development



# How to Participate.

Welcome to this Shoreline Master Program Story Map where we present proposed updates to the Shoreline Master Program (SMP).



Throughout your experience, you may have thoughts or questions.

Contact Andy Deffobis, SMP project lead, with any questions or comments using the below address.

Send Andy an email at:

**[Andrew.Deffobis@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:Andrew.Deffobis@co.thurston.wa.us)**

At the end of the SMP Story Map you will be presented with additional opportunities to connect with staff and find more information.

Enjoy!





# Why We do Shoreline Planning.

People are drawn to Thurston County because of its diverse beauty and abundance of streams, lakes, and coastal waters. In fact,





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"There are over 90 miles of Puget Sound coastline, three major river basins, and over 100 lakes and ponds in Thurston County (1)."

It is no wonder that our population is projected to grow by 42% by 2040 (2)! While growth is welcomed for its economic and cultural benefits, increased development requires careful and strategic planning to make sure we move into the future strong and resilient -- keeping the things we love and need safe.





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 In 1971 the Washington State Shoreline Management Act (SMA) was passed, and it was adopted by voters in 1972.

The SMA required Cities and County's throughout Washington State (WA) to create and implement a Shoreline Master Program (SMP) - a key effort towards the goal of preventing harm from uncoordinated and piecemeal development along the state's shorelines.





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Much has changed in our beautiful County over the last 32 years since our current SMP took affect in 1990.

Communities across WA continue to become more aware of increased residential, urban, and industrial development along the state's shorelines, and associated impacts to water quality.



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Applying the most current data available, we have proposed updates to Thurston County's SMP that will help balance growth and development consistent with protections that prioritize healthy and safe shorelines for people, fish, and wildlife to enjoy many generations into the future.

Our shoreline planning efforts are centered around keeping harmony between the needs of Thurston County homeowners, public access to beaches, clean water, and the salmon, orcas, and shellfish that make Thurston County a unique and wonderful place to live, work, and play.





# An Overview of Thurston County's Shoreline Master Program (SMP).

So, what is an SMP anyway?

A Shoreline Master Program (SMP) is



## So, what is an SMP anyway?

A Shoreline Master Program (SMP) is a suite of policies and protections required under the Washington State Shoreline Management Act (SMA).

This proposed SMP update has been drafted in close collaboration with the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), with thorough input from the Planning Commission. Local citizen participation as well as guidance from local agencies and organizations has been a key component.





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Over the past 2 years, we have been seeking input from the broader Thurston County community while the SMP update has been under review by the Thurston County Planning Commission. In this way, the SMA ensures careful coordination and management of activities along the State's shorelines.

Check out the FAQ sheet below for a comparative look at the current and proposed SMP.

[Overview of Proposed Changes](#)

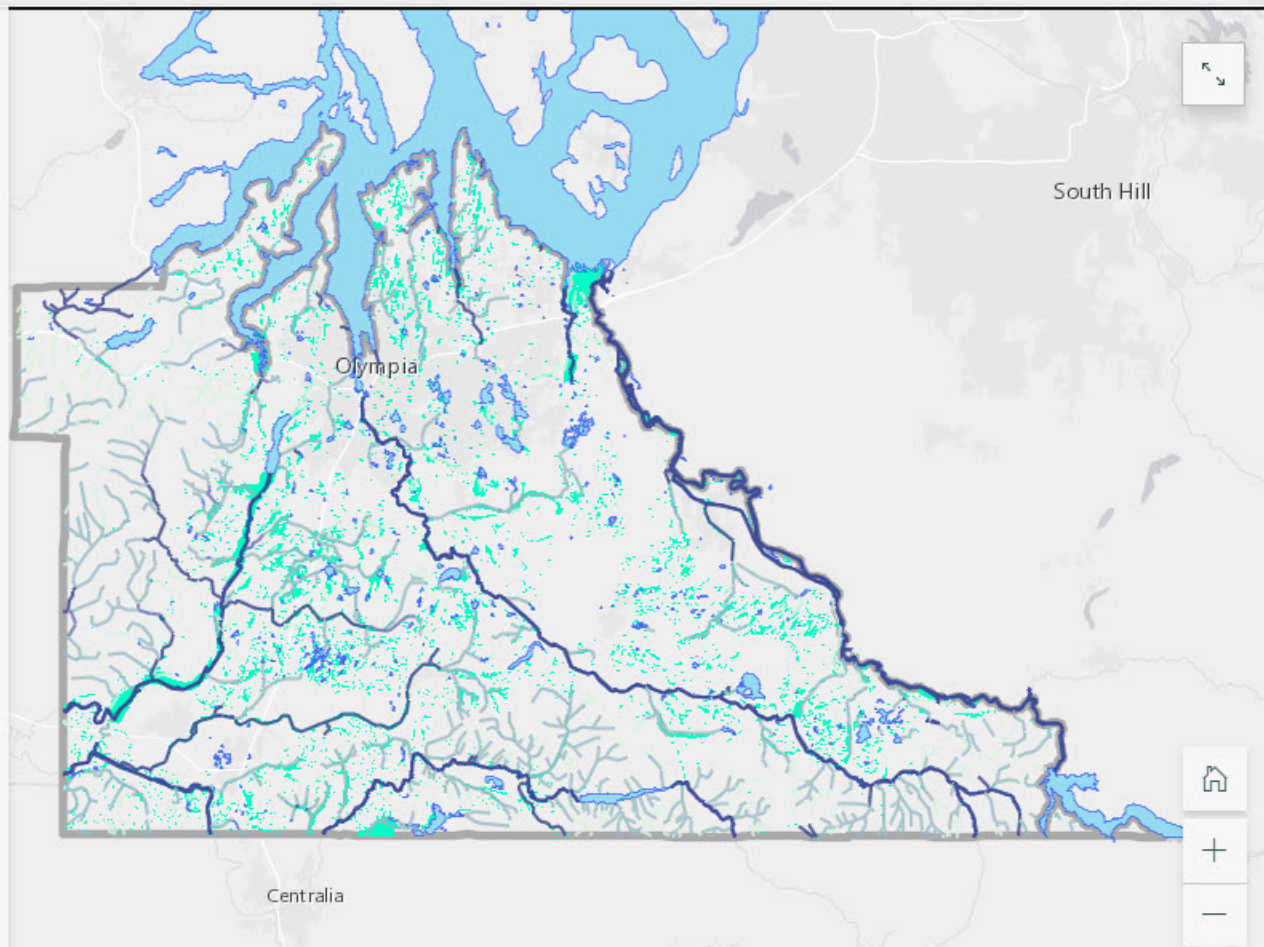




SMP protections apply to:

- The waters themselves,
- Shorelines extending landward 200 feet measured from the ordinary high water mark (OHWM), and
- Associated wetlands and floodplains.

The SMP also applies to critical areas within shoreline jurisdiction. With proposed updates, if your shoreline property also has critical areas - you will ONLY need to go through the SMP permitting process for your proposed development. This could be a huge efficiency gained for Thurston County residents!

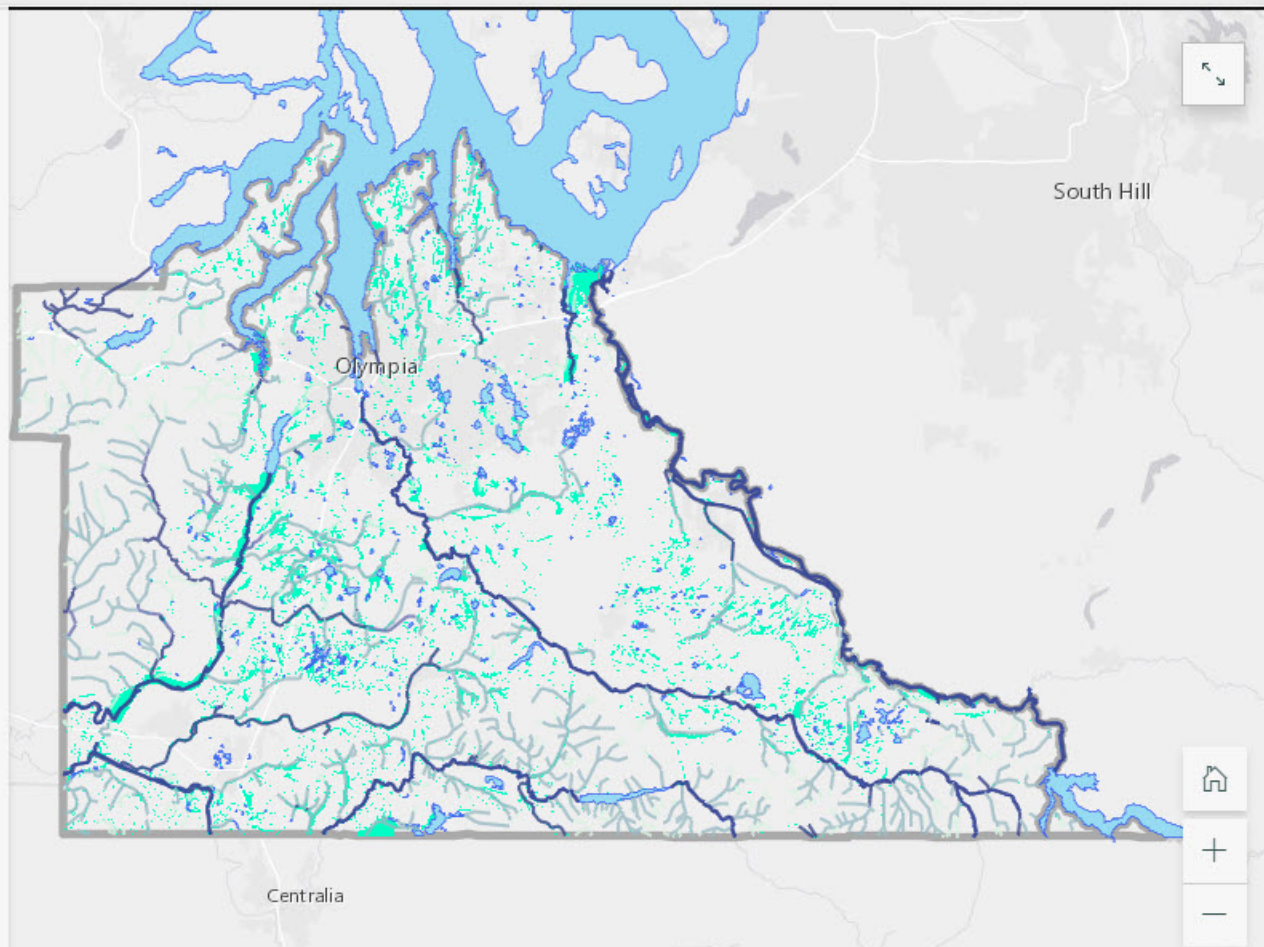




The map to the right shows all of the lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands in Thurston County; however, it's important to note that not all of the water features shown on this map are included in the updated SMP.

To view the map unobstructed by text, click on the opposing arrows icon in the top right corner of the map. To return the text and continue reading, click the arrows again. The bottom left of the map has 4 lines with dots to the left. Click on that to view the map legend.

The below FAQ sheets provide more clarity on this information.





view the map legend.

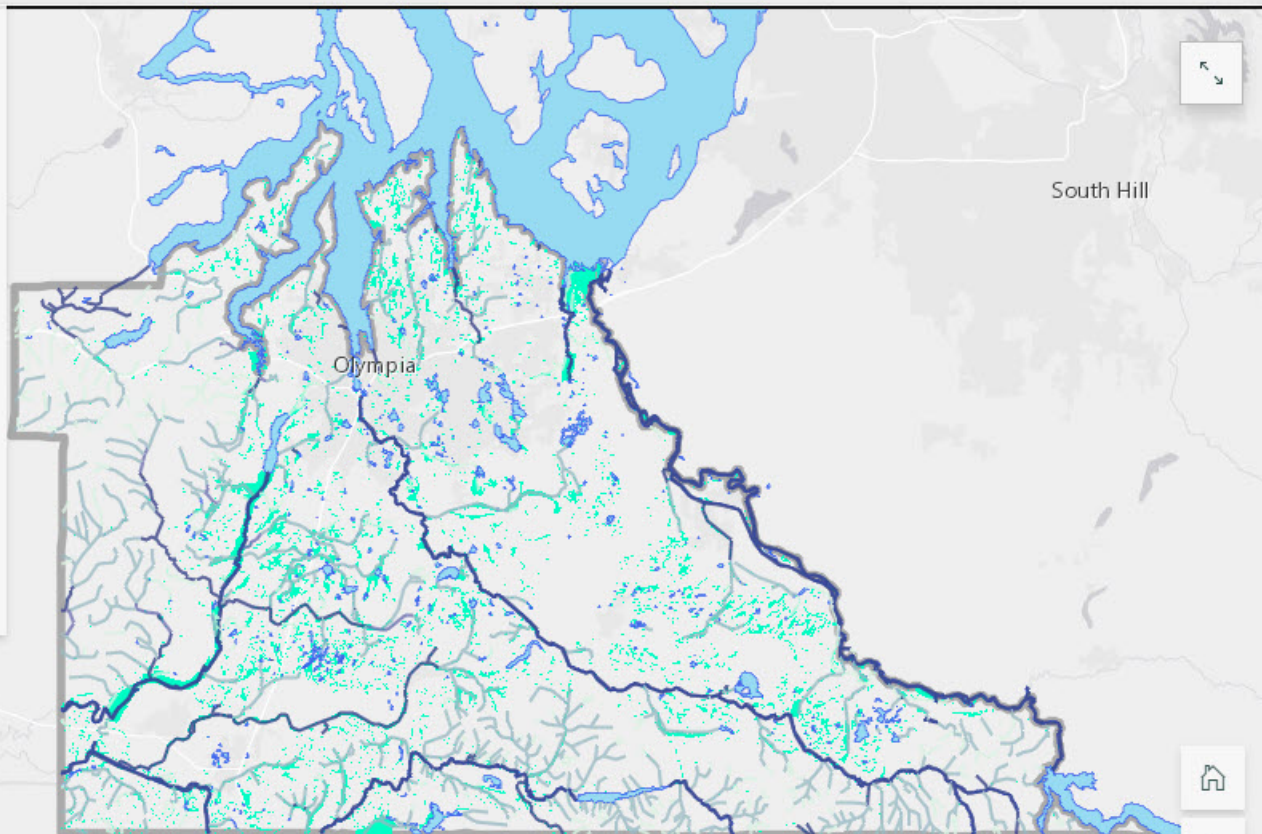
The below FAQ sheets provide more clarity on this information.

[What is an SMP?](#)

[Critical Areas & the SMP](#)

[Shoreline Permits](#)

[Additions to SMP Jurisdiction](#)





## Why We Are Updating the SMP.



Much has changed over the course of the last thirty years, and new federal and state guidelines have been adopted - requiring local jurisdictions to update related programs to meet new and changing needs.

The photo sequence to the left does a great job showing changes along the shoreline of Lake St Clair from 1996 - 2018. The increased intensity of development over time illustrated in this time-lapse highlights the need for an updated SMP with consistent protections.

Thurston County has been collecting and compiling updated information about the changing conditions of the shorelines throughout our County for several years now. Using the best data available, we have



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Thurston County has been collecting and compiling updated information about the changing conditions of the shorelines throughout our County for several years now. Using the best data available, we have crafted updated plans to ensure that the coming decades can safely accommodate projected growth and development rates.



# Property Types Within SMP Jurisdiction.

The updated SMP currently being proposed applies to:

- All marine waters,
- Shore lands and critical areas within SMP jurisdiction,
- Lakes 20 acres or larger, and





- All marine waters,
- Shore lands and critical areas within SMP jurisdiction,
- Lakes 20 acres or larger, and
- Rivers and streams downstream from a point where the mean annual flow is 20 Cubic Feet per Second (CFS).

“

Did you know that CFS can be visualized like a basketball (1 basketball = 1 CFS) rolling over an imaginary line across the width of a stream?





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So the volume of 20 CFS is roughly equivalent to 20 basketballs rolling across an imaginary line in the stream at once.





# Shoreline Master Program Update

## Preliminary Shoreline Environment Designations

October 2022

This map shows all proposed Shoreline Environmental Designations (SEDs) within Thurston County's SMP jurisdiction. To explore the map and access full instructions and usability features (including a comparison with existing SEDs), click the button below.

[View Interactive SED Map](#)[View 1990 & 2022 Side-by-Side](#)

### Shoreline Environmental Designations Summary

#### Natural:

Protect those shoreline areas that are relatively free of human influence or that include intact or minimally degraded shoreline functions intolerant of human use. Only very low intensity uses are allowed in order to maintain the ecological functions and ecosystem-wide processes.

#### Rural Conservancy:

Provide for sustained resource use, public access, and recreational opportunities while protecting ecological functions, and conserving existing ecological, historical, and cultural resources.

#### Shoreline Residential:

To accommodate residential development and appurtenant structures and provide appropriate public access and recreational uses in areas where medium and high density residential developments and services exist or are planned.

#### Urban Conservancy:

Protect and restore ecological functions of open space, floodplain and other sensitive lands where they exist in urban and developed settings, while allowing a variety of compatible uses.

#### Aquatic:

Protect, restore and manage the unique characteristics and resources of the areas waterward of the ordinary high-water mark.

### Shoreline Environment Designations

- Natural
- Rural Conservancy
- Urban Conservancy
- Shoreline Residential
- Aquatic\*
- Stream Reach Breaks
- Lake Reach Breaks
- Marine Reach Breaks
- Cities
- Urban Growth Areas
- Major Roads
- Railroads
- Streams

**DRAFT**

\*Aquatic SED applies to all shorelines of the state below the ordinary high water mark. Please see Map 1, Thurston County Shorelines of the State to identify areas where the Aquatic SED will apply.



Shoreline jurisdiction boundaries shown on this map are approximate. They have not been legally delineated or surveyed, and are intended for planning purposes only. Additional site-specific evaluation may be needed to determine the exact location of the shoreline on this map.

Management of aquatic resources is directed by the Washington Department of Ecology. For more information on aquatic resources, please contact the Department of Ecology at 206-463-3000 or visit their website at [ecology.wa.gov](http://ecology.wa.gov). For more information on the Shoreline Master Program, please contact the Department of Planning at 206-463-3000 or visit their website at [planning.wa.gov](http://planning.wa.gov).





To view this map as a full-screen PDF, click on the button below.

[View Map as Full-Screen PDF](#)

Learn more about this information by checking out the below FAQ sheets.

[Shoreline Environmental Designations](#)

[Additions to SMP Jurisdiction](#)

# Shoreline Master Program Update

## Preliminary Shoreline Environment Designations

October 2022

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0 2 4 6 8 10 Miles

Shoreline jurisdiction boundaries identified on this map are approximate. They have not been formally delineated or surveyed, and are intended for planning purposes only. Additional site-specific evaluations may be needed to determine the exact location of the shoreline on this map.

Management plan of riparian areas are derived from a variety of sources and are subject to change. The map is not intended to be used for legal purposes. For more information, please contact the Thurston County Planning Department at 360.835.3333 or visit our website at [www.thurstoncountypa.gov](http://www.thurstoncountypa.gov).





# Buffers. What are They and Why do We Have Them?

The population of Thurston County has just about doubled since the current SMP was implemented in 1990. This growth has put additional stress on our shorelines.



Studies show that one of the best practices we can promote for healthy shorelines is the preservation and enhancement of vegetated areas along all shorelines.

These vegetated areas, called buffers, help protect local waters AND shoreline homeowners' properties.

Buffers use stabilizing plants, shrubs, and trees as infrastructure that holds the ground in place - preventing erosion.

Furthermore, buffers create micro climates, attract beneficial small wildlife (like birds, butterflies, fungi, etc) and filter out pollutants before





etc), and filter out pollutants before they are allowed to flow or seep into nearby surface water and underground drinking water.

Did you know?

“

Virtually all of the drinking water in Thurston County comes from ground water aquifers – underground layers of coarse cobbles and gravel that contain space where water collects (3) "





layers of coarse cobbles and gravel that contain space where water collects (3)."

View current and proposed SMP shoreline buffers by clicking on the linked chart below.

[SMP Buffers Chart](#)



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With increased development of natural areas, buffers provide important habitat and movement corridors for wildlife. Many bugs and small fish live in the shoreline and larger fish depend on these small fish and bugs for a healthy food chain. Likewise Orca depend on the larger fish like Chinook salmon that depend on the smaller fish. The entire food chain must remain intact to avoid major negative consequences for all.



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Another fundamental reason we need trees and vegetation along shorelines is to keep waters cool and create shade. This is extremely important because...

“

"Streams with temperatures greater than 64 degrees Fahrenheit can stress salmon, and when rivers reach 70 degrees Fahrenheit, salmon begin to die (4)."





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A photograph of a stream flowing through a dense forest. A large, thick, fallen log lies horizontally across the foreground, partially submerged in the water. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The banks are covered in lush vegetation, including trees and shrubs. In the background, a rocky area is visible where the stream flows. The overall scene is a natural, wooded landscape.

Plants, shrubs, and trees can be seen as a natural insurance policy for homeowners because of their excellent ability to stabilize the shoreline and uplands by literally holding the ground in place. This reduces risk of landslide and other potential property damage.

While buffers are intended to



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While buffers are intended to remain natural and vegetated, there are a variety of uses typical of shoreline residential development (e.g. access paths, fire pits, landscaped areas, view corridors) that may still be permitted subject to applicable SMP requirements.

Learn more about this information by checking out the FAQ sheet linked below.

[Shoreline Buffers](#)





Today, property owners are increasingly interested in protecting the environment, and there's a lot of great information available on how to build and live sustainably on the shoreline (5)."

For more on this, check out the FAQ sheet linked below for your convenience.

[Environmental Protection](#)



Buffers are dual purpose - protecting the shoreline while also serving as a beautiful residential landscape option.

Thurston County has many organizations and resources to help when planning your shoreline landscapes.

Thurston Shore Friendly provides an overview of shoreline and wave dynamics, explains why buffers are important, includes how to's for your property, and provides several examples of shoreline buffer designs.






Another great resource is the [WSU Extension](#) and [Native Plant Salvage](#). Learn about the best native plants to use in your unique landscape and find opportunities for trainings like how to design and install a rain garden on your property.

And yet another fantastic resource is the [Thurston County Stream Team](#) where you can get involved in all sorts of trainings and events relating to stormwater pollution prevention and find local resources for protecting and enhancing your shoreline property!





## How the SMP Might Affect YOU.

An aerial photograph of a house under construction, showing the wooden framing and roof structure. The house is situated on a lot with some greenery on the left and a paved area on the right.

Can I Build a Single  
Family Residence?

Yes.

In the proposed SMP update, new  
homes must be consistent with



homes must be consistent with applicable regulations - including updated buffer requirements. Buffer widths vary depending on your Shoreline Environment Designation.

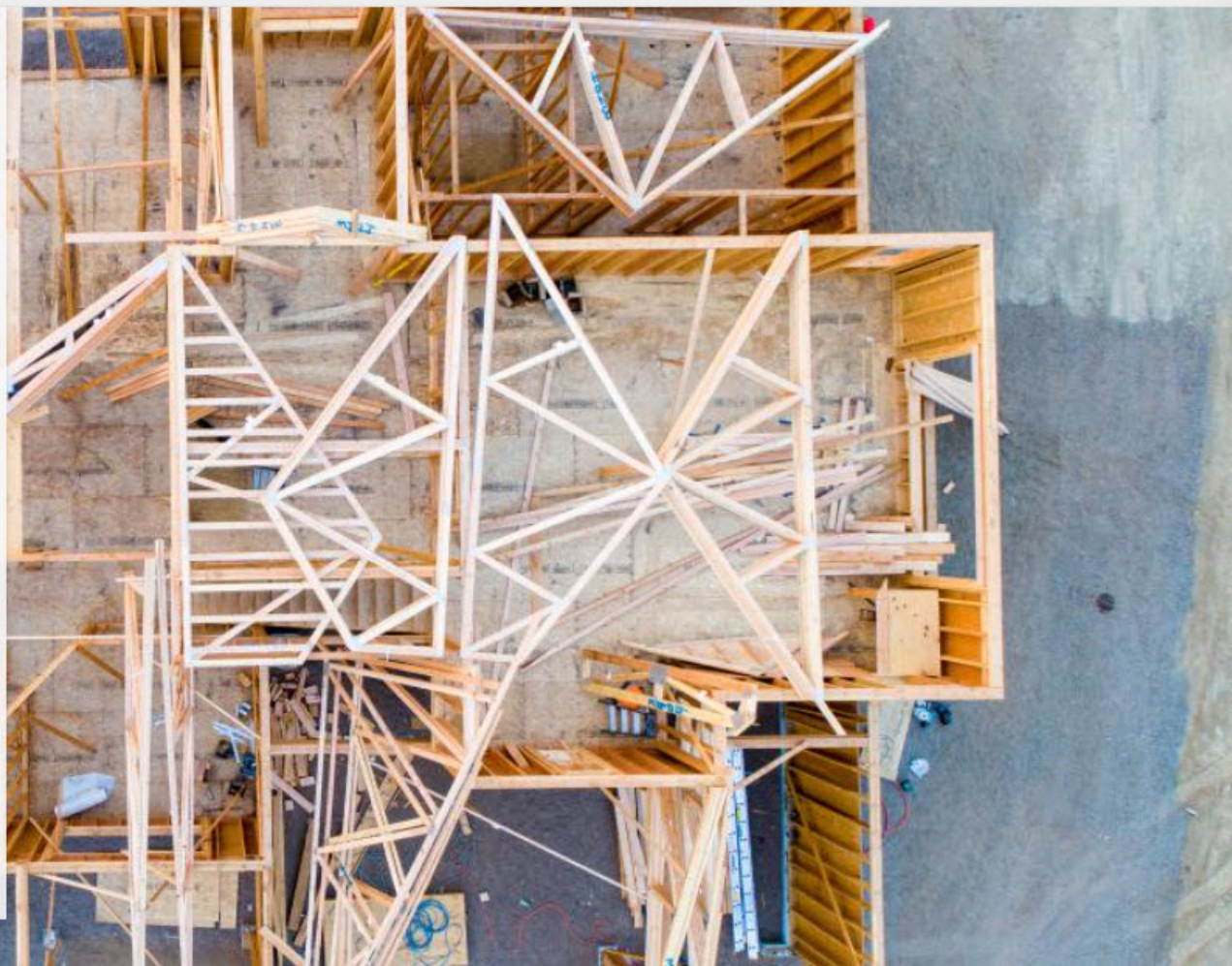
Below are several FAQ sheets and the buffer chart linked again for your reference.

[Shoreline Permits](#)

[Remodeling, Expanding and Rebuilding](#)

[Shoreline Designations](#)

[SMP Buffers Chart](#)





## Can I Practice Agriculture on my Land?

Yes.

Is your land already being used for agriculture? If yes, the updates will not affect you (in this regard) and you will not require shoreline permits.

The requirements under the proposed SMP update ONLY apply to new agriculture activities on land not currently in agricultural use.



Additional County approvals may be required for new agricultural uses (i.e., building permits to construct a new barn).

Keep in mind - uses not considered normal or necessary for farming and ranching activities are NOT exempt from a Shoreline Development Permit (SDP). This includes but is not limited to feedlots of any size, all processing plants, and commercial activities.

### [New & Existing Agriculture](#)





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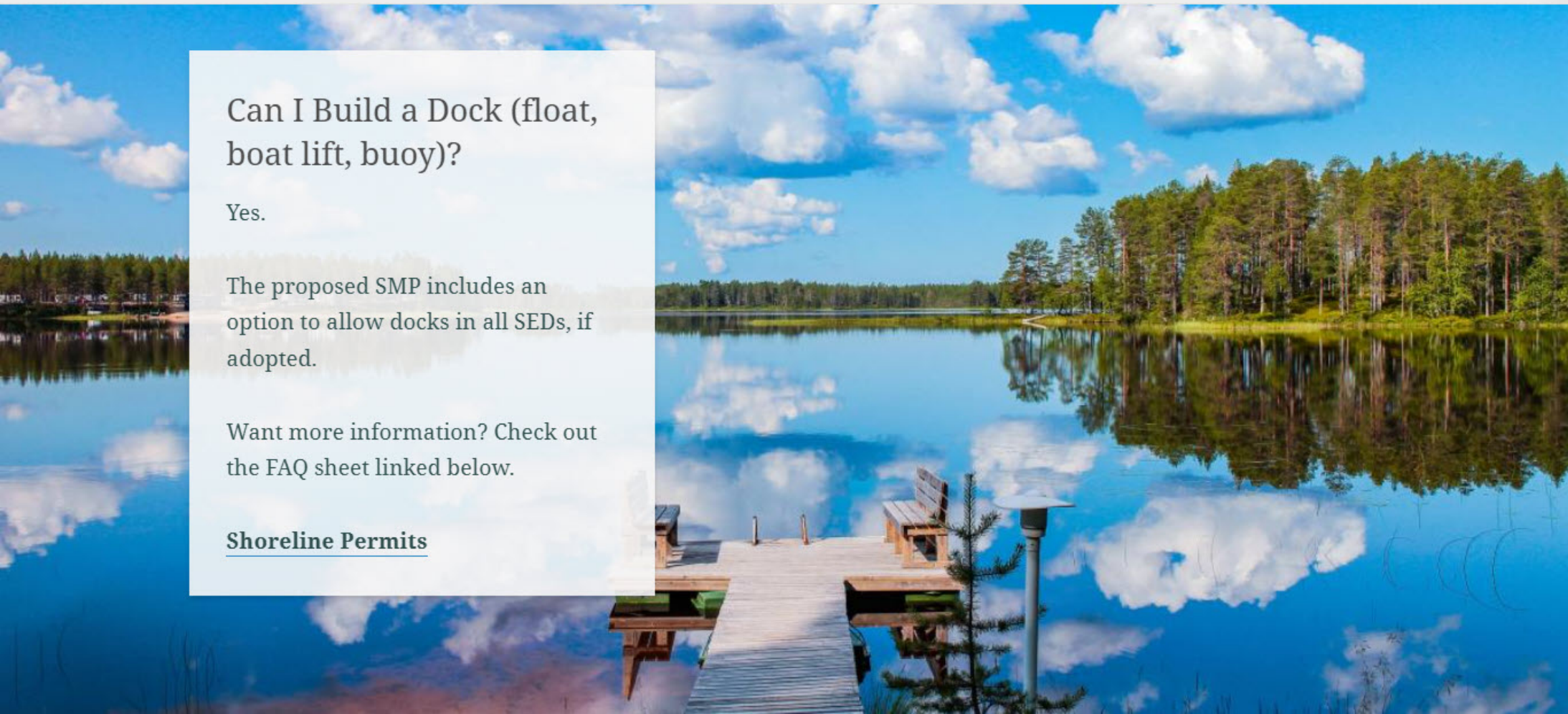
## Can I Build a Dock (float, boat lift, buoy)?

Yes.

The proposed SMP includes an option to allow docks in all SEDs, if adopted.

Want more information? Check out the FAQ sheet linked below.

[Shoreline Permits](#)





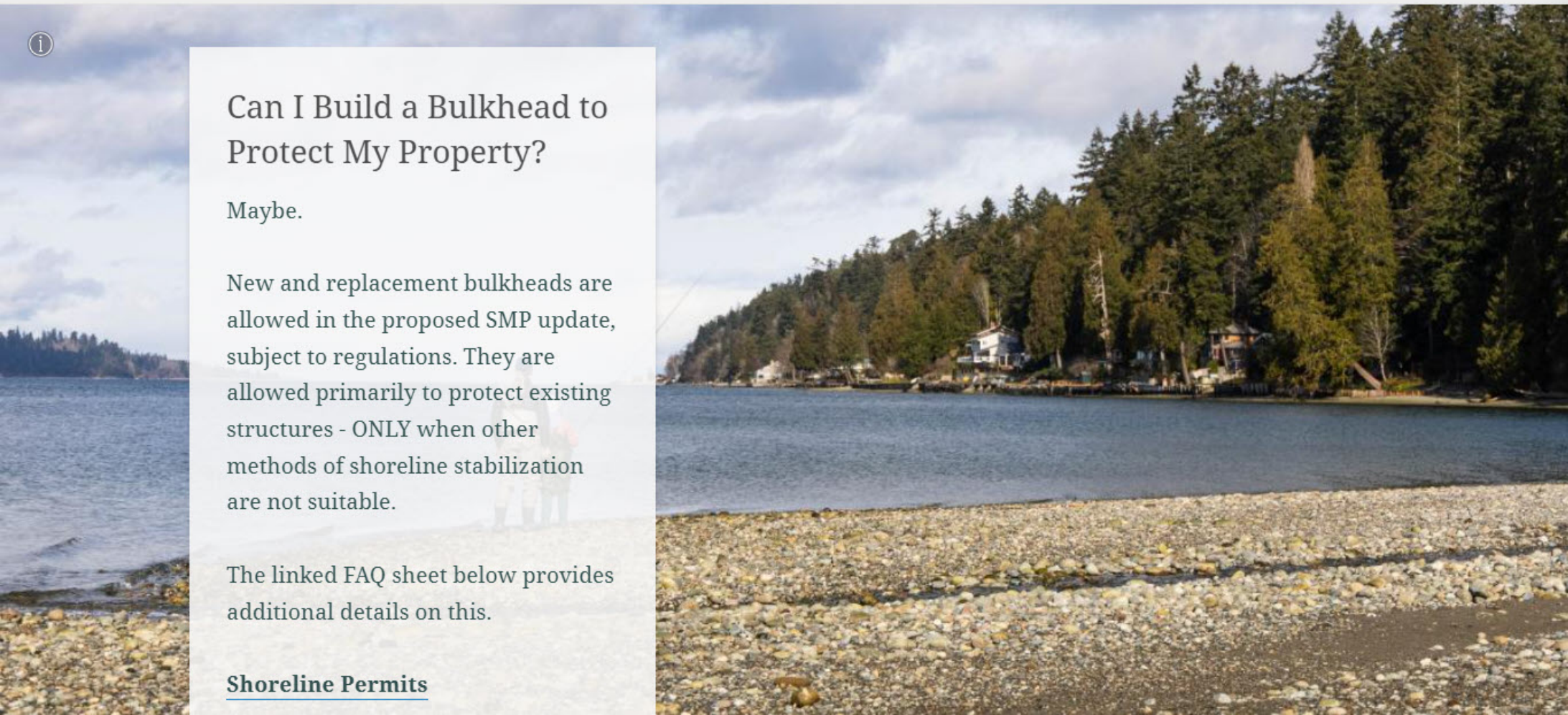
## Can I Build a Bulkhead to Protect My Property?

Maybe.

New and replacement bulkheads are allowed in the proposed SMP update, subject to regulations. They are allowed primarily to protect existing structures - ONLY when other methods of shoreline stabilization are not suitable.

The linked FAQ sheet below provides additional details on this.

[Shoreline Permits](#)

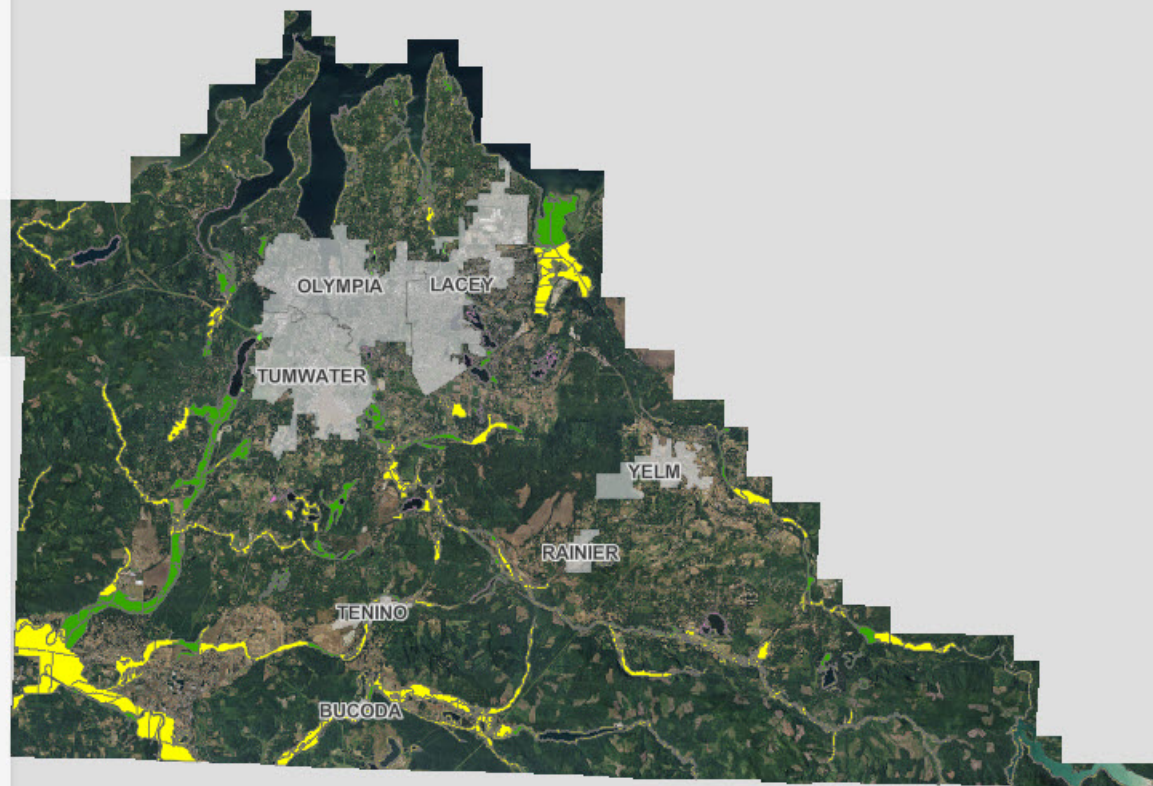




If your home is outside of shoreline jurisdiction, the proposed SMP update will NOT affect your property.

If your home or any other legally established residential structure is within shoreline jurisdiction, your home can be used, maintained, and repaired.

The SMP WILL affect your property if it is located in shoreline jurisdiction AND you intend to expand your home or other permanent structure or if you plan to undertake another use within the buffer (i.e. fire pit, patio, etc.). In this





buffer (i.e. fire pit, patio, etc.). In this case, you will need to follow the applicable requirements in the SMP.

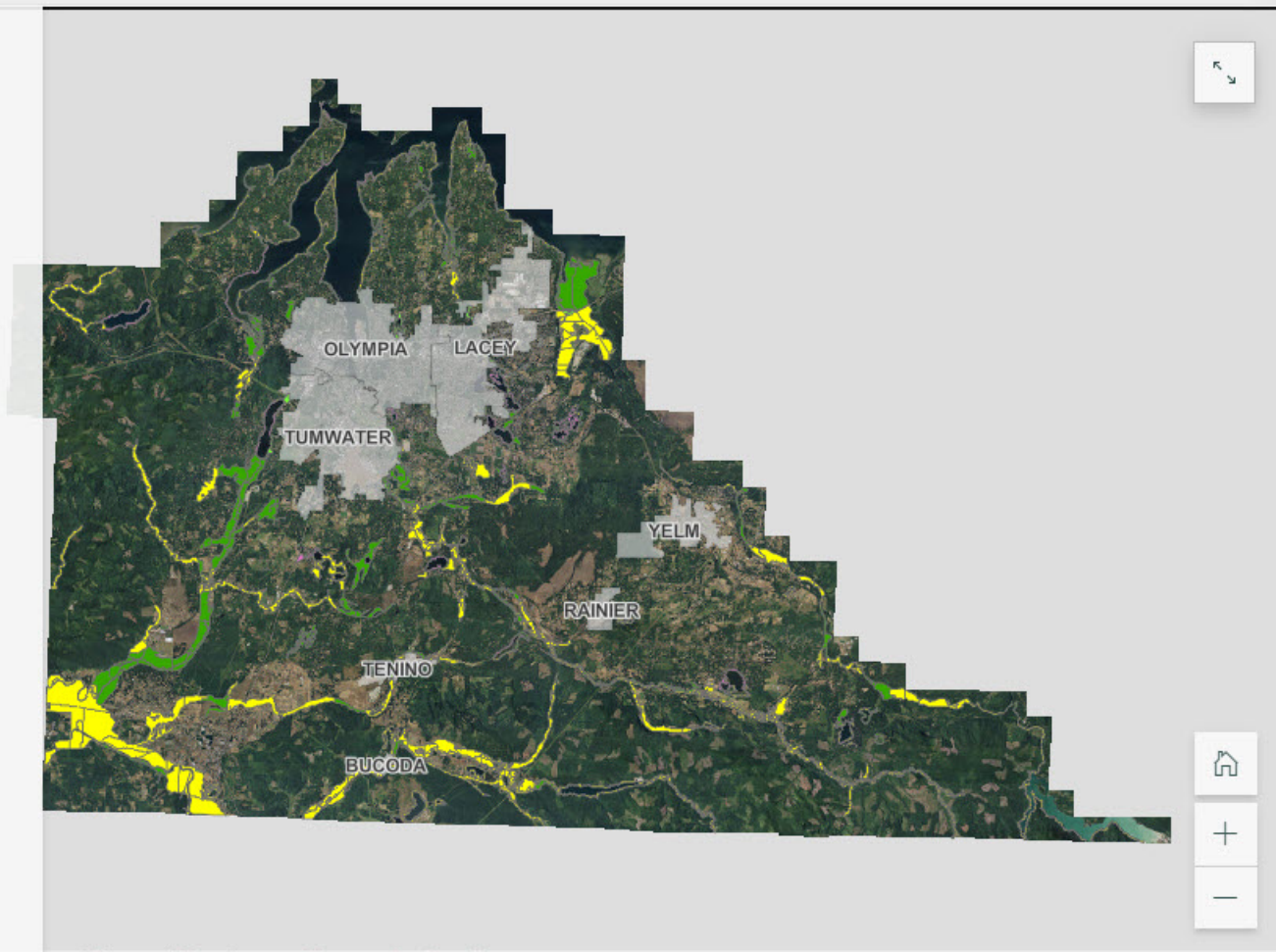
Check out the linked FAQ sheets below for more on this topic.

### [Remodeling, Expanding & Rebuilding](#)

### [Shoreline Permits](#)

### [Additions to SMP Jurisdiction](#)

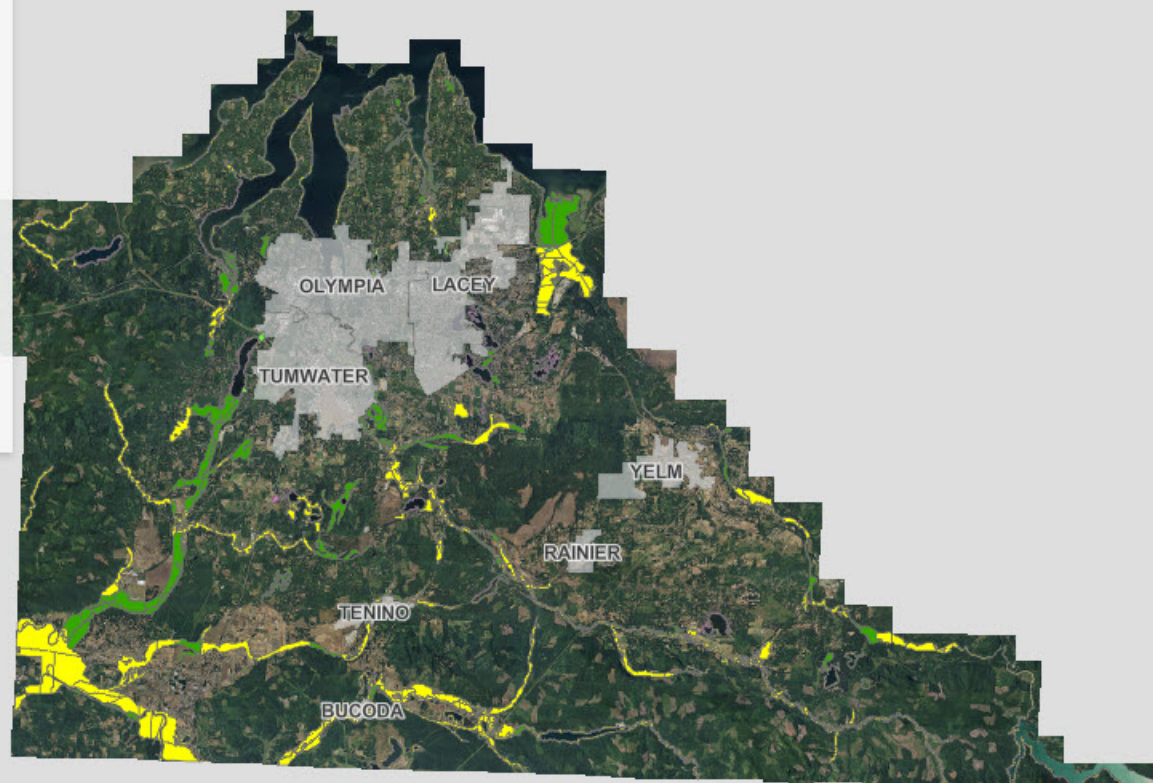
Click the button below to compare the Shoreline Environment Designation (SED) maps of the current (1990) and proposed (2021) SMP side-by-side in full screen.





Click the button below to compare the Shoreline Environment Designation (SED) maps of the current (1990) and proposed (2021) SMP side-by-side in full screen.

[View 1990 & 2022 SEDs](#)





## Here's How to Participate.

We held a virtual Open House August - October 2021 requesting public input on the proposed changes to the SMP. The Thurston County Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on October 20th, 2021 to accept additional public comment.





Planning Commission recommendations have been presented to the Thurston County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) for review.

**The BoCC will hold a Public Hearing on May 16th, 2023 at 5pm** or soon thereafter, where they will consider adoption of proposed changes to the SMP.

View all SMP educational resources, process timelines, contact info, and more by clicking the button below.

[Visit SMP Webpage](#)





We appreciate you taking the time to read about the proposed Shoreline Master Program update. Written comments will be accepted until 12pm May 16th, and will be forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for their review. Verbal testimony will take place at the Public Hearing 5/16 at 5pm.

[Submit a Comment](#)

To view the Planning Commission's (PC) recommendation click on the button below.

[View PCs Recommendation](#)





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If you have any questions or further thoughts, contact Andy using the below information.

**Send Andy an email at:**  
**Andrew.Deffobis@co.thurston.wa.us**

**Give Andy a call at (360) 522-2593.**

We worked really hard to update the SMP and present this information as clear as possible for you.

Thanks again for participating!





## Citations

1. Thurston County Comprehensive Plan: Introduction, 2020
2. Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) Population & Employment Forecast, 2017
3. Thurston County, [Aquifer Recharge Areas, Fact Sheet](#), 2012
4. Guillaume Mauger et al., State of Knowledge: Climate Change in Puget Sound, Climate Impacts Group, 2021
5. Hugh Shipman, Washington Department of Ecology. March 30, 2021.

## Credits

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