

SMP FACT SHEET #11

New & Existing Agriculture



Does the SMP Update Change Requirements for Existing Agriculture?

- No. Existing agriculture operations do NOT require shoreline permits.
- The requirements of the SMP update only apply to new agricultural activities on land not already in agricultural use.

Can I Change the Type of Agricultural Operation on my Property Without Obtaining Shoreline Approval?

- Yes. The SMP update kicks in when new agricultural activities are proposed on land NOT already under cultivation.
- Other County approvals may be required for new agricultural uses (e.g., building permits to construct a new barn).

What are the Buffer Requirements for New Agriculture?

- The SMP update applies the same buffers to new agriculture activities as other land uses.
 - Agricultural buffers may be reduced and, under certain conditions, the requirement to obtain a shoreline variance for buffer reductions may be removed.

What if I Allow my Land to Lay Fallow OR Go Dormant?

- WA State's definition of agricultural activities includes allowing land to lie fallow if it is plowed and tilled. Additionally, it allows land to lie dormant due to adverse market conditions, if it's enrolled in a conservation program, or under a conservation easement.
- The SMP generally considers uses that have been discontinued for a period of 2 or more years to be abandoned; however, has been updated to allow land to lay dormant without being considered abandoned, consistent with state law.

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

Current Shoreline Codes

FIND IT ONLINE

Shoreline Master Program Webpage



What Type of New Agricultural Activities are Exempt From Permits?

- Based on state law, many normal agricultural practices are exempt from an SDP.
 - This includes agricultural service roads and utilities on shorelands, construction of a barn or similar agricultural structure, and the construction and maintenance of irrigation structures.
- Agricultural activities are still subject to SMP development standards.
 - If a proposed activity can't meet these standards, a shoreline conditional use permit or variance may be required for new agricultural activities on new agricultural lands.

What Type of New Agricultural Activities are NOT Exempt From Permits?

- Uses NOT considered normal or necessary for farming and ranching activities are NOT exempt from an SDP permit. This includes but is not limited to feedlots of any size, all processing plants, commercial activities and more.

How Does the SMP Relate to the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO)?

- Critical areas within shoreline jurisdiction are regulated by the SMP. Relevant provisions of the CAO (specific to ag lands) have been folded into the SMP update.
 - This is a major efficiency gained for Thurston County residents!

How do the SMP & Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Work Together?

- The VSP program only applies to existing agriculture in critical areas that are outside SMP jurisdiction.

Existing & New Agriculture on Agricultural Land

SMP does not limit or require modifications to existing and ongoing agricultural activities.

Does not require shoreline permits (which includes SDPs).

State law allows for fallowing and dormancy beyond two years. The County has aligned its guidance here with state law recommendations and requirements.

New Agriculture on Non-Agricultural Land

May require a Substantial Development Permit. Many agricultural activities are exempt from an SDP per state law. If proposed activity can't meet SMP development standards, a shoreline conditional use permit or variance may be required.

Must adhere to standards of SMP and may require several permits including shoreline, building permits and critical area review.

Buffer requirement match other SMP buffer requirements.