

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? The SEDs govern the shoreline protections that will be applied.

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 the information collected.
- Thorough studies were undertaken 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 Designations Changed?

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

Q: Why Does Thurston County Use SEDs?

SEDs are required by the Shoreline Management Act.

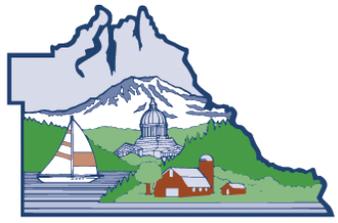
- Thurston County used current Department of Ecology guidelines to establish draft SEDs.

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 to more intense residential use.
- All other shorelands upland of the ordinary high-water mark are proposed as Urban or Rural Conservancy.
- Aquatic designation is proposed for all areas waterward of the ordinary high watermark.

The [ordinary high-water mark](#) is defined as the mark 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 the 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, floodplain and other sensitive lands.

Rural Conservancy

- Areas like farms, forests, or properties next to steep banks, bluffs, or flood-prone areas that 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 already 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 the areas waterward of the OHWM.



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

Marine Buffers in ft. (Puget Sound)				
SED	NOTES	Current	Option A	Option B
Shoreline Residential	The 2021 SMP draft proposes 2 options: A & B	50	50	85
Urban Conservancy		250	125	250
Rural Conservancy		250	150	250
Natural		250	200	250
Lakes Buffers in ft. (Fresh Water)				
SED	NOTES	Current	Option A	Option B
Shoreline Residential	The 2021 SMP draft proposes 2 options: A & B	50	50	75
Urban Conservancy		100	125	100
Rural Conservancy		100	150	125
Natural		100	200	250
Stream Buffers in ft. (Rivers & Streams)				
SED	NOTES	Current	Option A	Option B
Shoreline Residential	No changes are being proposed for Streams.	250	250	250
Urban Conservancy		250	250	250
Rural Conservancy		250	250	250
Natural		250	250	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, 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), and 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, the type of permit required, and the rules the project must adhere to.