

# SMP FACT SHEET #9

## Shoreline Permits

### Types of Permits

- **Substantial Development Permit (SDP).** "Substantial development" means any development costing or worth more than \$7,047, or any development which materially interferes with normal public use of the water or shoreline. There are exemptions to SDPs authorized by state law.
- **Exemptions to SDPs.** Some activities are exempt from an SDP, although other permits may still be needed. The County will issue a letter of exemption for activities which are exempt.
- SDP exempt uses include:
  - Maintenance and repair of existing structures,
  - New single-family homes,
  - Bulkheads typical to protect SFRs,
  - Agricultural construction and practices,
  - Docks (subject to limitations), and
  - Developments with costs under than \$7,047 that don't materially interfere with normal public use of the water or shorelines of the state.

\*Development standards still apply.

\*See WAC 173-27-040 for complete details and limitations.

- **Conditional Use Permit (CUP).** CUPs are used to permit activities not specifically listed in the SMP, with conditions. They are also used by the County or Department of Ecology to attach conditions to projects that may have more significant impacts. This is to prevent undesirable effects of the proposed use and/or to assure consistency of the project with the SMA and SMP.
- **Variance.** Variances provide relief from specific bulk, dimensional or performance standards in the SMP for properties with certain physical or configuration limitations. Variances must be approved by the Department of Ecology.
  - For critical areas in shoreline jurisdiction, uses that required a Reasonable Use Exception (RUE) now require a Variance.

### Natural Vegetation & Maintenance

- No permits are required for maintaining existing yards and landscaping.
- **Building a trail?** A variance may be needed if the trail exceeds the limits authorized within the SMP.
- **Vegetation clearing?** NOT permitted in the buffer zone. Limitations apply (see 19.400). May thin vegetation for view purposes, subject to standards. Limb thinning in the Natural SED requires approval by the County.



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 Permitting & Development

- **New Single-Family Residence:** A variance may be needed if the SFR project cannot meet certain buffer or other dimensional requirements. A CUP would be required within the Natural environmental designation.
- **Docks:** Docks require an SDP unless they meet exemption criteria in draft chapter 19.500 and WAC 173-27-040. The proposed SMP draft has an option to consider allowing docks in the Natural SED.
- **Bulkheads:** The proposed SMP draft requires a CUP. Bulkheads are generally ONLY permitted for protecting existing structures, and ONLY when a bulkhead is the necessary remedy. New homes that include bulkheads are not permitted.

### Who Reviews Permits?

Depending on the type of permit(s), it may be approved by either staff or the hearings examiner.

- During review of the draft SMP, the Planning Commission requested changes to how several SMP permits are reviewed. There was a call for more permits to be handled administratively, versus requiring hearing examiner review. Permitting standards will continue to be reviewed as the SMP update moves forward.
- Regardless of who approves permits at the County level, all CUPs and variances require Ecology approval before they can take effect.

### Why Shoreline Permits?

The Shoreline Management Act (SMA) requires that certain development activities on the shoreline go through a permitting process. Some permits can be issued by the County and others must also be approved by Ecology.

- The draft SMP describes when a permit is required for which type of activity, and the review process that must be followed.
- Details on permits themselves are in Chapter 19.500. Application requirements, development standards, and rules for specific activities for each shoreline environment designation (SED) are found in Chapters 19.400 and 19.600.
- Critical areas within shoreline jurisdiction are protected by the SMP. CAO development standards still apply to these areas but permitting is now conducted solely by the SMP.

*\*Examples in this FAQ are intended to provide general information. Development standards apply. Permit requirements vary by shoreline environment designation. Other local, state, and federal approvals may also apply.*