

Erosion Hazard Areas

Erosion hazard areas are those areas thought to be underlain by soils that are subject to severe erosion when exposed. The definition for erosion hazard areas includes, but is not limited to, several particular soil types that commonly erode rapidly because of the nature of their constituents and the engineering properties of the soil. The mapped extent of erosion hazard areas is based upon past regional soils mapping by several government agencies and is somewhat generalized. For this reason, specific site evaluations are sometimes necessary to quantify the actual nature and degree of erosion hazard. Often, such investigations are part of larger studies that evaluate landslide or steep slope hazards.

Development standards

To insure that development within erosion hazard areas does not result in erosion or sedimentation problems, either within the affected parcel or on adjacent properties, clearing and grading is sometimes regulated and erosion-control techniques are sometimes mandated. These restrictions commonly affect larger developments more than smaller ones, and many single-family residential proposals are not significantly impacted. The regulations state that:

1. Clearing in an erosion hazard area is only allowed from April 1 to October 1, except that clearing of up to 15,000 square feet may occur at any time (most single-family residences fall well below this amount of clearing).
2. Clearing of noxious weeds may occur at any time.
3. Forest practices (logging) regulated by the department are allowed at any time in accordance with a Clearing and Grading Permit if the harvest is in conformance with applicable state laws.

All subdivisions, short subdivisions, binding site plans, or urban planned developments within erosion hazard areas are required to retain all existing vegetation until the applicable building permits are issued for individual lots. Erosion and sedimentation control plans are considered under the building permit review. However, larger-scale clearing may be approved if it is part of a larger-scale grading plan.

If the department determines that erosion from a development site poses a risk of damage to downstream wetlands or aquatic areas, then regular monitoring of the development activity may be required. If water quality standards are not met, further development work may be suspended until such standards are met.

Allowed alterations

All alterations are allowed provided they are done using appropriate sedimentation and erosion control practices. Erosion and sedimentation control plans are commonly required at time of permit application review, especially for larger residential and commercial developments.