

Introduction

This User's Manual is a working description of the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) adopted in 2004. The manual also provides a description of the portions of the Clearing and Grading Ordinance that pertain to critical areas and a guide to the Small Project drainage review requirements, Water Quality Code and the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Manual adopted under the Surface Water Management Ordinance. This manual is ONLY a description of the CAO and must not be confused with the ordinance or regulations. In case of conflict, including but not limited to an omission or incorrect wording, the CAO itself will apply.

Purpose of User's Manual

This user's manual has been developed to help land use professionals and property owners better understand the requirements that may apply to their land or projects by providing them with a simple, easy-to-use reference that will help them navigate the Critical Areas Ordinance, the Surface Water Management Ordinance and the Clearing and Grading Ordinance. This manual is intended to help make these ordinances more accessible and their associated requirements more understandable to land use professionals and the general public.

Goals of the ordinances

Critical Areas Ordinance

King County passed the Critical Areas Ordinance to protect public health and safety by limiting development in hazard areas, such as on steep slopes or flood zones, and protect environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands and streams. The CAO is intended to protect critical areas from being adversely affected by clearing and development of land for residences, commercial use and livestock. The regulations are also intended to protect the public as well as public and private resources from natural hazards, such as flooding and erosion.

Surface Water Management Ordinance

The Surface Water Management Ordinance regulates activities that increase storm water runoff. The ordinance establishes a drainage review process and is implemented through the Surface Water Design Manual and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Manual. The design manual contains design standards and best

management practices (BMPs) that are intended to limit impacts to aquatic resources and downstream properties.

Clearing and Grading Ordinance

The Clearing and Grading Ordinance regulates activities involving the clearing or removal of vegetation, excavation, grading, earthwork, gravel pits, dumping quarrying and mining. The ordinance is intended to minimize the adverse impacts associated with these activities' storm water impacts; reduce habitat loss; protect water quality and critical areas; facilitate long-term forestry and establish administrative procedures for the issuance of permits, approval of plans and inspections; and provide penalties for violations of the ordinance.

How do the ordinances generally apply?

The requirements of the CAO, Surface Water Management and Clearing and Grading ordinances apply to many activities that alter land, water, or vegetation; or construct or alter structures or improvements. These requirements may in many cases require permits, as listed below.

Permits affected include the following:

- Commercial or Residential Building Permit;
- Binding Site Plan, Conditional Use Permit;
- Franchise Right-of-Way Construction Permit;
- Grading and Clearing Permit;
- Master Plan Development, Planned Unit Development, Right-of-Way Permit;
- Shoreline Conditional Use Permit;
- Shoreline Environment Redesignation;
- Shoreline Substantial Development Permit;
- Subdivision, Unclassified Use permit; Utility and Other Use Permit
- Variance, Zone Reclassification; or
- Any subsequently adopted permit or required approval not expressly exempted in the ordinance.