

Growth Management Act regulations regarding critical areas

Agency	Implemented by local governments; the Departments of Commerce, Ecology, and Fish and Wildlife provide technical assistance
Year Established	1990
Relevant Statute	RCW 36.70A.060; RCW 36.70A.040; RCW 36.70A.050; RCW 36.70A.172; Chapter 365-195 WAC; WAC 365-196-485 and 830
Program Goal	To ensure protection of the functions and values of critical areas from the impacts of land use and development.
Agency Summary	<p>Under the Growth Management Act (GMA), all jurisdictions are required to designate and protect critical environmental areas and conserve natural resource lands. Critical areas include: wetlands, areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas.</p> <p>The Department of Commerce provides advisory resources to help local jurisdictions meet requirements. The GMA requires local governments to include the Best Available Science (BAS) in developing policies and development regulations.</p>
Existing Outcome Measures	<p>Local governments are not required by statute to monitor and/or adaptively manage their critical areas protections. Commerce developed <i>Draft Monitoring/Adaptive Management Guidance</i> for local governments in 2017.</p> <p>Some jurisdictions have conducted specific studies of the effectiveness and outcomes of local critical areas regulations.</p>
Other benefits identified by agencies	<p>Community: volunteerism, recreation opportunities, cultural/aesthetic protection, improve/maintain citizen quality of life</p> <p>Economy: flood protection, support of resource industries</p> <p>Environment: protective buffers, open space habitat corridors, storm water management, ground water recharge and discharge, erosion control, wave attenuation, fish and wildlife habitat, food chain support</p> <p>Safety: protects lives and property from floods and geologic hazards, public health, protection from natural hazards</p>