

Chapter 3

Shorelines of Statewide Significance

Introduction

The Shoreline Management Act designates certain shoreline areas as shorelines of statewide significance west of the Cascade Mountains, the shorelines that are so designated are "natural rivers or segments thereof" that have a mean annual flow of one thousand (1,000) cubic feet per second (cfs) or more and the shorelands associated with those waters. Waters possessing these levels of flow were identified and designated as shorelines of statewide significance by the legislature in WAC 173-18. The Puyallup and White (Stuck) Rivers are designated as shorelines of statewide significance.

In determining that certain shorelines are of statewide significance, the Shoreline Management Act also determined that the interests of all of the people of the State shall be considered in the management of these shorelines. Because the shorelines of the Puyallup and White (Stuck) Rivers are a major resource from which all people in the state derive benefit, the Master Program gives preference to uses that favor public and long range goals. Accordingly, this Master Program gives preference to uses and development that meet the principles outlined below, listed in order of preference:

1. Recognize and protect the statewide interest over local interest
2. Preserve the natural character of the shoreline
3. Result in long-term over short-term benefits
4. Protect the resources and ecology of the shoreline
5. Increase public access to publicly owned areas of the shoreline
6. Increase recreational opportunities for the public on the shorelines
7. Provide for any other element as defined in the Shoreline Management Act deemed appropriate or necessary.

The Summer Master Program gives preference to these statewide goals by establishing policies and regulations for the following:

1. Riparian Management Zones
2. Floodplain Management
3. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Protection

4. Public Access and Recreational Opportunities.

In the implementation of this policy, the public's opportunity to enjoy the physical and aesthetic qualities of natural shorelines of the state shall be preserved to the greatest extent feasible, consistent with the overall best interest of the state and the people generally. To this end, uses shall be preferred that are consistent with control of pollution and prevention of damage to the natural environment or are unique to or dependent on use of the state's shorelines. Alteration of the natural condition of the shorelines of the state, in those limited instances when authorized, shall be given priority for single family residences, ports, parks, marinas, piers, and other improvements facilitating public access to shorelines of the state, and industrial and commercial developments that will provide an opportunity for substantial numbers of the people to enjoy the shorelines of the state.

Permitted uses in the shorelines of the state shall be designed and conducted in a manner to minimize, insofar as practical, any resultant damage to the ecology and environment of the shoreline areas and interference with the public's use of the water.

Riparian Management Zones

The purpose of a riparian management zone is to preserve the natural character of Sumner's riverine system and to protect the resources and ecology of the shoreline. The reason for this extra level of protection and control is to provide a recreational open space system for the City of Sumner and to enhance wildlife and fishery resources.

The shoreline along the White (Stuck) and Puyallup Rivers is lined with a mixture of native and non-native trees and shrubs and is developed in a mixture of residential, commercial, agricultural, and light industrial uses. Retaining the native vegetation that exists along the shoreline will enhance the river-oriented experience both on the water and along the banks. Boaters currently use the river for fishing and others are floating the river in rafts, kayaks, and inner tubes. Tall trees and dense vegetation create a natural experience that complements the recreational activity and is much valued. As a river trail system develops under the requirements of this Master Program and the Sumner/Pacific Trail Master Plan, Sumner residents and visitors will be able to enjoy the natural character of the shoreline. The Sumner Comprehensive Plan's objectives for parks, recreation, and open space are supported, and an individual's river-walk experience is enhanced, if the riverbank appears natural (vegetated).

Retaining the natural character of the shoreline is also important to fish and wildlife. Overhanging vegetation provides protective cover to fish and tends to attract insects on which fish feed. Rivers devoid of vegetative cover have correspondingly low fish populations. In addition, when vegetation is removed it is not always possible for fish to move to another part of the stream. Fish are territorial and will defend their place in the shade. Shade is also very important in keeping water temperatures within tolerable limits for fish in the summer. Additional information on habitat conditions and opportunities for enhancing the Sumner shoreline to protect habitat

areas is provided in the shoreline inventory, provided in *Appendix A: Shoreline Inventory*.

Riparian vegetation is also critical to terrestrial wildlife. In general, wildlife values are maximized where dense and diverse vegetation along the rivers provides innumerable niches for many creatures. In fact, the diversity of native floral species along riverbanks in Western Washington allows for a diversity and stability in animal communities. Sometimes, vegetation along stream banks provides the only shelter and migrational routes for small mammals and other terrestrial species. The Sumner Master Program recognizes the importance of native plants in protecting and encouraging shoreline habitat areas.

To protect the riparian vegetation, the Master Program requires development setbacks and places stringent controls on the removal or disruption of vegetation within these setbacks. Riparian management zone policies and regulations are presented in *Chapter 7: Specific Shoreline Development Policies and Regulations*.

Floodplain Management

The Master Program establishes policies and direction for floodplain management. Floodplain management will provide long-term benefits to the City of Sumner. Floodplain management is directed toward the reduction of the damaging effects of floods by maintaining and enhancing natural floodplain values and by making effective use of related water and land resources within the floodplain. It is an attempt to make optimal use of the floodplain, while recognizing the need for economic development, recreation, open space, and other possible uses. Floodplain management policies and regulations are presented in *Chapter 6: General Shoreline Development Policies and Use Regulations*.

Floodplain management can reduce the risk to life and property as well as lower public expenditures for flood protection and relief. Floodplain management can also enhance natural floodplain values. These values include the protection of water resources by moderating flood velocities, improving water quality, and allowing for groundwater recharge. Living resource values also benefit from floodplain management. Fish and wildlife and plant resources and habitat can be enhanced by periodic flooding and in some cases, the primary source of water in floodplain wetlands is derived from such flooding. Floodplains also provide cultural values. In the Sumner area, the open space of the valley floor provides exceptional scenic views, which include spectacular views of Mt. Rainer. The fertile valley floor also provides agricultural resource values.

The Master Program requires careful evaluation of proposed shoreline development to determine what influence, if any, the development will have on flood events. Shoreline developments must demonstrate that there will be no unacceptable increase in the incidence of flooding, either downstream or upstream of the proposed site. In addition, the Master Program provides protection of wetlands that reduce flooding by providing temporary storage of floodwater, thus reducing downstream volumes and velocities.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Protection

In addition to establishing riparian management zones for the enhancement of fish and wildlife, this Master Program provides policies and regulations for wetland protection. Wetlands associated with streams and drainages that run into the Puyallup and White (Stuck) Rivers can serve as critical habitat for fish populations. Wetlands also provide wildlife habitat, especially for waterfowl. Wetlands provide food, protection from predators, and nesting and rearing areas. Loss of wetlands drastically reduces the critical habitat required by these species.

In addition to migrating waterfowl and shorebirds, many species in the Sumner area depend upon wetlands for food, shelter, breeding and nesting sites, and water. Great blue herons require the presence of frogs, snakes, and small fish for their diets. Marsh hawks and red-tailed hawks are other species that have been observed within wetlands along the Puyallup and White (Stuck) Rivers. Marsh wrens and red-winged blackbirds require cattails and other marsh vegetation for nest materials and nesting site. In addition to birds, mammals, including deer, raccoon, opossum, beaver, muskrats, and other small rodents utilize wetlands for all or part of their life cycle.

In addition to providing food resources for organisms foraging within a wetland, wetlands can also export food to adjacent ecosystems. This function is termed "foodchain support." Typically, food chain support involves the passive movement of food items due to water movements or the actual migration of organisms from wetlands to other environments. Food chain support involves aquatic organisms as well as insects, amphibians, birds, or small mammals.

Public Access and Recreation

The Master Program requires public access to the shoreline as a condition of approval for many types of development. The authority to require public access derives from the Public Trust Doctrine, which gives individual states the responsibility to hold certain natural resources in trust for the people.¹ The beds and waters of navigable rivers fall into this category. Public access to these public trust areas is a priority in the state and is a goal to be achieved through local shoreline planning.

The Master Program policies and regulations recognize the special advantage that Sumner has to provide and protect such public access, open space, and recreational amenities to its residents. While land uses adjacent to the river have changed significantly over the last decade, there is a great deal of natural quality to the riverbank remaining. At this time, the predominant land uses along the shorelines of the White (Stuck) and Puyallup Rivers include agriculture, commercial, light

¹ "The Public Trust Doctrine (PTD) is a principle based in English Common Law that the state holds domain and sovereignty over all shorelands and navigable water, and administers this right to maintain the public's right to fishing and navigation (and possibly more, depending upon the state) above all other claims of use and ownership. In other words, the State can sell the land, but can not sell the public's right to access the tidelands (land beneath the high tide mark)." *Public Trust Doctrine in Washington State* by Jill Sheldon, Deputy Director, Center for Environmental Law & Policy.

industrial, and public uses that are abutted by forested areas and areas of significant native vegetation along the riverbanks. Consistent with the City's interest in protecting the natural environment, the City values the use of environmentally-friendly materials in developing public access facilities within the shoreline environment.

The goals and policies of this Master Program support the continued development of a river trail that will follow the course of both rivers and provide a linear park through the valley, as described in the Sumner/Pacific Trail Master Plan and supported by the Land Use, and Parks and Open Space elements of the Sumner Comprehensive Plan. In coordination with neighboring jurisdictions, Sumner developed a comprehensive and coordinated approach to providing regional public recreational access. This trail and open space system will develop as the valley develops, and development and shoreline permits are issued for uses and activities along the White and Puyallup Rivers.

Critical to accomplishing a shoreline public access system is the development of a comprehensive public access plan. The foundation of that public access plan was formed in the mid-1990s with the development of the Sumner/Pacific Trail Master Plan, formed under the guidance of a local Trails Advisory Committee. The goals of that public access foundation have been validated through the continued support of the goals and policies defined in the Sumner Comprehensive Plan. This Master Program recommends that the City of Sumner incorporate the current Sumner/Pacific Trail Master Plan as the foundation for the shoreline public access plan.