

Seattle Environmentally Critical Areas Regulations

PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT

November 2016

On October 26, 2016, the Mayor sent legislation to update regulations for Seattle's Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs) to the Seattle City Council. For more information about the project, visit our website at <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/changestocode/ecaupdate>.

What are Environmentally Critical Areas?

ECAs include wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas (including riparian corridors and shorelines, small lakes and other priority habitat and species areas), geologic hazard areas (including landslide-prone, steep-slope and liquefaction-prone areas), flood-prone areas, peat bogs, and abandoned landfills. Many of these areas provide opportunities for enhancing the urban environment through protection of areas that possess unique ecological values such as wetlands, wildlife habitat, erosion control on steep slopes, and stream and shoreline environments, whose health and well-being are valuable indicators of the overall health of the urban and natural environment. Some critical areas create hazards to development owing to the inherent vulnerability associated with unstable soils or flooding.



1) Why is Seattle revising its ECA Regulations?

Regulations designating and protecting ECAs are required by [RCW 36.70A.170](#), [RCW 36.70A.060\(2\)](#) and [RCW 36.70A.172\(1\)](#). The Washington State Legislature requires local jurisdictions to review and revise ECA regulations pursuant [WAC 365-196-610](#). The overall ECA regulations were last updated in 2006.

2) Where do the Environmentally Critical Areas regulations apply?

The regulations apply throughout the city in all areas that meet the definition of a “critical area” in Seattle Municipal Code Section [25.09.020](#), Environmentally critical areas definitions. In the Shoreline District, ECA regulations are applied through the Shoreline Master Program.

3) How are Environmentally Critical Areas regulated within the Shoreline District?

At the completion of Seattle’s Shoreline Master Program (SMP) update all ECAs located within 200 feet of the shoreline will be regulated by the SMP rather than by the ECA regulations as mandated by the state legislature. The existing ECA regulations were incorporated into the SMP regulations with changes to meet the requirements of the Shoreline Management Act. The level of protection of the critical areas in the SMP regulations will be equal to the regulations in the ECA regulations.

4) What is the status of the update?

On October 26, 2016, the Mayor sent legislation to update regulations for Seattle's Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs) to the Seattle City Council. The Council’s Planning, Land Use and Zoning Committee will hold a public hearing about the updated regulations on December 6, 2016.

SDCI is available by invitation to attend community group meetings to discuss proposed changes to the ECA regulations and to answer questions about the regulations. Please contact Maggie Glowacki via e-mail at margaret.glowacki@seattle.gov or by calling 206-386-4036.

5) What are the next steps?

The Seattle City Council’s Planning, Land Use, and Zoning Committee will hold a public hearing to take comments on the proposed regulations for Seattle's Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs) during their meeting on Tuesday, December 6, 2016 starting at 9:30 a.m. The hearing will be held in the:

City Council Chambers
2nd floor, Seattle City Hall
600 Fourth Avenue

For more information on the time of the hearing, please check the [Committee agenda](#) a few days prior to the meeting.

City Council will then complete their review and approval of the legislation, likely in early 2017. The updated regulations would become effective in early 2017.