Critical Areas and the SMP
Integration of the Critical Areas Ordinance with the SMP

Shoreline Master Programs are required to include regulations to protect Critical Areas that occur within the shoreline jurisdiction. Critical Area regulations are currently located in Kitsap County Code Title 19 (the “CAO”), which was last updated in 2005 along with an amendment for shoreline buffers in 2007. Critical Areas fall within the following categories:

- Wetlands
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
- Geologically Hazardous Areas
- Frequently Flooded Areas
- Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas.

Kitsap County plans to incorporate by reference or include most critical area regulations directly within the SMP. However, the existing “Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Area” standards are being reviewed pursuant to state guidelines prior to SMP integration.

Critical Saltwater and Freshwater Habitats
For the SMP, a key element of Critical Area protection includes “critical saltwater habitats” and “critical freshwater habitats”.

Critical Saltwater Habitats include:

- Kelp beds
- Eelgrass beds
- Mudflats
- Forage Fish spawning and holding areas
- Shellfish beds (subsistence, commercial and recreational)
- Intertidal habitats with vascular plants
- Areas with which priority species have a primary association.

Critical Freshwater Habitats include:

- Stream channels
- Channel migration zones
- Wetlands
- Floodplains
- Lakes with identified critical habitats.

Kitsap County’s updated SMP includes measures to protect, and mitigate impacts to these habitats where they cannot be avoided.

For more information, please visit www.kitsapshoreline.org