

Kittitas County Regional SMP Update

Shoreline Environment Designations Discussion Outline

July 18 and 19, 2012 Community Visioning Open House

I. Introduction

The system of classifying shorelines is established by the Shoreline Management Act (RCW 90.58) and the environment designation system guidelines (WAC 173-26-211). The purpose of shoreline environment designations is to provide a uniform basis for applying policies and regulations in distinct shoreline areas having similar characteristics. Generally, shoreline designations should be based on:

1. Ecological functions provided by the shoreline (including biological resources and critical area characteristics);
2. Existing and planned development patterns; and
3. The community's vision or objectives for its future management.

The state guidelines identify six basic shoreline environment designations, associated management policies, and designation criteria to assist jurisdictions with their updates. As outlined in WAC 173-26-211, these are:

1. Natural,
2. Rural Conservancy,
3. Aquatic.
4. High-Intensity,
5. Urban Conservancy, and
6. Shoreline Residential.

II. Current Kittitas County Shoreline Environment Designations¹

Chapter Five of the current Kittitas County Shoreline Master Program (SMP) designates four shoreline environments: Urban, Rural, Conservancy, and Natural. The definition and designation criteria for each shoreline environment are provided below in Table 1.

Table 1. Shoreline Environment Designations from Kittitas County SMP (1975)

Environment Designation	Definition	Designation Criteria
Urban Environment	The Urban Environment is characterized by high intensity land uses, high land values, [and] major public and private capital investments. This Environment does not necessarily include all shoreline areas within an incorporated city, but it is particularly suitable to those areas which are presently subjected to extremely intensive use pressure as well as those areas planned to	In addition to the [definition], the following criteria was used for the designation of Urban Environments: 1. Areas presently supporting high intensity land use including residential, commercial, industrial and recreational. 2. Areas which are planned to accommodate urban expansion of residential, commercial, industrial

¹ Kittitas County developed the 1975 SMP together with the Cities of Ellensburg and Cle Elum and the Town of South Cle Elum to regulate all the County's shorelines, including those within incorporated areas.

Environment Designation	Definition	Designation Criteria
	<p>accommodate urban expansion. The management objective is one of optimum future utilization of land to public investment. In view of the intensity of present and future development and consequent population densities, there is a correspondingly high requirement for open space and access to the water in this environment.</p>	<p>and recreational uses.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. High land values. 4. Major public or private capital investments. 5. Close proximity to services and utilities. 6. Few biophysical limitations to development. 7. Potentially low flood hazard.
<p>Rural Environment</p>	<p>The Rural Environment is characterized primarily by agricultural activities.</p> <p>The management objectives are to protect agricultural land, maintain open space, and allow for recreational use compatible with agricultural production.</p>	<p>In addition to the [definition], the following criteria would be used for the designation of Rural Environments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agricultural use including cultivated cropland, pastures and rangeland. 2. Those areas with potential for agricultural use. 3. Those undeveloped natural areas which lie between agricultural areas. 4. Low density residential and recreational uses. 5. Moderate land values. 6. Potential low demand for services. 7. High flood hazard.
<p>Conservancy Environment</p>	<p>The Conservancy Environment is characterized by land uses which are primarily related to natural resource use. Management objectives are oriented toward maximizing sustained yield natural resource utilization, recreation and low intensity recreational home while restricting development in hazardous areas.</p>	<p>In addition to the [definition], the following criteria would be used for the designation of Conservancy Environments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those areas which have steep slopes presenting erosion and slide hazards, areas prone to flooding, and areas which cannot provide adequate water supply or sewage disposal shall be included in a Conservancy Environment. 2. Those areas which are presently characterized by recreational uses and subdivisions, and areas which demonstrate potential for such uses. These types of activities must not be allowed to reach a density which will jeopardize the areas natural integrity and must be spaced so a continuous flow of recreational benefits will persist. 3. Areas of active and potential timber harvesting activities. 4. Areas which are isolated from services, have poor drainage, high flood danger, poor ground for septic tanks, unstable earth, or steep slopes, shall be designated Conservancy.
<p>Natural Environment</p>	<p>This Environment is characterized by land being relatively free of human influence, and having severe biophysical limitations for development. The presence of some unique natural or cultural feature which is sensitive to intensive human use is also an important criteria. In addition, the Natural Environment is intended for areas being of such a nature that its value is retained only in its natural condition.</p>	<p>In addition to the [definition], the following criteria would be used for the designation of Natural Environments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The presence of a natural, historical, cultural, scientific, or educational feature considered valuable by virtue of its existence in a natural or original state and thereby warranting preservation for the benefit of present and future generations. 2. Those areas which have been generally

Environment Designation	Definition	Designation Criteria
		uninfluenced by human activities. 3. Those areas which are generally sensitive to intensive human use.

Example of area designated “Urban” by SMP:



Photo Credit: Flickr user Majorbonnet

Boat Launch (Vantage LAMIRD)

Example of area designated “Rural” by SMP:



Yakima River Canyon (unincorporated Kittitas County)

Example of area designated “Conservancy” by SMP



Photo Credit: Flickr user Jexie 3

Cle Elum River (unincorporated Kittitas County)

Example of area designated “Natural” by SMP:



Photo Credit: Panoramio user Jabert

West Bank of Columbia River (unincorporated Kittitas County)

III. Ecology’s Recommended Shoreline Environments

Table 2. below describes the six shoreline environment designations recommended by Ecology’s Shoreline Master Program guidelines.

Table 2. Shoreline Environment Designations Recommended by State Guidelines (WAC 173-26-211)

Environment Designation	Purpose	Designation Criteria
Natural	The purpose of the "natural" environment is to protect those shoreline areas that are relatively free of human influence or that include intact or minimally degraded shoreline functions intolerant of human use. These systems require that only very low intensity uses be allowed in order to maintain the ecological functions and ecosystem-wide processes. Consistent with the policies of the designation, local government should include planning for restoration of degraded shorelines within this environment.	A "natural" environment designation should be assigned to shoreline areas if any of the following characteristics apply: (A) The shoreline is ecologically intact and therefore currently performing an important, irreplaceable function or ecosystem-wide process that would be damaged by human activity; (B) The shoreline is considered to represent ecosystems and geologic types that are of particular scientific and educational interest; or (C) The shoreline is unable to support new development or uses without significant adverse impacts to ecological functions or risk to human safety. Such shoreline areas include largely undisturbed portions of shoreline areas such as wetlands, estuaries, unstable bluffs, coastal dunes, spits, and ecologically intact shoreline habitats. Shorelines inside or outside urban growth areas may be designated as "natural."
Rural Conservancy	The purpose of the "rural conservancy" environment is to protect ecological functions, conserve existing natural resources and valuable historic and cultural areas in order to provide for sustained resource use, achieve natural flood plain processes, and provide recreational opportunities. Examples of uses that are appropriate in a "rural conservancy" environment include low-	Assign a "rural conservancy" environment designation to shoreline areas outside incorporated municipalities and outside urban growth areas, as defined by RCW 36.70A.110, if any of the following characteristics apply: (A) The shoreline is currently supporting lesser-intensity resource-based uses, such as agriculture, forestry, or recreational uses, or is designated agricultural or forest lands pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170; (B) The shoreline is currently accommodating residential uses outside urban growth areas and incorporated cities or towns; (C) The shoreline is

Environment Designation	Purpose	Designation Criteria
	impact outdoor recreation uses, timber harvesting on a sustained-yield basis, agricultural uses, aquaculture, low-intensity residential development and other natural resource-based low-intensity uses.	supporting human uses but subject to environmental limitations, such as properties that include or are adjacent to steep banks, feeder bluffs, or flood plains or other flood-prone areas; (D) The shoreline is of high recreational value or with unique historic or cultural resources; or (E) The shoreline has low-intensity water-dependent uses.
Aquatic	The purpose of the "aquatic" environment is to protect, restore, and manage the unique characteristics and resources of the areas waterward of the ordinary high-water mark.	Assign an "aquatic" environment designation to lands waterward of the ordinary high-water mark.
High-Intensity	The purpose of the "high-intensity" environment is to provide for high-intensity water-oriented commercial, transportation, and industrial uses while protecting existing ecological functions and restoring ecological functions in areas that have been previously degraded.	Assign a "high-intensity" environment designation to shoreline areas within incorporated municipalities, urban growth areas, and industrial or commercial "rural areas of more intense development," as described by RCW 36.70A.070, if they currently support high-intensity uses related to commerce, transportation or navigation; or are suitable and planned for high-intensity water-oriented uses.
Urban Conservancy	The purpose of the "urban conservancy" environment is to protect and restore ecological functions of open space, flood plain and other sensitive lands where they exist in urban and developed settings, while allowing a variety of compatible uses.	Assign an "urban conservancy" environment designation to shoreline areas appropriate and planned for development that is compatible with maintaining or restoring of the ecological functions of the area, that are not generally suitable for water-dependent uses and that lie in incorporated municipalities, urban growth areas, or commercial or industrial "rural areas of more intense development" if any of the following characteristics apply: (A) They are suitable for water-related or water-enjoyment uses; (B) They are open space, flood plain or other sensitive areas that should not be more intensively developed; (C) They have potential for ecological restoration; (D) They retain important ecological functions, even though partially developed; or (E) They have the potential for development that is compatible with ecological restoration.
Shoreline Residential	The purpose of the "shoreline residential" environment is to accommodate residential development and appurtenant structures that are consistent with this chapter. An additional purpose is to provide appropriate public access and recreational uses.	Assign a "shoreline residential" environment designation to shoreline areas inside urban growth areas, as defined in RCW 36.70A.110, incorporated municipalities, "rural areas of more intense development," or "master planned resorts," as described in RCW 36.70A.360, if they are predominantly single-family or multifamily residential development or are planned and platted for residential development.

IV. Potential Draft Shoreline Environment Designations

Based on an inventory of shoreline conditions (WAC 173-26-206(c)) and an analysis of shoreline issues of concern (WAC 173-26-206(d)), the County and Cities/Town will establish shoreline environment designations that will be assigned to each shoreline segment. Shoreline environment designations may be comprised of those recommended in the guidelines; the existing SMP; unique, locally developed environments; or any combination of these, so long as they are consistent with WAC 173-26-211 environment designation criteria. The information below is organized to initiate discussion on the shoreline environment designations and solicit advisory comments from the TAC for preparation of preliminary shoreline environment designations and mapping.

Existing Designations

Some environment designations in the existing SMP may still be appropriate, though others will need to be redesignated based on Ecology's guidelines. Below are potential options for redesignating existing environments.

- Urban environments could remain “urban” but will be evaluated for possible redesignation as shoreline residential, urban conservancy, or high-intensity; or could be redesignated to a unique local environment;
- Rural environments could remain “rural” but will be evaluated for possible redesignation as rural conservancy or natural, or could be redesignated to a unique local environment;
- Conservancy environments could remain “conservancy” but will be evaluated for possible redesignation as rural conservancy, urban conservancy, or natural environment, or could be redesignated to a unique local environment;
- Natural environments could remain “natural” but will be evaluated for possible redesignation as rural conservancy, urban conservancy, or could be redesignated to a unique local environment; and
- Aquatic environments will likely remain designated aquatic environments.

Ecology Recommended Designations

Natural

The Natural designation may be appropriate for reaches that are:

- minimally degraded shorelines with high ecological functions;
- shorelines with high quality associated wetlands;
- Shoreline of Statewide Significance that have moderate to high ecological functions



Lake Kachess (unincorporated Kittitas County)

Rural Conservancy

The Rural Conservancy designation may be appropriate for reaches that are:

- located outside UGAs, city limits, and LAMIRDs that have resource-based land uses and zoning;
- water bodies that are not Shorelines of Statewide Significance with high ecological functions.

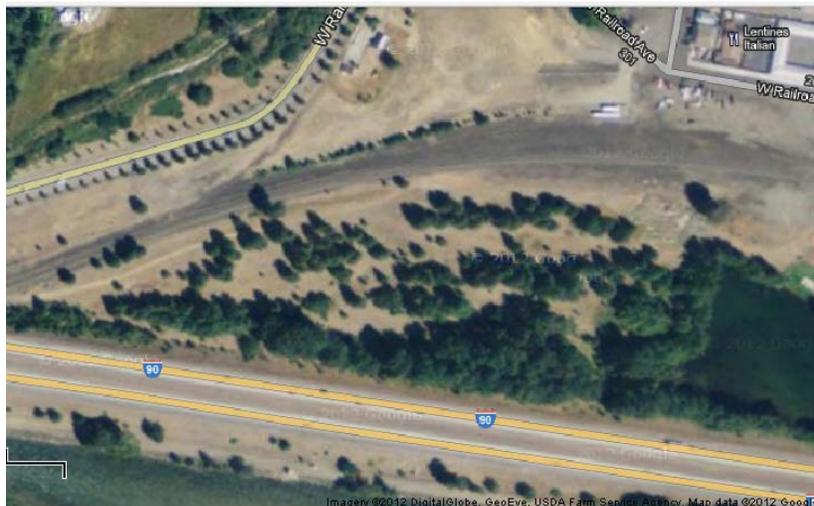


Manastash Creek (unincorporated Kittitas County)

High-Intensity

The High Intensity designation may be appropriate for reaches that are:

- located within UGAs, city limits, or LAMIRDs and are developed with industrial or high-intensity commercial uses; or
- suitable or planned for high-intensity water-oriented uses



Shoreline area in Yakima River floodplain zoned "Industrial" (Cle Elum city limits)

Urban Conservancy

The Urban Conservancy designation may be appropriate for reaches that are:

- within UGA or city limits with moderate to high ecological functions with potential for restoration;
- used for urban lands with open space, floodplains or sensitive habitats that should not be more intensively developed.



Photo courtesy of WA Wildlife and Recreation Coalition

Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park (Ellensburg)

Shoreline Residential

The Shoreline Residential designation may be appropriate for reaches that are:

- within Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRD), Urban Growth Areas (UGA) or city limits that are predominately zoned as residential.



Photo Credit: Google Earth

Residential development along the Columbia River (Vantage LAMIRD)

In addition to these, the Aquatic designation may be appropriate for lands waterward of the ordinary highwater mark.

Unique Local Designations

The Ecology guidelines allow for alternative shoreline environment designations as long as the designations are consistent with WAC 173-26-211. Potential designations that may be appropriate are:

- Rural Recreation – This environment would be used for commercial and residential areas in LAMIRDs or rural areas developed to serve seasonal recreational uses. This environment would support higher density development consistent with Rural Recreational zoning. This environment could be appropriate for areas such as the Suncadia Master Planned Resort or areas near Snoqualimie pass.
- Mixed Use – This environment would be used for shoreline areas within incorporated municipalities and designated urban growth areas if they currently support mixed uses related to commerce or are suitable and planned for water-oriented development or those non-water oriented parts of a mixed use development. See Douglas County SMP for example
- Floodway/Channel Migration Zone – This environment is characterized by deep/fast floodwaters and a shifting channel. This environment should protect the water areas, islands and associated overflow channels found within designated floodways, and mapped channel migration areas. See Yakima County SMP for example.