

DOCKET #235

CRITICAL AREAS ORDINANCE (CAO) UPDATE

Planning and Development Committee

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CITY OF
Renton



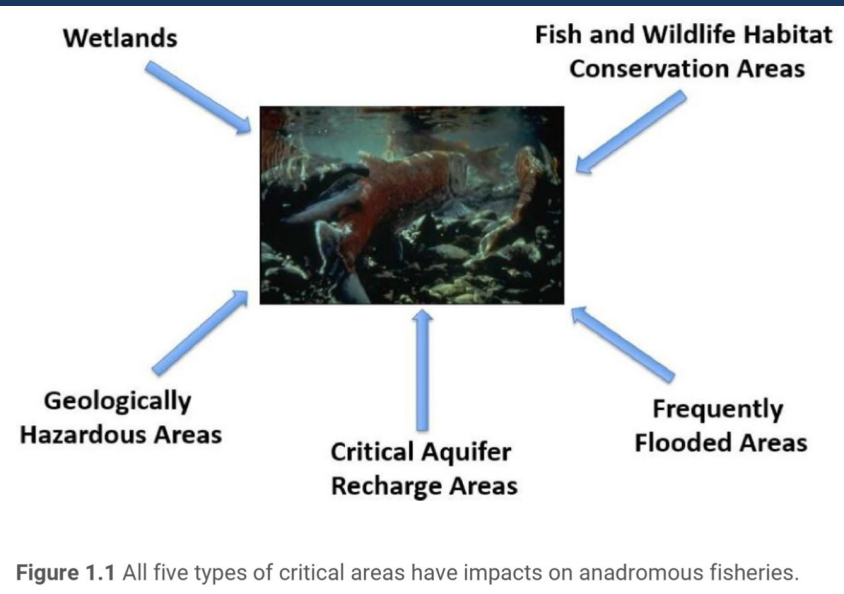
SUMMARY OF D-235

Issue:

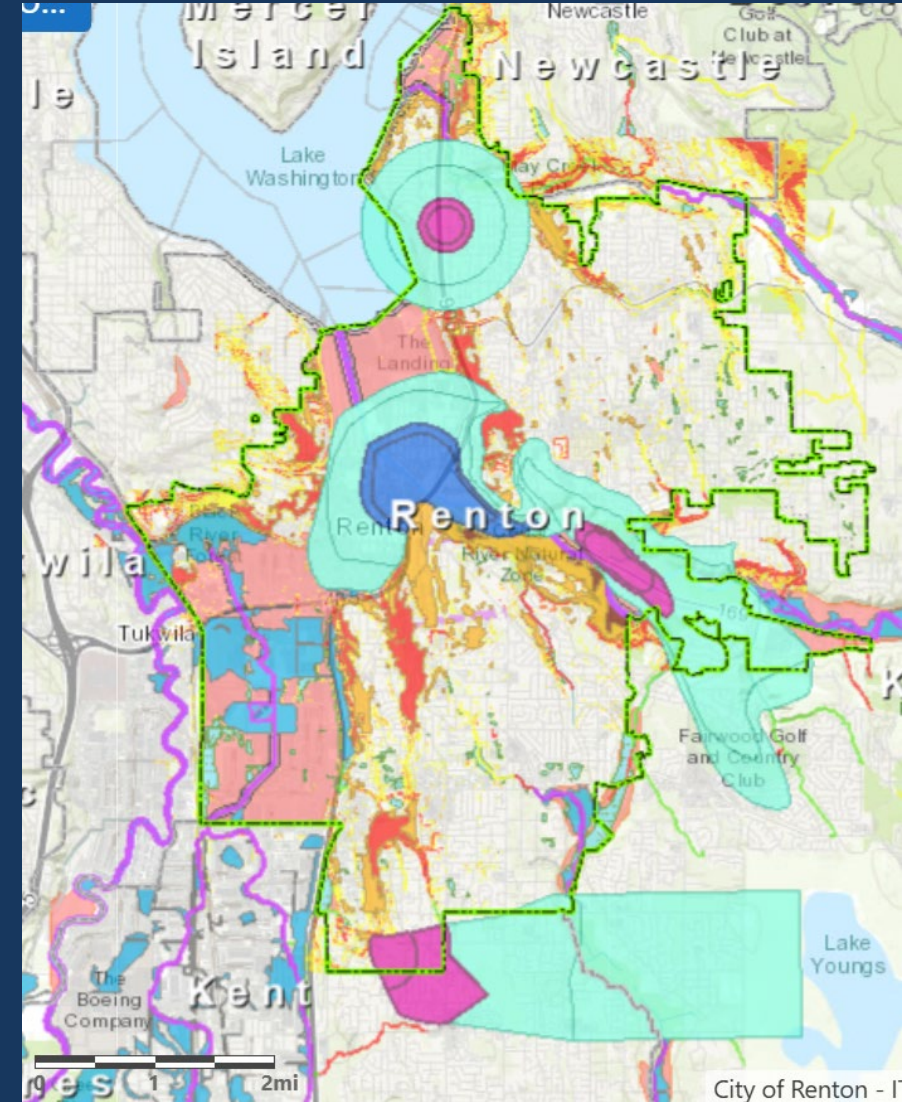
1. **The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires** all cities and counties in Washington to adopt **regulations protecting “critical areas”** to preserve the natural environment, wildlife habitats, and sources of fresh drinking water. Critical areas regulation also encourage public safety by limiting development in areas prone to natural hazards like floods and landslides.
2. **Every ten years**, counties and **cities are required to take legislative action** to review and, if needed, revise their comprehensive land use plans and development regulations **to ensure the plans and regulations comply with the requirements of the GMA. This update is due by June 1, 2025.**
3. The **level of review** depends on several factors.
 - If the jurisdiction contains **significant, extensive, and/or inadequately protected critical areas**, a more detailed review of its policies and development regulations may be necessary.
 - If **new sources of best available science (BAS)** are identified (including any management recommendations associated with the new science), the jurisdiction should review those updates for applicability to its critical areas regulations.

FIVE TYPES OF CRITICAL AREAS

1. Wetlands.
2. Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water.
3. Frequently flooded areas.
4. Geologically hazardous areas.
5. Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas.



*Salmonids play an extremely important role in the ecosystem and are vital cultural and economic resources, therefore jurisdictions must also “give special consideration to conservation and protection measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries.”



Renton's Critical Areas as mapped on the City of Renton's (COR) Maps
<https://maps.rentonwa.gov/Html5viewer/Index.html?viewer=cormaps>

Figure 1.1 All five types of critical areas have impacts on anadromous fisheries.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION OF ANADROMOUS FISHERIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FIVE TYPES OF CRITICAL AREAS

1. **Wetlands** and their buffers store floodwater, recharge groundwater, remove pollutants and excess nutrients, and provide habitat for a large number of plants and animals.
2. **Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas**, including wetlands and wetland buffers and riparian management zones, provide continuous vegetated riparian areas that are key to functioning salmonid habitat.
3. **Frequently flooded areas** protection addresses flooding that can directly impact salmonid habitat quality and availability. Restoring floodplain connectivity improves off-channel rearing habitat vital for young salmonids (smolts). Impervious surface coverage, vegetation removal, and other alterations can affect water quality, stream flows, and other ecosystem functions vital to salmon habitat.
4. **Geologically hazardous areas** may affect salmonids in a variety of ways. Steep slopes along shorelines can include feeder bluffs that benefit salmon habitat. While erosion and mass wasting slide events that occur naturally can block streams or overload them with sediment.
5. **Critical aquifer recharge areas** contribute to groundwater quality and in-stream flow. While critical aquifer recharge areas are designated and protected to ensure availability of potable water, the groundwater resource also interacts with streams.

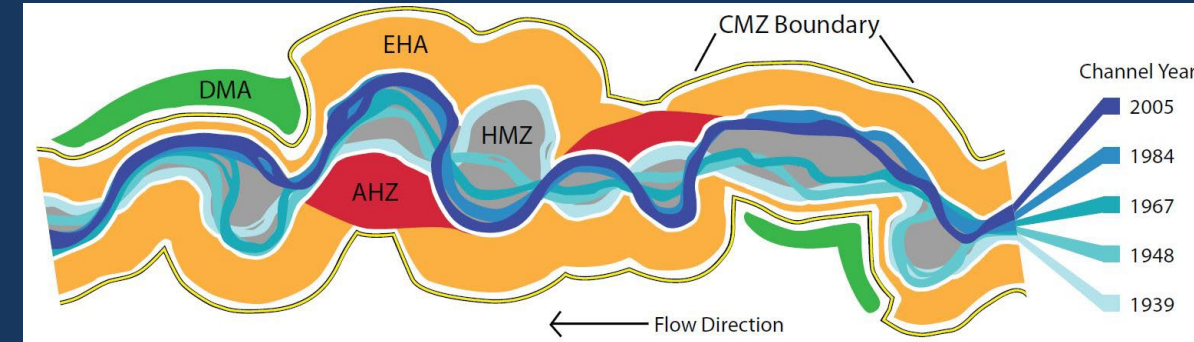
POTENTIAL *SUBSTANTIVE* AMENDMENTS TO THE CAO

1. Channel Migration Zones (CMZs):

- CMZ determines the potential lateral movement of a river or stream's channel over time.
- Renton's Shoreline Master Program contains some references to CMZs and associated land use restrictions.
- CMZs are closely linked to floodplain regulations and can extend outside of SMP jurisdiction.
- CMZ regulations introduced to the CAO will include opportunities to challenge the CMZ mapped by King County (2015)

2. Wetland Buffers:

- Existing wetland buffers and replacement ratios may increase due to best available science.
- Staff will provide a jurisdictional comparison to ensure proposed changes protect wetlands while not creating overly restrictive standards.



Schematic of channel migration zone and its components.



Springbrook Trail boardwalk crossing Springbrook Creek in Renton, Wash. The public trail is part of the 130-acre Springbrook Creek Wetland and Habitat Mitigation Bank. The critical urban wetland corridor helps control floods, filters drinking water, provides fish and wildlife habitat, and offers residents a chance to relax outdoors.

Next Steps:

- Staff to review potential code changes and determine recommendations
- Briefing on amendments to Planning & Development Committee (date TBD)
- Briefing to Planning Commission (date TBD)
- Planning Commission Public Hearing (date TBD)

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