

Frequently Asked Questions



Periodic Update of the Shoreline Master Program

What is a Shoreline Master Program (SMP)?

A Shoreline Master Program (SMP) is a set of policies and regulations required by state law that has three basic principles:

- Encourages reasonable and appropriate development of shorelines with an **emphasis on water dependent uses**, which when developed are consistent with the control of pollution and prevention of damage to the natural environment, recreational facilities, or industries and commercial uses that require a shoreline location and support economic development; and,
- **Protects the natural resources and character of the shorelines**, the land, vegetation, wildlife, water, and aquatic life within shoreline environment; and,
- **Promotes public access** and provides opportunities to enjoy the aesthetic qualities of the natural shorelines and recreational activities in shoreline areas.

Where does this apply?

“Shorelines of the state” include rivers and streams with mean annual flow more than 20 cubic feet per second, lakes 20 acres or larger, and all marine shorelines. Shorelines of the state in the Town of Coupeville are limited to the 2.4-mile long stretch of marine shoreline along Penn Cove. Shoreline jurisdiction extends 200 feet landward of the water’s edge and additionally includes associated wetlands.

What is a periodic update of the SMP?

The Town of Coupeville completed a comprehensive update of its Shoreline Master Program in 2009. Washington state law requires jurisdictions to review and update their SMPs every eight years in accordance with the Shoreline Management Act (SMA) and its current guidelines and legislative rules to attain state approval. The Town received a grant from the Washington Department of Ecology to support this periodic review. The grant timeline calls for completing this periodic update by June 30, 2021. The Town intends to complete the bulk of the review by June, and finalize its adoption by the end of 2021.

This periodic update will focus on:

- Reviewing relevant legislative updates since the 2009 SMP update and incorporating any applicable amendments;
- Ensuring consistency with Coupeville’s Comprehensive Plan Update; and
- Ensuring compatibility with other Town regulations.

This periodic update will NOT:

- Re-evaluate the ecological baseline that was established as part of the 2009 SMP update;
- Extensively assess no net loss criteria other than to ensure that proposed amendments do not result in degradation of the baseline condition; or
- Re-assess shoreline jurisdiction.

How do shoreline regulations apply to land use and development activities?

Shoreline regulations apply to any change in land use or development activity that occurs within the shoreline jurisdiction, as defined in the SMP. Included in those modifications and uses regulated in the SMP are:

- New or expanded structures, such as houses, sheds, and decks;
- Land development and alteration, such as clearing, grading, dredging, or filling; and
- Other activities along the shorelines, including restoration (e.g., riparian planting, bank stabilization), trail construction, and public access.

What is a Shoreline Exemption and what is required to obtain approval?

Certain land uses and development activities are exempt from the requirement to obtain a Shoreline Substantial Development Permit but are not exempt from compliance with the Shoreline Master Program. Exemptions are issued in writing by the Town after the submission of a complete application, including a site plan. Even though an activity is exempt from requiring a Substantial Development Permit, a conditional use or variance permit may be required. Exemptions under the SMP are different than exemptions under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

How does the SMP affect existing uses and development?

SMP regulations are not retroactive. SMP regulations apply to *new* development and uses. Existing uses and developments legally established may be repaired, maintained and operated. The SMP applies to proposals for expansion or alteration of existing uses and structures.

Structures and uses that were legally established in the past may become legally nonconforming due to new shoreline rules that are adopted over time. Current SMP regulations allow these previously built structures and established uses to continue as they are presently operating.

What is public access to shorelines? When is it required?

Public access is a preferred use per the SMA. Public access can be physical access (e.g. trail) and/or visual access (e.g. view corridors). Public access standards apply to new development, not existing development. Generally, new public access is only required for private uses of certain sizes (e.g. large subdivisions, resorts, etc.) and for public uses. Public access requirements do not allow for trespass on private property.

What is No Net Loss?

The SMP Guidelines establish the standard of no net loss. No net loss means that over time, the Town-wide condition of shoreline ecological functions should, at a minimum, remain the same as when the SMP is

implemented. Simply stated, the no net loss standard is designed to balance the introduction of new impacts to shoreline ecological functions resulting from new development through mitigation sequencing and restoration. The Town must achieve this standard through both the SMP planning process and by appropriately regulating individual developments as they are proposed in the future. Any amendments to the SMP that may occur through the periodic update process would need to comply with the no net loss standard.

How can I get more information?

Town Website:

<https://www.townofcoupeville.org>

Contact:

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Department of Ecology Shoreline Management Website:

<https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Shoreline-coastal-management/Shoreline-coastal-planning>