



## Community Development



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# Wetlands

The [Kitsap County Critical Areas Ordinance](#) (CAO) regulates development affecting wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, streams, aquifer recharge areas, and frequently flooded and geologically hazardous areas. This CAO fact sheet is one in a series which describes the above types of environmentally critical areas protected by Kitsap County under *Critical Areas*, Title 19, Kitsap County Code (collectively the CAO). This is being provided to you as general information and is not intended as a substitute for actual codes and regulations. For more information, contact the Kitsap County Department of Community Development (DCD) at (360) 337- 5777 or [visit our website](#).

## What is a wetland?

Wetlands are those areas inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.

Wetlands can be identified by three characteristics:

- Hydric Soils – soils saturated with water
- Water – the presence of standing water at least part of the year
- Plants – water-tolerant or water-dependent species

They generally include, but are not limited to, ponds, marshes, bogs, wet meadows, and swamps.

## Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands perform a variety of functions that are important to the environmental and economic well- being of Kitsap County, such as:

- Controlling flooding by acting as natural reservoirs for incoming storm flow
- Improving water quality by filtering contaminants
- Maintaining stream flows by gradually releasing stored water after floods and wet seasons
- Recharging groundwater
- Stabilizing shoreline areas
- Providing fish and wildlife habitat
- Creating places for recreation, education, scientific study, and aesthetic appreciation

## Does my property contain a wetland?

To assist you in determining if your property contains a wetland, you may contact the DCD, who can provide you with inventoried wetland maps. However, since not all County wetlands have been identified in the wetland inventory, these maps should serve only as a general guide for property owners. Your property may still contain a wetland that requires protection under the County's CAO. In this case, a qualified wetlands specialist should visit your property to determine the presence, type, extent, and boundary of any wetland(s). DCD can provide a list of qualified wetland specialists.