

About this Document

What is the Shoreline Master Program?

Skagit County's Shoreline Master Program ("the SMP") is a combined planning and regulatory document that contains policies, goals, and specific land-use regulations for shorelines. The SMP balances development, public access, and shoreline protection. The SMP is required by the state Shoreline Management Act, which was approved by Washington voters in a 1972 referendum.

What are "shorelines"?

Shorelines are special water bodies that meet certain flow criteria, and their adjacent uplands, including:

- marine shorelines
- rivers with a flow greater than 20 cubic feet per second
- lakes larger than 20 acres
- upland areas within 200 feet of these water bodies, and the floodplains and wetlands associated with these shorelines.

How is this document structured?

This document is split into two principal sections:¹

- Chapter 6 of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan, with general goals, objectives, and policies to guide the creation of development regulations.
- Chapter 14.26 of Skagit County Code, with explicit criteria for development, divided into eight parts.

How do I use this document?

Follow the steps below to find out how the Shoreline Master Program affects how you can develop your property:

1. **First, does the SMP apply to your property?** "Shoreline jurisdiction" is generally within 200 feet of a shoreline, and is described fully in SCC 14.26.200 on page 53. If your property is outside of shoreline jurisdiction, this SMP doesn't apply. Also, this SMP only applies to unincorporated areas of the county; if you live in a city or town, this SMP doesn't apply.

¹ Per RCW 36.70A.480(1), the goals and policies of a shoreline master program of a city or county are "considered an element of the county or city's comprehensive plan" adopted under the Growth Management Act. In addition, all other portions of the shoreline master program, including use regulations, are considered part of a city or county's development regulations.

2. **If so, which Shoreline Environment Designation applies to your property?** Look up your property on the SMP Environment Designation maps at www.skagitcounty.net/smp.
3. **Read about your Shoreline Environment Designation in this SMP.** The designations are listed in Part II, which begins on page 53. The table of contents for that section lets you jump to the designation you want to read about. For a quick reference to what is permitted in each designation, see SCC 14.26.290 **Error! Reference source not found.** Shoreline Uses and Modifications on page 63.**Error! Bookmark not defined.** For height and lot coverage limits, see SCC 14.26.295 Dimensional Standards**Error! Reference source not found.** on page 67.
4. **Then, what do you want to do?** In Part IV on page 85, you can read about how various activities are regulated in shoreline jurisdiction. Be sure to also read Part III starting on page 70, which includes general rules for development in all environment designations.
5. **What if you want to repair or expand an existing use?** The SMP has special rules for uses that already exist within shoreline jurisdiction, especially single-family residences. See Part VI starting on page 160.
6. **Finally, how do you get approval to do it?** Part VII on page 163 describes the steps for applying for whichever type of shoreline permit you might need.

Types of SMP Permits

There are four kinds of permits, generally referred to as “shoreline permits,” that you might need under the rules of this SMP.

Type of Shoreline Permit	You need it if your proposed activity or development...	Process
Substantial Development Permit	qualifies as “substantial development”; see page 165	SCC 14.26.720
Substantial Development Permit Letter of Exemption	is specifically exempt from requiring a substantial development permit; see page 169	SCC 14.26.760
Conditional Use Permit	is not specifically allowed by this SMP, or if this SMP otherwise requires a Conditional Use Permit.	SCC 14.26.730
Variance	doesn’t comply with the specific use or dimensional criteria in this SMP.	SCC 14.26.750

Types of Exemptions

There are two kinds of exemptions defined in state law that lessen the regulatory impact of the Shoreline Management Act (“the SMA”).

- **Exemption from a Shoreline Substantial Development Permit:** Some activities or developments have to comply with the rules of the SMP, but do not require a Substantial Development Permit, for example, some single-family residences (see Appendix 2). You still have to obtain a “letter of exemption” (described above) for these activities.

- **Exemption from the SMA:** A few activities are completely exempt from shoreline rules, for example, existing agricultural activities (see page 92). These activities require no shoreline permit or letter of exemption, and do not have to comply with SMP regulations.

Guide to Acronyms and Abbreviations

Term	Expansion
BMP	best management practice
cfs	cubic feet per second
cfsmaf	cubic feet per second mean annual flow
CUP	Conditional Use Permit
Department	Skagit County Planning and Development Services Department
Director	Skagit County Planning and Development Services Department Director
Ecology	Washington State Department of Ecology
JARPA	Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application
LAMIRD	Limited Area of More Intense Rural Development
LID	low impact development
LWD	large woody debris
MLLW	mean lower low water
OHWM	Ordinary High Water Mark
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
SCC	Skagit County Code
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SMA	Shoreline Management Act of 1971
SMP	this Shoreline Master Program
State	State of Washington
UGA	Urban Growth Area
WAC	Washington Administrative Code
WDFW	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife