



SKAGIT COUNTY 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) Update

MAKERS
architecture • planning • urban design



FACET



Kimley»Horn
Expect More. Experience Better.





Draft CAO and Supporting Documents

- Visit the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Website:
<https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa>
- Available on the website:
 - CAO Gap Analysis
 - Best Available Science (BAS) Review
 - Draft Critical Areas Ordinance Proposed Changes
 - Planning Commission Recorded Motion and Recommendation

The background image is a scenic landscape. The top half shows a wide view of a coastal town with a marina, surrounded by green hills and distant mountains under a blue sky with light clouds. The bottom half shows a close-up of a bridge over a body of water, with a house on a rocky shore to the left.

Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) changes Best Available Science (BAS) & GMA



Critical Areas Ordinance

Pursuant to WAC 365-196-485, counties and cities are required to designate critical areas and adopt development regulations to protect them.

Critical areas include the following areas and ecosystems:

- Wetlands
- Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs)
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWCHAs)
- Frequently Flooded Areas (FFAs)
- Geologically Hazardous Areas



Highlight of Policy Changes

- BAS recommendations across all critical areas
 - Incorporation of “no net loss”
 - Updates to references and mapping sources
 - Updates for critical area designations and classifications
 - Site assessment criteria
- Clarity, Efficiency, Accountability
 - Readability and administration
 - Updated Reasonable Use and Variance language
 - Improved content and organization (e.g. CARA section)



Public Comment Responses and Planning Commission Recommendation



Public Comment

- Public Comment Period: April 21st – May 8th 2025
- 30 public comments received
- 17 recommendations from PDS staff based on public comments



Planning Commission Recommendation

- Recommend Board of County Commissioners adopt the CAO with four changes:
 - Incorporate the County staff recommendations 1-17
 - Amend SCC 14.24.070(7) to clarify language regarding tidal estuaries
 - Remove “short plat” from the habitat corridor requirement in SCC 14.24.530(5)
 - The BoCC direct County staff to improve access of mapping of critical areas



Additional CAO Changes

- Staff changes for administrative, organizational, and clarification purposes.

Questions & Discussion

