



JEFFERSON COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

621 Sheridan Street • Port Townsend • Washington 98368
360/379-4450 ~ 360/379-4451 Fax

CRITICAL AREAS

What are critical areas?

Critical areas include all of the following: aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas (FWHCAs), and wetlands. These areas are regulated in Jefferson County (as required under the Growth Management Act) so that the natural environment can be preserved and human health and safety can be protected. Of the five critical areas listed above, FWHCAs and wetlands have buffers to help protect the functions and values that these resources provide.

What is a buffer?

A buffer is the area immediately adjacent to a FWHCA or a wetland, and the width of the buffer is based on specifications listed in Chapter 18.22 of the Jefferson County Code (JCC). Jefferson County Code requires that development avoid critical areas and associated buffers if possible. If development cannot be designed to avoid these resources, then development impacts are to be minimized to the extent possible and mitigation shall be provided.

What happens if a buffer cannot be avoided by development?

If a proposed project cannot avoid a critical area buffer, there are three ways that may be used to approve an application:

1. **Administrative Buffer Reduction.** An administrative reduction can be used to reduce or average the prescriptive buffer widths for FWHCAs and wetlands, assuming the buffer width reduction does not exceed 25% of the prescribed buffer width. The prescribed buffer widths for FWHCAs are specified in Tables 18.22.270(1) and 18.22.270(2) of the Jefferson County Code, while the prescribed buffer widths for wetlands are presented in Tables 18.22.330(1) through 18.22.330(3). A Habitat Management Plan or a Mitigation Plan would be required by Jefferson County as part of project permitting.
2. **Critical Areas Stewardship Plan (CASP).** A CASP may be used to reduce or average buffers. This process is an alternative to the Administrative Buffer Reduction described above, and additional information about CASPs can be found on the other side of this sheet.
3. **Reasonable Economic Use Variance (REUV).** If a buffer cannot be reduced or averaged by either of the two ways discussed above, a REUV would be used for project permitting. A REUV would also be used if a proposed development impacts a FWHCA or a wetland. To approve an REUV, a Habitat Management Plan or Mitigation Plan would be required by Jefferson County.

How do I know if there is a critical area on my property?

Jefferson County has mapping that indicates the potential locations of critical areas within the County. If you know your parcel number and you have computer access, you can view the critical areas that have been mapped in the vicinity of your property. The following link can be used to view County mapping: <http://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/>; click on the 'Maps' tab; then click on 'Critical Areas'; then enter your parcel number in the lower left corner and click on 'Go'. Note that Jefferson County mapping can only indicate if a critical area has the potential to occur on your property, and an evaluation by a qualified professional may be needed for permitting.

CRITICAL AREAS STEWARDSHIP PLAN (CASP)

What is a CASP?

A Critical Areas Stewardship Plan, or CASP, is a way for an applicant to reduce a fish and wildlife habitat conservation area (FWHCA) buffer or a wetland buffer. A CASP is a report that is prepared based on site-specific conditions and is used for permitting of residential development. The intent of a CASP is to include property owners in decisions that affect their property while still protecting the functions and values of critical areas on and in the vicinity of their property.

When can a CASP be used?

An applicant may be able to submit a CASP for permitting if the proposed project cannot avoid a FWHCA buffer or a wetland buffer, and if all of the following are met:

- The applicant is proposing residential development;
- The property is ¼ acre (10,890 square feet) or larger;
- The CASP is being used only for FWHCAs or Wetlands (Category II, III, and IV wetlands and Category I wetland buffers, but not Category I wetlands);
- The fill materials used for development will be placed outside the FWHCA or wetland; and
- The CASP provides equal or greater protection of critical area functions and values than that provided by the prescriptive buffer width.

CASP requirements are specified in Article IX of the Jefferson County Code (JCC), which includes JCC 18.22.460 through JCC 18.22.550. These sections of the JCC state what needs be included in a CASP for permitting purposes.

How do I know if a CASP will work for my property?

If you think a CASP may be applicable to your project, you may request an on-site meeting with Jefferson County staff to discuss the CASP process in greater detail. To request an on-site meeting, complete a CASP Pre-Application Conference Form Request and submit it to Jefferson County Department of Community Development along with the pre-application fee. Be sure to fill out both sides of the form and attach a conceptual site plan showing your proposal. It is suggested that you invite your project biologist to attend the meeting as well.

How do I apply for a CASP?

To apply for a CASP, the following needs to be submitted to Jefferson County Department of Community Development:

- A Master Permit Application (check the Critical Areas Stewardship Plan box);
- A CASP report that addresses JCC 18.22.461 through JCC 18.22.530; and
- A check for the CASP review fee.

More Questions?

If you have any questions about critical area permitting, contact the Jefferson County Planner of the Day at 360-379-4450.