



City of McCleary

Home of the McCleary Bear Festival

Statement for City Council Meeting

Earlier this month, the building department issued a Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance for the Parayil Clearing project. During the public comment period, the Washington State Department of Ecology submitted factual comments identifying that the buffer reduction reflected in the application had been calculated incorrectly. That error originated in the environmental checklist submitted by the applicant.

Once Ecology's comments were in hand, it was clear the record needed to be corrected before a threshold determination could responsibly be finalized. We withdrew the determination so the applicant can submit an accurate checklist reflecting the correct wetland buffer, consistent with the City's Critical Areas Ordinance.

I want to be direct about what this shows: this is precisely why the SEPA comment process exists. The Legislature built a public and interagency comment period into this process for exactly this reason. So that agencies with subject-matter expertise, like Ecology on wetland and buffer standards, have a real opportunity to catch factual errors before a determination becomes final. That is not a breakdown in the process. That is the process working exactly as intended.

Here's where things stand now: no clearing is authorized under the withdrawn determination. The applicant will need to submit a corrected checklist reflecting the accurate buffer calculation, and any new determination will go back out for a full public comment period before it becomes final. Giving Ecology, other agencies, and the public another opportunity to weigh in on an accurate record.

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