City of MEDINA WASHINGTON

Critical Areas Ordinance Update

Medina Planning Commission
September 23, 2025

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Agenda

Critical Areas Ordinance Update

- Introduction
- Growth Management Act Requirements
- Best Available Science
- Gap Analysis
- Schedule

Introduction

Purpose of the Critical Areas Update

- Previous update performed in 2016 with minor update in 2018
- State Law/Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.060 and RCW 36.70A.170)
- Consistency with Best Available Science (RCW 36.70A.172)
- State deadline December 31, 2025

What are Critical Areas

State Definitions:

WAC 365-196-485

- Wetlands
- Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water
- Frequently flooded areas
- Geologically hazardous areas
- Fish & wildlife habitat conservation areas

Local Definitions:

MMC 16.50

- Streams
- Wetlands
- Geologically hazardous areas
- *NOTE: Critical aquifer recharge areas (CARAs) and Frequently Flooded Areas (FFAs) are not included in the Medina CAO*

No Net Loss

WAC 365-190-080(1) Counties and cities must protect critical areas. Counties and cities required or opting to plan under the act must consider the definitions and guidelines in this chapter when designating critical areas and when preparing development regulations that protect all functions and values of critical areas to ensure no net loss of ecological functions and values.

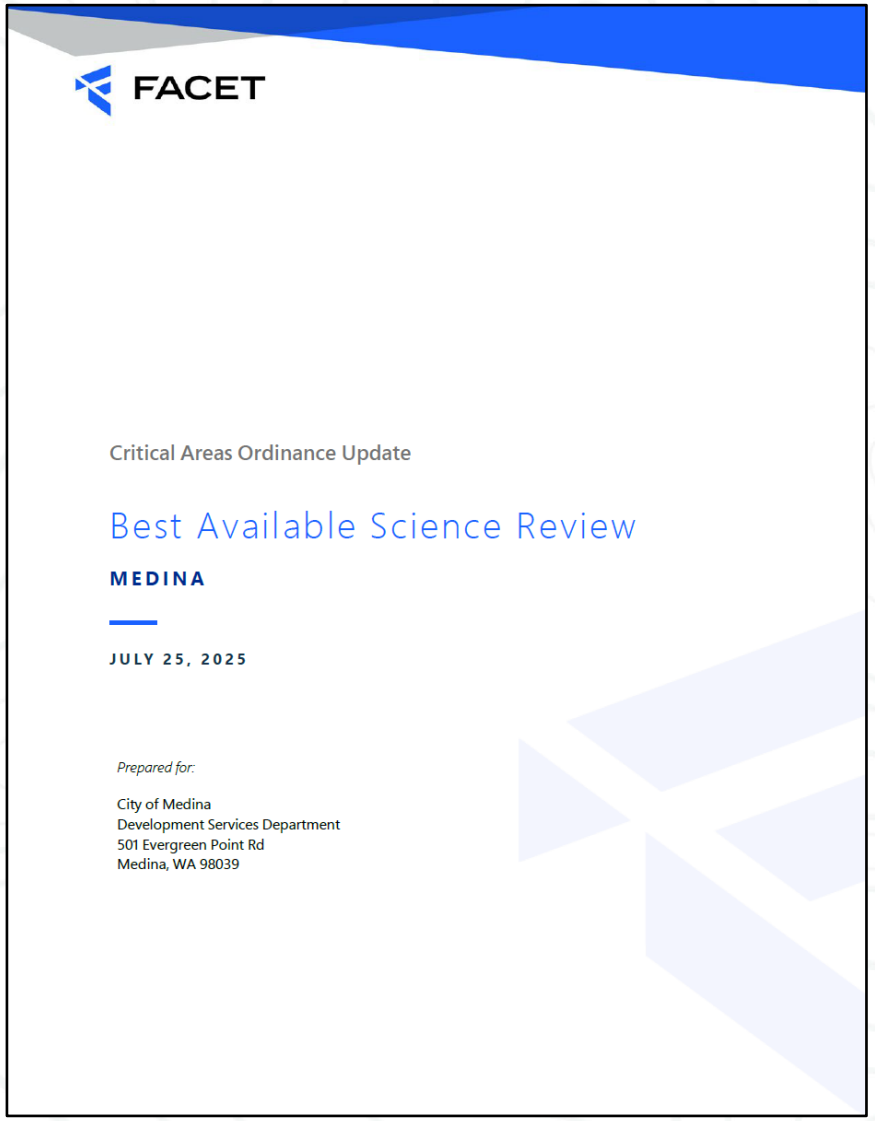
Best Available Science

- **WAC 365-190-080(2)** requires that Counties and cities must include the best available science when designating critical areas and when developing policies and regulations that protect critical areas.
- Must give special consideration of anadromous fisheries and are encouraged to protect both surface and groundwater resources.

BAS Review for Medina

Referenced materials include:

- Existing critical area inventories
- Peer-reviewed research publications
- Synthesis publications from state agencies
- Complete reference list provided in Section 7 - *Best Available Science Review, City of Medina* (Facet 7/25/2025).



Wetlands

Identify & Classify

- Assessment by a qualified professional following Agency approved methodology
- Ecology Wetland Rating System updated in 2023

Functions & Values

- Water quality functions, hydrologic functions, habitat functions
- Vegetated buffer condition, habitat corridors

Management Standards

- Buffer Wetlands to protect against disturbance
- Mitigation sequencing
- Compensatory mitigation to achieve No Net Loss
- Sustainable compensation options
- Protection in perpetuity

Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

Identify & Classify

- Designate fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas (FWHCA) consistent with WAC 365-190-130, including:
  - Endangered, threatened and sensitive species
  - Habitats and species of local importance
  - Lakes, ponds, streams and rivers

Functions & Values

- Biological, chemical and physical habitat conditions

Management Standards

- Designate FWHCA and buffer from adjacent land uses
- Require habitat assessments as applicable
- Require impact avoidance, minimization and mitigation

FACET

Streams & Riparian Areas

Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 1:
Science Synthesis & Management Implications

Describes riparian functions and ecosystems (Scientific Synthesis), including:

- Pollution removal to protect water quality
- Aquatic and terrestrial habitats, including corridors
- Large woody debris recruitment
- Temperature regulation

Describes Site Potential Tree Height (SPTH) to protect for full riparian functions

FACET

Streams & Riparian Areas

Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 2: Management Recommendations

- WDFW recommends using Site Potential Tree Height model to establish RMZs
- A 100-foot-wide buffer/RMZ is the recommended minimum for all streams based on water quality efficacy.

FACET

Geologic Hazard Areas

Identify & Classify

- Site-specific assessment by a qualified professional

Functions & Values

- Geologic hazard areas (GHA) pose potential risks to people and property
- Dynamic natural processes

Management Standards

- Avoid disturbance / buffer
- Earthquake-resistant building standards
- Engineered solutions

Gap Analysis

Key Areas

- General Provisions (MMC 16.50.010)
- Wetlands (MMC 16.50.080)
- Geologic Hazard Areas (MMC 16.50.090)
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Area Areas (MMC 16.50.100)

Gap Analysis

Minor Updates Identified

- Definitions
- WAC references
- Agency resources
- Wetland Rating publication

Gap Analysis

Key Areas of Consideration

Wetlands – Development standards / Buffers *(MMC 16.50.080)*

- Review 2022 Ecology guidance with three BAS-based buffer options. Ecology's preferred option includes criteria for habitat corridors and vegetation standards.

Streams – Classification & Buffers *(MMC 16.50.100)*

- Review WDFW management recommendations, choose predictive model or Site Potential Tree Height methodology (SPTH)
- Review riparian buffer recommendations, consider increases to current protections.

Wetlands – CAO Recommendations

Select a BAS-based buffer option

Option 1 (Preferred)

- Incorporates wetland category and habitat score
- Presumes high or moderate land use impact
- Requires minimization measures and habitat corridor for smaller buffer width

Option 2

- Based on wetland category and adjacent land use intensity

Option 3

- Based on wetland category only

Wetlands – Regulatory Approaches

- Establish buffer vegetation requirements
- Consider habitat corridors
- Address functionally disconnected buffer areas
- Emphasize mitigation sequencing
- Sustainable mitigation options
  - Permittee-responsible (on-site)
  - Programmatic mitigation (banking, in-lieu fee)
- Protection in perpetuity - signs and fencing
- Code Enforcement / Performance bonds

FWHCA – CAO Recommendations

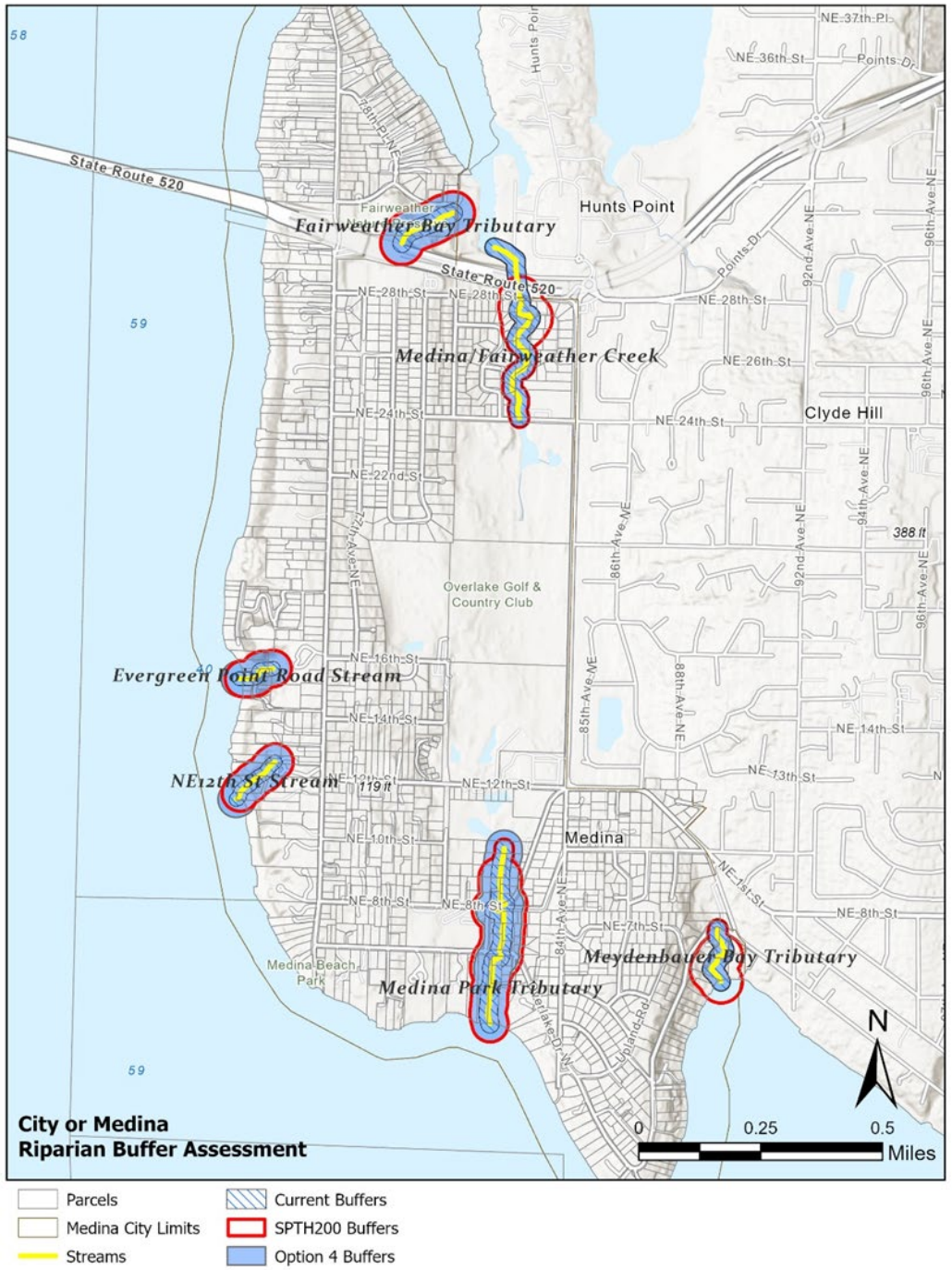
"Predictive Model" vs

Water Type	Standard Buffer	Minimum Buffer
Type 1	100 feet	50 feet
Type 2	75 feet	37.5 feet
Type 3	50 feet	25 feet

(MMC 16.50.100(G)(2))

$SPTH_{200}$ Tool

- Streams not classified
- Ecologic functions protected based on SPTH value
- Minimum buffer 100 feet
- SPTH value = 100-231 feet



FWHCA – Regulatory Approaches

There are various SPTH200 RMZ values within the city limits

- Lowest 100 feet
- Largest 231 feet
- Streams may have multiple SPTH200 values

Streams – Classification & Buffers

Pros

- Clear criteria for fish habitat presence/absence
- Fixed buffers are predictable for landowners and administrators

Cons

- Buffer widths may not support full riparian function
- Not fully aligned with WDFW guidance

Note: *Current buffer widths need to be reviewed and width increases considered. The minimum width recommended for water quality is 100-feet.*

Streams – Riparian Management Zone

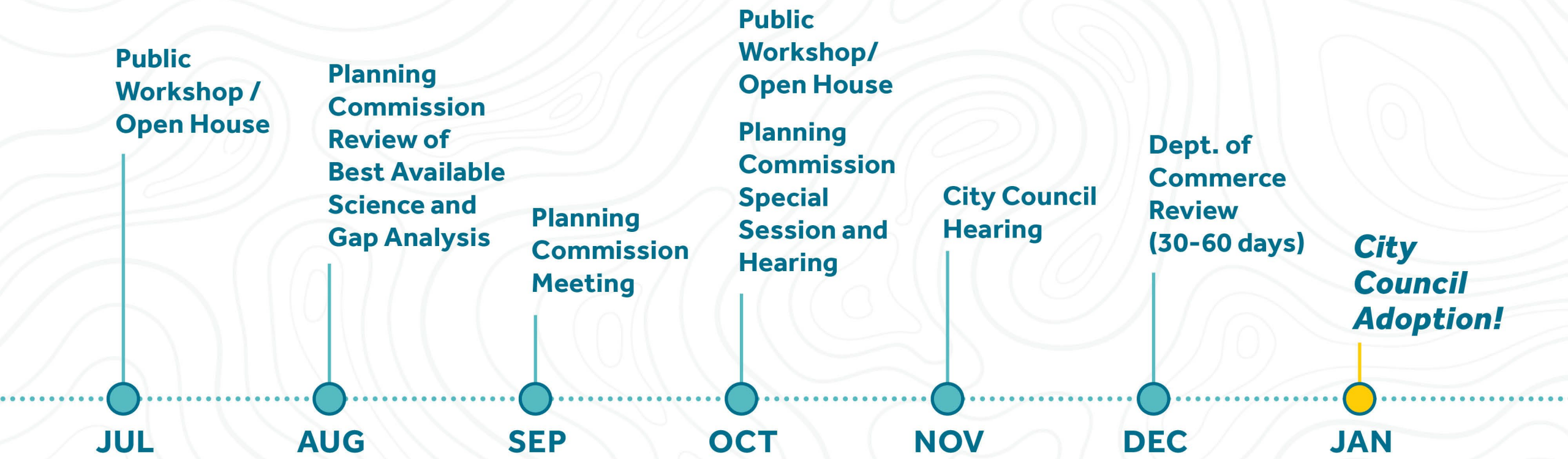
Pros

- Fully aligned with BAS
- SPTH riparian widths set to achieve full riparian functions
- Targets functional potential by site
- Landowners have the option to obtain a site-specific assessment

Cons

- SPTH is a new approach, not readily understood
- Increased number of non-conforming uses and structures
- Third-party review would likely need to be established

CAO Update Timeline



THANK YOU

Question and Answer