

## **2. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ELEMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The quality of life in the Pacific Northwest is often equated with the quality of the environment. Protecting and restoring air quality, water resources, soils, and plant, fish and animal habitats are important goals for the City of Medina.

This is particularly vital in light of federal Endangered Species Act listings of several salmonid species. Chinook salmon and steelhead trout are listed as threatened by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and bull trout are listed as threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Coho salmon are a candidate species listed by NMFS. All of these species are found in Lake Washington.

Medina is committed to federal, state, and regional goals of endangered species recovery of listed salmon species by addressing salmon habitat needs within and adjacent to its boundaries with Lake Washington. However, protecting these resources is challenging for a fully developed community.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that comprehensive plans establish critical areas policies based on best available science as defined by WAC 365-195-905. In addition, "...cities shall give special consideration to conservation or protection measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries." King County countywide planning policies (CPP) direct local jurisdictions to incorporate environmental protection and restoration efforts into their local plans and to provide effective stewardship of the environment for future generations, including preserving and protecting critical areas. The City defines critical area wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, and geologically hazardous areas. These critical areas are regulated under the City's Critical Area Regulations (Ch. 20.50). The City does not contain any critical aquifer recharge areas or frequently flooded areas.

This section establishes critical areas policies based on best available science to protect the environment and enhance the community's quality of life within the constraints of a fully developed community.

The GMA also mandates the conservation of natural resources, such as agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands. However, Medina has none of these areas so natural resource lands will not be addressed further.

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The City of Medina is located within the Lake Washington/Cedar River/Sammamish Watershed, also known as Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 8.

The 2014 Critical Areas Map identifies and describes known critical areas within Medina. These critical areas include:

- Fairweather Park [Fairweather Nature Preserve];

- Medina Park and adjacent wetlands at Overlake Golf & Country Club;
- Portions of the Lake Washington shoreline, which are designated as erosion hazard areas;
- The Lake Washington shoreline in its entirety, which has moderate to high liquefaction susceptibility;
- a great blue heron priority habitat area in the northeast corner of Medina Park;
- a bald eagle nest buffer along the northern shoreline of Lake Washington;
- Medina Creek (a.k.a, Fairweather Bay Creek);
- an unnamed creek draining from the Medina Park ponds;
- an unnamed creek originating in the south Clyde Hill area;
- an unnamed creek connected to the Fairweather Park wetland; and
- a potential unnamed creek originating near Evergreen Point Road, north of NE 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

These features and their vegetated buffers provide moderate habitat functions for small mammals, a variety of birds, amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates typically found in urban green spaces. In addition, all of these features are adjacent to or ultimately drain into Lake Washington, a waterbody which contains federal Endangered Species Act-listed fish. However, none of these features, aside from the Lake Washington shoreline itself and the immediately accessible downstream reaches of the streams, contain federally listed fish. Therefore, from an ESA perspective, the most valuable function of these features to be preserved and enhanced is water quality treatment and storage, and groundwater recharge. Coho salmon are a State Priority Species, and have been observed in Medina Creek downstream (north) of SR 520. Recent improvements to culverts underneath SR 520 may allow coho salmon to pass upstream into Medina. Therefore, in-stream fish habitat on Medina Creek could also be enhanced. Other possible functions include passive recreation and environmental education.

## **GOALS**

- NE-G1 To achieve a well-balanced relationship between the built and natural environments utilizing guidance derived from best available science.
- NE-G2 To prioritize stormwater management, point and non-point pollutant discharge reduction, and erosion control methodologies to reduce short-term and long-term water quality impacts.
- NE-G3 To promote community-wide stewardship of the natural environment for future generations through protection, preservation/conservation, and enhancement of those natural environment features which are most sensitive to human activities and which are critical to fish and wildlife survival and proliferation.

## **POLICIES**

- NE-P1 The City shall maintain and update critical areas regulations as required by the GMA, and utilizing the best available science.

- NE-P2 The City shall preserve and should enhance where possible the functions and values of Medina's critical areas in a manner consistent with best available science.
- NE-P3 The City shall coordinate with other cities, King County, federal and state agencies, tribes, and the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council on regional environmental issues, such as surface and groundwater quality and quantity, and salmon conservation.
- NE-P4 No net loss of wetlands functions, values, and acreage should result from development.
- NE-P5 The City shall work to protect, preserve and, where possible, enhance water quality in Lake Washington, Medina Creek, and other streams.
- NE-P6 The City shall develop a mitigation incentives program that promotes improved water quality. Incentives should be monitored to determine effectiveness.
- NE-P7 The City shall work to preserve stream corridors wide enough to maintain and enhance existing stream and habitat functions in all development proposals by designation of native growth protection areas or other appropriate mechanisms.
- NE-P8 The City should restore Medina Creek to provide salmon habitat by developing and implementing a salmon restoration/habitat recovery plan.
- NE-P9 The City shall prohibit the introduction of invasive plant species and encourage enhancement of native plant communities in natural areas, which include, but are not limited to, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas and their buffers.
- NE-P10 The City should encourage and educate residents on development and land use practices that minimize impacts on the natural environment, with emphasis on anadromous fisheries.