
Sumas's Critical Areas Ordinance Amendments (2025-S-9793): WGS comments

From Sears, Tricia (DNR) <Tricia.Sears@dnr.wa.gov>

Date Thu 9/11/2025 4:59 PM

To Carson Cortez <CCortez@cityofsumas.com>

Cc Sears, Tricia (DNR) <Tricia.Sears@dnr.wa.gov>; Long, Lexine (COM) <lexine.long@commerce.wa.gov>

You don't often get email from tricia.sears@dnr.wa.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello Carson,

In keeping with the interagency correspondence principles, I am providing you with comments on Sumas's Critical Areas Ordinance Amendments (2025-S-9793).

For this proposal submitted via Planview, I looked at the proposal and focused on areas related to WGS work. Of note, but not limited to, I look for language around the geologically hazardous areas, mineral resource lands, mining, climate change, and natural hazards mitigation plans.

Specifically in this proposal, I reviewed the Draft CAO 8.26.25.docx. Kudos to you for updating your CAO!

There are two sections that are shown in red text and are proposed to be added are 15.20.220 and 15.20.445.

15.20.220 Land clearing and forest practices.

This section looks fine. You may have talked with DNR forestry staff about these provisions. If you haven't, suggest you do. There are three forest related divisions at DNR, Forest Resilience, Forest Regulation, and Forest Resources.

15.20.445 Variances.

This section is not entirely clear. It states that a critical areas variance is required. And it states "An application for a reasonable use development exception may be approved or approved with modification if the following criteria are met:..." So is the process that the person makes a critical areas review application with a reasonable use exception for a variance? Do they also need to provide the information required for a critical areas review? And they need to provide information for the specific critical area, e.g. geologically hazardous area or other critical area? Suggest clarifying the information.

Of note, the geologically hazardous areas provisions in 15.20.280-.410 are not proposed with changes. In interesting to note these provisions are very short and have limited detail. Suggest, in the future, considering review of other jurisdictions geologically hazardous areas provisions and adding more detailed provisions to the Sumas code. I am happy to provide examples if staff is interested.

Below, I include our usual language for this and future endeavors.

Recognizing the limitations of the current proposals, I want to mention that it would be great for you to consider these in current or future work, be it in your comprehensive plan, development code, and SMP updates, and in your work in general:

- Consider adding a reference to the definition of geologically hazardous areas, WAC 365-190-120, in other areas besides the CAO. In addition, consider adding a reference to WAC 365-196-480 for natural resource lands.

- Consider adding in other areas besides the CAO. If you have not checked our interactive database, the WGS Geologic Information Portal, lately, you may wish to do so. [Geologic Information Portal | WA - DNR](#)
- If you have not checked out our Geologic Planning page, you may wish to do so. [Geologic Planning | WA - DNR](#)

Thank you for considering our comments. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me. For your convenience, if there are no concerns or follow-up discussion, you may consider these comments to be final as of the 60-day comment deadline of 10/25/25.

Have a great day!

Cheerio,
Tricia

Tricia R. Sears (she/her/hers)

Geologic Planning Liaison

Washington Geological Survey (WGS)

Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Cell: 360-628-2867 | Email: tricia.sears@dnr.wa.gov