

Shoreline Master Program Updates: Lessons Learned

Getting Started



- Bring Ecology early on to your meetings with planning commission and elected officials. SMP 101 presentation sets framework for SMP update. Get notice on what's required.
- One-on-one meetings with Ecology staff and consultant are vital to a smooth process. Build relationships; keep communications open.
- Allocate your grant money so that you have some left at the end for public process, council review and needed revisions.
- Engage with the public early. Big learning curve on SMA and SMPs. Many people think SMA is a new law.
- Citizen and technical advisory committee members must understand their responsibilities and level of commitment. Establish ground rules.
- Long planning process – expect your SMP update to take 2-3 years or more.

Heads up – hot topics

- Vegetation conservation, shoreline buffers and setbacks.
 - Vegetation conservation needed to preserve ecological functions.
 - New SMP regulations apply to new development – they are not retroactive. The SMP can provide for flexibility, with mitigation.
 - Can be a challenging decision.
- Legally existing development.
 - Residential structures and appurtenances can be conforming with regard to buffers, setbacks, yards, area, bulk, height and density. (2011 legislation.)
 - Legally existing nonconforming development and uses can remain.
- Public access.
 - Public access should be required on public land.
 - Some public access requirements for private land.
 - No requirement for public access to private single family lots.
 - Public access plan provides comprehensive look.

SMP update under way

- SMP coordination meetings offer how-to's and networking. Regional coordination groups can focus on regional issues that you're dealing with.
- Tackle the controversial issues early. Address any misinformation early and often. Use our handouts on tough issues and FAQs.
- When in doubt, read your grant contract with Ecology. It's all spelled out.
- Fill in the SMP checklist as you go – could take days if you wait until the end. Required with each phase.

Problems we've encountered

- SMP provisions not based on inventory.
 - Example – 50 foot buffers throughout that do not reflect existing conditions and shoreline ecological functions.
 - Ecology requires shoreline recommendations for policies, regulations and environment designations in inventory and characterization.
- CAO incorporated wholesale into SMP.
 - Is CAO outdated or inconsistent with current science or Guidelines?
 - Does CAO address comments from state agencies on adequacy of buffers?
 - Some provisions of CAO such as reasonable use are not acceptable in SMP.
- No environment-specific regulations, particularly lot density and coverage, types of uses, buildings heights.
- Reliance on existing regulations to meet guidelines.
 - SMP must be based on the inventory and characterization, consistent with the SMA, and meet NNL requirement.
- No relationship between inventory & characterization, restoration plan, cumulative impacts analysis and SMP.
 - Recommendations in restoration plan should be policies in SMP.
 - Cumulative impacts analysis should come in with draft SMP and should analyze impacts of draft SMP. CI analysis may need to be revised if SMP changes.
- Inconsistent with Guidelines. Examples – SFR in Natural environment does not need a CUP, although required by guidelines. New floating homes allowed, although prohibited in guidelines.
- SMP internally inconsistent.
 - Tables inconsistent with text.
 - Policies conflict with regulations.