



# Shoreline Management Act Rulemaking Local Government Sounding Board



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April 21, 2025



# Agenda

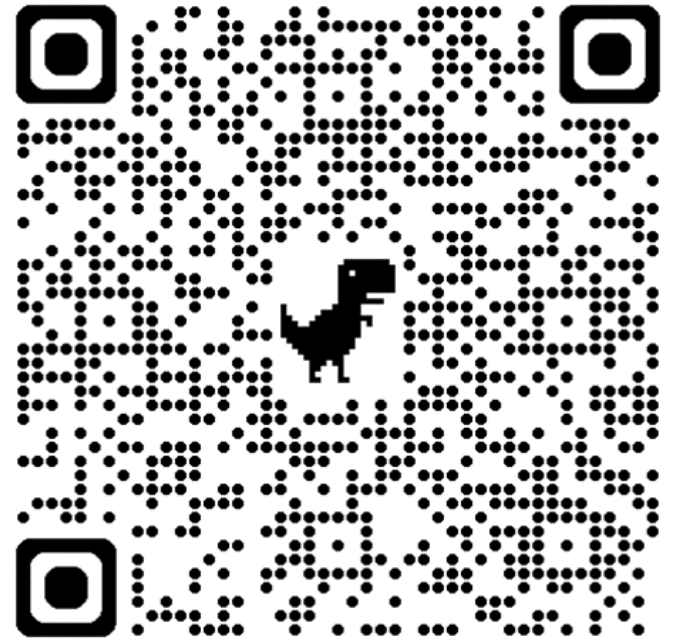
Time	Topic
1:00	Welcome, agenda review, tech logistics
1:10	Shoreline stabilization
2:45	Public input
2:55	Wrap up

# Meeting logistics

- **Sounding board members** can use the chat and raise hand features.
- Please stay muted when not speaking.
- Add questions & comments to the Q&A or chat.

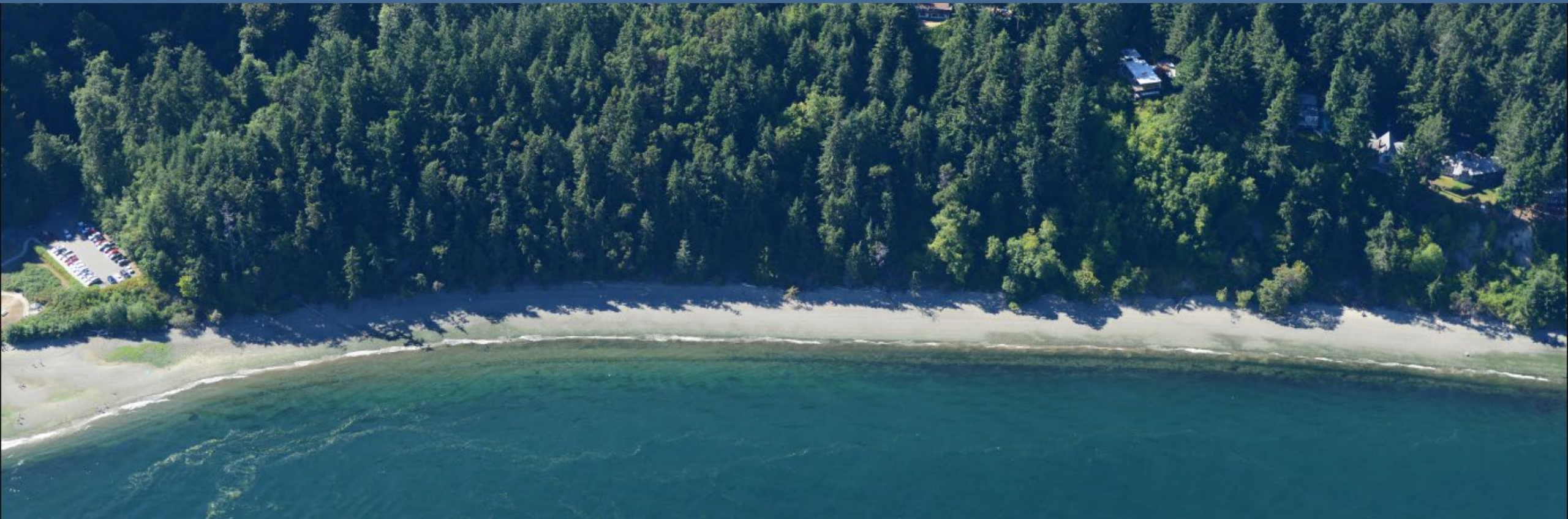
# Non-sounding board attendees

Please hold comments until the public input portion of the meeting at 2:45.





# Shoreline Stabilization



## Shoreline stabilization discussion objectives

An improved understanding of:

- What is considered shoreline stabilization
- How the SMA addresses shoreline stabilization
- Current rules around shoreline stabilization
- Considerations during this rulemaking

## What is shoreline stabilization?

Shoreline stabilization includes actions taken to **address erosion impacts** to property and dwellings, businesses, or structures caused by natural processes, such as current, flood, tides, wind, or wave action. These actions include structural and nonstructural methods.

# Types of stabilization



## Nonstructural methods

- Relocation of the structure to be protected,
- Groundwater management
- Planning and regulatory measures to avoid the need for structural stabilization.

## Structural methods

Ranges from hard to soft

- Seawall, bulkhead, bluff walls, gabion
- Rock revetment, gravel placement
- Anchor trees, beach enhancement
- Biotechnical measures, vegetation enhancement



- Defines "development" to include bulkheading.
- Provides an SDP exemption for certain single-family residential bulkheads.
- Provides an expedited process for review of single-family residential bulkheads.
- Requires SMPs to include standards for shoreline protection.
- Excludes shoreline modifications, such as shoreline stabilization structures, from the definition of appurtenant structures.

## How does the SMA address shoreline stabilization?

# RCW 90.58.100(6) SMP content requirements

- *Each master program shall contain standards governing the protection of single-family residences and appurtenant structures against damage or loss due to shoreline erosion.*
- *The standards shall govern the issuance of substantial development permits for shoreline protection, including structural methods such as construction of bulkheads, and nonstructural methods of protection.*
- *The standards shall provide for methods which achieve effective and timely protection against loss or damage to single-family residences and appurtenant structures due to shoreline erosion.*
- *The standards shall provide a preference for permit issuance for measures to protect single-family residences occupied prior to January 1, 1992, where the proposed measure is designed to minimize harm to the shoreline natural environment.*

## How our current rules address shoreline stabilization

- Clarify the exemption for certain single-family residential bulkheads.
- Include standards for shoreline protection.
- Address shoreline stabilization in the critical area protection standards.

# Current shoreline stabilization exemption

WAC 173-27-040(2)(c)

Construction of the normal protective bulkhead common to single-family residences.

- Includes those structural and nonstructural methods installed at or near, and parallel to, the ordinary high water mark
- **For the sole purpose of protecting an existing single-family residence and appurtenant structures from loss or damage by erosion.**
- Not exempt if constructed for the purpose of creating dry land.
- Limits the amount of backfill associated with vertical or near vertical walls to less than one cu ft.
- Vertical wall repairs cannot extend waterward of existing structures except as needed for footings.
- Replacement bulkhead must be located at or near the **actual** ordinary high water mark.
- Can include beach nourishment and bioengineered erosion control.

# Applicability of SMP provisions

## **WAC 173-26-191 Master program contents – Applicability.**

The SMA provisions and master program policies and regulations apply to all development and uses in shoreline jurisdiction, whether or not a shoreline permit is required.

## **SMP standards are still applied.**

Activities that might be exempt from the shoreline substantial development permit process are still subject to the standards provided in the SMP, including shoreline stabilization for existing single-family residences.

# Ecological protection standards for shoreline stabilization

WAC 173-26-221(2)(c)(iii) – Critical Saltwater Habitats

WAC 173-26-221(2)(c)(iv)(B)(II) – Critical Freshwater Habitats

WAC 173-26-221(3) – Flood Hazard Reduction

WAC 173-26-221(5)(b) – Shoreline Vegetation Conservation

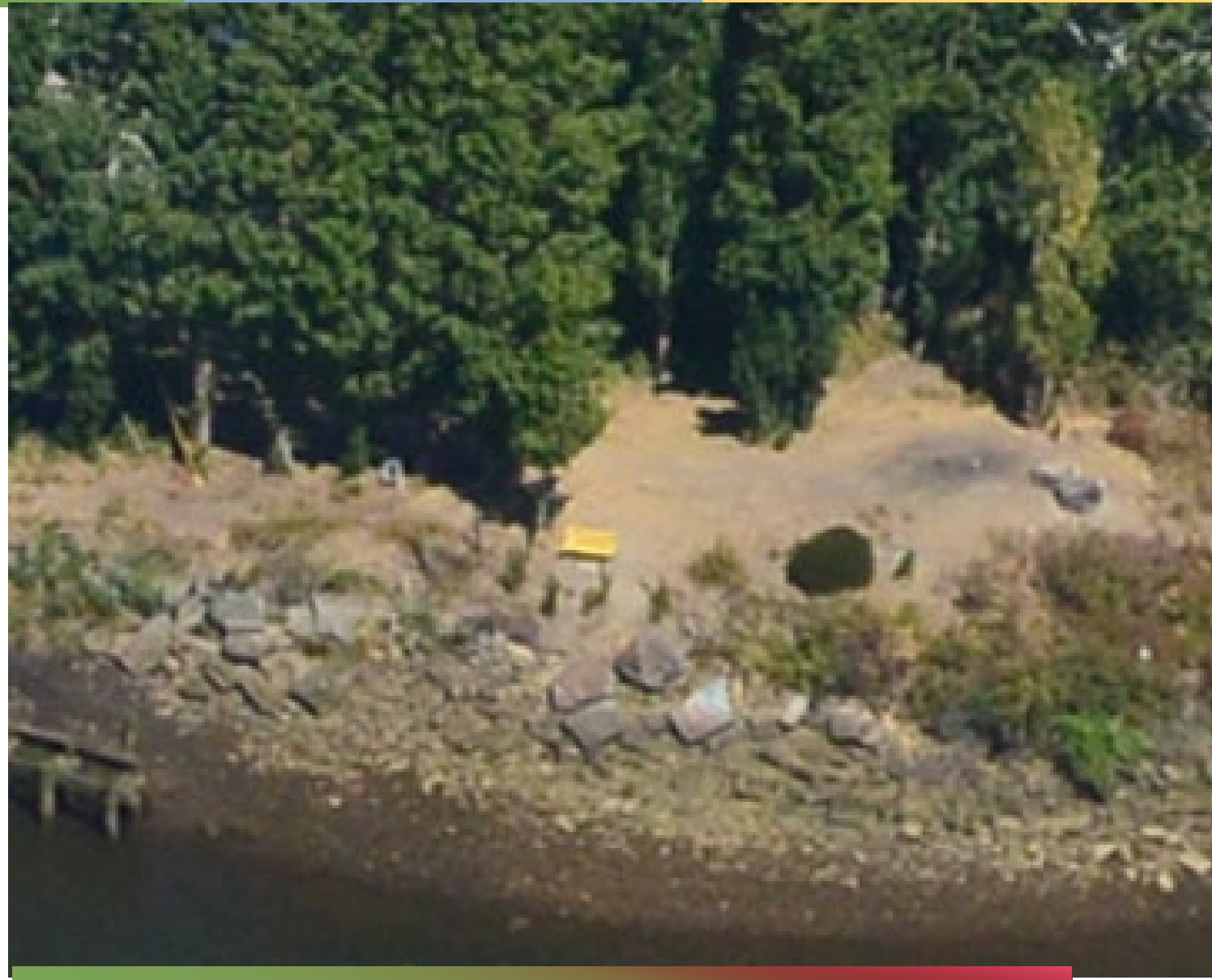


# Standards for shoreline stabilization

WAC 173-26-231(3)(a)  
Shoreline Stabilization

WAC 173-26-221(2)(c)  
Geologically Hazardous  
Area Standards

WAC 173-26-211(5)(f)(ii)  
Shoreline Residential  
Management Policies



# Preference for soft alternatives over hard

There is a range of measures varying from soft to hard that include:

- vegetation enhancement • upland drainage control
- biotechnical measures • beach enhancement
- anchor trees • gravel placement • rock revetments
- gabions • concrete groins • retaining walls and bluff walls • bulkheads • seawalls

[WAC 173-26-231\(3\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)



# Shoreline stabilization provisions already in SMPs

- Do not allow new development that would require structural shoreline stabilization over the life of the development.
- Allow new shoreline stabilization only
  - to protect existing primary residential structures or
  - for water-oriented uses, or
  - for ecological restoration, or
  - for non-water-oriented uses if no other alternative is feasible.
- Requires vegetation conservation as a means to increase the stability of riverbanks and coastal bluffs, to reduce the need for structural shoreline stabilization measures.
- Some SMPs require a shoreline conditional use permit for hard stabilization.
- Requires geotechnical report to demonstrate need, i.e., structure in danger within three years.

## Considerations for this rulemaking

- Modify exemption language in WAC 173-27-040.
- Consolidate standards for shoreline stabilization to WAC 173-26-231.
- Address channel migration zones, sea level rise, and coastal flooding in new sections intended to reduce the confusion between flood or inundation protection and shoreline stabilization.
- Add the concept of nature-based solutions.

# Adding new definition and clarification

(XX) “Shoreline stabilization” means actions taken to address erosion impacts to property and dwellings, businesses, or structures caused by natural processes, such as current, tides, stream flow, wind, or wave action. These actions include structural and nonstructural methods.

\*Shoreline stabilization is not an appropriate approach to mitigate the impacts of coastal flooding. Coastal flooding refers to when seawater temporarily covers land that is normally dry and can be caused by high tides, storm surge, or waves, and is often caused by a combination of factors. Coastal flooding can also interact with riverine, surface, and groundwater flooding. Sea level rise increases the frequency, extent, and severity of coastal flooding.

# Modifying exemption language in WAC 173-27-040

- Address the applicability of the repair and maintenance exemption to shoreline stabilization.
- Address the exemption for new installation, repair, and replacement of the single-family residential bulkhead in one place.
- Address emergency actions related to shoreline stabilization, limiting these actions to only those necessary to abate the emergency. Clarify that after-the-fact permitting for new permanent shoreline stabilization is not allowed.

# Shoreline stabilization standards WAC 173-26-231

Consolidate, simplify, and/or add the following provisions:

- Applicability
- Principles
- General shoreline stabilization standards
- Additional standards for shoreline stabilization on marine waters
- More comprehensive geotechnical report requirements
- Alternatives analysis requirements
- Ecological impact analysis requirements
- New requirement to demonstrate that the chosen alternative is the least ecologically impactful and will effectively abate the erosion hazard for the life of the endangered structure.

# New flood hazard reduction standards in WAC 173-26-231

New section to address flood hazard reduction modification

- Applicability
- Principles
- Standards for freshwater
- Standards for marine waters

\*this new section is connected to and implementing:

- New frequently flooded area and coastal flooding provisions and modified flood hazard reduction provisions in the critical area protection section.
- Sea level rise planning requirements

# New definition for nature-based solutions

(XX) “Nature-based solutions” means measures that leverage naturally occurring processes and materials to mitigate shoreline hazards. They can be composed of soft or hard elements, depending on shoreline conditions. Specific approaches vary based on the shoreline environment and are appropriately scaled to align with local coastal processes while minimizing ecological impacts. Nature-based solutions offer multiple benefits, including coastal resilience, improved nearshore habitat, and social benefits such as recreation and beach access.

# Nature-based solutions

New emphasis on prioritizing not just soft stabilization options, but nature-based solutions.

- Where shoreline modifications to address erosion or flooding are warranted and permissible, nature-based solutions should be prioritized over other types of interventions.
- In order to be classified as a nature-based solution, projects must be multi-benefit and demonstrate how they are aligned with localized naturally occurring processes.
- Clarifying that nature-based solutions and soft shoreline techniques used in replacement projects can be allowed waterward of the ordinary high-water mark.



# Discussion



# Upcoming Sounding Board Meetings

Date	Topic
<del>5/19</del>	<del>Present sections of the informal draft and get feedback</del>
6/16 & 7/21	Present sections the preliminary draft and get feedback
Aug & Sept	No sounding board meetings
Oct - Dec	Meeting invites have been sent out; register to get a calendar invite

# Public input

Public attendees may now raise your Zoom hand if you wish to speak. Please wait for us to call on you.

## eComment closed April 1

- We anticipate re-opening eComment on June 16 when the preliminary draft is made available.
- The informal comment period is anticipated to be June 16 - August 15, 2025





Thank you!

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