

## Wetlands

### ENVIRONMENTALLY CRITICAL AREAS

#### WHAT IS A WETLAND?

- Wetlands are areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.
- Wetlands do **not** include: irrigation & drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, canals, detention facilities, farm ponds, and landscape amenities.

#### WHY ARE WETLANDS IMPORTANT?

Wetlands perform many useful natural processes, including functions that are important in facilitating:

- Food chain production
- Aquatic, terrestrial & avian habitat
- Maintaining availability and quality of water
- Acting as recharge and discharge areas for groundwater aquifers
- Moderating surface & stormwater flows

#### WETLAND TYPES

Wetlands in Washington State are rated on a point scale and sorted into four categories based on:

- Sensitivity to disturbance
- Rarity
- Our ability to replace them
- Functions they provide

Based on the derived habitat score, wetlands are then categorized on a scale of I-IV. This is used to determine the required buffers of protection, which is useful in determining a property's development potential.

#### WETLAND BUFFERS

Wetland buffers, measured from the outer edge of the wetland boundary, are established based on the category of wetland and the habitat score as determined by a qualified professional using the [Washington State Wetland Rating System for Western Washington: 2014 Update](#).

#### IMPORTANT NOTES:

- In addition to category and habitat score, buffer widths vary depending on the presence of other **priority habitats**, as determined by Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- If **priority habitats** are identified within 300 feet of the wetland, then a **100 foot wide corridor** of relatively undisturbed, native vegetation must be in place.

If this **100 foot wide vegetated corridor** exists, *and* if mitigation measures have been established according to **Table 16.16.320-2**, (on the following page), then the buffers are as listed in **Table 16.16.320-1**.

## REDUCED BUFFERS WITH MITIGATION

Table 16.16.320-1

Category of wetland ↓	Habitat Score →	Buffer width (in feet) based on habitat score			
		3 – 4	5	6 – 7	8 – 9
I, except as below		75	105	165	225
I, bogs and wetlands of high conservation value		190	190	190	225
II, all		75	105	165	225
III, all		60	105	165	225
IV, all		40			

## MITIGATION MEASURES

Table 16.16.320-2

Disturbance	Required measures to minimize impacts if applicable to proposal
Lights	Direct lights away from wetland
Noise	Locate activity that generates noise away from wetland
	If warranted, enhance existing buffer with native vegetation plantings adjacent to noise source
	For activities that generate relatively continuous, potentially disruptive noise, such as certain heavy industry, establish an additional 10-foot heavily vegetated buffer strip immediately adjacent to the outer wetland buffer
Toxic runoff	Route all new, untreated runoff away from wetland while ensuring wetland is not dewatered
	Establish covenants limiting use of pesticides within 150 feet of wetland
	Apply integrated pest management
Stormwater runoff	Retrofit stormwater detention and treatment for roads and existing adjacent development
	Prevent channelized flow from lawns that directly enters the buffer
	Use low impact development techniques
Change in water regime	Infiltrate or treat, detain, and disperse into buffer new runoff from impervious surfaces and new lawns
Pets and human disturbance	Use privacy fencing or plant dense vegetation to delineate buffer edge and to discourage disturbance using vegetation appropriate for the ecoregion
	Place wetland and its buffer in a separate tract or protect with a conservation easement
Dust	Use best management practices to control dust

If the 100 foot vegetated corridor does not exist, is not proposed to be established, and the mitigation measures in **Table 16.16.320-2** above will not be implemented, then the wetland buffers will be listed in **Table 16.16.320-3** (on the following page).

## STANDARD BUFFERS

Table 16.16.320-3

Category of wetland ↓	Habitat Score →	Buffer width (in feet) based on habitat score			
		3 – 4	5	6 – 7	8 – 9
I, except as below		100	140	220	300
I, bogs and wetlands of high conservation value		250	250	250	300
II, all		100	140	220	300
III, all		80	140	220	300
IV, all		50			

Note that increased buffer widths shall be required when necessary to protect wetlands, based on criteria in [LFPMC 16.16.320-E](#). These criteria includes the following: 1. The presence of critical drainage areas; 2. Location of hazardous materials; 3. The presence of critical fish and wildlife habitat; 4. The presence of landslide or erosion hazard areas adjacent to wetlands; 5. The presence of groundwater recharge and discharge; and 6. The location of trail or utility corridors.

### PERMITTED ALTERATIONS

Consult the City of Lake Forest Park [Critical Areas Code](#) and the Planning Department for more specific information about:

- Wetland & wetland buffer crossings
- Restoration
- Establishment
- Enhancement/Maintenance

### ADDITIONAL WETLAND PROTECTION

- Vegetation or wildlife that are not native to the Pacific Northwest cannot be introduced into a wetland buffer without approval by the City of Lake Forest Park.
- Removal of invasive plant species shall be restricted to hand removal unless permits from the appropriate regulatory agencies have been obtained for approved biological or chemical treatments. All removed plant material shall be taken away from the site and appropriately disposed of. Plants that appear on the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board [list of noxious weeds](#) must be handled and disposed of according to a noxious weed control plan appropriate to that species.
- All permitted alterations are subject to conditions and requirements administered through a [critical areas work permit](#).

#### Questions?

For more information, please contact the Planning Department  
[aplanner@cityofflp.com](mailto:aplanner@cityofflp.com)  
 206-957-2837

#### Access to Information

Electronic versions of all forms, permits, applications, and codes are available on the Lake Forest Park website:  
<http://www.cityofflp.com/>  
 Paper copies of all of the above are available at City Hall:  
 17425 Ballinger Way Northeast, Lake forest Park, WA 98155  
 206-368-5440

**DISCLAIMER:** The information contained herein is meant to provide general information about Wetlands. This summary is not a substitute for the codes or regulations, and does not include information pertaining to other land use and building permit requirements and procedures. Additionally, the conditions and regulations described in this bulletin do not address any state or federal regulations regarding the listing of salmonid species under the Endangered Species Act and should not be construed as such. Environmentally Critical Area requirements can and do sometimes change after action by the City Council. Interested parties should always verify current requirements with the City Planning Department.