

November 19, 2025  
Thurston County Planning  
Commission

# CAO Update: Best Available Science and Agency Guidance

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# Presentation Outline

- What is Best Available Science (BAS)?
- BAS and Guidance for:
  - Geologically Hazardous Areas
  - Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas
  - Frequently Flooded Areas
  - Wetlands
  - Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas



Intro



# What is BAS?

- Defined in WAC 365-195-905
- Several factors can determine scientific validity
  - Peer review
  - Methods
  - Logical conclusions and reasonable inferences
  - Quantitative analysis
  - Context
  - References



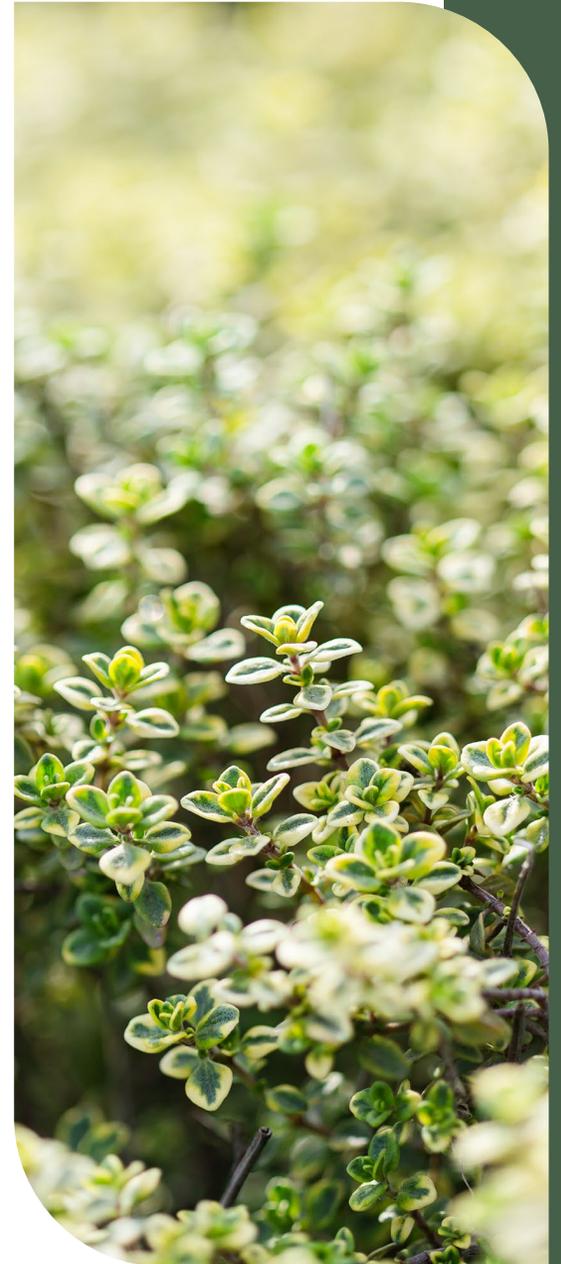
What is BAS?

## What *isn't* BAS?

- Anecdotal information. Experiences or observations which are not part of an organized scientific effort
- Nonexpert opinion. Opinion of a person who is not a qualified scientific expert
- Hearsay. Information repeated from communication with others



What is BAS



# Why and How do we use BAS?

- Counties and cities must use BAS per RCW 36.70A.172
- Staff reviews and presents BAS, then incorporates recommendations
- Public may submit relevant BAS for consideration



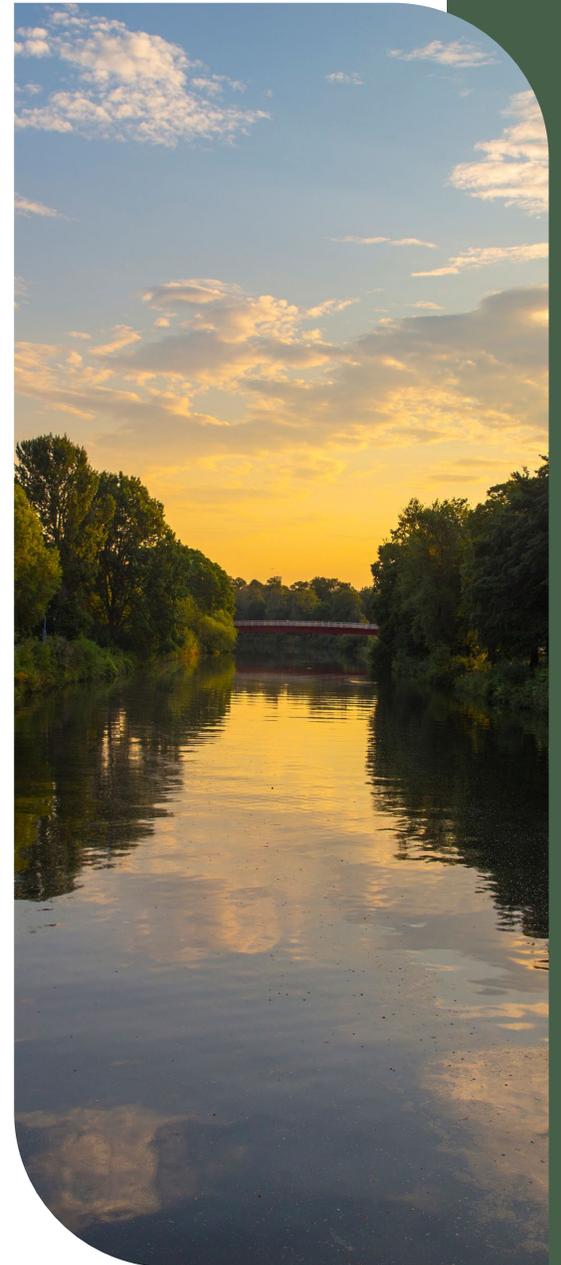
What is BAS?

# Geologically Hazardous Areas

- Primary Agency: WA Dept. Of Natural Resources (DNR)
  - US Geological Survey
  - Thurston Regional Planning Council



Geologically Hazardous Areas



# Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

- Primary Agency: WA Dept. Of Ecology (Ecology)
  - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Stormwater management and pollution avoidance



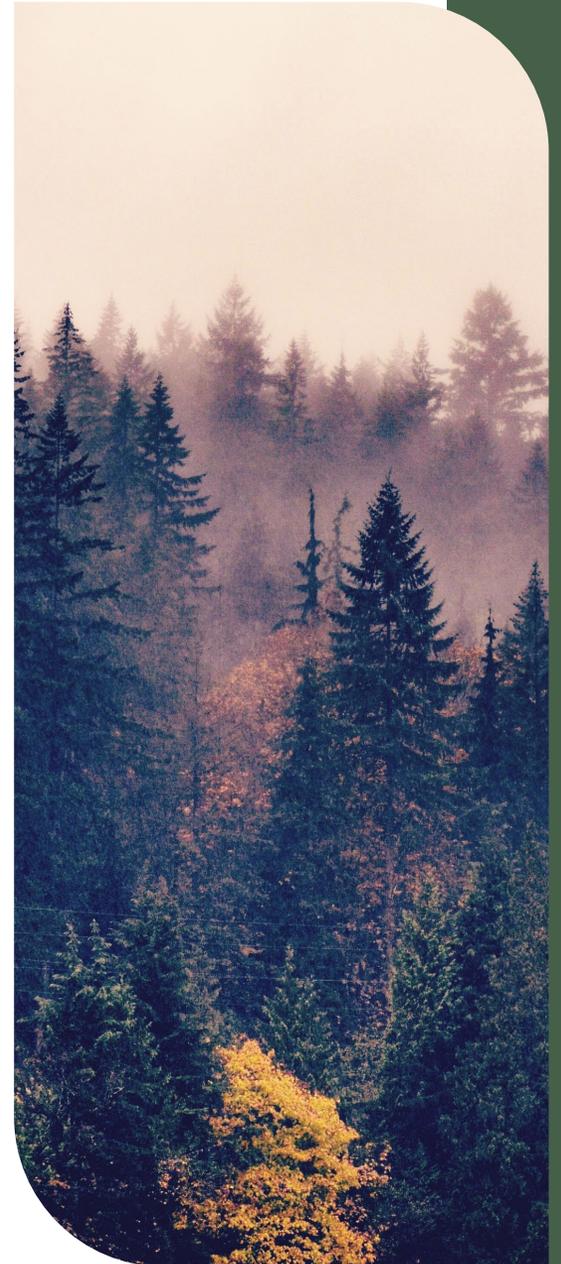
CARAs

# Frequently Flooded Areas

- Primary Agency: FEMA
  - DNR, Ecology, TRPC
- Mainly delineated by FEMA flood maps
- Additional designations: High groundwater and flood of record
- CAO will align with new FHMP



FFAs



# Wetlands

- Primary Agency: Ecology
  - Army Corps of Engineers
- Ecology provides guidance for delineating, classifying, and regulating wetlands
- Other agencies have also provided guidance for wetland mitigation

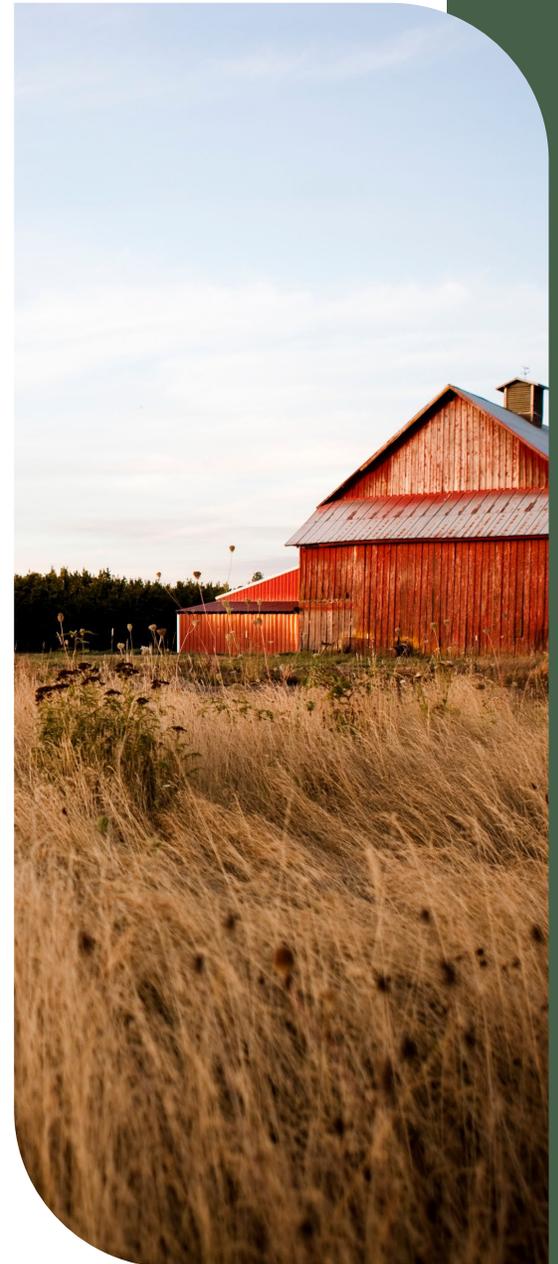


# Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

- Primary Agency: WA Dept. Of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
  - Ecology
- Designates Priority Habitats and Species (PHS)
- Delineating and protecting aquatic, riparian, and dryland habitats



FWHCAs



10/1/25	Permitting/front counter demonstration
10/15/25	Draft schedule overview and prioritization discussion
11/5/25	Schedule finalization (as needed)
11/19/25	Overview of state guidance and BAS
12/3/25	Geologic Hazard Areas Concepts
12/17/25	Invite DNR to present new landslide mapping
1/7/26	Frequently Flooded Areas and Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas Concepts
1/21/26	No Meeting
2/4/26	Geo Hazards code presentation
2/18/26	FFA and CARA code presentation
3/4/26	Wetlands
3/18/26	Wetland and Hydrologic FWHCAs
4/1/26	Dryland Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
4/15/26	Presentation on SMP and HCP integration
5/6/26	No Meeting
5/20/26	Permit Processes, FWHCAs and Wetlands code presentation
June-July 2026	Final review, public hearing, and recommendation



## Schedule

# Questions and Comments

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Find future project updates at [ThurstonCriticalAreas.org](http://ThurstonCriticalAreas.org).

