August 19, 2026
Thurston County Planning Commission

CAO Update: Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas Gap Analysis

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Follow-up discussion: Wetlands

- Public comments included concerns about single-family expedited approval
  - May be redundant with the Option 1+3 framework
- Any other discussion or questions?

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Presentation Outline: FWHCA Gap Analysis

- Key BAS points
- Gap analysis and recommended changes
- Discussion



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1 Intro

Key BAS Points

- FWHCAs represent many diverse and sensitive parts of the landscape, including streams, prairies, trees, and more
- FWHCAs include rare ecosystems and areas that support threatened or endangered species
- Riparian areas provide habitat and protect water quality, quantity, and temperature
  - Buffer width is the most important factor for riparian and stream health
  - Non-fish-bearing streams are not less ecologically important than fish-bearing streams

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Key BAS Points

- Prairies support a broad variety of rare, threatened, and endangered plants and animals
- The Westside Prairie ecosystem has been managed by Indigenous peoples of the region since time immemorial
- Oregon White Oak stands, woodlands, and some individual trees act as critical habitat

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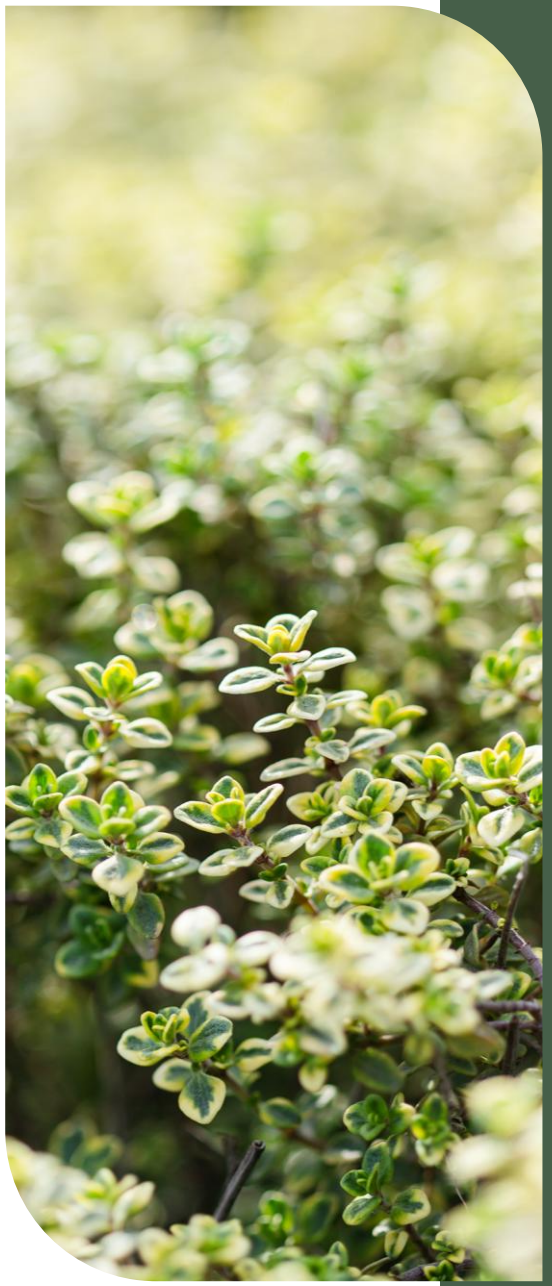
Other desired changes

- Transparency in screening tools and report requirements
- Flexibility where appropriate
- Clarity and navigability of code language



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Gap analysis

Code Section	Title	Recommendations	Reason
24.25.013 (New)	Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas designated	Provide clear designation criteria for all regulated FWHCAs	Clarity and accessibility
24.25.020	Standard freshwater riparian habitat width	Use WDFW riparian management zone delineation and management recommendations	BAS, State agency guidance
24.25.025	Reduced riparian habitat width	Use WDFW riparian management zone delineation and management recommendations	BAS, State agency guidance

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Gap analysis

Code Section	Title	Recommendations	Reason
24.25.040	Riparian management zones	Incorporate into implementation of WDFW riparian management zone guidance	BAS, State agency guidance
24.25.070	Tree protection	Include provisions for restoration, particularly in prairies	Feedback from conservation groups, BAS
24.25.075	Important habitats and species – Identification and buffers	Include prescriptive provisions for development in prairie areas	BAS, process improvements, clarity

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Gap analysis

Code Section	Title	Recommendations	Reason
Table 24.25-3	Approvable uses and restrictions within fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas	Use designations that reflect the riparian management zone framework, and include more specificity for other habitats, like prairies	Clarity, BAS
Table 24.25-3	Approvable uses and restrictions within fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas	Reflect common use recommendations from WDFW	BAS, State agency guidance

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Discussion

- Question, concerns, or ideas about the RMZ framework
- Thoughts on prairie management
- Are any additional changes needed?
- Questions?

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Meeting Date	Topic
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	No meeting- Power outage
1/7/26	Invite DNR to present new landslide mapping
1/21/26	Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas Concepts
2/4/26	Frequently Flooded Areas Concepts
2/18/26	No Meeting
3/4/26	Geo Hazards code presentation
3/18/26	FFA and CARA code presentation
4/1/26	Wetlands
4/15/26	Wetland and Hydrologic FWHCAs
5/6/26	Dryland Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
5/20/26	Presentation on SMP and HCP integration

Meeting Date	Topic
6/3/26	Invite DFW to present on FWHCAs
6/17/26	GHA Gap Analysis and Feedback Incorporation
7/1/26	CARA Gap Analysis and Feedback Incorporation
7/15/26	FFA Gap Analysis and Feedback Incorporation
8/5/26	Wetland Gap Analysis and Feedback Incorporation
8/19/26	FWHCA Gap Analysis and Feedback Incorporation
9/2/26	Wetlands Draft Code
9/16/26	Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas Draft Code
10/7/21	Revisit Wetlands and FWHCAs
10/21/26	Permit Processes and General Standards
11/4/26	Revisit Permit Processes and General Standards
11/18/26	Hearing Draft Overview (Open house before PC)
12/2/26	Anticipated Public Hearing
12/16/26	No Meeting Planned
1/6/27	Code Draft Workshop 1
1/20/27	Code Draft Workshop 2
Feb-March 2027	Finalizing and Recommendation

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7 Schedule

Questions and Comments

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Find future project updates at ThurstonCriticalAreas.org.

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