



[www.redmond.gov/ZoningCode](http://www.redmond.gov/ZoningCode)

# Critical Areas—Wetlands

DR005c



## What is a wetland?

Wetlands are areas that are frequently inundated or saturated by surface and/or groundwater and often support vegetation that naturally is adapted to semi-aquatic soils. Wetlands come in a variety of types such as forested swamps, open marshes, peat bogs, or a mixture of other such conditions. They exist in both freshwater and estuarine water bodies.

The three following characteristics identify the presence of a wetland:

**Hydric Soils** are soils that form under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding. These soils develop through anaerobic (oxygen lacking) conditions.

**Wetland Hydrology** is standing water and/or soil saturation at the surface for a least part of the year.

**Hydrophytic Vegetation** are water-tolerant or water-dependent plants and are predominate in a wetland.

## Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands provide a variety of important ecological and economic functions, including:

- Reduction of flooding, erosion, and runoff during periods of storm and flood waters by providing areas for water to be stored.
- Improved water quality by filtration and removal of nutrients and contaminants as well as storage of sediments.
- Recharge and discharge of

aquifers.

- Maintenance of stream flows during low flow periods by slowly releasing water stored after storm events or peak wet seasons.
- Stabilization of river, stream banks, and other shoreline areas.
- Sustained habitat and wildlife diversity; wetlands can be an important source for nomadic species and migratory birds.
- An amenity for passive recreation, education, scientific study, and aesthetic appreciation.

## Are wetlands protected and regulated?

Wetlands are protected because they are a critical and rare resource that provide wide ranging ecological, social, and economic benefits.

In accordance with the Growth Management Act, the City of Redmond's Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) uses best environmental practices. The CAO regulates development activity with on-site and adjacent wetlands by setting specific standards for environmental protection of wetlands before, during, and after development in and around wetlands.

For detailed regulations, please see Redmond Zoning Code [Section 21.64.030, Wetlands](#).

### Non-Regulated Wetlands

Some wetlands may not be regulated



by the City. This can be for a variety of reasons, such as: wetland size, wetland category, date of creation, which thus deems the wetland exempt from the CAO regulatory authority. Other individual circumstances may also exist that exempts a wetland from regulation. A special report must be prepared to determine this.

## How do I know if my property is constrained by a wetland?

The City of Redmond has wetland maps that may help identify if a property could be constrained by a wetland. While the data is not exhaustive of all current wetlands in the city, it can be a good starting point. Planning and Community Development can provide assistance with locating wetlands using our maps and data.

In many cases where there is a suspected wetland, a qualified wetland specialist is necessary to prepare a detailed wetland report called a "wetland delineation". The wetland



specialist investigates the site and provides a report that consists of the existing soil, water, vegetation, and other related conditions. These conditions are examined in terms of the presence, type, extent, and boundaries of any wetland.

The reporting techniques can be found in the Redmond Zoning Code [Appendix 1: Critical Areas Reporting Requirements](#). Additionally, Planning and Community Development can provide a list of qualified wetland consultants.

### Protective Buffers

The designation and establishment of protective buffers are intended to protect and minimize impacts to wetlands by providing separation between wetlands and development activities.

Regulated wetlands are protected by vegetated buffers that are based on three primary criteria characteristics:

- A. **Quality of Wetland** which is categorized from Category I to Category IV;
- B. **Quality of Habitat** provided by the wetland which can range from low to high quality; and
- C. **Intensity of Proposed Land Use** which may range from low to high intensity.

Protective buffers surrounding wetlands can range from 25 feet to 300 feet depending upon the above-mentioned criteria characteristics.

The wetland category and habitat value are determined per the revised 2006 [Washington State Wetland Rating System for Western Washington](#).

In exceptional circumstances, the City may vary the standard buffers for wetlands through buffer reductions or buffer averaging. Where circumstances warrant it, the City may require buffers that exceed the minimum standard widths in order to protect wetland function and value.

### Reasonable Use

Permit applications that are unable to comply with specific standards of the CAO may seek approval pursuant to “reasonable use” standards and procedures. In order to qualify, a proposal must meet several criteria, including but not limited to, demonstration that there is no feasible alternative, adverse impacts will be avoided to the maximum extent possible, and unavoidable impacts will be mitigated.

### Mitigation

Proposed activities that will adversely affect wetlands and/or wetland buffers are required to mitigate potential impacts by the following:

1. Avoid adverse impacts altogether.
2. Minimize adverse impacts by limiting the magnitude of the action.
3. Mitigate the adverse impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment.
4. Reduce or eliminate adverse impacts gradually by preservation

and maintenance during the life of the action.

5. Compensate for the impact.

### Mitigation Plan

A compensatory mitigation plan must be developed when a project creates unavoidable adverse wetland and/or wetland buffer impacts. The purpose of a compensatory mitigation plan is to identify installation and monitoring provisions. These provisions will implement appropriate mitigation measures to address wetland and/or wetland buffer functions and values that are impacted by the proposed development.

### Wetland Protection

Protecting wetlands requires public education, involvement, and cooperation. Depending upon the specific circumstances of a project, the City may require that the wetlands and buffers on the respective property to be identified with a Critical Area sign, markers or protective fencing, and/or a notice on the property title to ensure that areas are fully protected.

If a property contains a wetland, there are ways that it should be protected. Dumping, draining, or filling near a wetland should be avoided. Even yard waste can cause degradation of the functions and value of a wetland.

For more information about preservation of wetlands or how you may be affected by the CAO, please contact Planning and Community Development via e-mail at [PlannerOnCall@redmond.gov](mailto:PlannerOnCall@redmond.gov) or phone at 425-556-2494.

#### Applicable Code Sections

RZC 21.64.030: Wetlands

RZC Appendix 1: Critical Areas Reporting Requirements

**Questions:** 425-556-2494 or [planneroncall@redmond.gov](mailto:planneroncall@redmond.gov).

You can also visit us in person at the Development Services Center located on the 2nd floor of City Hall. Open Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm.

Development Services Center  
15670 NE 85th St PO BOX  
97010 Redmond, WA 98073