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Introduction to Critical Areas

DR005a



What is a critical area?

Critical areas are defined by their character and value. Areas that are determined as critical require special regulatory attention in order to protect their intrinsic environmental value and/or provide for the public health and safety.

Critical areas are appropriately designated by their type and any subset categorization for the purposes of regulation. Regulations are specifically tailored in order to effectively mitigate or prevent impacts and maintain the character, value, and function of critical areas.

Consistent with the State Growth Management Act, five broad types of critical areas are recognized by the City of Redmond: *Geologically Hazardous Areas*, *Wetlands*, *Frequently Flooded Areas*, *Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas*, and *Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas*.

Critical Area Types

Geologically Hazardous Areas may be susceptible to erosion, sliding, earthquakes, and other geological events. As a result, these areas are not suitable for structural development because of life concerns.

Wetlands 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.

Frequently Flooded Areas are lands within a floodplain that are highly susceptible to flooding. Frequently flooded areas are defined as having a one percent change or greater in any given year of having a significant flood event. This is known as the 100-Year Flood. Flooding can come from a variety of sources, including: streams, rivers, lakes, and wetlands.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs) are lands and streams critically important to maintaining specific types of fish, wildlife, and plant species. The HCAs help prevent isolation, fragmentation, and degradation of habitat and species populations by protecting the natural ecosystems. Many of these areas serve as migratory and unique habitat for bird nesting, fish spawning, and other wildlife activity. HCAs commonly provide refuge for endangered and threatened species.

Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas are any aquifer source used for drinking water



that is both highly susceptible and vulnerable to contamination. The contamination of these aquifers are particularly susceptible in the area around the water extraction point and through permeable soils, permeable surficial geology, and groundwater close to the ground surface throughout the aquifer.

For detailed information on associated regulations and how critical areas may impact you, please refer to the other handouts in the Critical Areas Series (*Geologically Hazardous Areas*, *Wetlands*, *Frequently Flooded Areas*, *Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas*, and *Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas*).

Applicable Code Sections

RCZ 21.64: Critical Areas

Questions: 425-556-2494 or 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.

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