Shoreline Vegetation
Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater

Shorelines are naturally full of a rich diversity of life: plants, animals, and microorganism. The proposed update to the Shoreline Master Program places increasing importance in keeping these systems healthy, by adding new standards for vegetation conservation.

The Problem

Traditional lawns are not particularly harmful, but they do not have the benefits of a more natural shoreline. Lawns are shallow rooted, provide little wildlife habitat, need frequent maintenance, and are often over-fertilized. These factors can lead to problems on lakes such as:

- Shoreline erosion and lake sedimentation
- Algal blooms and excessive aquatic plant growth
- Loss of wildlife habitat, but an increase in nuisance animals

Planting Natural Vegetation

Placing a strip of natural plants along the shoreline between the water and buildings will help keep the water body healthier. Natural shoreline vegetation provides the following benefits:

- Provide habitat and food for a wide variety of wildlife, including fish
- Filter out pollutants and nutrients from surface runoff that degrade water quality
- Prevent shoreline erosion by absorbing wave action
- Stabilizes banks

Natural shoreline vegetation along a lake in Minnesota.
http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakescaping/index.html

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Shoreline Vegetation Standards
Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater

The proposed update to the Shoreline Master Program includes new requirements for vegetation conservation. The idea is to slowly replace lawns and turf along shorelines with native vegetation as shoreline properties develop or redevelop.

The proposed new standards are required on parcels with waterfront access when:

- A new structure is constructed
- An existing structure is remodeled and square footage is added
- An accessory structure (such as a garage, deck, or patio) is added
- Any development action requiring a shoreline permit is taken

In order to move toward the goal of restoring native vegetation to shorelines incrementally, the proposal includes a sliding scale for how much vegetation restoration is required.

New Structures

New structures will require a full vegetation plan including retention of native vegetation or replanting to restore vegetation. The plan must be prepared by a qualified forester or landscaper, and indicate the type and location of native vegetation, including an overstory, understory, and floor of herbs of native plants. Native vegetation will be required within 75 percent of the distance of the shoreline setback.

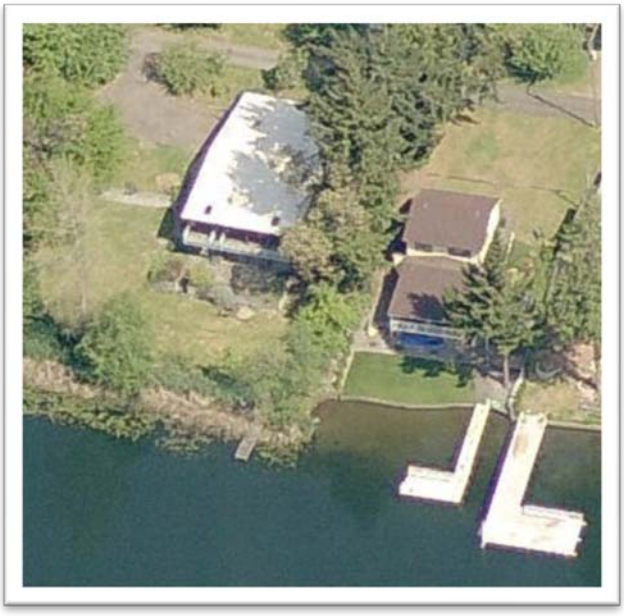
Additions or Accessory Structures

Additions that are 50 percent or more of the existing square footage must also meet the full requirements, which are:

- A vegetation plan to retain or restore vegetation in 50 percent of the distance between the existing structure and the shoreline.

For smaller additions, part of the requirements will be waived, as shown in the table.

Additional Square Footage (as percent of existing)	Percentage of Requirement that must be met (as outlined above)
1-15%	20%
16-30%	40%
31-40%	60%
41-49%	80%



Examples of two different approaches to shoreline vegetation – Pattison Lake, Lacey

Other Shoreline Development Actions

Other development actions that require a shoreline permit - such as new docks or bulkheads - will require meeting shoreline vegetation standards. In order to encourage removal of hard armored bulkheads to soft shorelines, the vegetation standards can be waived or modified if the development is leading to an increase in restoration of shoreline ecological function.

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