

Ecology Unveils Modernized Shoreline Master Program Website

OLYMPIA, WA, May 26, 2010 — The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) has launched a [new shoreline master program website](#) designed to help the public, local governments and the media better understand and get involved in the process of updating shoreline master programs. The shoreline master programs website, includes:

- A citizen guide for the public to learn more and help shape the future of Washington's shorelines — including frequently asked questions.
- A shoreline planner's toolbox to provide guidance and resources for local governments to help them update their shoreline master programs.
- Information about shoreline permits and enforcement.
- Media kit to find news releases and related information about shoreline master programs.

Gordon White, manager of Ecology's Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program, said: "Managing how state shorelines are used and developed is important. It helps preserve what we value and protect life and property. Sharing and caring for shorelines is everyone's responsibility."

He added, "Washingtonians treasure their beaches, their shorelines, and the waterways that define so much of what makes our state a wonderful place to live, work and play."

Washington has about 28,000 miles of shorelines — more than the distance around the globe. In 1972, voters approved the state Shoreline Management Act (SMA) which established a bill of rights regarding Washington's shorelines.

The act has three basic goals — protect the environmental resources of state shorelines, promote public access and enjoyment opportunities, and give priorities to uses requiring shoreline location.

It largely relies on locally tailored land use policies and regulations called shoreline master programs — adopted by more than 260 towns, cities and counties with marine or freshwater shorelines and approved by the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) — to achieve the goals of the act.

State law requires jurisdictions to periodically review and revise their shoreline master programs. Most haven't done so since the 1970s. Since the SMA was adopted, Washington's statewide population has nearly doubled to an estimated 6.6 million people. White said, "The old master programs have lead to the unsustainable development of our state shorelines and an outdated set of standards for shoreline land owners to work through. Updating our shoreline programs also will improve our water quality and keep our shorelines and beaches clean and available for our citizens to use and enjoy now and for future generations."

The 2003 Washington Legislature set up a timetable for all local governments to comprehensively update their shoreline master programs by December 2014. Lawmakers have provided towns, cities and counties about \$12 million since 2005 to modernize their shoreline master programs.

The update process is designed to bring diverse local interests to the table to work collaboratively including waterfront property owners, builders, farmers, environmental and conservation interests, recreation users, local governments, tribes and state agencies. The guidelines also require local jurisdictions and the state to ensure the regulations do not infringe on private property rights.

More than 250 towns, cities and counties are making decisions that will affect our future relationship to shorelines. They are deciding where parks and marinas, waterfront homes, and fishing spots will be. Ecology's new website gives people the ability to track the status of all the shoreline master program updates going on across the state.

Several counties including Douglas, Whatcom and Yakima have comprehensively updated their shoreline master programs and more than 25 cities have already modernized their shoreline policies and regulations.

On May 21, Ecology published a blog, *Be the wave in your local shoreline master program*, urging local residents to get involved in adding their voice to the shoreline master program update process.

###