

Chapter 1

Shoreline Master Programs Handbook

Introduction

The *Shoreline Master Programs Handbook* (*SMP Handbook* or *Handbook*) is a guide for local governments developing or updating Shoreline Master Programs (SMP) in Washington State. This *Handbook* provides guidance for meeting the requirements of the Shoreline Management Act (SMA, RCW 90.58), the Shoreline Master Program Guidelines (WAC 173-26, Part III) and the SMP procedural rules (WAC 173-26, Parts I and II.) The *Handbook* also provides information and resources to help in making decisions on SMP environment designations, policies and regulations.

The *SMP Handbook* builds on guidance materials previously developed by the Department of Ecology for developing and updating SMPs. With new Guidelines approved in 2003, a legislative mandate for updates of existing SMPs, and new scientific information available regarding shoreline ecosystems, Ecology decided the time was right to update the guidance and prepare this *Handbook*. The *Handbook*:

- Reflects 45 years of experience by Ecology and our local government partners in developing and administering SMPs.
- Benefits from the scientific knowledge acquired in recent decades about shoreline and upland ecosystems.
- Provides links to numerous resources that are helpful in updating SMPs.

Handbook organization

The *SMP Handbook* is roughly organized according to the SMP Planning Process that Ecology developed to guide the SMP update process. The process is depicted on a multicolored chart that shows the six phases of the SMP planning process and the tasks for each phase.

The chart can be viewed at the end of Chapter 3, “All phases - Shoreline Master Program Planning Process,” which provides an overview of the update process.



Figure 1-1: Kayak Point in Snohomish County, the Kirkland waterfront, and the Columbia River (shown at Grand Coulee Dam), are all shorelines of the state under the Shoreline Management Act.

The *Handbook* chapters and sections explain the directives of the SMA and the SMP Guidelines to the topic and related task. For example, in “Chapter 9, Shoreline Public Access,” the SMA’s directive to preserve “the public’s opportunity to enjoy the physical and aesthetic qualities of natural shorelines of the state” is discussed in the introduction. A section on the SMP Guidelines explains the requirement to address both public access opportunities and public access needs during the SMP update.

The chapters provide examples from updated SMPs approved by Ecology and other suggested SMP language, including environment designations, policies and regulations, shoreline buffers and setbacks, shoreline jurisdiction, public participation elements, shoreline characterization discussions, and cumulative impacts analysis tables. You can use these examples to help develop your own policies, regulations and environment designations. Keep in mind, though, that your SMP should be based on local shoreline conditions described in the inventory and characterization and locally prepared analyses such as the cumulative impacts analysis or shoreline use analysis.

Current chapters and sections

The first four chapters of the *SMP Handbook* are introductory chapters that give a general overview of SMA, the SMP Guidelines and procedural rules and the SMP planning process, as well as the concept of no net loss of shoreline ecological functions.

The chapters that follow the introductory chapters correlate with the phases on the planning chart. For example, Chapter 5, “Shoreline Jurisdiction,” provides guidance for this Phase 1 task, and Chapter 9, “Shoreline Public Access,” provides guidance for this work in Phases 2 and 3. Other chapters cover specific topics, and an appendix addresses sea level rise and master programs.

Using the SMP Handbook

The *SMP Handbook* provides a wealth of information that will help in developing, amending or comprehensively updating SMPs. The *Handbook* establishes the context of the SMA and SMP Guidelines and provides direct guidance on thorny issues such as no net loss or shoreline vegetation conservation. Depending on the topic, the *Handbook* offers suggested methods for conducting analyses, points out important considerations when tackling various topics, reviews environmental impacts and benefits, and includes policies and regulations from approved SMPs.

The *Handbook*, information available on Ecology’s website, and the SMP grant agreement are Ecology’s written guidance for development of new SMPs and SMP updates. Following are some suggestions for using the *Handbook*:

- First, read Chapter 2, “Shoreline Management Overview,” and Chapter 3, “Shoreline Management Program Updates,” for background on the Shoreline Management Act, the SMP Guidelines and an overview of the SMP update process and requirements.

- Scan the *Handbook* chapter list below to get a sense of topics that are addressed during the SMP update process.
- Read specific chapters and sections thoroughly to get specific direction for developing one of the required products.
- Share the *Handbook* website and specific chapters and sections with your advisory committees, planning commission, elected officials and the public. This will help get everyone on the same “page” about the SMP update requirements. Chapter 3, “Shoreline Master Program Updates,” will be helpful in providing an overview of the process and the work ahead.
- Find examples of policies and regulations that Ecology should find acceptable. These are generally near the end of the pertinent chapters. Remember, what works in one city or county may not be appropriate for yours, depending on shoreline conditions and ecological functions. The example policies and regulations will need to be tailored for local shorelines.

SMP Handbook chapters

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Shoreline Management Overview
- Chapter 3: All phases - Shoreline Master Program Planning Process
- Chapter 4: No Net Loss of Shoreline Ecological Functions
- Chapter 5: Shoreline Jurisdiction
- Chapter 6: Public Participation
- Chapter 7: Shoreline Inventory and Characterization
- Chapter 8: Shoreline Use Analysis
- Chapter 9: Shoreline Public Access
- Chapter 10: Community Visioning
- Chapter 11: Vegetation Conservation, Buffers and Setbacks
- Chapter 12: Piers, Docks, and Other Structures
- Chapter 13: Shoreline Environment Designations
- Chapter 14: Legally Existing Uses and Development
- Chapter 15: Shoreline Stabilization
- Chapter 16: Aquaculture
- Chapter 17: Cumulative Impacts Analysis
- Chapter 18: Integration of Critical Areas Ordinances
- Appendix A: Addressing Sea Level Rise in Shoreline Master Programs
- Appendix B: Additional guidance documents
- Appendix C: SMP Checklist