

## ShoreScore Update

November 2016



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**Update on Shoreline Management and Critical Areas Rules**  
**Year End Contributions - They are deductible!**

### Bellevue and Water System Contamination

*Does your home have a lawn or landscape sprinkler system?*  
*Do you use lake water for irrigation?*  
*Do you have a boat lift that uses water?*

These were among questions posed to Bellevue shoreline property owners in a survey sent by mail earlier this year. Since that time, WSSA has asked the City why shoreline properties were the focus and what was driving the concern. We've met with City representatives. Here is what we've learned.

What is the Program? A [new program](#) is being established within the Utilities Department. It's focus will be on assuring little chance of polluted water backing up into the City drinking water system.

What is the Need? To be concise, the terrorism events over the last 15 years, starting with 911 (Sept. 11, 2001) have increased concern for protecting various distribution systems such as our electrical grid, and, in this case, our water supply. The mandate for Bellevue's program originates from the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. At the state level the Health Department has been tasked with regulation and has mandated public water suppliers establish Cross Connection (Contamination) Control Systems (CCCP's).



Is there Evidence of a Threat? One which City staff cite is a 2014 e-coli contamination that impacted Mercer Island's water system. During that event, residents as well as businesses were forced to use bottled water awaiting return of safe conditions. This did not occur for more than a week, and the cause was never determined. More information on the Mercer Island event is available by [clicking here](#).

How Would the Program Work? There will be two elements. Initially, information about each property's water system(s) will be gathered. Where it is determined there's a chance contaminated water could backflow from your property back into the City system, you will be required to have a device to prevent this from happening. (Those with fire suppression systems likely already have such a device.)

The second aspect of the program will be monitoring to assure backflow prevention devices are installed and working properly. While private companies with trained/certified staff will be allowed to install sanctioned devices, you can expect a City inspector to visit to review the installation. Subsequently, the City is to provide reports to State Health on the status of getting all sites into compliance.

What Might Back Flow Preventers Cost? Depending on the complexity of the system on a given property, staff felt the average cost would be about \$500 with a range of several hundred on up to as much as \$10K for a complex situation. In addition, there will be an annual inspection required. Qualified private companies will be allowed to do the certification. Cost? About \$75 a year.

Are Sprinkler Systems and Boat Lifts the Only Problems? We posed that question to the City. Staff noted that efforts to winterize these systems often use air pressure to clear the lines. If connected to the City water system, backflow can occur. It is also possible that this procedure can force contaminated water back into the residence.

We found helpful information on Mercer Island's website showing "threat" examples. As you can see, many are not isolated to shoreline properties. Staff acknowledged there are other potential pollution sources and, in the long term, these will be monitored under the program as well.

#### Examples of property features requiring backflow prevention assemblies



#### Bellevue Shoreline Management Program (the wait continues...)

On October 18th the Department of Ecology held a public hearing at Bellevue City Hall. Ecology staff took comments on [Bellevue's draft SMP](#) from about 12 people with about 40 in attendance. This input will be taken into consideration by Ecology in preparing feedback to the City Council on recommended and required changes to what was proposed. [Ecology's feedback](#) will likely not occur until 2017.

## Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) Wetlands Issue

In September we learned that the Dept. of Ecology has altered [how it defines wetlands](#). Those changes could, if broadly applied, declare many lakeshore properties to have wetlands along their shore. These parcels would then be subject to the stricter CAO rules, no matter which jurisdiction you live in.

A wetland, critical area designation carries with it much greater restraints than, for example, those proposed in Bellevue's draft SMP. The latter would allow some urban improvements as close as 25 ft. from shore. A critical areas designation would restrain activity, through a no touch buffer, to as much as 200 ft. from the shoreline.

Through research by WSSA's attorney, we learned that an alternative could be proposed for small wetlands due to reduced functional (i.e., environmental) value. WSSA proposed that "lake fringe" wetlands of 2500 square feet or less be exempt from harsh CAO buffer requirements. **Bellevue City Council agreed!**



Our proposal has joined those embedded in the draft Shoreline Master Program awaiting approval by the Department of Ecology.

### Your Support Is Needed

We thank all who have contributed previously, both financially and by your attendance at meetings! As shown by the critical areas issue, however, there continues to be a need to monitor regulations being proposed for our shorelines. WSSA urges your support to enable us to carry on this task along with providing you updates and representing our mutual goal of achieving rational regulations that protect the environment while recognizing we live here.

We are a 501c-3 organization; making your donations tax deductible. Please consider a contribution of \$100, \$500, or more and send your check to **WSSA, P.O. Box 6773, Bellevue 98008** We will provide you a year end summary of contributions for your tax return.