

Critical Areas Ordinance Quiz

How well do you understand the CAO? Take the quiz below

In 1990, the state legislature responded to Washington's rapid growth by passing the Growth Management Act ("GMA") to guide future development in a predictable, environmentally-sensitive manner. See how well you understand the CAO. Stay informed...Take the Quiz, read the draft ordinance, reports, and find out about CAO meetings posted at: www.sanjuan.co/cao.

Attend the public meetings in October

Q. 1 What does the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) protect?

- a. Protects people from building in a frequently flooded area.
- b. Protects people from building in geological hazards.
- c. Protects fish and wildlife.
- d. Protects drinking water in our critical aquifer recharge areas.
- e. Wetlands.

Answer: all of the above

Q. 2 Why should I care?

- a. I want economic certainty for my property.
- b. I want to protect ground water, for my own and future generations.
- c. I moved to the San Juans for their beauty and natural abundance, and want to keep it that way.

Answer: all of the above.

Q. 3 How many of the 12 Puget Sound Counties have completed their Critical Areas Ordinance?

- a. 11
- b. 9
- c. 5
- d. none

Answer: b (Only San Juan, Thurston and Island County are incomplete)

Q. 4 What does the current proposed CAO say can be done if a home is already built within 200 feet of a shoreline, a stream, or a wetland?

- a. Continue to enjoy it as it is.
- b. Expand it by 20% landward.
- c. Rebuild in its original location if there is a fire.
- d. Tear the house down or relocate it inland.
- e. all but d.

Answer: e. (However, you are free to relocate your home inland if you want to "d").

Q. 5 Can San Juan County include marine shorelines in the Critical Areas Ordinance update ?

- a. No, the Supreme Court in 2008 said counties must separate shorelines from their CAO update (a growth and include them in their Shoreline Master Plan updates.

- b. Yes, the county could move forward shoreline critical areas under the Shoreline Management Act (SMA) as an early action item to our shoreline management plan update -and do this concurrently with our CAO update!

Answer: b. The Department of Ecology has told San Juan County that the county can work on these parallel tracks concurrently (SMA for marine shorelines and GMA for uplands).

Q. 6 What's the harm if the County continues to delay in passing a CAO update?

- a. Procrastination precludes opportunities for state funding based on GMA compliance.
- b. Procrastination leaves people and property unprotected and exposed to hazards.
- c. Procrastination leaves fish, wildlife, wetlands, and our aquifers with inadequate protections.

Answer: all of the above.

Q. 7 What do buffers protect?

- a. Fresh and marine waters from sediments and pollutants.
- b. Areas for fish and wildlife to feed and reproduce.
- c. The risk of damage to property, by reducing the risk from flooding or erosion.

Answer: all of the above.

Q. 8 What is Best Available Science (BAS) ?

- a. Making predictions, observations, and recommendations forming and testing hypotheses..
- b. The most accurate and current information available to base decisions.
- c. Only information that has been collected in San Juan County.
- d. Information from anywhere that is applicable to San Juan County.

Answer: a, b and d. BAS is produced by a valid scientific process that generally includes peer review, a clear testing methods, logical conclusions with reasonable inferences, quantitative analysis, proper context and references. State regulations require BAS and suggest consulting with state, federal and tribal natural resources agencies when developing it.

Q. 9 Geohazards include:

- a. earthquakes
- b. floods
- c. landslides
- d. avalanches
- e. tsunamis

Answer: All of the above. "Geohazards" are events caused by geological features and processes that present severe threats to humans, property and the natural and built environment. Landslides, caused by heavy rainfall, flood, saturated soils, earthquake, excessive vegetation removal, erosion, and human activities, are the most common geohazards on land. Scientists studying global climate change have warned that rising sea levels will increase coastal flooding and shoreline erosion.

Q. 10 Approximately what percentage of marine shoreline parcels are developed?

- a. 30 %
- b. 40 %
- c. 50 %
- d. 60%

Answer: c. This analysis excluded parks and natural areas.

Q. 11 How many species in San Juan County have been listed as endangered or threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA)?

- a. 21 b. 11 c. 8 d. 5 e. none

Answer: b. There are 11 species found in SJ County that are protected under the Federal ESA These include: Southern Resident Orca, Stellar sea lion, humpback whale, gray whale, Chinook salmon, steelhead, brown pelican, common loon, marbled murrelet, peregrine falcon, Taylor's checker-spot butterfly.

Q. 12 A local favorite food for endangered salmon and sea birds is forage fish. Which of the fish below is not a forage fish?

- a. Surf smelt b. Sand lance c. Herring d. Halibut

Answer: d.

Q. 13 Has herring spawn decreased in San Juan County since 2004?

- a. Not at all.
b. A little. I am sure that it is a natural population fluctuation.
c. Somewhat. I see herring schooling from the docks and ferries all the time.
d. Significantly. The population is crashing.

Answer: d. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has documented an 88% decline in Herring spawn on eelgrass plants below low tide in San Juan County. Their numbers have dropped significantly in recent years, particularly in shallow embayments surrounded by denser residential development. Department of Natural Resource, University of Washington and other researchers have also documented significant loss of eelgrass in San Juan County.

Q. 14 Have there been any toxins found in waters surrounding San Juan Island?

- a. No, San Juan County's waters are pristine.
b. Yes, high detergent levels have been documented in Friday Harbor's marine waters.
c. Yes, high bacteria levels have been found in numerous county streams.
d. Yes, pesticides and herbicides have been found in marine waters, sediments and shellfish.
e. All but a.

Answer: e. Healthy wetlands and vegetated buffers along marine and freshwater shorelines keep our water and shellfish healthy by filtering sediments, toxins, and nitrates. Things that can help at home include: not using chemicals on our gardens and lawns, not washing cars in the driveway where water runs into storm drains, and picking up your dogs waste.

Q. 15 Isn't a bulkhead the most effective way to protect my property and control shoreline erosion?

- a. No, in most cases, maintenance of a wide buffer of undisturbed vegetation and soils can provide the best protection from coastal erosion.
b. No, proper management of upland stormwater runoff is essential for erosion management on shoreline properties.
c. No, bulkheads can actually increase erosion rates at the base or edges of the structure--passing the problem and cost on to your neighbor
d. Yes, my contractor told me we need to build one to protect our lawn.
e. All but d.

Answer: e. There are often alternatives to hard bulkheads including: setbacks, buffers, and restoration techniques to protect property and maintain natural habitats. Future home construction near marine shorelines should plan for climate change, greater storm events and sea level rise.

Q. 16 How Does Adoption of a Strong CAO with Shoreline Protections Benefit Our Community?

- a. It offers certainty for people and the environment. The longer we wait to complete the CAO, the longer property owners who want to build near critical areas will be unable to plan for their future.
- b. It will protect fish and wildlife from further degradation.
- c. It encourages environmentally-sensitive development and will ensure the San Juans will remain a desirable location to live, work, retire and recreate.
- d. It will get us compliance with the GMA, and allow the County to compete for State grants and low interest loans.
- e. It will get us toward compliance so our county can continue to enjoy FEMA emergency funding and protection in Federal flood Insurance programs.
- f. All of the above.

Answer: All of the above. Critical Areas Ordinance which includes Shoreline Protections would create one work product with four outstanding outcomes!

TRUE OR FALSE STATEMENTS:

Q. 17 San Juan County already has setbacks for development in the marine shoreline?

Answer: TRUE. If your home is fully screened there is currently a 50ft setback, if your home is partially screened it is a 75 setback, and if it is not screened at all, there is a 100 ft setback.

Q. 18 The Critical Areas Ordinance affects all development.

Answer: FALSE. The CAO only applies to new development activities in designated critical areas. Existing development will not be impacted.

Q.19 This is a government land grab?

Answer: FALSE. Our “government” does not want your land. Water, air, fish and wildlife area vital part of our common heritage. The County is entrusted by the people to prevent individual citizens from harming these public resources, and that is what the CAO does.

Q. 20 We can use Land Bank and San Juan Preservation Trust lands as mitigation for building in a critical area?

Answer: FALSE. The San Juan County Land Bank protects properties with funds previously approved by the voters for conservation purposes. Using these lands for mitigation would in effect subsidize development and is not legal under state law. The Preservation Trust is a private non-profit organization which protects properties using private donations.

Q. 21 All counties are required to update their Shoreline Master Plan.

Answer: TRUE. San Juan County is required under the Shoreline Management Act to update our Shoreline Master Plan by 2012. Shorelines mean all waters of the state which include: lakes (greater than 20 acres), streams, and tidal waters.

Q. 22 I will have to move my house if it's in a critical area.

Answer: FALSE. The CAO will not require the relocation of a pre-existing home if it is in a critical area at the time the ordinance is adopted.

Q. 23 Our marine shoreline is at a suburban density.

Answer: True. The most common (mode) marine shoreline parcel is 0.68 acres, the middle value (median) is 1.32 acres and the average (mean) size is 5.37 acres. Our analysis looked at developed and undeveloped parcels, and excluded parks and natural areas. Source www.sanjuanco.com/gis/gislib.aspx

About Friends of the San Juans

FRIENDS of the San Juans is a public interest non-profit organization that has been preserving the qualities that make our community a great place to live, work, retire and recreate since 1979. We recognize that the health of our community and environment are two key forces that shape our economic prosperity today and in the future. We work with citizens, local, state, federal, and tribal decision makers to ensure that land use decisions are based on sound science, comply with existing laws, and promote stewardship of our islands. For more information, please visit www.sanjuans.org or call (360)378-2319.

*Want fairness and certainty for our environment and our economy?
Tell you elected officials you want critical areas protected in the shoreline and uplands.*

Contact your County Council:

Lovel Pratt (Dist 1 SJ South) 370-7473 LovelP@co.san-juan.wa.us
Rich Peterson (Dist 2 SJI North) 378-2898 richp@co.san-juan.wa.us
Howie Rosenfeld (Dist 3 Town of FH) 378-5788 howier@co.san-juan.wa.us
Richard Fralick (Dist 4 Orcas West) 370-7473 richardf@sanjuanco.com
Gene Knapp (Dist 5 Orcas East) 378-2898 genek@co.san-juan.wa.us
Bob Myhr (Dist. 6) 468-2258; BobM@co.san-juan.wa.us