

# Chapter 5 SHORELINE ENVIRONMENT DESIGNATIONS

## 5.1 Official Shoreline Environment Designations Map

---

A set of designations for shorelines called Shoreline Environment Designations have been developed as a part of this Program and are delineated on a map incorporated as a part of this Program (Map 1) that will be known as the Official Shoreline Map. The Map is located at the City of Gig Harbor Planning Department and the Washington State Department of Ecology. The purpose of Shoreline Environment Designations is to provide a systematic, rational, and equitable basis upon which to guide and regulate development within specific shoreline areas. These Shoreline Environment Designations apply to areas of the shoreline that have similar ecological conditions and similar land uses or potential development patterns.

Shoreline Environment Designations have been determined after consideration of:

- The ecological functions and processes that characterize the shoreline, together with the degree of human alteration as determined by the 2009 Shoreline Inventory and Characterization Report and any subsequent investigations or analyses as may be required by this program;
- Existing development patterns together with the Gig Harbor Comprehensive Plan land use designations and other officially adopted plans; and
- The guidelines outlined in WAC 173-26-211, Environment Designation System.

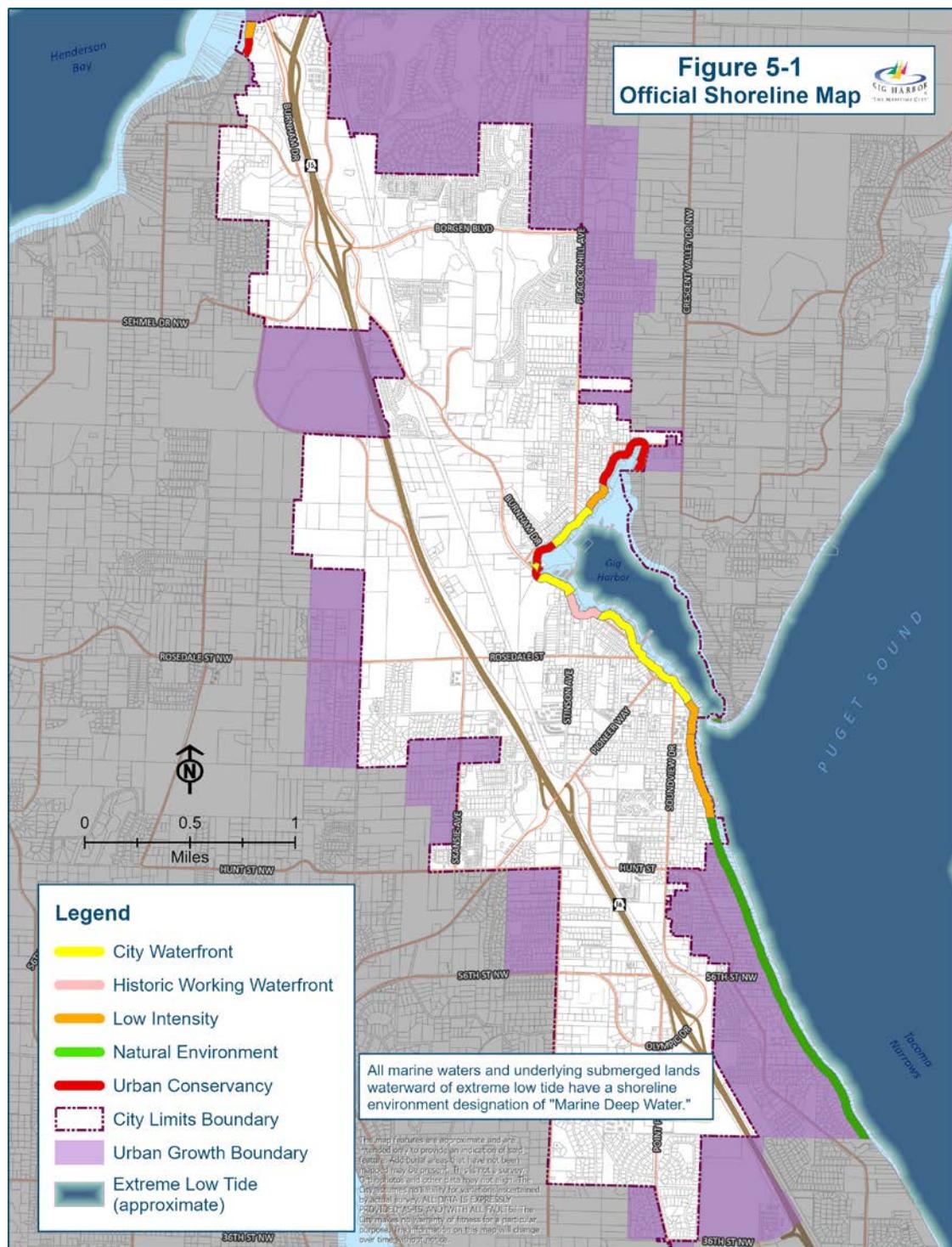
The City may, from time to time as new or improved information becomes available, modify the Official Shoreline Map consistent with state guidelines to more accurately represent, clarify, or interpret the true limits of the shorelines defined in this chapter. A substantive change to the map triggers a master program amendment process.

Areas found to be within shoreline jurisdiction that are not mapped and/or designated are automatically assigned the “Urban Conservancy” designation until re-designated through a master program amendment process.

A parcel found to be within more than one Shoreline Environment Designation shall conform to the Shoreline Environment Designation which overlays more than fifty (50) percent of the parcel.

This Master Program and its Shoreline Environmental Designations shall apply to all of the lands and waters in the City of Gig Harbor that fall under the jurisdiction of the Act (see Section 1.7 Shoreline Jurisdiction). The Master Program will apply to all lands and waters in the City's Urban Growth Area (UGA) at such time the lands and waters are annexed into the City. Until that time, the Pierce County Shoreline Master Program will govern development and activities within the UGA.

Figure 5-1. Shoreline Map (Map 1)



The purpose of the Official Shoreline Map is to identify the approximate location of the shoreline jurisdiction. The map does not necessarily locate the exact lateral extent of shoreline jurisdiction or all associated wetlands. The lateral extent of the shoreline jurisdiction shall be determined case by case based on the location of the Ordinary High Water Mark utilizing the definition set forth in RCW 90.58.030.2(c), and the presence of associated wetlands.

The Official Shoreline Map also identifies the location of Shoreline Environment Designations. If disagreement develops as to the exact location of a Shoreline Environment Designation boundary line, the Administrator shall interpret the boundaries and the following rules shall apply:

- 1) Boundaries indicated as approximately following lot, tract, or section lines shall be so construed.
- 2) Boundaries indicated as approximately following roads or waterbodies shall be construed to follow their centerlines.
- 3) Boundaries indicated as approximately parallel to or extensions of features indicated in (1) or (2) above shall be so construed.
- 4) Whenever existing physical features are inconsistent with boundaries on the Official Shoreline Map, the Administrator shall interpret the boundaries.
- 5) Whenever changes in parcel numbers affect indicated parcel-specific boundaries, the Administrator shall defer to the general boundaries described under 5.2.1.

## **5.2 Shoreline Environment Designations**

---

### **5.2.1 Shoreline Environments and General Boundaries**

This Master Program establishes six distinct Shoreline Environments with their general boundaries:

- **Natural:** Gig Harbor Spit; and Tacoma Narrows south of overwater beach cabins to southern Urban Growth Area limits;
- **Urban Conservancy:** Stream mouths and estuarine wetlands of Crescent and Donkey Creeks; and the stream mouth of McCormick Creek;

- **Low Intensity:** Overwater beach cabins along Tacoma Narrows; and Henderson Bay within the city limits excluding the stream mouth of McCormick Creek;
- **City Waterfront:** Downtown Gig Harbor Bay excluding stream mouths and estuarine wetlands of Crescent and Donkey Creeks;
- **Historic Working Waterfront:** Downtown Gig Harbor Bay within the historic "Millville" District; and
- **Marine Deepwater:** Gig Harbor Bay, and Henderson Bay within the city limits waterward of extreme low tide.

All Environments extend waterward to the extreme low tide, except that the Marine Deepwater Environment extends waterward to city limits.

This section describes the purpose, designation criteria, parcel-specific location of designated shorelines, and shoreline management policies for each Environment.

## 5.2.2 Natural Environment

### A. Purpose

The purpose of the "Natural" environment designation is to protect those shoreline areas that are relatively free of human influence or that include intact or minimally degraded shoreline functions that would become irreversibly impaired as a result of human development and activity. These systems require that only very low intensity uses be allowed in order to maintain ecological functions and ecosystem-wide processes. Consistent with the policies of the designation, restoration of degraded shorelines within this environment is appropriate.

### B. Designation Criteria

This designation should be applied to shoreline areas in city limits or in designated urban growth areas if any of the following characteristics apply:

- The shoreline is ecologically intact and therefore, currently performing an important, irreplaceable function or ecosystem-wide process that would be damaged by human activity.
- The shoreline is considered to represent ecosystems and geologic types that are of particular scientific and educational interest.

- The shoreline is unable to support new development or uses without significant adverse impacts to ecological functions or risk to human safety.

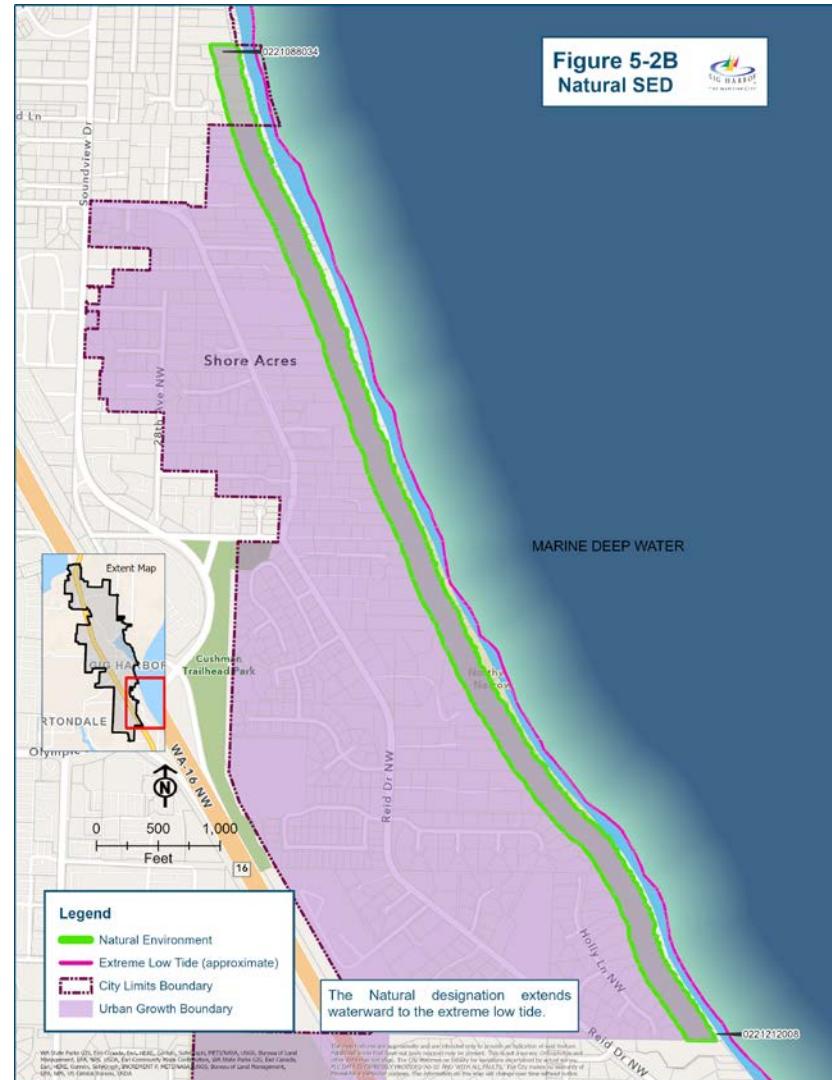
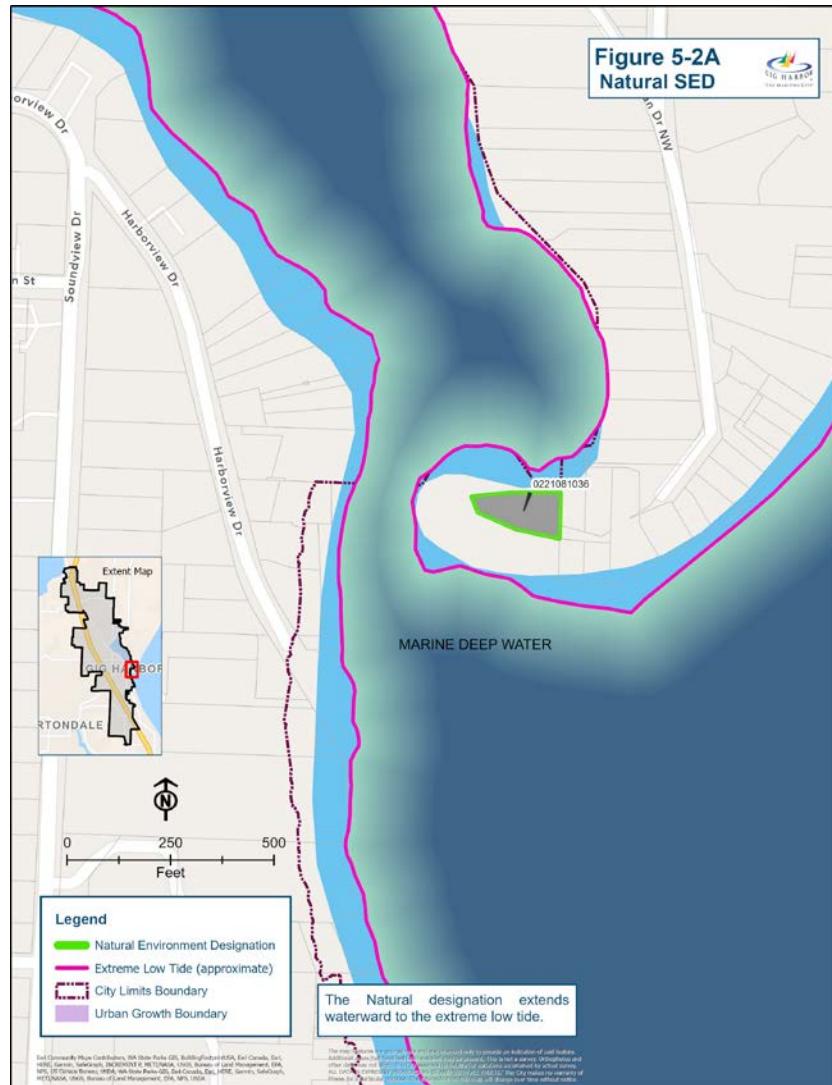
### **C. Shorelines Designated**

The Natural Environment designation applies to areas as shown on the Official Shoreline Map and described below:

- Tacoma Narrows beginning at the northernmost property line of parcel 0221088034, extending south to the southernmost property line of parcel 0221212008.
- Gig Harbor Spit, designated as parcel 0221081036.

Refer to Figure 5-2 below for a map of the Natural Environment designation boundaries.

Figure 5-2. Natural Shoreline Environment Designation



## **D. Management Policies**

In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program, the following management policies should apply:

- 1) Any use or modification that would substantially degrade the ecological functions or natural character of the shoreline area should not be allowed.
- 2) The following new uses should not be allowed in the "natural" environment:
  - a) Commercial uses.
  - b) Industrial uses.
  - c) Non-water-oriented recreation.
  - d) Roads, utility corridors, and parking areas that can be located outside of "natural" designated shorelines.
  - e) Scientific, historical, cultural, and educational research uses.
- 3) Single-family residential development may be allowed as a conditional use within the "natural" environment if the density and intensity of such use is limited as necessary to protect ecological functions and be consistent with the purpose of the natural environment designation.
- 4) Low-intensity water-oriented recreational access uses may be allowed provided that no significant ecological impact on the area will result.
- 5) New development or significant vegetation removal that would reduce the capability of vegetation to perform normal ecological functions should not be allowed. Subdividing property in a configuration that, to achieve its intended purpose, will require significant vegetation removal or shoreline modification that adversely impacts ecological functions should not be allowed. That is, each new parcel must be able to support its intended development without significant ecological impacts to the shoreline ecological functions.
- 6) Overwater structures waterward of the ordinary high water mark should be prohibited except when associated with shoreline restoration.

## 5.2.3 Urban Conservancy Environment

### A. Purpose

The purpose of the “Urban Conservancy” environment is to protect and restore ecological functions of open space, floodplain and other sensitive lands where they exist in urban and developed settings, while allowing a variety of compatible uses.

### B. Designation Criteria

This designation should be applied to shoreline areas in city limits or in designated urban growth areas if any of the following characteristics apply:

- They are suitable for water-related or water-enjoyment uses.
- They are open space, floodplain or other sensitive areas that should not be more intensively developed.
- They have potential for ecological restoration.
- They retain important ecological functions, even though partially developed.
- They have the potential for development that is compatible with ecological restoration.

### C. Shorelines Designated

The Urban Conservancy Environment designation applies to areas as shown on the Official Shoreline Map and described below:

- 
- Gig Harbor Bay beginning at the southernmost property line of Parcel 0221056024 (Gig Harbor City Limits), extending west to the southernmost property line of Parcel 2260000461.
- Gig Harbor Bay beginning at the northernmost property line of Parcel 4097000020, extending south to southernmost upland property line of Parcel 0221068023, except Parcels 0221064138 and 4002990020.
- Henderson Bay beginning at southernmost city limit, extending north to northernmost property line of Parcel 0122256038.

Refer to Figures 5-3 and 5-4 below for maps of the Urban Conservancy Environment designation boundaries.

**Figure 5-3. Urban Conservancy Shoreline Environment Designation – East**

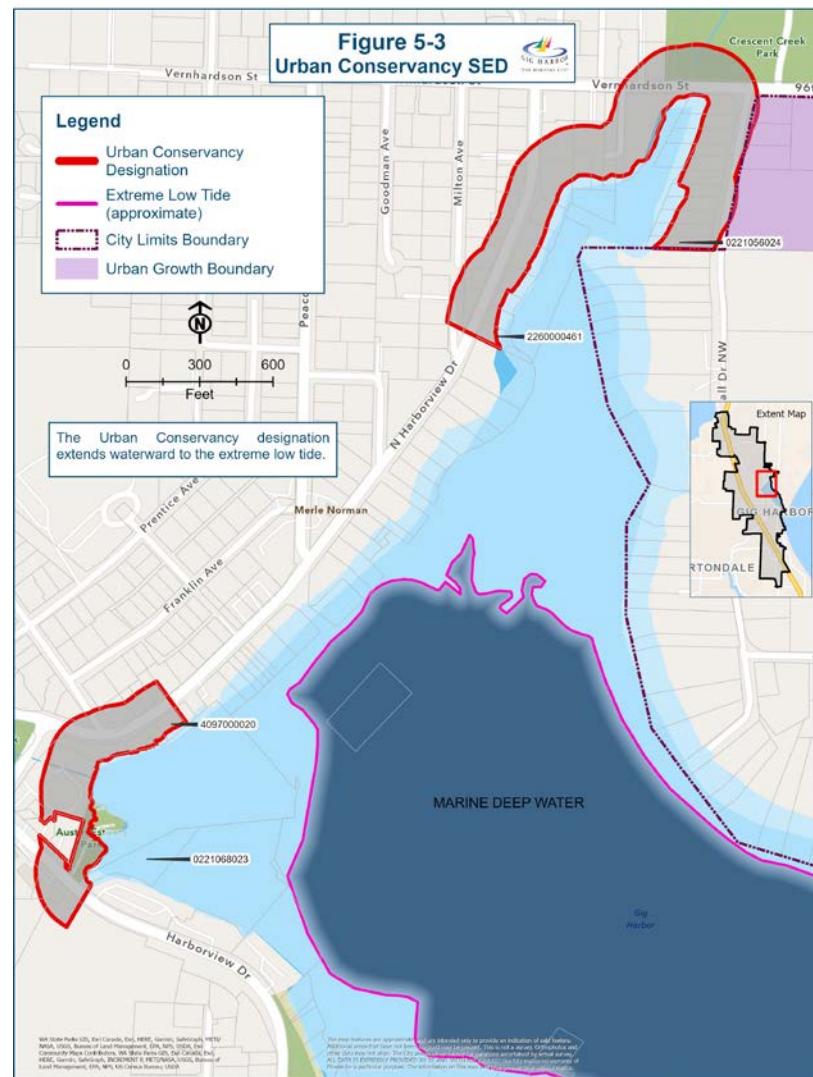
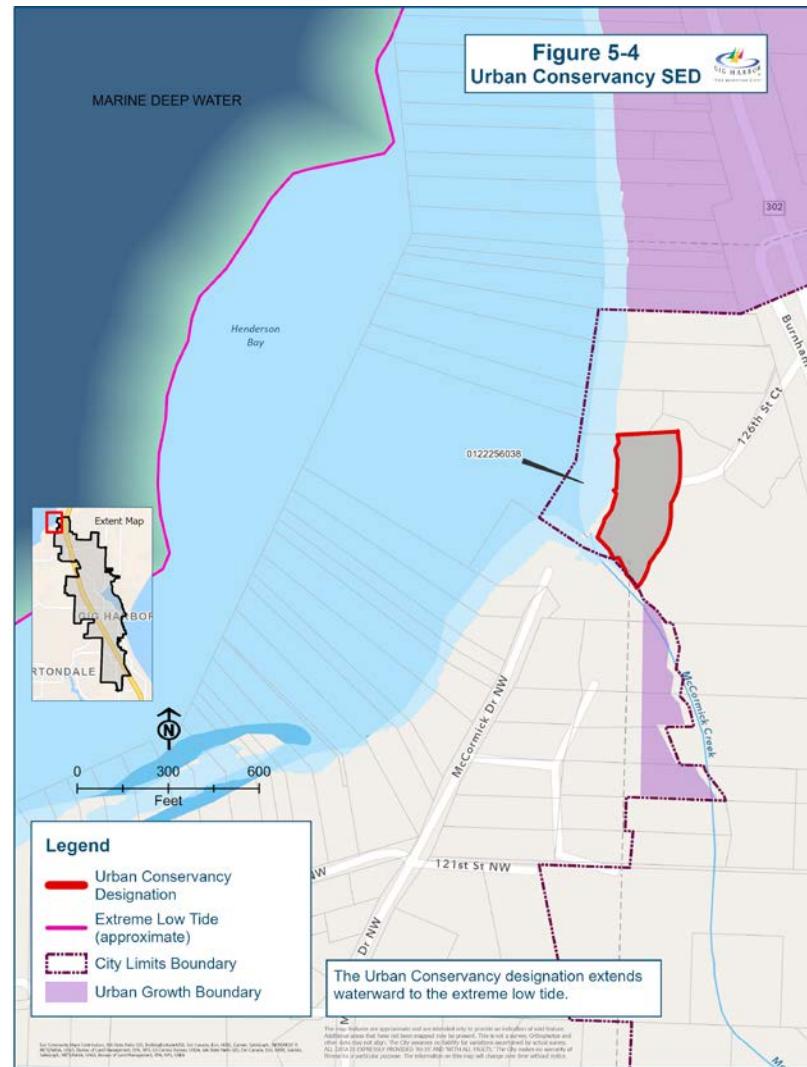


Figure 5-4. Urban Conservancy Shoreline Environment Designation – West



## D. Management Policies

In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program, the following management policies should apply:

- 1) Uses that preserve the natural character of the area or promote preservation of open space, floodplain or sensitive lands either directly or over the long term should be the primary allowed uses. Uses that result in restoration of ecological functions should be allowed if the use is otherwise compatible with the purpose of the environment and the setting.
- 2) Standards should be established for shoreline stabilization measures, vegetation conservation, water quality and shoreline modifications within the urban conservancy designation. These standards shall ensure that new development does not result in a net loss of shoreline ecological functions or further degrade other shoreline values.
- 3) Low intensity public access should be provided whenever feasible and significant ecological impacts can be avoided or mitigated.
- 4) Water-oriented uses should be given priority over non-water oriented uses. For shoreline areas adjacent to commercially navigable waters, water-dependent uses should be given highest priority.
- 5) Allow a variety of commercial and residential uses as established by the Comprehensive Plan and zoning code and when consistent with the policies of the Shoreline Management Act, where the development of such uses is done in a manner that protects or enhances ecological functions.
- 6) Restoration and protection of stream mouths and associated wetlands for Crescent, Donkey, and McCormick Creeks is a high priority.
- 7) New structures waterward of the ordinary high water mark should only be permitted for aquaculture facilities, water-dependent commercial uses, single-family moorage facilities, public access, or ecological restoration. The size of new over-water structures should be limited to the minimum necessary to support the structure's intended use. To reduce the impacts of shoreline development and increase effective use of water resources, multiple uses of the same over-water facility should be encouraged.
- 8) Shoreline uses and modifications located waterward of the ordinary high water mark should be designed and managed to prevent degradation of water quality and alteration of natural hydrographic conditions.

- 9) All developments and uses waterward of the ordinary high water mark should be located and designed to minimize interference with surface navigation, to minimize adverse visual impacts, and to allow for the safe, unobstructed passage of fish and wildlife, particularly those species dependent on migration.

## 5.2.4 Low Intensity Environment

### A. Purpose

The purpose of the “Low Intensity Environment” is to accommodate residential development in areas that are already developed with or planned primarily for residential uses. The Low Intensity Environment may also include water-oriented commercial and recreation uses and public access.

### B. Designation Criteria

This designation should be applied to shoreline areas in city limits or in designated urban growth areas if any of the following characteristics apply:

- The Low Intensity Environment designation shall apply to areas planned for or already being used primarily for residential and commercial uses.
- The Low Intensity Environment designation should not include areas with high ecological value, including but not limited to: feeder bluffs, natural spits, lagoons, estuaries, mature forests, wetlands, or floodplains.

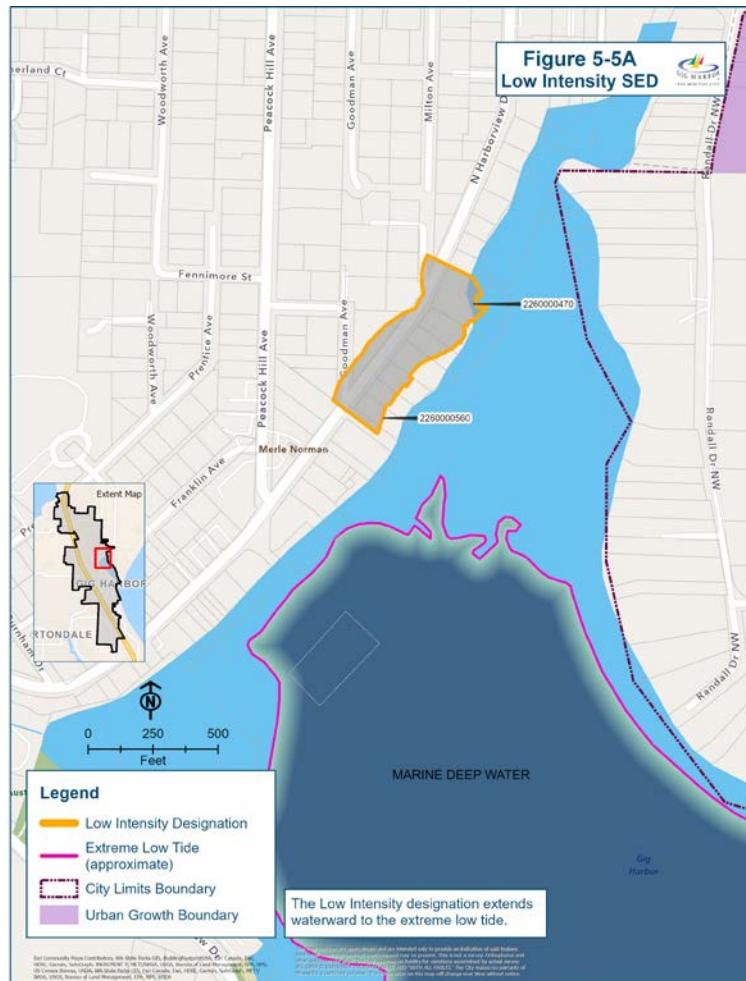
### C. Shorelines Designated

The Low Intensity Environment designation applies to areas as shown on the Official Shoreline Map and described below:

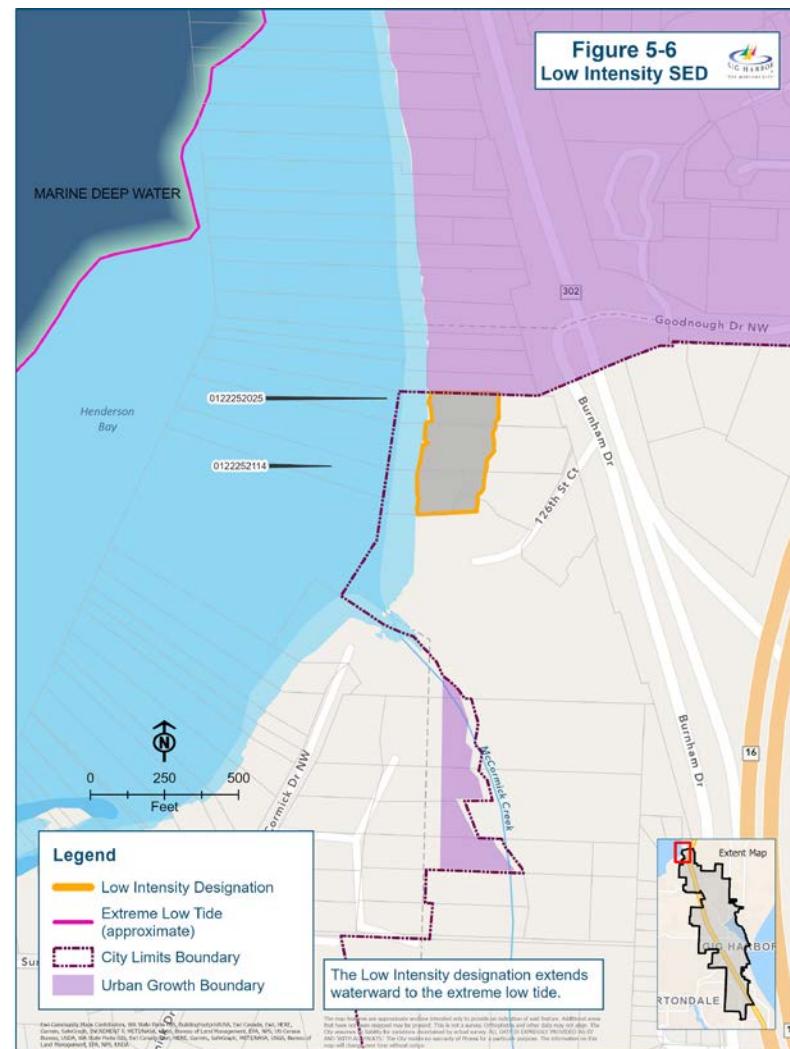
- Gig Harbor Bay beginning at northernmost property line of Parcel 2260000470, extending south to southernmost property line of Parcel 2260000560.
- Gig Harbor Bay beginning at northernmost property line of Parcel 0221081121, extending south along Tacoma Narrows to southernmost property line of Parcel 0221084059.
- Henderson Bay within the city limits beginning at the southerly most property line of Parcel 0122252114 and extending north to the northerly most property line of Parcel 0122252025.

Refer to Figures 5-5 and 5-6 below for maps of the Low Intensity Environment designation boundaries.

**Figure 5-5. Low Intensity Shoreline Environment Designation – East**



**Figure 5-6. Low Intensity Shoreline Environment Designation – West**



## **D. Management Policies**

In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program, the following management policies should apply:

- 1) Priority should be given to residential and water-oriented commercial development where such development can be accommodated with no net loss of shoreline ecological functions.
- 2) Public or private recreation facilities should be encouraged if compatible with surrounding uses. Preferred recreational uses include water-dependent and water-enjoyment recreation facilities that provide opportunities for substantial numbers of people to access and enjoy the shoreline.
- 3) Development should be designed to preserve and enhance the visual quality of the shoreline, including views over and through the development from the upland side, and views of the development from the water.
- 4) New commercial development should be limited to water-oriented uses. Expansion of existing non-water-oriented commercial uses may be permitted provided that, such uses should create a substantial benefit with respect to the goals and policies of this Program such as providing improved public access or restoring degraded shorelines.
- 5) New structures waterward of the ordinary high water mark should only be permitted for water-dependent uses or public access. The size of new over-water structures should be limited to the minimum necessary to support the structure's intended use. To reduce the impacts of shoreline development and increase effective use of water resources, multiple uses of the same over-water facility should be encouraged.
- 6) Standards for density, setbacks, lot coverage, buffers, shoreline stabilization, vegetation conservation, critical area protection, and water quality should be applied to assure no net loss of shoreline ecological functions, taking into account the environmental limitations and sensitivity of the shoreline area, the level of infrastructure and services available, and other comprehensive planning considerations.
- 7) Shoreline uses and modifications located waterward of the ordinary high water mark should be designed and managed to prevent degradation of water quality and alteration of natural hydrographic conditions.
- 8) All developments and uses waterward of the ordinary high water mark should be located and designed to minimize interference with surface navigation, to

minimize adverse visual impacts, and to allow for the safe, unobstructed passage of fish and wildlife, particularly those species dependent on migration.

## 5.2.5 City Waterfront Environment

### A. Purpose

The City Waterfront areas comprise an important portion of the historic downtown commercial area of Gig Harbor. Together with those commercial areas in the view basin located outside the jurisdiction of the master program, they serve as the traditional and emotional center of the city. These areas include many non-water oriented commercial uses that have historically provided essential goods and services to the nearby residential neighborhoods within the city's view basin, and continue today to support those neighborhoods and residential areas outside the view basin, and are an integral part of a significant tourism industry. The City Waterfront is a place where people can live, work, walk, play, shop and worship all in one location. Important factors that continue to support this mix of land uses include: proximity to downtown residential areas that allows residents to walk to a local retail store, office or other destination rather than drive; availability of places for people to gather and socialize; presence of old buildings that give the area authenticity and charm; accessibility to areas to stroll and relax; and existence of a series of public spaces owned, controlled and actively used by the public.

The purpose of the City Waterfront designation is to accommodate and foster the unique mix of uses and activities that characterize the Gig Harbor Bay waterfront. The City Waterfront Environment is an area of intensive and diverse land use. Current zoning (WC Waterfront Commercial and WM Waterfront Millville) allows for professional services such as legal, medical, and architectural offices; business services, such as postal services, financial institutions and photocopying businesses; sales level 1 such as grocery stores, hardware stores and flower shops; product services level 1 such as the servicing, repair and maintenance of small personal items such as shoes, computers, watches and jewelry; restaurants, taverns, hotels and marinas.

This environment should protect and preserve the waterfront locations for water-dependent uses, including commercial fishing, boatyards and marinas; allow for the continued mix of both water oriented and non-water oriented uses as allowed by the City's Zoning Code and Comprehensive Plan in recognition of historic and existing land use patterns and to maintain balance between the various land uses; protect historic resources such as overwater net shed structures; promote public access and knowledge of Gig Harbor's history; and support tourism, while

protecting existing ecological functions, restoring ecological functions that have been previously degraded, and enhancing public access to the shoreline.

## **B. Designation Criteria**

With the exception of the Donkey Creek and Crescent Creek estuarine areas this designation should be applied to the southerly central and north waterfront of Gig Harbor Bay within city limits. This area contains a mix of waterfront, residential, and commercial uses and includes the historic “Millville” District and the Downtown and Finholm Business Districts.

## **C. Shorelines Designated**

The City Waterfront Environment designation applies to areas as shown on the Official Shoreline Map and described below:

- Gig Harbor Bay beginning at the northernmost property line of Parcel 2260000712 extending south to the southernmost property line of Parcel 4097000010.
- Gig Harbor Bay-Parcels 0221064138 and 4002990020.
- Gig Harbor Bay beginning at the southernmost upland property line of Parcel 0221068023 and extending south to the southerly most property line of Parcel 0221064099.
- Gig Harbor Bay beginning at the westernmost property line of Parcel 5970000230, extending southeast to southernmost property line of Parcel 0221081138.

Refer to Figure 5-7 below for a map of the City Waterfront Environment designation boundaries.

Figure 5-7. City Waterfront Shoreline Environment Designation



## D. Management Policies

In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program, the following management policies should apply:

- 1) In this environment as well as others, preserve the cultural heritage of Gig Harbor as a fishing village by supporting commercial fishing activities and accessory facilities, and by encouraging adaptive reuse of historic net sheds when water-dependent uses for those structures are no longer economically viable.
- 2) Redevelopment should occur in a manner that avoids impacts to critical areas and natural shoreline processes.
- 3) Commercial and recreational development should serve both the citizens of Gig Harbor and tourists.
- 4) Public access and education should be enhanced through interpretive signage, viewpoints and overlooks, and physical access to the water when feasible.
- 5) Degraded shoreline ecological functions should be restored by removing unnecessary shoreline armoring, derelict structures, and unused pilings or pilings treated with toxic materials wherever possible.
- 6) New structures waterward of the ordinary high water mark should only be permitted for water-dependent uses, public access, or ecological restoration. Water-related and water-enjoyment commercial uses may be allowed waterward of the ordinary high water mark provided they are located in existing overwater structures. Decks located waterward of the ordinary high water mark may be allowed provided they are appurtenant to a permitted upland water-oriented or water-enjoyment use. The size of new over-water structures should be limited to the minimum necessary to support the structure's intended use. To reduce the impacts of shoreline development and increase effective use of water resources, multiple uses of the same over-water facility should be encouraged.
- 7) Shoreline uses and modifications located waterward of the ordinary high water mark should be designed and managed to prevent degradation of water quality and alteration of natural hydrographic conditions.
- 8) All developments and uses waterward of the ordinary high water mark should be located and designed to minimize interference with surface navigation, to minimize adverse visual impacts, and to allow for the safe passage of fish and wildlife, particularly those species dependent on migration.

## 5.2.6 Historic Working Waterfront Environment

### A. Purpose

The purpose of the Historic Working Waterfront designation is to recognize and preserve two of Gig Harbor's most notable historic industries: commercial fishing and boatbuilding. The area possesses a significant concentration of historic uses and structures. This concentration of contiguous net sheds and commercial fishing vessel moorage facilities on either side of the historic Eddon Boat Building facility and Eddon Boat Park, have aesthetic, architectural, historical and cultural significance that characterize the community's regional maritime identity.

This designation allows a limited range of non-water oriented uses as a means of promoting the preservation and rehabilitation of the historic structures. Current zoning (WC - Waterfront Commercial and WM - Waterfront Millville) allows for professional services. The preferred and best uses for this area are commercial fishing services/moorage and boatbuilding. Those properties that have been listed on the City's Register of Historic Places shall be eligible for conditional non-water oriented uses such as offices and sales, and water-enjoyment uses such as restaurants and small-scale marina trades businesses.

This environment should recognize historic resources such as overwater net shed structures; promote public access and knowledge of Gig Harbor's history; and support tourism, while protecting existing ecological functions, restoring ecological functions that have been previously degraded, and enhancing public access to the shoreline.

### B. Designation Criteria

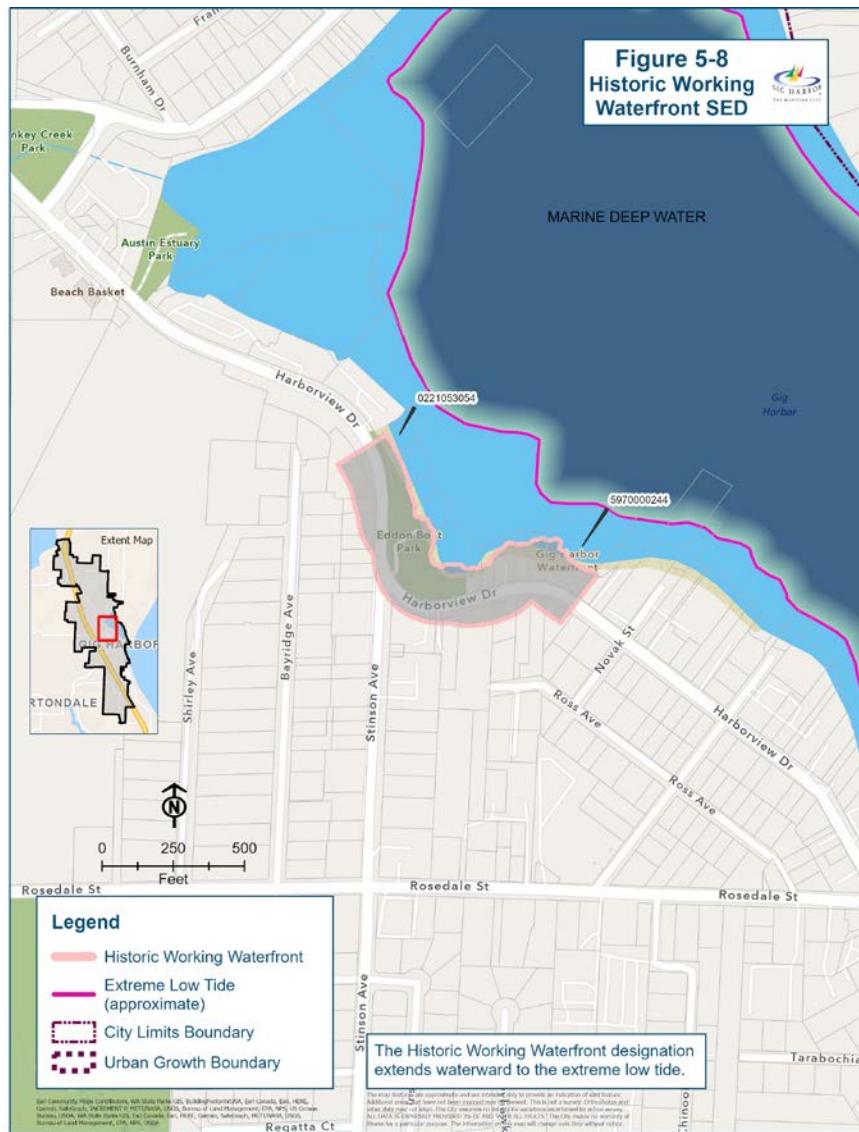
This designation should be applied to 14 parcels along the northwest section of waterfront on Gig Harbor Bay within the city limits just south of Donkey Creek and Austin Estuary. This area contains a mix of waterfront, residential, and commercial uses and includes a portion of the historic "Millville" District.

### C. Shorelines Designated

The Historic Working Waterfront Environment designation applies to areas as shown on the Official Shoreline Map and described below:

- Gig Harbor Bay beginning at the northernmost property lines of Parcel 0221053054, extending south to the southernmost property line of Parcel 5970000244.

Refer to Figure 5-8 below for a map of the Historic Working Waterfront Environment designation boundaries.

**Figure 5-8. Historic Working Waterfront Shoreline Environment Designation**

## D. Management Policies

In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program, the following management policies should apply:

- 1) Uses that preserve the historic integrity of the area and/or promote the preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures should be the primary allowed uses.

- 2) The City shall investigate ways to maintain the District's integrity, character and economic viability.
- 3) The City will consider development allowances and incentives that contribute to the structural rehabilitation and continued industrial uses of the District.
- 4) Standards should be established that promote the health and economic viability of the District.
- 5) The cultural benefit and historic relevance of the District should be promoted and publicized whenever possible.
- 6) Education should be enhanced through interpretive signage and viewpoints where feasible.
- 7) Water-dependent historic uses should be given priority over non-water oriented uses.
- 8) All development and uses waterward of the ordinary high water mark should be located and designed to minimize interference with surface navigation and to minimize adverse visual impacts, and to allow for the safe, unobstructed passage of fish and wildlife, particularly those species dependent on migration.
- 9) All development and uses landward of the ordinary high water mark should be located and designed to minimize adverse visual impacts, be compatible and consistent with historic district design details, and conform to the existing patterns of development in scale, materials and character of the historic structures within the District.
- 10) The City should investigate and encourage use and development allowances that promote the preservation of the Millville District as a whole.
- 11) Redevelopment should occur in a manner that avoids impacts to critical areas and natural shoreline processes.
- 12) Shoreline uses and modifications located waterward of the ordinary high water mark should be designed and managed to prevent degradation of water quality and alteration of natural hydrographic conditions.

## 5.2.7 Marine Deepwater Environment

### D. Purpose

The purpose of the Marine Deepwater Environment is to protect, restore, and manage the unique characteristics and resources of the marine waters in Gig Harbor.

### E. Designation Criteria

This designation should be applied to shoreline areas in city limits or in designated urban growth areas if any of the following characteristics apply:

- Marine Deepwater areas include all marine waters and underlying submerged lands waterward of extreme low tide level.

### F. Shorelines Designated

The Marine Deepwater Environment designation applies to areas as shown on the Official Shoreline Map and described below:

- Marine waters and underlying submerged lands waterward of extreme low tide level.

### G. Management Policies

In addition to the other applicable policies and regulations of this Program the following management policies should apply:

- 1) All developments and uses on navigable waters and submerged lands should be located and designed to minimize interference with surface navigation, to reduce impacts to public views, and to allow for the safe, unobstructed passage of fish and wildlife, particularly those species dependent on migration.
- 2) Uses that adversely impact the ecological functions of critical saltwater habitats should not be permitted except where necessary to achieve the objectives of RCW 90.58.020, and then only when all potential impacts are mitigated as necessary to assure maintenance of shoreline ecological functions and processes.
- 3) Shoreline uses and modifications should be designed and managed to prevent degradation of water quality and alteration of natural conditions. New over-

water structures should only be permitted for water-dependent uses or public access. The size of new over-water structures should be limited to the minimum necessary to support the structure's intended use. To reduce the impacts of shoreline development and increase effective use of water resources, multiple uses of the same over-water facility should be encouraged.