

Protecting what's there

Land and water are connected. Native vegetation provides erosion control, shade, and insects that feed the fish. Think twice about removing vegetation from your bank or shore: native plants are perfectly designed to support the life there, and they are very low maintenance.

Trees help hold banks and bluffs in place. If a tree is blocking your view, think about creating “windows” by removing some vertical branches. Pruning is more effective than topping, which may leave the tree open to disease.

Plants for shore restoration

Oregon grape	Salal
Snowberry	Evergreen huckleberry
Twinberry	Thimbleberry
Sword fern	Ocean spray
Vine maple	Pacific dune grass
Shore pine	Hooker's willow

Resources

Shore Friendly provides guidance by the Department of Natural Resources and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for homeowners to help them protect their shoreline property. See shorefriendly.org.

Puget Sound Shorelines, Washington State Department of Ecology describes Puget Sound issues, from plant and animal species to buying property and building on the shore. See tinyurl.com/psshorelines

Vegetation Management: Guide for Puget Sound Bluff Property Owners, by the Washington State Department of Ecology, provides detailed information about managing shoreline bluff properties. See tinyurl.com/vegman

Washington Native Plant Society provides detailed lists of native plants for shoreline planting. See tinyurl.com/saltshoreplants. Skagit County Shoreline Master Program See tinyurl.com/skagitSMP.

Skagit County Critical Areas Ordinance See tinyurl.com/skagitCAO

Your Guemes SHORELINES



Guemes shorelines support an amazing variety of marine plants and animals—from the tiny sand flea and candlefish to salmon and Orca whales. Nearly 75 percent of our Guemes Island shoreline parcels have been developed.

Understanding our connection to the shore can help us protect our waterfront properties and the beaches, waters, and marine life that depend upon healthy shorelines.



Kelp and eelgrass beds

Beaches on Guemes Island support forests of eelgrass and kelp, which provide habitat for forage fish to spawn, grow, and eventually feed juvenile salmon. Our tidelands provide rich crabbing grounds that feed and delight hundreds of residents and visitors each year.

Feeder bluffs

Beaches are sediment. They depend on erosion to feed them. While some parts of the shore erode, others gain gravel and sand.

A feeder bluff is an area that produces sediment. Prevailing wind and waves carry the sediment from the feeder bluff offshore or to another beach, known as an accretion beach. Yellow Bluff, northern North Beach, and the shoreline along South Shore Road are feeder bluffs; the beaches at the ferry dock and Young's Park are accretion sites where sand and gravel drift and accumulate.

Setbacks and buffer zones

The most cost effective and shore-friendly way to protect waterfront properties is to locate buildings away from the beach.

Skagit County Shoreline Master Program

The Shoreline Master Program (SMP) requires new houses to be set back 50–75 feet from the shore, or the average setback of neighboring houses, whichever is greater. (See Chapter 7.13) An update of the SMP is in process and may change these setback standards: consult Skagit County Planning and Development Services for current standards.

Skagit County Critical Areas Ordinance

- All shorelines on Guemes are considered critical areas for fish and wildlife habitat conservation.
- The Skagit County Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) regulates building and site modifications within shoreline buffer areas. On Guemes, these are generally 100 feet inland from the ordinary high water mark. (See SCC 14.24.500)
- CAO requires a buffer to be established from the top, toe, and all edges of all landslide and erosion hazard areas. CAO mandates that existing vegetation must be maintained in landslide and erosion hazard areas and associated buffers.

This brochure is provided by the Guemes Island Planning Advisory Committee. We meet monthly; find us at linetime.org or myguemes.org

Shore armoring

Shore armoring is the practice of using hard structures such as bulkheads, concrete walls, and rip-rap to armor and stabilize the shore. These structures interfere with the movement of wind and waves and eliminate upper beach habitat where some small fish lay their eggs and insects feed the fish. A bulkhead on one property affects the neighboring properties. In some cases, it is possible to restore beaches to a more natural state and still protect against erosion. The photo below shows hard armoring that is likely to interfere with natural accretions and habitat.



Courtesy Washington State Department of Ecology

Drainage

Water running off the island causes erosion. If you have drainage lines over a bluff, keeping them in good repair will help all water reach the beach below. A rain garden or rainwater collection can help protect your bank. Careful watering will have the added benefit of protecting our aquifer.