

March 25, 2025

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**Critical Areas Report**  
Sims Way Stormwater Facility  
Port of Port Townsend

**CITY OF PORT TOWNSEND**  
**DSD**

Dear Jenny Murphy,

The Port of Port Townsend proposes to construct the Sims Way Stormwater Facility project located in Port Townsend, Jefferson County. This Critical Areas Report has been prepared to identify and document critical areas and their required buffers, pursuant to Port Townsend Municipal Code (PTMC) 19.05. Site visits by the qualified consultant, Widener & Associates, and a review of the City of Port Townsend Critical Areas Public Maps and Jefferson County GIS Open Data Portal were used to identify critical areas and their nature and type in the vicinity of the Project.

**Project Description**

The Port of Port Townsend proposes maintenance activities to repair the damaged, substandard, and dysfunctional Sims Way stormwater drainage and outfall by reconstructing the facility. This will involve installing a new outfall at the current location, adding a new bioswale meeting Ecology standards for basic treatment, and constructing a maintenance-only access road. These improvements will restore drainage patterns and provide basic treatment for stormwater generated by Sims Way and over 100 acres of City development. Stormwater generated by the Boat Haven Boatyard will continue to be regulated under the Boatyard General Permit (BYGP), a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), and State Waste Discharge permit issued by Ecology (BYGP WAG031006); no industrial stormwater will be discharged by this project.

The main project elements include the replacement of the existing damaged, substandard 15-inch pipe outfall with a new 24-inch pipe outfall, repositioning existing riprap to provide energy dissipation for the new outfall, new manholes and 24-inch storm drains to connect the existing 18-inch culvert by Sims Way with the replaced outfall, a 230-foot wet biofiltration swale to provide basic treatment for Sims Way and City stormwater, and a 12-foot wide access road for stormwater facility maintenance. The access road widens to 15 feet at the stormwater swale, providing additional space for maintenance equipment to operate, and tapers to 10 feet adjacent to Wetland A, avoiding permanent impacts to the high-value coastal lagoon.

The Project will also restore the 10,155 SF (0.23 acres) of temporary impacts related to construction access and the 11,500 SF (0.26 acres) of permanent Wetland A buffer impacts resulting from the construction of the maintenance access road. Compensatory mitigation will be provided for the 4,552 SF (0.10 acres) of unavoidable permanent wetland impacts resulting from the reconstruction of the stormwater facilities. Wetland mitigation will consist of the construction of a 1-acre mitigation site comprised of a 0.22-acre wetland compensatory area and 80-foot vegetated perimeter buffer according

to the Ecology, EPA, and USACE interagency guidance in *Wetland Mitigation in Washington State* to ensure no net loss of ecological functions and values result from the project.

#### Construction Methods, Equipment & Timeline

The construction methods will follow traditional industry standards, utilizing a combination of mechanized equipment—such as excavators, backhoes, dozers, loaders, bucket trucks, and graders—and skilled labor. This approach will be employed for various tasks, including excavation, grading, trenching, installation of stormwater systems, and any other necessary construction activities as directed by the project engineer. No blasting or pile driving will be required. The project area is approximately 14 acres. Construction is anticipated to begin in June 2025 and conclude in October 2025, lasting approximately 5 months.

#### Use Criteria

The proposed development activities for the stormwater utility meet the criteria of PTMC 19.05.050(A)(4)(a-d) as they do not pose a threat to public health, safety, or welfare; mitigation sequencing was applied per PTMC 19.05.060(A); impacts to critical areas will be mitigated according to PTMC 19.05.060(B), and the proposed design is based on the best available science to ensure no net loss of ecological functions and values. Further, the development proposal meets other applicable regulations as required under PTMC 19.05.050(A)(4)(e) as stormwater treatment facilities and municipal improvements are permitted outright under Table 17.22.020 for the M-II(A) Boat Haven Marine Related Uses district, as designated in PTMC 17.22.010(B)(3). A small portion of the Port-owned parcel to be developed, ID 948301003, is included in the adjacent R-II(SF) residential zoning district on the bluff; however, this area is located at the base of the bluff approximately 90 feet below the residential area and has been developed with roads and a maintenance shop to support the Boatyard since at least 2000. The proposed development is consistent with the established use of the site.

#### Avoidance, Minimization Measures, and Best Management Practices

During the design process, the Project applied mitigation sequencing per PTMC 19.05.060(A). As the proposed development repairs an existing facility, avoidance was not possible. As a result, the project was designed to limit disturbance to the minimum area necessary to accomplish the project objectives, and unavoidable permanent impacts are restricted to the poorer-quality critical area (Wetland C) or the existing infrastructure footprint. All temporary impacts to critical areas and their buffers will be fully restored, and permanent impacts will be mitigated by establishing a compensatory wetland mitigation site in an ecologically higher-value location on Port property.

The Project will also implement best management practices (BMPs), including Temporary Erosion and Sediment Control (TESC), Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), and Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures (SPCC) plan elements to avoid and minimize the possibility of adverse effects. Soils and vegetation outside of the area of impact will be protected in place; no stockpiling of materials or equipment will be allowed in sensitive areas. No fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides will be applied. Hydrologic function and drainage patterns will be restored, and stormwater facilities providing basic treatment will be installed. A Hydraulic Assessment has been performed to ensure that no-rise in the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) will occur from the project activities.

### Identified Critical Areas

The following sections provide documentation of the five identified critical areas in the vicinity of the Project (Figure 1, Figure 2).

#### 19.05.070 Aquifer Recharge Areas

The site is partially located within a Critical Aquifer Recharge Area (CARA), rated as susceptible due to site geology, and the Coastal Seawater Intrusion Protection Zone (SIPZ), areas within 0.25 miles of a marine shoreline. The proposed activities to restore the stormwater facility and mitigate wetland impacts are not regulated under 19.05.070(C); therefore, further analysis is not required. However, the project meets the performance standards for development stipulated under 19.05.070(D), ensuring maximum protection for the aquifer recharge area and aquifer water quality.

No hazardous substance or petroleum storage facilities are proposed. No fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides will be applied. Native soils and vegetation outside the impact area will be protected, and vegetation impacts will be fully restored and mitigated. During construction, stormwater runoff will be managed through the SWPPP, and BMPs will be implemented until final stabilization. Post-project, the new bioswale will provide basic treatment for stormwater generated by Sims Way and over 100 acres of adjoining City development before discharge to Puget Sound, as intended. This will stop the discharge of poor-quality stormwater to the site, preventing the delivery of pollutants to the aquifer, and hydrologic function and drainage patterns will be restored.

#### 19.05.080 Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Priority Habitats and Species, the Ecology Washington State Coastal Atlas Map, the WDFW Forage Fish Spawning Map, the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation, the USFWS Critical Habitat Mapper, and the NOAA Species and Habitats databases were reviewed for the presence of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA) in the vicinity of the Project. The FWHCA include:

WDFW Priority Habitats and Species	USFWS & NMFS ESA Species & Habitats	NMFS MSA Essential Fish Habitats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pacific Sand Lance</li><li>• Dungeness Crab</li><li>• Feeder Bluff</li><li>• Freshwater Emergent Wetlands</li><li>• Marine Nearshore Habitat</li><li>• Marine Waters of the State</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marbled Murrelet</li><li>• Bull Trout</li><li>• Chum Salmon &amp; DCH</li><li>• Chinook Salmon &amp; DCH</li><li>• Steelhead Trout</li><li>• Bocaccio &amp; DCH</li><li>• Killer Whale &amp; DCH</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pacific Coast Groundfish</li><li>• Coastal Pelagic Species</li><li>• Pacific Coast Salmon</li></ul>

In accordance with PTMC 19.05.080(K)(1), a Habitat Assessment (HA) has been prepared for the Project. Additionally, a Programmatic Biological Evaluation (BE) has been developed per PTMC 19.05.080(L)(1)(a) to initiate federal interagency ESA consultation under the Salish Sea Nearshore Programmatic (SSNP), as ongoing informal consultations with NOAA have determined that the project consultation should proceed under the streamlined SSNP regulatory tool. Please refer to the attached HA and BE for additional information regarding the nature and type of FWHCA in the vicinity of the Sims Way

Stormwater Facility project. The HA determined that no state or local priority habitats and species would be permanently adversely affected by the Project. The Programmatic BE concluded that the project incorporates measures of the SSNP to minimize impacts on species and habitats, resulting in no net loss of functions and values. Conservation of the FWHCAs will be accomplished by fully restoring temporary impacts and mitigating permanent impacts. Per PTMC 19.05.060(D)(6) and state and federal regulations, a Site Mitigation Plan has been prepared to outline the mitigation proposed for the unavoidable project impacts.

#### 19.05.090 Frequently Flooded Areas and Drainage Corridors

The project area is mapped within FEMA Zone AE, the 100-year floodplain, at a NAVD 88 elevation of 12.0 feet, equivalent to about 13.3 feet MLLW (FEMA, 2024). As a result, the Port retained the services of Blue Coast Engineering (Blue Coast) to conduct a hydraulic evaluation for the proposed project. Blue Coast determined that the proposed project will not adversely affect base flood elevations (BFEs) as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The project complies with Port Townsend Municipal Code (PTMC) Section 16.08.200 Encroachments as well as Jefferson County Code (JCC) Chapter 15.15.080 Provisions for Flood Hazard Reduction (Blue Coast, 2025).

#### 19.05.100 Geologically Hazardous Areas

The project area lies within seismic and tsunami inundation hazard areas. The site has a high liquefaction susceptibility and is within the 2,500-year event Cascadia Subduction Zone. As the site is an existing facility, no additional impacts related to geohazards are anticipated for this project.

#### 19.05.110 Wetlands

The Jefferson County and USFWS National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps identify two wetlands in the vicinity of the project, Wetland A and Wetland B; a third wetland is also identified on the City of Port Townsend Public Maps Critical Areas database, Wetland C (Figure 3). Widener & Associates biologists conducted investigations and delineations of the wetlands identified in the federal, county, and city databases to determine the presence and location of their boundaries (Figure 4). The results of the wetland investigations are as follows:

**Wetland A** is a 3.63-acre emergent depressional wetland meeting the requirements for a Category II Coastal Lagoon rating based on functions and special characteristics (Widener & Associates, 2024a). Reconstruction of the stormwater facilities will result in 1,955 SF (0.04 acres) of temporary impacts due to construction access and 320 SF (0.01 acres) of permanent impacts. After installation is complete, the temporary impacts will be fully restored and revegetated with native species. Compensatory wetland mitigation will offset the permanent impacts.

**Wetland B** was not present upon investigation. As the presence of this wetland was photo-interpreted using color infrared imagery from 1980, it was determined to be erroneously mapped by the NWI and subsequently adopted by the Jefferson County and City of Port Townsend databases (Widener & Associates, 2024b).

**Wetlands C1 and C2** comprise 4,232 SF (0.10 acres) of Category III emergent depressional wetland (Widener & Associates, 2025). The installation of the new stormwater treatment facilities will result in the filling of Wetlands C1 and C2. The permanent adverse impacts to Wetlands C1 and C2 will be fully mitigated by constructing a compensatory mitigation site adjacent to the higher-value Wetland A coastal

lagoon according to the Ecology, EPA, and USACE interagency guidance in *Wetland Mitigation in Washington State* to ensure no net loss of ecological functions and values result from the permanent wetland impacts.

**Wetland Buffers** Both Wetland A and Wetland C are subject to 150-foot buffers per PTMC 19.05.110(G)(2)(a) as Boatyard activities have a high land-use intensity as defined under PTMC 19.05.110(G)(2)(b). However, buffer waivers are allowed where an existing legally established roadway or other legally established structure or paved area effectively eliminates the function and values intended to be provided by the buffer per 19.05.110(G)(7)(b). Therefore, wetland buffers have been reduced by the presence of existing development. The buffer for Wetland A will end at Haines Place to the northwest, the stormwater facility and existing Boatyard to the northeast, and the Larry Scott Trail embankment to the southeast. The buffer for Wetland C ends at the existing boatyard to the northeast (Figure 5).

The Wetland A buffer impacts include 8,200 SF (0.19 acres) of temporary impacts for construction access and 11,500 SF (0.26 acres) of permanent impacts for the maintenance access road. The filling of Wetland C to support the reconstruction of the stormwater facility will eliminate the Wetland C buffer (Figure 6). Post-construction, the temporary impacts on the Wetland A buffer will be restored by revegetating with in-kind native species. Permanent Wetland A buffer impacts will be addressed by protecting the currently mowed, unprotected northwest portion of the buffer and installing native trees and shrubs. The impacts on the Wetland C buffer will be offset by establishing a regulatory buffer around the new compensatory wetland mitigation site, as specified in the Site Mitigation Plan prepared per PTMC 19.05.060(D)(6) and SMP DR-6.3.4.

Please note: All of the Wetland A impacts, 1,955 SF (0.04 acres) of temporary and 320 SF (0.01 acres) of permanent; and 1,928 SF (0.04 acres) of the temporary and 3,360 SF (0.08 acres) of the permanent Wetland A buffer impacts also fall under the City Shoreline Jurisdiction (please refer to the Shoreline Use Evaluation for a description of impacts within SMP jurisdiction).

### Conclusion

The Port of Port Townsend, based on the best professional judgment of Widener & Associates, believes this Critical Areas Report adequately identifies and documents critical areas and their nature and type in the vicinity of the Sims Way Stormwater Facility project, assesses the impacts on critical areas resulting from the project, and proposes restoration and compensatory mitigation activities to ensure no net loss of ecological function pursuant to Port Townsend Municipal Code 19.05. Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Ross Widener at (425) 503-3629 or [ross@widener-enviro.com](mailto:ross@widener-enviro.com).

Sincerely,



Ross Widener  
Widener & Associates



**Project Location**

Map showing the Port of Port Townsend, Jefferson County, Washington. The map includes the town of Port Townsend, Port Hadlock, and the Port Hadlock Peninsula. Key features include the Discovery Bay, Port Townsend State Park, Old Fort Townsend State Park, and the Jefferson Co International Airport. The project location is marked with a red dot near the town center.

**Vicinity Map**  
**Boat Haven Stormwater Improvement**  
 Port of Port Townsend  
 Jefferson County, Washington

Scale: 0 0.5 1 2 Miles



Figure 2. Critical Areas Map





Figure 3. NWI and City Database Wetlands





Figure 4. Delineated Wetland Boundaries





Figure 5. Reduced Wetland Buffers





Figure 6. Wetland and Wetland Buffer Impacts



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