



Upland Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

Common Questions & Answers

Q: Will these changes to the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) prohibit me from developing my property?

A: *No. These changes are designed to provide protection of upland habitat species while preserving existing development opportunities. This is accomplished primarily through the management of public lands because most of the upland wildlife habitat conservation area (UWHCA) is publically owned, and also through existing land use regulations of remote areas that already have little development potential. The ordinance is designed so that prior to development, the applicant considers impacts to upland species. As such, the development may be affected, but not prohibited.*

Q: Do I need a permit for agricultural activities? What if I want to change my farming practices or the way I manage my land?

A: *Agricultural activities are not regulated by this ordinance.*

Q: Will I be able to hunt within the UWHCA areas?

A: *Of course. Recreational use of land is not regulated by Yakima County. Furthermore, deer and elk are not protected. The ordinance only protects state or federally designated endangered, threatened, or sensitive species.*

Q: What do the UWHCA maps mean?

A: *The maps are only a guideline, they are not regulatory. As such, proposed development within the mapped UWHCA will be reviewed on a project by project basis to determine if there is a potential for impacting upland species.*

Q: Isn't this just an extra layer of government regulation?

A: *Sort of. Yakima County is required to protect wildlife habitat (WAC 365-190-080(5)). Through a series of meetings with multiple groups that appealed the existing CAO for not doing enough to protect upland species and habitat, Yakima County has developed the UWHCA maps that show areas of upland habitat potential. While the area mapped is relatively large, the development standards that apply within these areas do not prohibit development.*

Q: If I live within a mapped UWHCA area, do I need a permit for development?

A: *Maybe. But only if it is determined that the proposed development could impact protected species, then management recommendations established for specific species need to be considered. If your project can be designed following these management recommendations, then it is likely that a permit will not be required. Otherwise, through the review of a Type-1 CAO permit impacts will be mitigated, if possible.*

Q: Do I have to hire a “qualified professional” to determine whether or not a permit is required?

A: *Not necessarily, Yakima County is working with the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to develop a process to coordinate with “qualified professionals” from the WDFW to evaluate development proposals. An applicant always has the choice of hiring a “qualified professional”, but if an applicant doesn't agree with the County's or WDFW's assessment of potential impacts, then a “qualified professional” can make the assessment.*

Q: Will I have to remove or change any of my existing development?

A: *No. The proposed changes to the CAO will not affect any existing development.*