



King County

Shannon Braddock

King County Executive

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June 30, 2025

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Zahilay:

This letter transmits a Critical Areas Monitoring and Adaptive Management Program Plan, as called for by Ordinance 19861, Section 16, Proviso P1, and a proposed Motion that would, if approved, acknowledge receipt of the plan. This plan provides a discussion and analysis of what would be needed to develop and implement a critical areas monitoring and adaptive management program consistent with Washington State Department of Commerce guidance in the Critical Areas Handbook.

As required, the enclosed plan includes an analysis of the one-time monetary and staffing resources needed to develop the program, as well as an analysis of the ongoing monetary and staffing resources required to implement it. Based on this needs analysis, the plan provides a detailed timeline for developing and implementing the program. It also includes an analysis of whether all permits and critical areas, or only a subset, should be monitored through the program. Finally, the plan examines how phasing implementation – such as applying it to streams and wetlands first and to other types of critical areas later – would impact the needed resources and the timeline, as well as any potential environmental impacts resulting from this phased approach.

The enclosed plan is both scalable and aligned with Commerce's Critical Areas Handbook and advances King County Comprehensive Plan policies and King County Code directives. It lays out evidence-based recommendations to continuously improve permitting and protection processes by upgrading the permit tracking system and extending and integrating monitoring efforts across departments. At its core, the program would integrate multiple monitoring components – including permit implementation monitoring, permit effectiveness monitoring, and ecological validation monitoring – each serving as vital components of the initiative. The

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integration of these monitoring elements is intended to provide continuous, data-driven evaluations of whether permitted projects are carried out in accordance with regulations and whether the critical area functions and values are maintained over time. These evaluations serve as the basis for recommending adaptive management actions to improve regulations and permitting processes and address any gaps in critical area protection. The program could operate on a five-year cycle, aligning with other essential cycles and updates.

Thank you for your consideration of this plan and proposed motion. This plan will help allocate resources effectively and drive actionable improvements through integration.

If your staff have questions, please contact Josh Baldi, Division Director, Water and Land Resources Division, Department of Natural Resources and Parks, at 206-477-9440.

Sincerely,



for

Shannon Braddock
King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers
 ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff, King County Council
 Melani Hay, Clerk of the Council
Karan Gill, Deputy Executive, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive
Stephanie Pure, Council Relations Director, Office of the Executive
Leon Richardson, Director, Department of Local Services
Jim Chan, Director, Permitting Division, Department of Local Services
John Taylor, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)
Josh Baldi, Division Director, Water and Land Resources Division, DNRP
Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget
Lauren Smith, Director of Regional Planning, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget