

Bill Blake

Hi, Thanks for the opportunity to comment. I see a lot of work has gone in to this by staff and the partners striving to find a workable document. I generally agree with most of the document, and realizing the work is targeted at Ecology's responsibility to water quality I believe there is merit to cross referencing other functional contributions of a riparian area just in case this is the only guidance a landowner reviews. Even if it is a reference to a WDFW document, the average person doesn't realize all of the ecosystem functions riparian areas provide. Specifically wildlife needs is a concern, as it relates to the proposal of doing Agro-forestry within the buffer area. I support agro-forestry when done correctly, but important in this document to highlight that use must be accompanied by a stewardship plan similar to what occurs with RCO grant funded projects. The critical area and buffers are truly the only lowland habitat areas protected by GMA, and over the next couple of hundred years they may be the only habitat left in the lowlands. Stewardship plans identifying temporal limitations for entering the riparian zone for actions related to agro-forestry is essential. The buffers serve multiple life stage needs for over 50% of Washington's wildlife. Specifically juveniles of many species could not escape management actions, nor would try as their nature is to hunker down and not draw attention. Our pollinators rely on plants in the riparian zones. Some birds species simply won't nest within sight of another bird and simplified buffers may reduce reproductive success. I was in charge of the buffers in the City of Arlington for 17-years both planting new ones and managing existing that experienced many non-authorized multiple uses such as recreation or over enthusiastic adjoining use maintenance. A disc golf course was integrated in to a riparian zone which led to nesting song birds being displaced by crows, and deer that were common prior to the course completely disappeared from the frequent human disturbance and impacts to the only migratory corridor available. Off leash dogs are also not very compatible with spawning salmon so providing a heads up in a stewardship plan can provide landowners some simple guidance rather than having Scooby showing up with a fish in his mouth. Having worked with many farmers over the years the majority embrace stewardship and appreciate the knowledge it takes to do the best job they can. Please, include the requirement for a stewardship plan to go along with multi-use buffer options. thanks, Bill