

## **6.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

### **6.1 Vision**

*In 2035, Camas appreciates and remains good stewards of its natural environment. A vegetated corridor provides habitat and safe passage for wildlife from Green Mountain to the Columbia River. Lacamas Lake is treasured as a unique and pristine resource. City policies preserve trees and natural areas.*

### **6.2 Organization of Natural Environment Element**

- Natural Environment Overview
- Goals and Policies
  - Citywide
  - Environmental Stewardship
  - Critical Areas
  - Shorelines
  - Landscape Enhancement and Tree Preservation

### **6.3 Natural Environment Overview**

The quality of life in the Pacific Northwest is often equated with the quality of the environment. Preserving the quality of the environment depends on individual, corporate, and government decisions, and on coordinated actions to minimize adverse environmental impacts.

The Natural Environment Element provides a policy framework for the protection and improvement of Camas' natural environment, an important element for the development of a sustainable city. The City of Camas is committed to the concept of a sustainable urban environment and weighs the merits and costs of its environmental actions with other important demands, such as public safety and recreation, public infrastructure, housing, and economic development.

The City has adopted a number of plans and development regulations to provide a balance between environmental regulations, public safety and economic development. These plans and regulations include the:

- Camas Shoreline Master Program (July 27, 2015, Ord. 15-007)
- City of Camas Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan (January 5, 2015, Ord. 15-002)
- Landscape Ordinance (Camas Zoning Code, Chapter 18.13) (date, Ord. 2515)
- Sensitive Areas and Open Space Ordinance (Chapter 18.31 of the Camas Zoning Code) (2008, Ord. 2515; amended in 2011, Ord. 2612)
- Title 16, Environment, of the Camas Municipal Codes (2015, Ord. 15-007)
- Low impact development policies within the City of Camas Stormwater Design Manual (Res. 1193, update in progress)

## **6.4 Goals and Policies**

Natural Environment goals and policies are established to ensure the preservation of the natural environment, consistent with the Camas 2035 Vision. Goals and policies are presented for environmental stewardship, critical areas (wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, historic and cultural resources), and landscape enhancement and tree preservation.

### **6.4.1 Environmental Stewardship**

One of the most demanding roles the City of Camas must fulfill is that of chief steward of the city's environment. The city has the authority to regulate land use and the responsibility to implement federal and state statutes. Therefore, the City must endeavor at all times to ensure that its environment is managed wisely. The City encourages all develop to consider the preservation, restoration, and improvement of the natural environment.

#### ***Environmental Stewardship Goal***

**NE-1:** To preserve Camas' natural environment through the development of a sustainable urban environment and the protection of habitat and vegetation corridors.

#### ***Environmental Stewardship Policies***

**NE-1.1:** Consider the immediate and long-term environmental impacts of policy and regulatory decisions.

**NE-1.2:** Conduct city operations in a manner that provides quality services to the community while ensuring resource conservation, and provide an environmentally safe workplace for its employees.

**NE-1.3:** Prepare, plan and provide ongoing training for responding to and recovery from adverse environmental events.

**NE-1.4:** Establish citywide multimodal connectivity to encourage non-motorized transportation in order to protect the City's air quality.

**NE-1.5:** Protect, conserve, and manage existing natural resources and valuable historic and cultural areas in order to ensure long-term preservation.

**NE-1.6:** Encourage the preservation of the night sky through dark sky standards in development regulations and design guidelines.

**NE-1.7:** Limit clearing, grading and soil disturbance outside of the building footprints, in order to maintain the natural hydrologic functions of a site.

**NE-1.8:** Encourage the development of grading regulations that will preserve the natural contours of undeveloped properties, natural vistas, and mature vegetated corridors.

#### **6.4.2 Critical Areas**

The critical area goal and policies provide for the protection of designated critical areas as identified by the Growth Management Act. Camas' natural environment is composed of a variety of landforms, soils, watercourses, and vegetation. Protection and, where appropriate, restoration of these critical areas will ensure the preservation of Camas' natural environment and contribute to Camas' quality of life. Development on property that contains critical areas must comply with the goal and policies listed below, as well as the development regulations contained in Title 16 of Camas' Municipal Codes.

##### **Critical Area Goal**

**NE-2:** To preserve, maintain, and restore the City's critical areas to protect their function and values.

##### **Critical Area Policies**

**NE-2.1:** Utilize Best Management Practices and Best Available Science to preserve, protect, and to the extent practical, restore the biological health and diversity of Camas' critical areas.

**NE-2.2:** Preserve, and when appropriate restore, aquatic and riparian habitats consistent with applicable regulations.

**NE-2.3:** Conserve and protect groundwater resources.

**NE-2.4:** Regulate land use and development in a manner that protects natural topographic, geologic, vegetative, and hydrologic features.

**NE-2.5:** Promote soil stability through the use of the natural drainage systems and protection of existing native vegetation.

**NE-2.6:** Minimize and control soil erosion during and after construction with the use of best management practices, best available science, and ecologically-sustainable site design.

**NE-2.7:** Preserve and avoid areas with endangered, threatened, and sensitive species, and species of local importance, as required by local, state and federal laws.

**NE-2.8:** Ensure that development throughout the City meets or exceeds long-term wetland protection and mitigation standards and practices.

#### **6.4.3 Shorelines**

The 2003 Washington State Legislature enacted a law (Substitute Senate Bill 6012) for Washington cities and counties to amend their SMP's by December 2011. The cities of Camas, Battleground, Vancouver, Washougal, Ridgefield, La Center, Town of Yacolt, and Clark County agreed to form a coalition by means of an interlocal agreement (Record #4570316 IA). The Clark County Coalition was established in 2009, to update the shoreline inventory, and to encourage public participation on the mandated SMP

amendments. In the years that preceded the adoption of this Program, there were monthly public outreach activities, regional open houses, and Planning Commission and City Council work sessions. The city also created an ad hoc committee to examine the proposed amendments and to ensure that the locally significant policies remain intact.

The Camas Shoreline Master Program (SMP) was amended in 2012 with Ordinance 2643 and Resolution 1250. A limited amendment to the wetland regulations was adopted July 2015 with Ordinance 15-007.

***Shoreline Goals (as provided in the SMP):***

**SMP-3.1:** To guide the future development of shorelines in the City in a positive, effective, and equitable manner consistent with the Shoreline Management Act.

**SMP-3.2:** To promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community by providing long range, comprehensive policies and effective, reasonable regulations for development and use of the City's shorelines.

**SMP-3.3:** To ensure, at minimum, no net loss of shoreline ecological functions and processes and to plan for restoring shorelines that have been impaired or degraded.

**6.4.4 Landscape Enhancement and Tree Preservation**

The natural landscape and existing tree cover are important aspects of Camas' natural environment. Native, mature landscaping and trees contribute to the City's ecological health, provide valuable animal habitat, and enhance the community's natural beauty.

***Landscape Enhancement and Tree Preservation Goal***

**NE 4:** To protect Camas' native landscape and mature tree cover.

***Landscape Enhancement and Tree Preservation Policies***

**NE-4.1:** Encourage the use of native plants in residential, commercial, and industrial landscapes, in order to increase the implementation of low-impact site design.

**NE-4.2:** Encourage the eradication of aggressive non-native vegetation species.

**NE-4.3:** Conduct an analysis of the tree canopy citywide, and encourage no net loss of significant tree cover, or provide a goal for improvement, in order to address air quality and low-impact development goals.

**NE-4.4:** Develop a fee-in-lieu replacement program to compensate for the loss of tree canopy coverage, when retention of mature trees within development sites is impractical. Among other goals, the program may provide community education regarding healthy tree management and support to the management of urban forest areas.