



Cowlitz County Department of Building and Planning
Critical Areas Ordinance Update

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
TO ASSIST IN UPDATING COWLITZ COUNTY'S CRITICAL AREAS ORDINANCE (CAO) AND BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE (BAS).

Agency Description

Cowlitz County is the most populous partially-planning County under the growth management act in Washington State. In 2024, the County had a population of approximately 114,000 people. The county adopted its most recent comprehensive plan update in July 2017 and the Critical Areas Ordinance was adopted December 2016. The Department of Building and Planning implements the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance, Forest Practices, Floodplain Management, Shoreline Master Program and Critical Areas Ordinances, and is responsible for building permits and inspections, code enforcement, land use designations, long range planning, and more.

Project Description

Cowlitz County has received \$75,000 to review and update the Best Available Science for an update of the Critical Areas Ordinance consistent with GMA amendments and conditions in Cowlitz County. Work with a steering committee, advisory committees and the Planning Commission is underway to update the 2017 Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan. These funds will assist Cowlitz County with the following deliverables:

- Gap analysis and Update to Critical Area policies and regulations and Best Available Science
- Organic Materials Management Facilities Siting
- Natural Resource Land Designations

Cowlitz County is required to update its Critical Areas ordinance consistent with state requirements for periodic updates as a county partially-planning under the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). Consultant will propose a scope of work that includes full or partial work, as budget allows, on an updated ordinance, gap analyses and demonstration and documentation that the best available science has been considered when creating their critical areas ordinance, by documenting scientific sources that support their approach to regulating critical areas, and explaining when policies depart from science-based recommendations.

All submittals must be received by 9:00 am on Monday, October 13, 2025.

To: Adam Trimble, trimblea@cowlitzwa.gov

Cowlitz County's Critical Areas Ordinance regulations and policies are available at:

- CCC Chapter 19.15 **CRITICAL AREAS**
<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/CowlitzCounty/#!/CowlitzCounty19/CowlitzCounty19.html>
- Best Available Science Report <https://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/3208/Critical-Areas-Ordinance-Update-RFP>
- Critical Aquifer Resources Report <https://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/3208/Critical-Areas-Ordinance-Update-RFP>
- 2022 Shoreline Master Program <https://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/1307/Shoreline-Master-Program>
- Cowlitz County Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 2, Land Use, Section 2.6.A Critical Areas
<https://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/1309/Comprehensive-Plan>
- Critical Areas Website with links to data sources:
<https://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/1306/Critical-Areas>

Scope of Work

The consultant will begin as soon as possible upon the completion of the contract process and once County requirements are met.

The consultant will:

- Work directly with Building and Planning Department staff regarding critical areas updates.
- Review the BAS reports regarding critical areas of Cowlitz County in accordance with state requirements and prepare an update to the County's existing BAS for the Critical Areas Ordinance to ensure compliance with state requirements. Existing BAS resources from relevant government agencies will be provided.
- Prepare required environmental checklists for the Critical Areas Ordinance update adoption.
- Review and prepare responses to comments received as a result of the SEPA comment period with all requirements of the GMA and other relevant laws.
- Review and advise the County on staff prepared updates regarding Organic Materials Management Facilities Siting, and Natural Resource Land Designations.
- Adhere to project schedule and budget.
- Produce two (2) drafts of the Critical Areas Ordinance update in accordance with WAC 365-190 and as directed by the County and produce one final draft at the end of the process for adoption by the Board of County Commissioners that addresses all public comments and state agency requirements.
- Attend 1 Planning Commission Hearing [5:30PM start], 1 Board of County Commissioners Workshop meeting [9 AM anticipated], and 1 Board of County Commissioners Public Hearing [10AM anticipated].

The County will:

- Review Comprehensive Plan policies, and draft policy amendments as needed to ensure consistency between Critical Areas regulations and policy.
- Complete portions of the project not included in the contractor's proposal.
- Prepare updates regarding Organic Materials Management Facilities Siting and Natural Resource Land Designations.
- Conduct public outreach and facilitate public participation throughout the update process.
- Complete mailings, public notices, select meeting locations, and distribute information regarding public outreach throughout the update process.
- Facilitate public participation to gather input during the project process.
- Review and comment upon the draft ordinances produced throughout the process.
- Complete the adoption process with the Planning Commission and Board of County

Commissioners.

Project Timeframe

The work will be completed by May 2026. Specific deadlines relating to the stages of the update process will be negotiated prior to final contract approval. Recommendations for key benchmarks in the timeline would be welcomed as part of the proposal.

Evaluation and Selection Process

The selection of a consultant for this project will be made from the respondents to this solicitation. All firms responding will be evaluated, scored, and ranked. The top firms may be invited for interview and have references checked.

All proposals will be evaluated on the following items in order of priority:

1. General project approach, and targeted approach to updating the County's Critical Areas Ordinance that focuses on completing only what is required to comply with the GMA as well as being responsive to community vision and concerns over increasing critical habitat buffer widths.
2. Demonstrated success with similar projects.
3. Relevant experience and qualifications of the facilitating team and of key person(s) to be assigned to this project.
4. Ability to meet the project schedule.

Submittal Content Requirements

1. **Letter of Interest (1 page maximum):** Indicate interest, experience and availability to address plan/scope elements, and current levels of general and professional liability insurance carried by the consultant and any subconsultants.
2. **Project Approach and Scope Consideration (4 pages maximum):** Include a brief description of the consultant's philosophy, approach to the project, and value to the County. Include key scoping considerations to accomplish the scope elements stated in the RFP. The consultant is encouraged to include suggestions or supplemental tasks which may enhance the project or streamline the scope of work and improve cost effectiveness. Must include a targeted approach for updating the County's Critical Areas Ordinance that focuses on completing only what is required to comply with the GMA as well as being responsive to the Community Vision.
3. **Schedule (1 page maximum).** Include a timeline showing the estimated length of time required for completion of the work described in the scope of work.
4. **Cost Summary (1 page maximum):** Provide a preliminary cost summary of the work to be completed based upon the task outline presented above.
5. **Project Team (2 pages maximum):** Identify the proposed team, including subconsultants, qualifications, experiences, and references. Identify the project manager and principal contact who will be permanently assigned to the project.
6. **Relevant Experience (3 pages maximum):** Describe the consultant's experience in preparing scope elements. Include at least three completed projects that are similar to the projects described in this request. For each project, provide the following information:

- Name and location of each project;
- Year completed;
- Name and contact information of each client;
- Name and contact information of the client project manager; and
- Elements of the project that are like the scope elements of this request.

7. Project Team Resumes: Provide in an appendix to the proposal resumes per team member, no page limit; or include at least a paragraph for each key team member, years of experience, education, certifications, company affiliation, workplace location, and a brief bulleted list of individual project experience.

8. Proposal Submittal Process

Consultants are encouraged to submit concise and clear responses to this RFP. Documents shall have a minimum font size of 11 or greater. Proposals must be in digital format, with a maximum length of 12 pages excluding the cover letter and appendices. The cover letter should have the following information: Firm name, Contact information, Name of Principal-in-Charge, and Project Manager.

All submittals must be received by 9:00 am on Monday, October 13, 2025, at trimblea@cowlitzwa.gov
 No submittals will be accepted after that date and time. It is the consultant’s sole responsibility to ensure that timely submittals are received. All submittals become the property of Cowlitz County and will not be returned. Cowlitz County assumes no obligations of any kind for expenses incurred by any respondent to this invitation. The County reserves the right to modify or cancel in part, or in its entirety, this RFP.

Anticipated Timeline for Consultant Selection

The County desires to select a consultant and complete contract negotiations by **October 28, 2025**.

October 13, 2025	Proposals due
October 13, 2025	Evaluation team selects finalist
October 28, 2025	Final scope and contract negotiations completed

Title VI Requirements

The selection of a consultant shall be made without regard to race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin or political affiliation. Cowlitz County is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Cowlitz County encourages disadvantaged, minority, and women-owned consultant firms to respond. Cowlitz County, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 78 Stat. 252, 42 U.S.C. 2000d to 2000d-4 and Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, Department of Transportation, subtitle A, Office of the Secretary, Part 21, nondiscrimination in federally assisted programs of the Department of Transportation issued pursuant to such Act, hereby notifies all bidders that it will affirmatively insure that in any contract entered into pursuant to this advertisement, disadvantaged business enterprises as defined at 49 CFR Part 26 will be afforded full opportunity to submit bids in response to this invitation and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, national origin or sex in consideration for an award.

Prospective consultants will be held to federal Equal Employment Opportunity requirements and Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Persons with disabilities may request this information be prepared and supplied in alternate forms by contacting Adam Trimble, trimblea@cowlitzwa.gov

Questions

Questions regarding this Request for Proposals should be directed to Adam Trimble, 360-577-3052 x6664 or trimblea@cowlitzwa.gov