



State of Washington

## Department of Fish and Wildlife, Region 4

Region 4 information: 16018 Mill Creek Blvd, Mill Creek, WA 98012 | phone: (425)-775-1311

August 13, 2025

City of Ferndale  
Kyla Boswell, Assistant Planner  
2095 Main St  
Ferndale, WA 98248

**RE: Submittal ID: 2025-S-8504, The City of Ferndale's Proposed Amendments relating to the Critical Area Ordinance Update**

Dear Ms. Boswell,

On behalf of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), thank you for the opportunity to comment on Ferndale's proposed amendments relating to the Critical Area Ordinance (CAO) update. This letter is a follow-up to the detailed comment sheet submitted on behalf of the agency on August 23, 2024, under PlanView submittal #2024-S-7172.

Within the State of Washington's land use decision-making framework, WDFW is considered a technical advisor for the habitat needs of fish and wildlife and routinely provides input into the implications of land use decisions.

The currently proposed stream buffers fall short of WDFW's Best Available Science (BAS). Specifically, a 25-foot buffer for Type Ns streams does not provide adequate protection for water quality, habitat functions, or support overall watershed health. WDFW's BAS, as outlined in Riparian Ecosystems, Volumes 1 and 2, establishes 100 feet as the minimum buffer width required to maintain essential pollution filtration functions. Additionally, the draft ordinance does not establish clear limits on how stream buffers can be modified, allowing already insufficient buffers to be reduced further without defined reduction or restoration parameters.

Pollution concerns are especially relevant for Ferndale's local waterbodies. The portion of the Nooksack River adjacent to Ferndale and Schell Ditch have been [officially listed](#) by the Department of Ecology under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act as having impairments to water quality from fecal coliform bacteria and fine sediment. These pollutants can be directly influenced by upland land use decisions. Improving and maintaining riparian buffers, which are highly effective at filtering these pollutants, is critical for reducing downstream impacts. Without minimum 100-foot buffers, development risks exacerbating existing pollution concerns.

We strongly urge the City to revise its buffer standards to align with WDFW's BAS, including establishing a 100-foot minimum buffer for Ns streams and limiting any allowances for reductions. These revisions are essential to support the long-term ecological health and resilience of the watershed. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Morgan Krueger  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Regional Land Use Lead

CC:

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