

Frequently Asked Questions

Periodic Update of the City of Morton Shoreline Master Program (SMP)

What is a SMP?

A SMP is a set of policies and regulations required by state law that has three basic principles:

- Give priority to uses that require a shoreline location
- Protect the natural resources and character of the shorelines
- Promote public access and enjoyment opportunities

Where does the City's SMP apply?

"Shorelines of the state" in the City of Morton include the Tilton River and Johnson Creek. Shoreline jurisdiction extends 200 feet landward of the water's edge and additionally includes associated wetlands.



Discover Lewis County, *Tilton River*, Accessed 2025, <https://discoverlewiscounty.com/outdoors/tilton-river/>

What is the periodic update of the SMP?

The City completed its current SMP in 2017. Washington law requires local jurisdictions throughout the state to review and, if necessary, update their SMPs every eight years. The City received a grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology to support this update. The grant timeline calls for completing the periodic update by June 30, 2025.

This periodic update will focus on:

- Reviewing relevant legislative updates since the adopted 2017 SMP and incorporating any applicable amendments
- Ensuring consistency with Morton’s Comprehensive Plan
- Ensuring compatibility with other City regulations

This periodic update will NOT:

- Re-evaluate the ecological baseline that was established as part of the adopted 2017 SMP
- Extensively assess no net loss criteria other than to ensure that proposed amendments do not result in degradation of the baseline condition
- Re-assess shoreline jurisdiction



Google, *Johnson Creek*, Accessed 2025, <https://maps.app.goo.gl/xRLfBQLXLgksd5fg7>.

How do shoreline regulations apply to land use and development activities?

Shoreline regulations apply to any change in land use or any development activity that occurs within the shoreline jurisdiction. Examples of activities regulated by the SMP include:

- New or expanded structures, such as houses, sheds and decks
- Land alteration, such as clearing, grading and filling
- Shoreline modifications, such as shoreline stabilization

How does the SMP affect existing uses and development?

SMP regulations are not retroactive. SMP regulations apply to *new* development and uses, including proposals for expansion or alteration of existing uses and structures. Existing uses and developments legally established may be repaired, maintained and operated.

How can I get more information?

More information is available on the project website at the following link:

<https://www.visitmorton.com/comprehensiveplanupdate.html>

What is a Shoreline Exemption and what is required to obtain approval?

Certain land uses and development activities are exempt from the requirement to obtain a Shoreline Substantial Development Permit. Shoreline Exemptions are issued by the City after the submission of a complete application. Even if an activity is exempt from requiring a Shoreline Substantial Development Permit, a conditional use or variance permit may still be required. Exempt activities must still comply with the SMP.

What is No Net Loss?

The SMP Guidelines establish the standard of no net loss. No net loss means that over time, the Citywide existing condition of shoreline ecological functions should, at a minimum, remain the same as when the SMP is implemented. Simply stated, the no net loss standard is designed to balance the introduction of new impacts to shoreline ecological functions resulting from new development through mitigation sequencing and restoration. The City must achieve this standard through both the SMP planning process and by appropriately regulating individual developments as they are proposed in the future. Any amendments to the SMP that may occur through the periodic update process would need to comply with the no net loss standard.

What is public access to shorelines? When is it required?

Public access is a preferred use per the Shoreline Management Act. Public access can be physical access (e.g. trail) and/or visual access (e.g. view corridors). Public access standards apply to new development, not existing development. Generally, new public access is only required for private uses of certain sizes (e.g. large subdivisions, resorts, etc.) and for public uses. Public access requirements do not allow for trespass on private property.