

Topics covered in this Development Information Bulletin (DIB) include:

- What is a floodplain?
- How can I determine if I have a floodplain on my property?
- What requirements apply within floodplains?
- How do I obtain a Floodplain Development Permit?

See Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, Chapter 14.02A ICC for the complete regulations on this topic.

WHAT IS A FLOODPLAIN?

Floodplains, also called frequently flooded areas, are lands subject to a one-percent (1%) or greater chance of flooding in any given year. These areas may occur along shorelines, near streams or drainage ways, or may lie in inland areas where regular ponding or sheet flow of water occurs.

There are different types of floodplains. "Shallow flooding areas" are lands subject to a 1% or greater chance of flooding of 1 to 3 feet in depth in the form of ponding or sheet flow. "Coastal high hazard areas" are subject to high velocity waves during flooding events.

HOW CAN I DETERMINE IF I HAVE A FLOODPLAIN ON MY PROPERTY?

Floodplains have been mapped by the Federal Insurance Agency on a series of maps collectively called the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). The maps contain information including known base flood elevations, flooding depths, and type of flood hazards. You may call or visit to ask if any floodplains are mapped on your property (be sure to have your parcel number at hand). It is the property owner's responsibility to know what regulated features exist on their property.

WHAT REQUIREMENTS APPLY WITHIN FLOODPLAINS?

Prior to constructing any structures or placing any fill within floodplains, a Floodplain Development Permit must be obtained.

Different requirements apply depending on the type of flooding that occurs on a given site and the type of structure or land use being proposed. For example, a new residential site-built structure located in a shallow flooding area must have the lowest edge of the lowest floor, including basements, at least 1 foot above the flood depth indicated on the FIRM maps. Additionally, the structure must be anchored to prevent flotation or collapse during flooding. Residential structures in coastal high hazard areas must be constructed with the lowest edge of the lowest floor at least one foot above the base flood elevation. Any space below the lowest floor must be constructed so that floodwaters may freely pass through without obstruction. This can be accomplished by using non-supporting breakaway walls or creating openings to allow unrestricted passage of floodwaters in such spaces. Use of flood resistant materials and hydrostatic balancing ports in all areas of the structure, including all elements and finishes in the area below the Base Flood Elevation is required (see ICC 14.02A.010).

HOW DO I OBTAIN A FLOODPLAIN DEVELOPMENT PERMIT?

Permit application forms are available at the Island County Planning and Community Development permit center. These permits are generally processed in conjunction with a building permit. The Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance (ICC 14.02A) clearly spells out application requirements and standards which must be met.

IMPORTANT NOTE - "Development Information Bulletins" (DIBs) are intended to assist the general public in understanding the effect of codes and regulations. DIBs are not complete statements of the laws and rules and should not be used as a substitute for them. If conflicts and questions arise, the code and regulations are the final authority. Because these regulations may be revised or amended at any time, consult Island County staff to be sure you understand all current requirements before beginning any work. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the project meets requirements of all current codes and regulations.

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