



9 Environment

La Center's environmental ~~objectives, goals, and, objectives-policies~~ build upon what ~~we the City and its citizens have~~ already achieved. We recognize that a healthy environment is essential to creating a livable community. The state-of-the-art wastewater treatment facility is ~~a~~ prime indication of our focus on the environment and our willingness to invest in it. The numerous parks, ~~and trails, open spaces, and recreational facilities~~ also show our focus on the environment, ~~as do less obvious things, such as the constant maintenance of wastewater drains, and the enactment of rules to deal with tree removal the City's tree protection and replacement rules~~ at construction sites, ~~and the use of native plant species, and the prohibition of~~ invasive plant species.

Environmental conservation will be important to our long-term economic prosperity, ~~and~~ ~~This Chapter-chapter~~ reaffirms our desire for environmental sustainability and support ~~for appropriate of good~~ development decisions. ~~The Additionally, this Environment Chapter-chapter~~ provides information about local natural resources. It is the foundation for developing critical area protections and ~~helping to help~~ property owners and ~~City decision-makers~~ make ~~wise and informed~~ sustainable decisions about where and ~~under what circumstances when~~ development will occur.

The natural environment of La Center consists of many interrelated components: geology (earth, soil, minerals); biology (living plants, animals microorganisms); water resources (groundwater, surface water, streams); and air. Critical areas, identified in ~~state State~~ statute (RCW 36.70A.050), ~~and are~~ protected under ~~City~~ regulations (LCMC 18.300 and the La Center Shoreline Master Program).

~~This chapter reviews, a Additional environmental components, such as surface water, air quality, noise, and cultural resources, are also reviewed to provide policy direction for proposed developments within the City under the State's SEPA process, along with required mitigation, which is regulated in LCMC Chapter 18.310.~~

Existing Conditions:

Surface Water

The East Fork ~~of the~~ Lewis River and its tributaries, such as Brezee Creek, Jenny Creek, and McCormick Creek, form the primary drainage system in the area. ~~The East Fork Lewis River and~~ flows west to the Lewis River and ~~eventually to the~~ Columbia River. ~~These r~~Rivers and other surface waters are important ~~means~~ because they ~~have scenic value~~, provide habitat for wildlife and ~~marine-aquatic~~ creatures, ~~of their scenic value and, they~~ convey storm-waters away from the land, and, ~~Further, for the they were essential~~ transportation ~~corridors function they played~~ ~~induring the development of La Center the City's early development years.~~

~~Ground Water~~Critical Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

Ground-water is replenished from precipitation and surface water filtering through the ground to aquifers. The ground-water ~~thx~~ system is interconnected, and localized pollution in one area may influence the quality of water used elsewhere. ~~Additionally, the ground-water system is~~

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interconnected with private and public well systems. Public wells are protected under wellhead protection areas, which may have four of five zones that each represent how long it would take a particle of water to travel from the zone boundary to the well. Surface and subsurface contaminants are likely to move toward and reach wells. The Critical Areas Ordinance specifies the types of land uses that are acceptable within the aquifer recharge area. All and ultimately aquifers proposed developments in the zone will be required to comply with the Critical Areas Ordinance. Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs) also contribute to in-stream flow, lower summer daytime temperatures, and year-round flow to streams.



Frequently Flooded Areas

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has defined the extent of the 100-year flood boundary (~~—i.e., defined as~~ areas subject to a ~~one-1~~ percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year ~~—~~) in order to establish actuarial flood insurance rates and assist communities in efforts to promote sound flood-plain management.

Development on flood-plains ~~retards-prevents~~ their ability to absorb water, restricts the flow of water from land areas, and causes hazards downstream. The extent of flood-plain areas in La Center is limited to the East Fork ~~of the~~ Lewis River ~~and~~; a short reach of Brezee Creek ~~at and near its confluence with the East Fork Lewis River~~.

FEMA has updated its flood mapping in 2023 across Clark County for its National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which includes the City. For FEMA and NFIP compliance, the City updated its Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), specifically its Frequently Flooded Areas regulations, in the Fall of 2023. Areas of the City with mapped floodways include the East Fork Lewis River, the La Center Bottoms (lowlands near East Fork Lewis River), and the lower reaches of Brezee and McCormick Creeks.

Wetlands

Wetlands are fragile ecosystems that assist in the reduction of erosion, flooding, and ~~pollution to~~ ground ~~water~~ and surface water ~~pollution~~. Wetlands also provide an important habitat for wildlife, plants, and fisheries ~~and are an important a source for carbon- Thesequestration. The Ceity has~~ utilizes wetlands inventory information from the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps ~~and Clark County GIS~~. The city ~~City~~ also ~~has maps showing references~~ hydric soils ~~maps~~. The NWI and hydric soil maps guide the ~~Ceity~~ in determining where wetlands might exist.

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The ~~Ccity's wetlands program includes~~City has provisions for ~~acquisition protection of~~ protecting certain high-value wetlands, ~~restoration restoring and mitigation~~mitigating of degraded ~~and/or impacted~~ wetlands, ~~mitigation monitoring~~ mitigation measures, ~~public education~~educating the public about regarding wetlands values and management, ~~and promoting the use of use of~~ innovative land use techniques to minimize the impacts of development, ~~and control density around key wetlands~~. Others ~~wetland provisions~~ include scenic and recreational, agricultural, and water supply recharge ~~values and discouraging in general, d~~ development within delineated wetlands ~~is prohibited~~.

Air Quality

There is limited information available regarding air quality in the La Center area. This indicates that no chronic problems exist or events have occurred to warrant investigation by the Southwest Clean Air Agency or the Department of Ecology. There has not been any development in or around the community that causes long term adverse impacts to the air shed, and we can assume that local residents will continue to enjoy clean air for years to come.

Vegetation and Wildlife

~~Disturbance~~Disturbing of ecological communities and ~~division dividing them~~ into isolated habitats ~~are is~~ the major cause for the decline in animal and plant species ~~populations~~. Conserving viable ecological habitats in an interconnected system is the most effective way of conserving vegetation and wildlife. Many habitats that are conserved for environmental or scenic reasons cannot survive division into

small, isolated land parcels.



~~Table 1~~Table 10 lists ~~s~~Species of interest that are known to frequent or inhabit the East Fork of the Lewis River basin and which that the ~~city~~City protects through implementation of by implementing the Critical Areas Ordinance ~~CAO~~ are listed in ~~Table 10~~Table 9.

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Table 11-9: Species of Interest¹

Common nameName	Species	Status
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Federal Species of Concern
Dolly Varden/Bull Trout	<i>Salvelinus confluentusmalma</i>	Federal ThreatenedN/A
Sockeye Salmon	<i>Oncorhynchus nerka</i>	N/A
Common Name	Species	Status
Coho Salmon	<i>Oncorhynchus kisutch</i>	Federal Threatened
Chinook	<i>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</i>	Federal Threatened
Fall Chinook Salmon	<i>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</i>	Federal Threatened
Fall Chum	<i>Oncorhynchus keta</i>	NA
Bull Trout	<i>Salvelinus confluentus</i>	Federal Threatened
Cutthroat	<i>Oncorhynchus clarki</i>	Federal Candidate
Steelhead	<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>	Federal Threatened
Columbian White-tailed Deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus leucurus</i>	Federal Threatened
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	Federal Threatened
Northwestern Pond Turtle	<i>Actinemys marmorata</i>	Federal Proposed Threatened
Monarch Butterfly	<i>Danaus Plexippus</i>	Federal Candidate

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Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation AreasFWHCAs:

The City relies on the Washington Department of Fish and WildlifeWashington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) classification system for fish and wildlife habitat conservation areasFWHCAs: (FWHCAs). The City recognizes that the urban environment is shared with fish and wildlife and that the associated habitats exist within a regional habitat system. Consequently, the City will coordinate the local management program with other jurisdictions in the bioregion. The City protects fish and wildlife areasFWHCAs through application of the Critical Areas OrdinanceCAO.

Table 11-11 lists the habitat areas of interest which that the City protects through implementation of by implementing the Critical Areas OrdinanceCAO, are listed in Table 10Table 11.

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¹ Source: <http://apps.wdfw.wa.gov/phsontheweb/>, see also Appendix B, WDFW PHS 2013 Distribution by County

Table 2-110: Habitat Areas of Interest²

Common Name	Priority Area
Oak Woodlands	Terrestrial Habitat
Freshwater/Forested Shrub Wetland	Aquatic Habitat
Freshwater Emergent Wetland	Aquatic Habitat
Waterfowl Concentrations	Regular concentrations
<u>Freshwater Pond</u>	<u>Aquatic Habitat</u>
<u>Biodiversity Areas and Corridor</u>	<u>Terrestrial Habitat</u>
<u>Cavity nesting ducks</u>	<u>Breeding area</u>

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Geologically Hazardous Areas

Geologically Hazardous Areas include areas susceptible to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events. These events pose a threat to the health and safety of citizens when incompatible commercial, residential, or industrial development is sited in areas of significant hazard. Through engineering, design, or modified construction practices, some geological hazards can be reduced or mitigated so that risks to public health and safety are minimized. If risks cannot be reduced to acceptable levels, building in geologically hazards areas must be avoided. Pursuant to WAC 365-190-120 and under the City's CAO, areas with one or more of the following hazards are classified as geologically hazardous:

- » Erosion Hazards-
- » Landslide Hazards, and
- » Seismic Hazards

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Generally, **Erosion Hazard Areas** are those that are likely to become unstable, such as bluffs, steep slopes, and areas with unconsolidated soils. In the City, these areas are typically mapped as severe erosion hazard areas.

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² Source: Id

Landslide Hazard Areas are those subject to landslides based on a combination of geologic, topographic, and hydrologic factors. These areas are susceptible to landslide due to any combination of bedrock, soil, slope, slope aspect, structure, hydrology, or other factors. At a minimum, landslide hazard areas include the following:

- » Areas of historic failures;
- » Areas with slopes greater than 15 percent and exhibiting the following characteristics: hillsides intersecting geologic contacts with a relatively permeable sediment overlying a relatively impermeable sediment/bedrock, and springs or groundwater seepage;
- » Areas that have shown movement during the last 10,000 years or underlain or covered by mass wastage debris;
- » Slopes parallel or subparallel to planes of weakness in subsurface soils;
- » Slopes steeper than 80 percent subject to rockfall during seismic shaking;
- » Areas potentially unstable due to rapid stream incision, stream bank erosion, and undercut by wave action
- » Areas with a slope of 40 percent or steeper and with a vertical relief of 10 or more feet except areas composed of bedrock;

Seismic Hazard Areas are those subject to severe risk of damage from ground shaking, slope failure, settlement or subsidence, soil liquefaction, and surface faulting from earthquakes. Ground shaking is the primary cause of statewide earthquake damage, and ground settlement may occur with shaking. Ground shaking is primarily affected by the magnitude of an earthquake, the distance from the source of an earthquake, the type or thickness of geologic materials at the surface, and the type of subsurface geologic structure.

Other Environmental Factors

Air Quality

There is limited information available regarding air quality in the La Center area. This indicates that no chronic problems exist (or events have occurred) -to warrant investigation by the Southwest Clean Air Agency or the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology). No development in or around the community has caused long-term adverse impacts to the air shed, and we can assume that local residents will continue to enjoy clean air for years to come.

Open Space

Open spaces perform important functions, such as, buffering different land uses, increasing property values at the edge of open space, and improving the quality of life in the community. Open space can include parks, trails, recreational amenities, utility corridors, critical areas, and their respective buffers. One mechanism way the city City uses to create open space is by application of applying the Critical Areas Ordinance CAO during the development review process.

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another method is requiring family parks in new residential development by implementing LCMC Chapter 18.147, Parks and Open Spaces. The City updated its Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan, as discussed in Chapter 6, Parks, Recreation & Open Space. The updated PROS Plan evaluates the existing open space infrastructure in the City, identifies gaps and formulates a short-term plan to improve existing facilities as well as acquire additional lands for open space.

Applicable Legislation

Federal Endangered Species Act

~~Our area~~ La Center contains critical habitat needed for endangered anadromous fish species. Critical habitat areas include the East Fork ~~of the~~ Lewis River, Brezee Creek, and McCormick Creeks. The listing process for endangered anadromous fish species is handled by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ~~(NOAA)~~, and NOAA is the agency responsible for identifying critical habitat and developing recovery plans. ~~The City of~~ La Center responds to the federal Endangered Species Act mandates through a variety of regulatory and action-based mechanisms.

Federal Clean Water Act (Section 404)

~~The city~~ La Center contains several federally regulated wetlands areas that are, protected under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Wetlands dredge-~~and~~-fill activities are regulated at the federal level by the U.S. Army Corps ~~(the Corps)~~ of Engineers (USACE). A ~~person or agency having~~ a project that impacts wetlands must submit a permit application USACE to the Corps for review, ~~such an application also being~~ which will also be reviewed by ~~the Washington Department of~~ Ecology.

Shoreline Management Act

Washington's Shoreline Management Act ~~(the Act)~~ SMA governs the use and development of ~~Washington's~~ its shorelines and creates a unique partnership between ~~local governments and the state~~ State and local governments. The goal is to provide responsible shoreline use and development, environmental protection, and public access. Local governments develop programs based on the ~~Act~~ SMA and ~~S~~ state guidance. La Center has such a program and participates in its administration through the City of La Center Shoreline Master Program (SMP), which was last updated in 2021.

The City's SMP guides the future development of shorelines in La Center promoting the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community—while ensuring no net loss of shoreline ecological functions with its plan to restore shorelines that have been impaired or degraded. The City's SMP is consistent with the State's SMA pursuant to RCW 90.58 and WAC 173-26. The only designated shoreline within La Center is the East Fork Lewis River.

State Environmental Protection Act

The State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) process identifies and analyzes environmental impacts associated with governmental decisions. These decisions may be related to issuing

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permits for private projects, constructing public facilities, or adopting regulations, policies, and plans.

The SEPA review process helps agency decision-makers, applicants, and the public understand how the entire proposal will affect the environment. SEPA can be used to modify or deny a proposal to avoid, reduce, or compensate for probable impacts. Environmental components such as surface water, air quality, noise, and cultural resources are reviewed for any impacts from proposed developments within La Center under the State's SEPA process with required mitigation, which is regulated in LCMC Chapter 18.310.

Growth Management Act

The Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA) defines critical areas as wetlands, ~~aquifer recharge areas~~ CARAs, ~~fish and wildlife habitat~~ FWHCAs, frequently flooded areas, and geologically hazardous areas. Jurisdiction planning under the GMA must develop programs to protect and manage critical areas based on Best Available Science: (RCW 36.70A.060 and 36.70A.172). La Center has developed ~~and updated and administers an~~ administered critical area review program consistent with Best Available Science.

Critical Areas Ordinance

In accordance with the GMA requirements, the City has adopted a CAO (LCMC 18.300) to protect critical areas within La Center. Critical areas perform key functions that enhance our environment or may be hazardous to human health, -and development in those areas should be avoided or restricted.

The benefits that critical areas provide include the following:

- » -Water quality protection and enhancement
- » Fish and wildlife habitat
- » Food chain support
- » Flood storage, conveyance, and attenuation (the slow release) of flood waters
- » Groundwater recharge and discharge
- » Drinking water quality and quantity
- » Erosion control
- » Protection from natural hazards
- » Aesthetic value
- » Recreation

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Further, the designation of critical areas protect the public from threats to human safety and serve to protect public and private property from natural hazards.

The following critical areas are afforded protections within the City under its CAO:

- » CARAs
- » Frequently Flooded Areas
- » Wetlands
- » FWHCAs
- » Geologically Hazardous Areas
- »

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Environmental Goal

La Center shall ensure the preservation and protection of natural resources, critical areas, open space, and recreational lands within its Urban Growth Area through adequate and compatible policies and regulations.

Environmental Policies

Goal 9.1 Regarding Critical Areas

La Center shall ensure the preservation and protection of its critical areas through adequate, updated, and compatible policies and regulations.

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Policy 9.1.1 La Center shall continue to adopt Best Available Science guidelines for environmental protection.

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Policy 9.1.2 La Center shall ensure that the following areas are adequately protected from development through the implementation and update of its CAO:

- » WetlandsCARAs
- » Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potableFrequently Flooded Areas
- » Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areasWetlands
- » Frequently flooded areasFWHCAs
- » Geologically Hazardous Areas

Policy 9.1.3 ~~The City~~ La Center shall clearly define, identify, and update maps of various types ~~offor~~ environmentally critical areas throughout the City, using federal, ~~Sstate~~, or other accepted definitions ~~and databases~~ where appropriate.

Policy 9.1.4 ~~Update~~ La Center shall update, develop, and/or maintain regulatory and incentive programs for the protection and conservation of environmentally critical areas, including ~~wildlife habitat areas~~ FWHCA's, wetlands, and shorelines; and ~~their~~ underlying watershed processes. Emphasis should be given to policies and standards to protect and conserve critical areas as larger blocks, corridors, or interconnected areas, rather than in isolated parcels. ~~Coordinate and cooperate with other agencies to protect environmentally critical lands, particularly ecosystems and watershed processes that are located within the City's UGA.~~

Policy 9.1.4 Policy 9.1.5 ~~The City~~ La Center shall coordinate and cooperate with other agencies, particularly ecosystems and watershed processes that are located within the City's UGA to protect environmentally critical lands.

Policy 9.1.5 Policy 9.1.6 ~~La Center shall e~~ Encourage the use of northwest native plants in landscaping, ~~parks, and open space areas~~, particularly adjacent to critical areas, and discourage the use of invasive non-natives ~~plants~~.

Policy 9.1.6 Policy 9.1.7 ~~La Center shall p~~ Protect and conserve groundwater and surface water as a resource for drinking water, commerce, recreation, and for wildlife based on quality and quantity.

Policy 9.1.7 Policy 9.1.8 ~~Reduce risk to life and property from hazards associated with development in geologically hazardous and floodplain areas. La Center shall reduce risk to life and property from hazards associated with development in geologically hazardous and floodplain areas and will achieve this by:~~

Policy 9.1.8» Prohibiting, discouraging, or mitigating development in areas of steep slopes or other areas with high potential for geological hazards;

Policy 9.1.9» Limiting the removal of vegetation during development in order to reduce storm runoff and erosion;

Policy 9.1.10» Requiring geo-technical studies to determine construction methods and technologies necessary to further public safety in geologically hazardous areas, including landslide areas and steep slopes. Development design and construction technology used shall be appropriate to the soil limitations of the particular site; ~~and~~.

Policy 9.1.11» Continuing to prohibit development in the floodway. In the flood fringe, development impacts shall be mitigated through the use of appropriate construction designs, methods and timing. Floodplain functions will be protected to the extent possible.

Policy 9.1.12 Policy 9.1.9 ~~The City~~ La Center shall ~~e~~ Encourage habitat protection ~~through its CAO and SMP~~ that will provide a diverse and sustainable population of fish and wildlife.

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~~Policy 9.1.13~~ ~~Policy 9.1.10~~ ~~Solicit~~ La Center shall solicit review assistance from ~~the~~
~~Department of Fish and Wildlife~~ ~~WDFW~~ for development proposals directly affecting ~~state~~ ~~Sstate~~
or federal sensitive, threatened, or endangered species.

~~Policy 9.1.14~~ ~~Policy 9.1.11~~ ~~The City~~ La Center shall ~~limit~~ clearing of vegetation from stream
banks, and restore the integrity of stream banks where degraded by development, ~~especially~~
~~areas supporting anadromous fish habitat.~~

~~Policy 9.1.15~~ **Goal 9.2** Regarding Endangered Species

~~Policy 9.1.16~~ ~~Policy 9.2.1~~ ~~Consult with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife~~
~~(WDF&W)~~ ~~w~~ La Center shall consult with WDFW when future land uses have a probable impact
on listed species and their habitat.

~~Policy 9.1.17~~ ~~Policy 9.2.2~~ ~~The City~~ La Center shall ~~e~~Establish and update appropriate
avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures that functionally replace or improve affected
species habitat ~~through its CAO.~~

Regarding Stormwater

La Center shall plan, implement, maintain, and routinely update its stormwater management
policies and standards in order to effectively manage stormwater across the city.

Goal 9.2 **Goal 9.3**

~~Policy 9.2.1~~ ~~Policy 9.3.1~~ La Center shall ~~it~~ implement stormwater basin planning to
effectively address stormwater management in developed and urbanizing areas.

~~Policy 9.2.2~~ ~~Policy 9.3.2~~ La Center shall ~~a~~Adopt stormwater standards substantially
equivalent to current adopted Washington State standards, and continue to monitor and update
the stormwater control ordinance and related policies and standards ~~to implement and enhance~~
~~stormwater management to implement and enhance stormwater management.~~

~~Policy 9.2.3~~ ~~Policy 9.3.3~~ ~~Maintain~~ La Center shall ~~maintain~~ clear development review
standards for the control of the quantity and quality of stormwater discharge from development
projects, which emphasize on-site retention, treatment, and infiltration of run-off to minimize
impacts on the established wastewater system and local streams, rivers, wetlands, and lakes.

~~Policy 9.3.4~~ ~~Limit the removal of vegetation during development in order to reduce~~
~~stormwater run-off and erosion, the~~ The City shall limit the removal of vegetation during
~~development in order to reduce stormwater run-off and erosion.~~

~~Policy 9.2.4~~ ~~Policy 9.3.5~~ La Center shall inventory its existing stormwater systems, including
~~any green infrastructure and shall consider green infrastructure in its future stormwater systems~~
~~needs.~~

Goal 9.3 **Goal 9.4** Regarding Shorelines

La Center shall implement and routinely update its Shoreline Master Program to protect the
ecological, economic, and recreational function of its shorelines.

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~~Policy 9.3.1~~ Policy 9.4.1 ~~La Center shall e~~Ensure that land use designations and development activities adjacent to shorelines are compatible with the ~~State Shoreline Management Act~~SMA and consistent with the ~~City of La Center Shoreline Master Program~~City's SMP, which is an chapter of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

~~Goal 9.4~~Goal 9.5 Regarding Air Quality

~~The City~~La Center shall implement and update, as necessary, policies and a development review process to preserve air quality.

~~Policy 9.4.1~~Policy 9.5.1 ~~La Center shall d~~Develop, update, and implement policies that help to preserve air quality, as necessary.

~~Policy 9.4.2~~Policy 9.5.2 ~~La Center shall e~~Evaluate potential impacts to local air quality during the ~~development review process~~using the SEPA review process during the development review process.

~~Goal 9.5~~Goal 9.6 Regarding Water Quality

~~The City should~~La Center shall implement and update, as necessary, policies and development review process to preserve and/or improve water quality.

~~Policy 9.5.1~~Policy 9.6.1 ~~Protect the quality and quantity of ground water used for public purposes and, through Critical Area regulations and other mechanisms, La Center shall identify and protect wellhead areas, critical aquifer recharge areas~~CARAs, and surface water sources by protecting the quality and quantity of ground-water used for public purposes through its CAO.

~~Goal 9.6~~Goal 9.7 Regarding Wastewater ~~— La~~Center shall implement and update, as necessary, policies design standards for wastewater infrastructure to protect aquatic habitats and species and critical groundwater resources to protect the ecological function of waterways and groundwater resources.

Policy 9.7.1 La Center shall regularly update its design standards for wastewater facilities within the City limits to protect its natural waters and water-dependent resources.

~~Policy 9.6.1~~Policy 9.7.2 ~~La Center shall d~~Design and develop infrastructure supportive of anadromous species habitat ~~(e.g. for example,~~ effluent purity, temperature, and turbidity) to the extent practicable.

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