“Critical areas” means the following areas, GMA (as per RCW 36.70A):

1. Wetlands;
2. Frequently flooded areas;
3. Critical aquifer recharge areas;
4. Geologic hazard areas and
5. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

**“Wetland” or “wetlands”** means areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, or that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas. Wetlands do not include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from non-wetland sites, including, but not limited to, irrigation and drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, canals, detention facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, farm ponds, and landscape amenities, or those wetlands created after July 1, 1990, that were unintentionally created as a result of the construction of a road, street, or highway. Wetlands may include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from non-wetland areas in order to mitigate conversion of natural wetlands. Areas below the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) of a water body, including but not limited to marine waters, lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers, may also qualify as wetlands if they meet the criteria of the 1987 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual and the 2008 Interim Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Western Mountains, Valley and Coast Region.

**“Frequently flooded area”** means lands in the flood plain subject to at least a one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year or areas within the highest known recorded flood elevation, or within areas subject to flooding due to high ground water. This includes all areas within unincorporated Garfield County identified on flood insurance rate maps. Frequently flooded areas may include special flood hazard areas or high ground water flood hazard areas, where high ground water forms ponds on the ground surface, or may overlap with other critical areas, such as streams, rivers, lakes or wetlands.

**“Critical aquifer recharge areas”** means an area with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water, including areas where an aquifer that is a source of drinking water is vulnerable to contamination, or is susceptible to reduced recharge.

**“Geologically hazardous areas”** means areas that because of their susceptibility to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events, are not suited to the sitting of commercial, residential, or industrial development consistent with public health and safety concerns.

**“Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas”** are areas that serve a critical role in sustaining needed habitats and species for the functional integrity of the ecosystem, and which, if altered, may reduce the likelihood that the species will persist over the long term. These areas may include, but are not limited to, rare or vulnerable ecological systems, communities, and habitat or habitat elements including seasonal ranges, breeding habitat, winter range, and movement corridors; and areas with high relative population density or species richness. These also include locally important habitat and species.

Garfield County VSP --- DRAFT Critical Area Definitions Brad’s first take….

**Wetlands:** Areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater supporting a prevalence of vegetation adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Cattails and standing and/or running water are the main indicators that we will use. **Includes:** swamps, marshes, bogs and in some instances springs. There are wetlands within riparian, agricultural and rangeland areas throughout Garfield County. **Designations under Section 10.0 Garfield County Critical Areas Ordinance:** There are four Wetlands Area Classifications; **Class I:** areas which meet the following criteria: a.) documented habitat for endangered or threatened fish or animal species or potentially extirpated plant species recognized by state or federal agencies; b.) high quality native wetland communities, including documented Class I or II quality Natural Heritage wetland sites; c.) high quality, regionally rated wetland communities with irreplaceable ecological function; and d.) wetlands of local significance.  **Class II:** areas which meet the following criteria: a.) regulated wetlands that do not contain features outlined in Class I; b.) documented habitats for sensitive plant, fish or animal species; c.) rare wetland communities which are not high quality; d) wetland types with significant functions which may not be replicated; e) regulated wetlands. **Class III:** regulated wetlands that do not contain features outlined in Class I, II or IV. **Class IV:** areas which meet the following criteria: a) regulated wetlands which do not meet the criteria of a Class I or II wetland; b) isolated wetlands that are less than or equal to one acre in size, have only one wetland class, and have only one dominant plant species; c) isolated wetlands that are less than or equal to two acres in size and have only one wetland class and a predominance of exotic species.

**Wetlands Buffer Requirements**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Class** | **Point of Measurement for Buffer** | **Width of Buffer** |
| I | From edge of wetland | 200 ft minimum |
| II | From edge of wetland | 100 ft minimum |
| II | From edge of wetland | 50 ft minimum |
| IV | From edge of wetland | 25 ft minimum |

**Frequently Flood Areas:** Lands within the flood plain subject to at least a one percent chance of flooding in any given year, or within areas subject to flooding due to high groundwater. **Includes:** streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and areas where high groundwater can cause flooding. There are frequently flood areas within instream, riparian, agricultural and rangeland areas throughout Garfield County. **Designations under Section 12.0 Garfield County Critical Areas Ordinance:** Three Frequently Flooded Area Classifications; **Class I:** areas which are *Highly Vulnerable* to flood hazard; areas within the stream. **Class II:** areas which are *Vulnerable* to flood hazard; land which is within the flood plain subject to a one percent of flooding any year. **Class III:** areas *Not Vulnerable* to flood hazard; land which is not in Class I or Class II.

**Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas:** Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water, including areas where an aquifer that is a source of drinking water is vulnerable to contamination that would affect the potability of water or is susceptible to reduced recharge. **Includes:** Areas adjacent to city wells (well head protection areas), shallow groundwater areas and areas identified to have connection to local aquifers. There are critical aquifer recharge areas within instream, riparian, agriculture and rangeland areas throughout Garfield County. **Designations under Section 11.0 Garfield County Critical Areas Ordinance:** There are three Critical Aquifer Recharge Area Classifications; **Class I:** areas which are *Highly Vulnerable* to contamination; **Class II:** Areas which are *Vulnerable* to contamination; **Class III:** areas *Not Vulnerable* to contamination.

**Geologically Hazardous Areas:** Areas susceptible to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events, where development is not suitable due to public health and safety concerns. **Includes:** Landslide hazard areas, channel migration zones, steep slopes (>20%) and highly erodible soils. There are geologically hazardous areas within riparian, agriculture and rangeland areas throughout Garfield County. **Designations under Section 13.0 Garfield County Critical Areas Ordinance:** There are three Geologically Hazardous Area Classifications; **Class I:** areas which are *Highly Vulnerable* to geological hazard; these would specifically include sedimentary interbeds on steep slopes within basalt flow and steep talus slopes or rock slides; **Class II:** areas which are *Vulnerable* to geological hazard; these would include other site specific areas with potential for unstable slopes, erodible soils or seismic hazard; **Class III:** area *Not Vulnerable* to geological hazard; land which is not included in Class I or Class II.

**Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas:** Areas of land and water managed to maintain populations of fish and wildlife species in suitable habitats within their natural geographic distribution over the long term with connected habitat blocks and open spaces. **Includes:** Streams and rivers with ESA listed summer steelhead and riparian, agricultural and rangeland areas that support mule deer, elk, wolves and birds of prey that rely on these habitats for food, cover and shelter. **Target Species:** Steelhead, mule deer, elk, big horn sheep, upland game birds, raptors and song birds. There are fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas within instream, riparian, agriculture, rangeland and cliff areas throughout Garfield County.

**Garfield County Background Information --- DRAFT History**

Garfield County is located in southeastern Washington. It is border by Columbia County to the west, Asotin County to the east, the Snake River and Whitman County to the north and the Grand Ronde River and Oregon to the south.

Agriculture has dominated Garfield County’s economy with farms and ranches occupying two-thirds of the county. Wheat is the main crop, though other grains such as barley and bluegrass are also grown. Recently more cover crops have been planted but finding alternative crops and markets can be challenging for producers. Additionally ranching is also occurring throughout the county with cow/calf operations being important to the local way of life and economy.

Garfield County is the least populous in the state and at 712.8 square miles it is the seventh-smallest county in Washington State. The 2000 Garfield County population was 2,397 residents and there has been a -7.6% reduction to the 2014 county population of 2,215 residents. The unemployment rate was 7% in 2014.

75% of the county is privately owned, 21 % is US Forest Service ownership and the remaining 4% is state owned by DNR, WDFW, BLM. As of the 2012 Agricultural Census, the county had 211 farms with an average size of 1,462 acres. The market value of agricultural products sold was $48,208 million, with 92% of that figure being from crop sales. In 2012 about 37% of the farms in Garfield County had a value of crop sales over $100,000 per year.

Agriculture plays a significant role in Garfield County’s success and future. Farming and ranching is a way of life that needs to be maintained and enhanced. The Voluntary Stewardship Program goals are to protect the five critical areas while maintaining and enhancing the viability of agriculture.

Voluntary programs have been successful at protecting and restoring water quality throughout the county, but to some degree the programs and funding to protect and restore habitats are not offered in a manner that is consistent or results are hard to quantify. As important as farming and ranching are to our local economy, having funded programs that identify and protect critical areas with an identified monitoring plan that has check-ins for completed benchmarks will ensure that watersheds and agriculture viability are protected for years to come.