

ECO-FRIENDLY SHORELINE DEVELOPMENT

Green Shores: LEED®-style rating system

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Wouldn't it be wonderful if eco-friendly shoreline development projects could get a "gold star?"

That just might happen due to the creation of a rating system for shoreline development projects, called **Green Shores**. Developed by a cadre of coastal professionals in British Columbia, Green Shores seeks to do for green shoreline development what LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) has done for green building.

The US Green Building Council introduced the LEED 1.0 pilot program in 1998, seeking to accelerate sustainable development practices through standards, tools, and performance criteria. Subsequently, the LEED program has pushed the previously little-known concept of green building deep into the consciousness of

the planning and development community. So far, that consciousness has resulted in LEED certification for more than 2,000 buildings, with another 18,000 proposed for certification. Perhaps even more striking, LEED has become one of the planning and development field's most publicly recognizable acronyms—right up there with NIMBY!

By contrast, green shoreline development has not enjoyed the same kind of notoriety. Despite widespread concern about coastal ecology since the first Earth Day in 1970, shoreline development practices (such as armoring and vegetation removal) continue to adversely affect the coastal environment some 39 years later. Moreover, the general public still does not appear to firmly grasp the myriad threats to marine waters and shores. For example, despite ample scientific evidence indicating that Puget Sound faces serious problems, a December poll conducted by Elway Research, Inc. found that just 40 percent of heads of households in counties bordering Puget Sound believed that its health is "poor" or "not so good."

Scientists expect that in the future, population growth and climate change phenomena (such as sea level rise and more intense storms) will cause additional stress to the coastal environment, making green shoreline development even more vital.

Realizing that LEED does not cover important issues related to shoreline development (the graphic to the left shows how LEED and Green Shores interact), the Green Shores project team designed its rating system to fill the gap in coverage. To earn Green Shores certification, a project must meet prerequisites and earn a minimum number of points in four topic

Comparison of LEED and GREEN SHORES Rating Systems as applied to Shore Development

Credit Category	LEED – New Construction	LEED – Neighborhood	Green Shores
Waterfront Building Siting	Not Addressed	Limited	Included
Critical/Sensitive Habitat	Optional Credit	Optional Credit	Prerequisite
Coastal Processes	Not Addressed	Not Addressed	Included
Stormwater Management	Discharge quantity and quality	LID Methods	LID Methods
Innovation/Education	Included	Included	Included
Building Efficiency (Energy, Water)	Included	Included	Not Included

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areas: **Project and Building Siting, Shore Habitat and Coastal Processes, Stormwater Management, and Project Development Process.** Like LEED, projects that can accrue additional points can qualify for higher levels of certification (e.g. Silver, Gold).

For now, the Green Shores project team intends the rating system for use on waterfront residential subdivisions and waterfront mixed residential/commercial development projects. After working out the kinks and streamlining the certification process, the Green Shores project team will turn its attention to the more complicated task of creating a rating system for single-family residential development projects, the predominant type of coastal development in the Cascadia region.

Recognizing that Washington and British Columbia shorelines are ecologically similar and face many of the same threats, members of the Green Shores project team began discussions last year about how the

Green Shores concept might be applied in Washington.

Perhaps the timing is right for a rating system like Green Shores in Washington. The Puget Sound Partnership is ratcheting up efforts to restore Puget Sound by 2020. Regulatory budgets are plummeting due to the sputtering economy, making voluntary, developer-funded initiatives like Green Shores even more appealing. Also, because a program like Green Shores has the potential to

create green jobs, such a program might support more than just healthy shorelines.

If a LEED-style program for shoreline development projects can do even a fraction of what LEED has done for green building, Washington's shorelines stand to benefit.

For more information, please visit the [Green Shores project Web site](#).

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