

PHS-At-A-Glance: Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe Map and Guide

Products: PHS Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe Map/Technical Report and User Guide

Where to Access the Map and User Guide: Map: geo.wa.gov (search term “shrubsteppe <county name>” and via [PHS on the Web](#). Technical Report and User Guide: [PHS User Guides webpage](#).

Map

Description: This map shows the general location of Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe Priority Habitat as defined by WDFW’s [Priority Habitats and Species](#) (PHS) program. It uses 30m satellite imagery classified by Landfire, a USGS-led consortium, as a base layer. From the base layer we have refined the map by removing roads, crops, buildings, and other infrastructure.

For its purpose as a flagging tool to identify likely locations with PHS-defined Shrubsteppe or Eastside Steppe vegetation, this map is Best Available Science according to the criteria provided in [WAC 365-195](#) for the Growth Management Act (GMA, [RCW 36.70A](#)).

Technical Report: The methodology used to create the Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe map is described in *PHS Technical Report: Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe Map*, available at the [PHS Publications webpage](#). This report describes the map’s underlying source data, methods, errors (and steps taken to minimize errors), and the results. Users may either cite the map itself or the Technical Report when referring to the map as Best Available Science.

Maintenance, Updates: WDFW intends to correct consequential errors in this dataset as improved information becomes available. Consult the map’s metadata to see when it was last updated.

User Guide

Description: The document *PHS Local Government User Guide: Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe Map* describes the intended uses of the PHS Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe maps and how they relate to local government land use responsibilities under the GMA, Shoreline Management Act (SMA, [RCW 90.58](#)), [Voluntary Stewardship Program](#) (VSP), and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA, [RCW 43.21C](#)).

User Guide's Key Messages

Primary Intended Use: The PHS Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe maps are flagging tools to identify the likely presence of Shrubsteppe or Eastside Steppe Priority Habitat to inform the land use planning process. These maps are not surveys of known Shrubsteppe or Eastside Steppe locations.

Secondary Uses: The PHS Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe maps can be used to estimate and analyze the total area, distribution, or pattern of Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe vegetation at a regional scale (for example, county, watershed, or state).

Informed Use of the Data: Because of inherent errors in GIS mapping and on-going land use changes, on-the-ground conditions may vary from what is shown on the maps. Users should be aware that:

- In all cases, site verification is necessary to identify the true presence/absence, location, and condition of Shrubsteppe or Eastside Steppe vegetation.
- The map includes two subclasses: “Presumptive Shrubsteppe” or “Presumptive Eastside Steppe.” There is greater uncertainty that locations subclassified as “Presumptive” have those vegetation types present on site compared to locations classified simply as Shrubsteppe or Eastside Steppe. In addition, vegetation in “Presumptive” sites may be degraded by non-native or invasive species. In “Presumptive” locations, a simple site visit may be sufficient to verify or refute the presence of Shrubsteppe and/or Eastside Steppe vegetation, followed by a detailed survey if those vegetation types are verified as present.
- Users can have greater confidence that large areas of contiguous Shrubsteppe or Eastside Steppe in the maps will have Shrubsteppe or Eastside Steppe on the ground. By contrast, small areas of Shrubsteppe or Eastside Steppe interspersed with other vegetation or cover types are more prone to classification errors.

Key Messages about applying the maps in land use decision making

GMA: The PHS Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe maps are tools to help local land use decision makers avoid and minimize impacts to Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe critical areas. They are a new source of Best Available Science to consider when updating Critical Areas Ordinances (CAO) during Periodic Updates. Current planners can use the maps to flag parcels for further site-scale review of Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe critical areas during preapplication meetings, permit intake, and permit processing. In addition, long-range planners can use the maps to avoid and minimize impacts to Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe when considering Urban Growth Area expansions, upzones, and siting of large projects.

SMA: For current planners implementing a Shoreline Master Program, the maps fulfill a similar role as it does with respect to CAOs. The map – which is the “[best scientific and technical information available](#)” regarding the general location of Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe– can also be useful when considering changes to Shoreline Environment Designations.

SEPA: The maps can be used when completing the [SEPA checklist](#) or evaluating likely cumulative impacts of projects within mapped Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe areas.

VSP: The maps can identify likely areas of Shrubsteppe or Eastside Steppe vegetation in VSP watersheds. In conjunction with field verification, the maps can provide a more accurate accounting of the location and amount of Shrubsteppe and Eastside Steppe on VSP lands.