The upcoming public hearing on the Critical Areas Ordinance has generated several incorrect perceptions. We hope the following information will help clear the air.

**Myth:** The Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) will expand wetland buffers to 500 feet.

**Fact:** Wetland buffer ranges are not proposed to change. Thurston County will continue to use the current buffer range of 50-300 feet, depending on wetland type.

**Myth:** The CAO will cause many current homes and businesses to become uninhabitable.

**Fact:** Existing structures, including homes and businesses, are free to continue in their current form. Existing structures damaged by natural disaster, fire, or other accidents may be rebuilt to their current form, with the exception of homes located in areas where it is hazardous to rebuild.

**Myth:** The Sheriff will remove people from homes declared uninhabitable due to CAO regulations.

**Fact:** Thurston County is unaware of any cases where the Sheriff has removed people from their homes in response to critical area concerns. The only exceptions are condemned properties in the floodway following repeated flood events, and those properties rendered uninhabitable by the Carlyon Beach landslide.

**Myth:** Property owners will not be allowed to replace a failed well or septic system.

**Fact:** The CAO specifically provides for replacement and repair of failing wells and septic systems.

**Myth:** The CAO will prohibit property owners from building or remodeling on their land.

**Fact:** Existing homes can be remodeled. In Washington state, including Thurston County, critical area regulations are also required to include a mechanism for property owners to derive a reasonable use of their property. The county is considering other provisions to give landowners more flexibility.

**Contact Information**
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