

NGPA Does Not Mean “Do Not Touch”

Native Growth Protection Areas (NGPAs) are created to protect environmentally sensitive areas. To make that clear, Snohomish Municipal Code requires signs be posted around the edge of NGPAs warning not to disturb the area.

While that’s a warning we all should heed, it doesn’t mean keep out or else.

In this case “do not disturb” means don’t do anything to harm the critical area being protected of the habitat in the buffer surrounding the critical area.

In fact, for owners of property that has a NGPA, we encourage active management of NGPAs by removing invasive plant species by hand and planting appropriate native vegetation.

Active management of NGPAs is a good thing. Too often the buffers deliberately established to protect a wetland or a stream become overgrown with non-native invasive blackberry plants. Property owners are allowed to go into the NGPA to remove the blackberries provided they do it by hand.

Just the removal of invasive vegetation would be beneficial to the critical area and the health of the habitat but property owners who want to go a step further can proactively plant appropriate native plants and take care of them, including watering.

While a permit isn’t required to remove invasives or to plant natives checking in with the Planning & Development Services Department is recommended two reasons.

First, if you’re in the NGPA it’s possible a fellow resident might see you and not knowing you assume the worst and call the city to ask us to intervene. If we know ahead of time what your plans are we can reassure your neighbor and also save staff time to investigate a complaint about legal activity.

Second, if you’re planting planning staff can suggest to you what would be the appropriate plants to use.

For more information about NGPAs and the City’s critical area protection regulations contact Director of Planning & Development Services Glen Pickus at pickus@snohomishwa.gov or 360-282-3173.