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This handout is intended as an informational guide. For more information, refer to Clark County Code.

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# Critical Aquifer Recharge Area (CARA)

## What is the purpose of the CARA permit?

The CARA ordinance was established for preventing degradation, and where possible, enhancing the quality of groundwater for drinking water or business purposes. The CARA review is intended to limit potential contaminants within designated critical aquifer recharge areas. Groundwater provides 95 percent of our drinking water in the county. The CARA ordinance took effect August 1, 1997.

## What is the land use limitation under CARA?

If you plan to conduct certain activities that would have an impact on groundwater in Clark County, Washington, you may need a permit to comply with the Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas ordinance.

The ordinance **does not** apply to:

- Existing legal activities established prior to July 31, 1997
- All residential uses other than those having activities covered by Section 40.410.020(A)
- Group A public water system source development and associated infrastructure
- Public water supply aquifer storage and recovery facilities
- Public water pipelines
- Public water supply storage structures
- Other uses not listed in Sections 40.401.020(A), (B) or (C)
- Activities already permitted and regulated by the state of Washington and/or Clark County Public Health to incorporate Best Management Practices (BMPs)

The ordinance applies to activities in designated Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas that include most of Clark County west of the Cascade foothills. These areas are divided into two categories on how close they are to public drinking water. Certain activities are prohibited in Category I areas because they are close to public wells. These activities are permitted in Category II but require a CARA permit. These include the following:

- Landfills
- Class V injection wells
- Agricultural drainage wells
- Untreated sewage waste disposal wells
- Cesspools

- Industrial process water and disposal wells
- Radioactive water disposal
- Electroplating activities
- Radioactive disposal sites
- Surface mining operations

There are no activities prohibited in Category II areas, but they may be subject to other limitations specified within the Clark County Code (CCC). A map delineating the Category I and II boundaries is on file with Clark County GIS.

In both Category I and II areas, certain activities are required to implement BMPs to minimize effects to the activity on ground water. The ordinance applies to the following activities in both categories.

- Above and below ground storage tanks (tanks and pipes used to contain an accumulation of regulation substances)
- Facilities that conduct biological research
- Boat repair shops
- Chemical research facilities
- Dry cleaners
- Gasoline service stations
- Pipelines
- Printing and publishing shops (that use printing liquids)
- Below ground transformers and capacitors
- Sawmills (producing over 10,000 board feet per day)
- Solid-waste handling and processing
- Vehicle repair, recycling, and auto wrecking
- Funeral services
- Furniture stripping
- Motor vehicle service garages (both private and government)
- Photographic processing
- Chemical manufactures and reprocessing
- Creosote and asphalt manufacturer and treatment
- Electroplating activities
- Petroleum and petroleum products refining, including reprocessing
- Wood products preserving
- Golf courses
- Regulated waste treatment, storage, disposal facilities that handle hazardous material
- Medium quantity generators (dangerous, acutely hazardous, and toxic extremely hazardous waste)
- Large quantity generators (dangerous, acutely hazardous, and toxic extremely hazardous waste)

### **Is there information available about BMPs to help safeguard groundwater?**

Yes, the department shall maintain and update a library of BMPs recommended by the state of Washington and federal agencies.

### **Where can I obtain information about water supply well in my area?**

Clark County Public Health maintains a list of the physical location of all public water supply wells.

## **What is the CARA review process?**

To receive a CARA permit, the applicant must demonstrate, through a Level I Site Evaluation Report, how they will integrate necessary and appropriate BMPs to prevent degradation to groundwater. The applicant must also meet existing local, state and federal laws and regulations. A Level I Site Evaluation Report shall be completed and submitted to Development Engineering for review and approval. See Clark County Code 40.410.030 (B).

If an applicant wants to avoid implementation of applicable BMPs, they must submit a Level 2 Site Evaluation Report, develop, and implement a monitoring program that consists of the following:

- Demonstrate, through Level 2 Site Evaluation Report, how they will prevent degradation to groundwater. The applicant must also meet existing local, state and federal laws and regulations. A Level 2 site Assessment Report shall be completed and submitted to the department for review and approval (see CCC 40.410.030(C)); and,
- Develop and implement a monitoring program with quarterly reporting to the department. The department will evaluate the monitoring program and may require periodic changes based on the monitoring results, new technology and/or BMPs.

**Critical Aquifer Recharge Area permits are reviewed and issued with the primary development permit required by Clark County.**