



Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs)

What are they?

CARAs are land areas that recharge groundwater aquifers, which are our source of drinking water.

An aquifer is a geologic formation that readily transmits water to wells or springs. An aquifer is filled, or recharged, by water that filters through the ground. Aquifers can be unconfined, or closer to the surface and connect the water table or confined deeper underground.

The Central Pierce County Aquifer is a sole-source aquifer. This means it supplies the majority of our drinking water, and there are no reasonable alternative sources if it becomes contaminated. There are also many wells in Pierce County that draw from aquifers. Critical Areas regulations help protect our drinking water from contamination and manage a community resource.

Why do we value them?



Aquifers provide drinking water, so the water that refills them must be clean and uncontaminated.



Aquifers provide water to streams and wetlands that are essential to local habitat and ecology.



A map of Pierce County, Washington, with a light blue shaded area representing the Central Pierce County Aquifer Area SSA. The shaded area is roughly rectangular with irregular edges, covering a significant portion of the county. Major roads like Interstate 5 and State Route 161 are visible within the shaded area. The text "Central Pierce County Aquifer Area SSA" is overlaid on the map in a bold, black font with a white outline.

Central Pierce County Aquifer Area SSA

How do we protect them?

- Identify and classify aquifer recharge areas.
- Reduce contamination risks by limiting high-risk activities and uses in aquifer recharge areas.

What changes are needed?

- Consider changes that would clarify hazardous uses.

[PierceCountyWa.gov/CriticalAreas](https://www.piercecountywa.gov/CriticalAreas)



Pierce County