

Clearing, Grading & Healthy Soils

Low-Impact Development Code Update

Thurston County
Community Stakeholder Group
October 29, 2015



Background

- Native vegetation and soils provide natural stormwater management and pollutant removal
- LID depends on maintaining the ability of the soil to infiltrate water
- When areas are disturbed during construction, and soil is compressed, it limits the ability to use that area for LID

Background

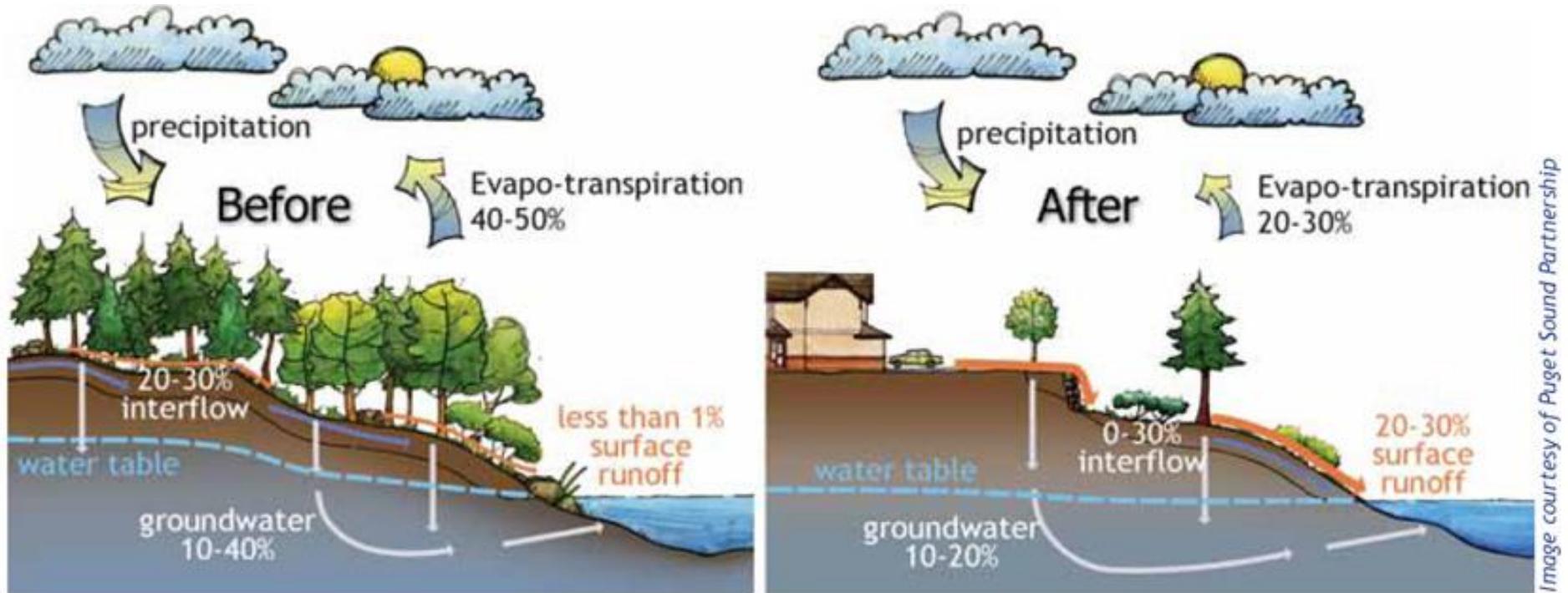


Image courtesy of Puget Sound Partnership

Before development almost all rainfall is taken up by plants, evaporates or infiltrates through the ground. After conventional development, surface runoff increases significantly while evaporation and infiltration into the ground decrease.

Focus on Clearing and Grading

- Do clearing and grading regulations include provisions for minimizing site disturbance and protecting native vegetation and soils?
- Is there an existing ordinance that requires or encourages the preservation of vegetation?
- Is wholesale clearing of sites prohibited or limited?
- Can the code be revised to limit clearing to the building footprint and area needed for maneuvering machinery?
- Can the code be revised to require amendment of disturbed soils?
- Are protection areas required to be fenced?

Focus on Clearing and Grading

- Thurston County requires a grading permit
 - 50 cubic yards of excavation or fill
 - Clearing in a critical area
- Clearing more than 7,000 square feet triggers stormwater review, but a permit is not required
- Forest Practices permit
 - Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater UGAs: 5,000 square feet of clearing;
 - 5% tree tract required
 - Outside North UGAs: 5,000 board feet of clearing
 - No tree tract required

Recommendations

- Require a “land-disturbing activity” permit that would cover grading and clearing over thresholds
- Include additional guidance on protecting soils
- Option 2: Develop a tree/vegetation preservation ordinance that applies within the UGAs of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater
- Option 3: Develop a tree/vegetation preservation ordinance that applies for areas outside UGAs

Discussion

- What barriers do you see for protecting trees, vegetation, and soils during construction?
- Are there incentives that could better encourage minimal site disturbance?
- Other thoughts and comments?

