

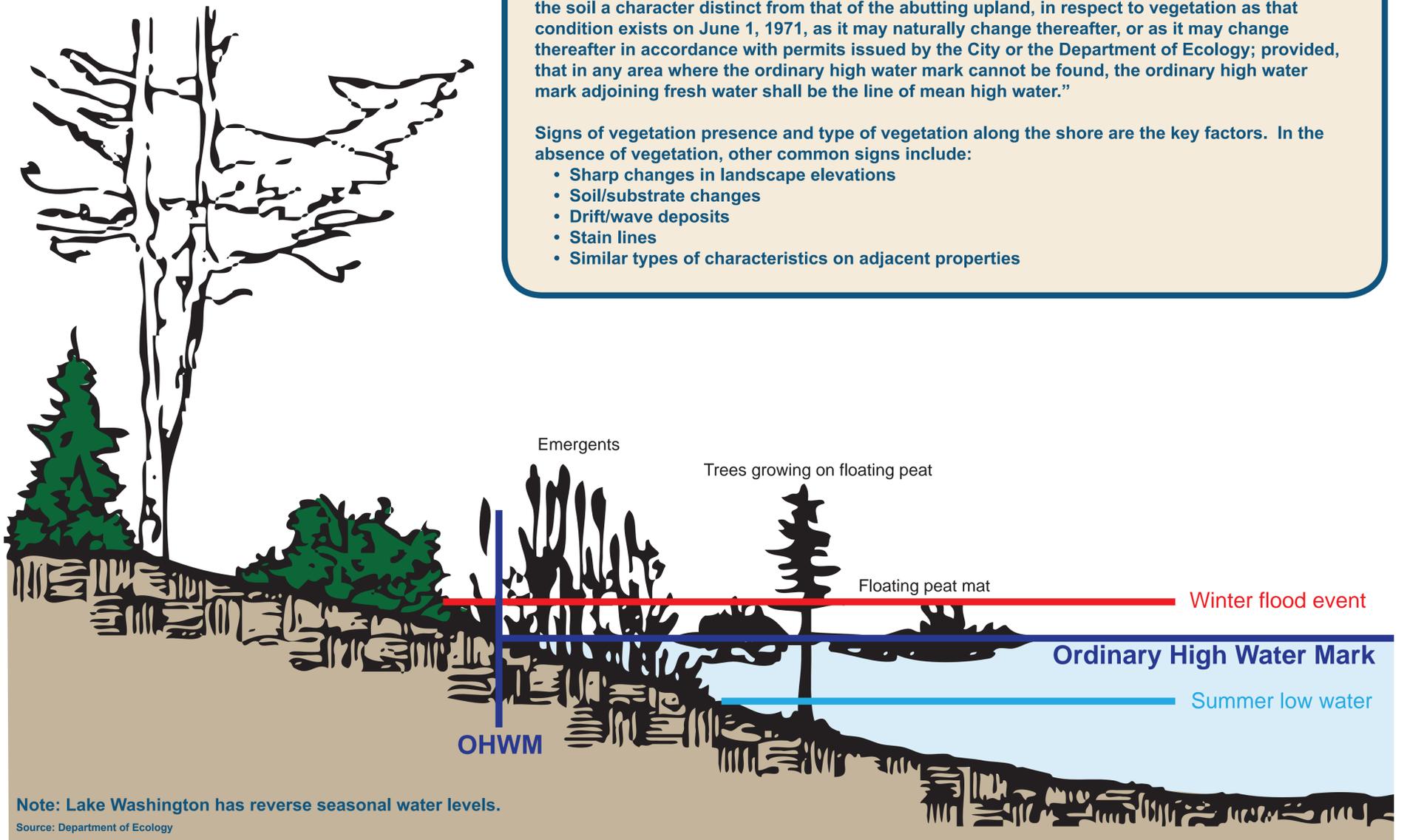
ORDINARY HIGH WATER MARK

How is OHWM determined?

The OHWM is defined by the City as “On all lakes, streams, and tidal water, that mark that will be found by examining the bed and banks and ascertaining where the presence and action of waters are so common and usual, and so long continued in all ordinary years, as to mark upon the soil a character distinct from that of the abutting upland, in respect to vegetation as that condition exists on June 1, 1971, as it may naturally change thereafter, or as it may change thereafter in accordance with permits issued by the City or the Department of Ecology; provided, that in any area where the ordinary high water mark cannot be found, the ordinary high water mark adjoining fresh water shall be the line of mean high water.”

Signs of vegetation presence and type of vegetation along the shore are the key factors. In the absence of vegetation, other common signs include:

- Sharp changes in landscape elevations
- Soil/substrate changes
- Drift/wave deposits
- Stain lines
- Similar types of characteristics on adjacent properties



How is the OHWM used?

- To determine the extent of shoreline jurisdiction
- To determine the location for shoreline armoring
Note: City requires a site-specific determination by a qualified professional
- To determine the extent of a structure setback
Note: On Lake Sammamish, an applicant chooses to use either:
 1. Standard elevation of 31.8 feet (NAVD 88)
 2. Site-specific determination by a qualified professional

Lake Sammamish OHWM Study

- Study conducted at the request of citizens
- Focused to establish standard elevation from which to measure structure setbacks
- Used statistical verification to aid decision
 - Ensures with 95% confidence that the shoreline setback for any proposed development would not be measured from a point waterward of the true (physical/biological) OHWM for that specific site

Don't miss this!

Different datums (reference points) are used by different jurisdictions and agencies to identify the OHWM elevation. The City of Bellevue, for example, uses the North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD 88). However, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers uses the National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929 (NGVD 29).

Use the following formula to convert NGVD 29 to NAVD 88: $NGVD\ 29 + 3.57 = NAVD\ 88$
For example $28.2\ NGVD\ 29 = 31.8\ NAVD\ 88$