

Memorandum

To: David Harvey, Gunderson, Inc.
From: Steve Johnson, Principal, Tilikum Ecological Services, LLC
Date: March 26, 2019
Re: Comments on draft 2019 City of Portland revised Willamette River Greenway Inventory specific to the Gunderson site

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2019 City of Portland revised Willamette River Greenway Inventory. Tilikum Ecological Services, LLC conducted a preliminary review of the draft document at the request of Gunderson, Inc. I am an aquatic ecologist and have worked on a variety of issues concerning the lower Willamette River for the past 35+ years. I have been involved with specific habitat assessment and enhancement issues on the Gunderson site since 2010.

The following comments address key elements of the inventory specific to the Gunderson site. The Gunderson site occupies approximately 58 acres along 4,000 lineal feet of river frontage within the North Reach of the Greenway Inventory area.

The following elements are addressed in this memorandum:

- Mapping Issues
- Willamette Greenway Overlay Zones
- Special Habitat Areas
- Portland Superfund

Mapping Issues

The 2019 Willamette Greenway inventory mapping, which is generally the same as in 1989, appears to be based on taxlot lines rather than distance from the river. The 1989 Willamette Greenway Plan established a setback line for non-river dependent and non-river related uses of a minimum of 25 feet landward from the top of bank. This setback area is not appropriate for industrial areas, such as Gunderson, from a practical standpoint. The original Greenway boundary was determined to be greater than 150 feet from the ordinary low water line of the river.

The 1989 Willamette Greenway Boundary was determined by the following: 1) The inclusion of all properties adjacent to the river; 2) The inclusion of all lands necessary for the conservation of significant riparian habitat; 3) The inclusion of public lands adjacent to or near the river, and 4) To a minor extent, view to and from the river.

Willamette Greenway Overlay Zones

Natural resource inventory features, such as those shown in Map 6, indicate water depths adjacent to shore. Inventory mapping indicates depths between 20 and 40 feet adjacent to the

Gunderson site. It would be helpful to identify the Ordinary High (OHW), a federal regulatory boundary, and Ordinary Low Water (OLW) elevations (from which Greenway boundaries are calculated), on the overlay maps since these depths may influence future dredging considerations around marine structures such as the barge ways that extend into the river beyond OLW.

Dredge depth described in City of Portland code (33.10.130.C) is unclear. Code specifies that dredging be regulated by Title 33 when the dredging occurs outside of the federal navigation channel where marine operations occur in water that is less than 35 feet deep. Shallow water is generally considered to be water depths between zero and 20 feet deep, however using 35 feet as the trigger for review represents an area of confusion regarding where the City's regulatory review is applied.

Special Habitat Areas

Special Habitat Areas (SHA) "contain or support special status fish or wildlife species, sensitive/unique plant populations, wetlands, native oak, bottomland hardwood forests, riverine islands, river delta, migratory stopover habitat, connectivity corridors, grasslands, and other unique natural features." Because SHAs are determined by a mix of Metro Habitats of Concern and BES/BOP resource data, there are no established protocols for mapping these features and they fall outside the domain of scientific scrutiny and peer review.

Findings from on-site observations at Gunderson indicate that the inventory still requires further calibration to account for specific environmental conditions at the site level. As an example, the Gunderson site received a rating of High for wildlife habitat in the 2008 River Plan. Site specific surveys conducted by Dunkeld Environmental Consulting and SWCA Inc. found that wildlife habitat on the Gunderson site would rank relatively low based on lack of connectivity to riparian areas and the size of habitat patches. Also, the riverbank is generally very steep and composed of riprap, while the inventory classifies it as 'unclassified fill'. Resource rankings such as high or low are not appropriate unless specifically tied to scientific variables. For instance, native and non-native plant species are not specified, therefore some areas mapped as having high wildlife value could be dominated by non-native plant species rather than native species with an assumed high value.

Portland Harbor Superfund

Gunderson has been working to improve riverbank habitat as part of interim measures for DEQ Source Control requirements for the past 10 years. These measures include removing non-native species and replacement with native species and as a result, habitat value on the site has been improved. These measures have raised site habitat value in the interim; however, the final remedial design approved by DEQ or US EPA may require grading changes that could reduce site habitat value, for instance, if installation of riprap is needed to support permanence of the remedy.

The baseline for site habitat value should be the beginning of the interim measures since there is no guarantee that the final remedial design can accommodate the higher value provided by the interim measures. Changes to riverbank grades and/or treatment of riparian conditions should not be restricted by City habitat assessments if additional changes are required by DEQ or US EPA.



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March 26, 2019

*****Via E-mail*****

City of Portland
Planning and Sustainability Commission
1900 SW 4th Ave, Suite 7100
Portland, OR 97201


**Subject: Comments on draft 2019 City of Portland revised Willamette River
Greenway Inventory specific to Gunderson Site**

Dear PSC,

Gunderson has reviewed the latest inventory document and some of our original concerns remain with the inventory at our site. More detailed information is provided in the attached memo authored by Tilikum Ecological Services, LLC. Staff at Tilikum Ecological Services have been on site and conducted several field inventories resource reviews over the last 10 years.

If you have questions regarding any of the information provided in this submittal, please do not hesitate to contact me for clarification.

Sincerely,


Soren Hill for
David J. Harvey
Environmental Director