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## Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission

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October 5, 2020

Portland City Council  
1221 SW 4th Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97204

Dear Mayor and City Commissioners,

The Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC) is pleased to forward to you the Recommended Draft of the *River Plan / South Reach*, an update to the Willamette Greenway Plan for the stretch of the Willamette River from South Waterfront to the southern boundary of the unincorporated Multnomah County neighborhood of Riverdale / Dunthorpe. The draft plan includes a 20-year vision, policies, regulations and actions, including:

- **Watershed Health and Resilience:** New River Overlay zones, which include a wider river setback and new bird-safe glazing, exterior lighting, residential dock and landscaping requirements and updated floodplain development regulations to reduce flood risk and expand habitat for listed species.
- **Recreation:** Increased access and improvements to and along the Willamette Greenway Trail network; Planning and funding for the Ross Island/Oaks Bottom/Sellwood Riverfront Park complex and the former Staff Jennings site; allowing a small amount of river recreation-supportive retail in three South Reach parks; encouraging partner agencies to strengthen enforcement and expand boater education and safety programs; and designating and protecting unique scenic views of the South Reach.
- **Tribal Engagement and Collaboration:** A new requirement for archaeological surveys in high-sensitivity areas in the South Reach and working with tribal governments and Native community members to identify indigenous culturally significant locations, natural resources and practices to honor and support tribal customs and traditions.
- **Riverfront Communities:** Ensuring that all nearby neighborhoods have safe and convenient access to the riverfront and updating design guidelines for the Macadam area.



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### **Initial public hearing and work sessions resulted in a number of amendments**

On February 25, 2020, the PSC held an initial public hearing to get feedback on the *River Plan / South Reach* Proposed Draft. The PSC heard testimony from 16 people at the hearing and reviewed over 70 pieces of written testimony. The PSC then held work sessions with staff on March 10, May 12 and May 26, 2020 to make changes to the draft plan.

The PSC's amendments included expanding the minimum width of the River Environmental overlay zone from 50 to 100 ft, improving enforcement of tree planting and mitigation requirements, and adding new standards for new residential docks and for existing docks undergoing significant repair or replacement. The commission also encouraged staff to continue to coordinate with the City's Tribal Relations Director.

### **A second public hearing focused on boating**

During the work sessions portion of this project, the PSC provided a letter to the Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) during the open comment period for their rulemaking process on boating safety rules in the South Reach. This touched off a surge of interest in river recreation, including from many people who had not participated in prior public involvement processes for this project, even though the City does not have jurisdiction over boating rules. The PSC re-opened testimony and had another public hearing to be sure that recreational boaters and other river users would have a chance to testify before the commission (and which would also be shared with the OSMB).

Thirty-three people provided oral testimony and more than 900 people submitted written testimony. The PSC was persuaded by the testimony to support a significant expansion of the Slow / No Wake zone. Recognizing that the city doesn't have jurisdiction over boating rules, the PSC recommended this strong action to be placed in the plan:

*The City of Portland, to address river recreational safety and ecological health of the river, will petition the Oregon State Marine Board to establish a Slow / No Wake Zone between the Hawthorne and Sellwood Bridges and at Powers Marine Park and Elk Rock Island.*

The PSC also accepted the Marine Board's invitation to provide invited comments at their public meeting July 22, 2020, and provided a follow-up letter, accompanied by copies of all the public testimony the PSC had received.

The Oregon State Marine Board is expected to act on October 21, 2020.

### **Willamette River Greenway Inventory**

In addition to the *River Plan / South Reach* documents, we are also transmitting to you the Willamette River Greenway Inventory that was the subject of a public hearing and recommendation on March 26, 2019. The Inventory is required by State Planning Goal 15.

### **In conclusion**

The PSC hereby forwards the *River Plan / South Reach* Recommended Draft and the Willamette River Greenway Inventory to City Council for a public hearing and consideration.



The PSC also recommends that City Council petition the OSMB to establish a slow / no wake zone in the South Reach area to improve safety for nonmotorized boaters, swimmers and riverfront residents, support more equitable use of the river, further city climate goals, and reduce erosion and damage to habitat.

Finally, the PSC would like extend its gratitude to all Portlanders who contributed to the plan and to staff from the bureaus of Planning and Sustainability, Development Services, Environmental Services, Parks and Recreation, Transportation, the Office of Government Relations-Tribal Relations, the City Attorney's office, and Multnomah County for their work to develop this *River Plan / South Reach Recommended Draft*.

Sincerely,



Eli Spevak  
Chair





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