



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 12, 2020

TO: Planning and Sustainability Commission

FROM: Sallie Edmunds, Central City, River and Environmental Planning Manager

COPY: Seraphie Allen, Mayor Wheeler's Office; Marc Jolin, Joint Office on Homelessness; Justin Russell, Department of State Lands

SUBJECT: Houselessness Information

PSC members requested information on houselessness in the South Reach at a recent meeting. On May 26, Seraphie Allen (Mayor Wheeler's office) and Marc Jolin (Joint Office on Homelessness) joined the PSC Zoom session but due to time constraints were not able to provide the requested briefing but have agreed to come back on June 23, 2020. We plan to start the South Reach session with this briefing and then move on to the public hearing portion of the session.

This memo includes some background information on the topic. Some of the information you received in advance of the last session and some is new.

1. Homelessness Response in South Reach Portland. From Seraphie Allen (Mayor Wheeler's Office) 5/26/20
2. Email from Justin Russell (Department of State Lands) to Debbie Bischoff 5/26/20
3. Proposed Rule related to Camping and Campfires along the Columbia River 6/8/20. News Release from the Department of State Lands



City of Portland, Oregon | Bureau of Planning and Sustainability | www.portlandoregon.gov/bps
1900 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 7100, Portland, OR 97201 | phone: 503-823-7700 | fax: 503-823-7800 | tty: 503-823-6868

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1. Homelessness Response in South Reach Portland. From Seraphie Allen (Mayor Wheeler's Office) 5/26/20

General efforts to end homelessness

The City of Portland has a multiprong approach to addressing homelessness that includes prevention, shelter, transitional services and increasing our permanent and supportive housing supply. In a single year, we helped more than 37,000 people with housing, shelter and services. On any given night, we're helping to house 12,000 people who might otherwise be homeless — thousands more since 2017. You can learn more about the City's vision and plan at [A Home For Everyone](#).

The City is also engaged in efforts to provide immediate resources to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness with programs like the Navigation Team. The Navigation Team is a group of multi-disciplinary outreach workers who go to areas where high-impact camping exists. The team offers access to services including shelter, health supports (medical, mental health, substance use), transportation assistance, identification and benefits assistance, and housing and rental assistance. A new Navigation Center at the west end of the Broadway Bridge—offering 100 shelter beds and intensive, one-on-one case management—opened last summer to facilitate the Navigation Team's work.

You can learn more about our proactive efforts from our Homelessness Toolkit at www.portlandoregon.gov/toolkit, where you will find resources like our Strategic Plan, Performance Measures, Response to Homelessness Quarterly Newsletters, and Weekly Campsite Reports. These resources are very helpful when trying to understand the complex issues surrounding homelessness and what we are doing to address it.

Impact reduction of homelessness

Unsanctioned camping is not permitted in City Code ([14A.50.020](#) and [14A.50.050](#)). The City's Homelessness and Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program (HUCIRP) oversees managing public space issues and addressing concerns around public health and safety related to unsanctioned camping throughout the City. All other landholding agencies and landowners are in charge of their own property management. HUCIRP uses [One Point of Contact](#), a reporting system that provides a place for community members to identify and report issues with campsites. HUCIRP uses Clean Start, a homeless to work program through Central City Concern, to respond to reported campsites and provide trash service and an on-site assessment of the impact of the campsite on City-owned property. In 2019, Clean Start removed over 1,100 tons of trash, over 70,000 needles, and 15,475 assessments. Campsite cleanups are performed at sites with the highest impact across the City. These sites are cleaned by a separate subcontractor who can mitigate environmental hazards. In FY18-19, 2,828 campsites were cleaned, removing nearly 2,000 tons of garbage and over 450,000 needles city-wide.

The City's efforts at managing its public lands and coordinated outreach through the Navigation Team has attracted partnerships with other landholding government agencies. At the end of 2018, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) [signed an intergovernmental agreement](#) to have HUCIRP manage its public rights-of-way within the City of Portland. In the South Reach, the City is not the sole property

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holder. Private landholders and government agencies, like the Department of State Lands (DSL), who oversee Oregon’s waterways, are independent authorities with their own homelessness response. DSL, for example, allows public recreational use, which includes camping, in the states submersed and submersible lands for a limited duration. For the purposes of public recreational use, limited duration is not to exceed 30-calendar days in the same location during any contiguous 12-month time period, within a distance of five miles (OAR [141-088](#)). DSL has limited resources for enforcement of these rules and in cases of removing abandoned or derelict boats in public property, they work with the Oregon State Marine Board. DSL recently restricted overnight camping on the banks of the Lower Willamette River between River Mile 1 and River Mile 11, but this does not extend to the area of interest for the South Reach project (OAR [141-082](#)).

COVID 19 Response

Creating opportunities for physical distancing

Since the beginning of the crisis, the City has coordinating closely with Multnomah County and the Joint Office of Homeless Services to create sufficient physical distancing within its existing shelter capacity and beyond. Portland Parks’ Community Centers and Metro’s Oregon Convention Center were an integral part in temporarily creating distancing in our congregate shelters. Additional precautions were taken to provide safety for the most vulnerable—the Jupiter Hotel and our other Medical Motel Shelters are a critical resource for further quarantine symptomatic individuals and those deemed at highest risk of infection. In an effort to augment opportunities to physically distance in the unsheltered community, the City has coordinated with JOIN to create three temporary outdoor emergency shelters, providing places to wash hands, go to the bathroom and sleep and spend time at safe distances.

Improving access to hygiene

Since the onset of the COVID emergency, the City’s Homelessness and Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program (HUCIRP) and Portland Parks & Recreation (PPR) have worked to greatly [expand access to hygiene stations and bathrooms](#) across the city. As of May 7, the City has opened 56 parks offering 24/7 restrooms and hygiene services, with an additional 12 parks that have day-time access, as well as placed more than 35 additional handwashing stations or portable toilets with handwashing stations in strategic locations to improve accessibility to hygiene.

Reduction in campsite cleanups

On March 13, in accordance to [CDC guidelines](#), HUCIRP raised the threshold for what necessitates a campsite cleanup to minimize the risk of displacing individuals and reducing possible spread of infection. Trash service and outreach continued as before, but the number of cleanups requiring campers to relocate has greatly diminished. The only sites where movement may be required are those that pose a significant public health and safety risk, including those set up in the middle of a street blocking traffic and emergency vehicle access or next to fast-moving traffic such as a highway on/off ramp. Using reports through One Point of Contact and our outreach partners, we continue to monitor the public health and safety risk of these sites.



2. Email from Justin Russell (Department of State Lands) to Debbie Bischoff 5/26/20

The Department of State Lands is responsible for managing all uses of state owned waterways in the State of Oregon. In Portland, this includes the Willamette and Columbia Rivers, as well as Multnomah Channel. Transient boats and long-term moorage in one location is considered a use that requires authorization unless the vessel moves 5 miles every 30 days. DSL does enforce these rules, but there are more transient boats and homeless camps than the Department has funding to effectively manage. Consequently, our enforcement strategy prioritizes larger strategic cleanup events throughout the year, with some funds set aside for emergency situations.

While the South Reach is home to the highest concentration of transient boats in the City, these boats are often moored or anchored on portions of the river where our agencies management role is limited. The submerged land between Toe Island and Ross Island, and westerly portions of Holgate Channel are privately owned by Ross Island Sand and Gravel. Accordingly, DSL has no jurisdiction to enforce its rules on these portions of the river. The public docks at both Sellwood and Willamette Parks are authorized by DSL, and boats who moor at these docks are to be managed by the City of Portland. While there are vessels moored on DSL owned and managed portions of the South Reach, enforcement against these boats is complicated by the patchwork of ownership and management responsibilities in the area.

In order for the majority of the transient vessels to be removed from the South Reach, Ross Island Sand and Gravel would have to take legal action against boats who are trespassing on their property, with support from law enforcement. To date this has not occurred. It should be noted that the OSMB rules relating to the removal of abandoned or unauthorized vessels, under which DSL removes unauthorized vessels from state-owned waterways, explicitly provides local law enforcement the same authority to remove a vessel ([ORS 830.911](#)). Any vessel that meets the definition of abandoned or derelict, which many of the long-term transient vessels do, could be seized by local law enforcement without DSL involvement regardless of the ownership of the underlying submerged land.

The Departments ownership in the South Reach generally extends to only to Ordinary Low Water, meaning that most land based camps in the area are under the jurisdiction of the adjacent landowner and not our Department. In other areas in the City where homeless camps do occupy state-owned land, our Department has consulted with the JOHS to humanely engage with folks and provide resources and assistance wherever possible. If a transient vessel were to be posted for seizure, our Department would coordinate with JOHS to provide outreach in a similar fashion.

In regards to the action item you've included, I cannot provide any formal opinion on whether our Department would support public ownership of these lands. A policy directive like that would have to get sent up the chain. Informally, I think it sounds like something we can work towards and believe it would certainly aid in improving the efficacy of our enforcement of transient vessels.

Hope this is helpful but let me know if there's anything more you need.

Justin Russell
Proprietary Coordinator
Oregon Department of State Lands
O:503.986.5219
C: 503.510.6744
<http://www.oregonstatelands.us/>



3. Proposed Rule related to Camping and Campfires along the Columbia River 6/8/20

News Release from Oregon Dept. of State Lands 6/8/20

STATE SEEKS COMMENT ON CLOSING COLUMBIA RIVER LOCATIONS TO OVERNIGHT USE, RESTRICTING CAMPING AND CAMPFIRES

Public hearing to be held via Zoom on June 17, comment period open until July 1

PORTLAND, Ore. – Several Columbia River locations would close to camping, campfires, and overnight use under a new rule proposed by the state.

The Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) is seeking public comment on potential restrictions in the North Portland Harbor area, on the north end of Hayden Island including Oregon Slough (also known as the North Portland Harbor Channel), and on the Columbia River at the Sandy River Delta. [See a map of the closure areas.](#)

Temporary restrictions on camping, campfires, and use between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. were enacted in August 2019 to address ongoing damage to public lands, extensive littering and dumping, reckless burning, and other health and safety issues.

If the proposed rule is adopted, the camping, campfire, and overnight use restrictions would become permanent. The riverbanks would remain open for recreational use during daytime hours.

Public comment sought via Zoom hearing, written comments

A public hearing on the proposed rule will be held June 17, 2020 from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. Visit the [DSL website](#) for hearing details, to request the meeting link and to review the draft rule.

The public comment period will be open until 4 p.m. on Wednesday, July 1, 2020. Comments must be received by this date and time to be considered. Written comments may be submitted on the DSL website by [online form](#), by email to rules@dsl.state.or.us, or by mail to DSL Rules Coordinator, 775 Summer St. NE, Suite 100, Salem, Oregon 97301.

Once the public comment period closes, DSL will consider any comments received and revise the draft rule as needed. The earliest a permanent closure would go into effect is August 1, 2020.

Contact Info:

Ali Ryan Hansen, DSL Communications Manager
ali.r.hansen@state.or.us
503-510-6860 (cell)

