

## ***Willamette River Early Project Review Pilot***

Draft: 11/10/09

### **Summary**

The draft North Reach Plan (*The River Plan North Reach Proposed Plan Volume 1A*) recommends creation of an optional "Willamette River Early Project Review" process. It is intended to meet a key objective of the plan, namely to "Improve regulatory efficiency for all activities below the ordinary high water mark (OHWM)."

The Early Project Review process is proposed as a two year pilot project to test the usefulness of providing an opportunity for private-sector project sponsors in the North Reach of the Willamette River (roughly from the Broadway Bridge to the Columbia River) to have a discussion with federal, state and local regulatory agencies about project goals and timetables prior to submitting a formal permit application. The pilot project will be facilitated by the City of Portland's Office of Healthy Working Rivers (OHWR).

The goal of the pilot is to foster collaborative dialogue among project sponsors and regulatory agencies. The objective is to share information early in the process to clarify requirements, avoid misunderstanding, and decrease the risk of conflicting or out-of-sequence governmental requirements that may result in project delays. Regulatory agencies that will be asked to participate include those that have jurisdiction below the OHWM: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) as advised by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL), as advised by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (water quality certifications issued under section 401 of the Clean Water Act); and the City of Portland's Bureau of Development Services.

The goal of the Willamette River Early Project Review Process is intended to:

- help project sponsors work with City, state and federal regulations;
- create a process for regular discussions among parties;
- identify potential conflicting requirements; and
- determine the need for mitigation and provide technical information to inform project sponsors' mitigation proposals.

This voluntary process will ensure that agencies are reviewing the same information, and allow for collaboration on requirements. As a result, the project sponsor should gain an early understanding of permit application

timeframes, be subject to fewer project re-designs, and receive more consistent guidance.

The Office of Healthy Working Rivers will strive to ensure a productive and workable process and thus it is likely that not all projects will be accommodated during the pilot period. At the conclusion of the pilot, the City of Portland will assess the process and make recommendations regarding its continuance, improvements, and/or expansion beyond early information-sharing to test more coordinated, joint processes for permit issuance. The assessment will consider the value of the process to both project sponsors and government agencies (including overall cost effectiveness), and the timeliness of the process.



## OFFICE OF HEALTHY WORKING RIVERS



In January 2009, City Council established the Office of Healthy Working Rivers (the Rivers Office), to bring a new focus to implementing projects that advance the City's river goals of achieving:

- *a clean and healthy river,*
- *a prosperous working harbor,*
- *increased awareness of the river,*
- *a vibrant waterfront, and*
- *successful partnerships to implement river projects.*

The Rivers Office; in coordination with leadership from river-related City programs, government partners, Neighborhood Associations, and stakeholders; will be a catalyst for on-the-ground actions that support the City's river goals.

Overseen by Commissioner Amanda Fritz, the Rivers Office will provide leadership to promote the economic, transportation, ecological, and recreational roles of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers.

### ***THE RIVERS OFFICE IS AN ACTION-COORDINATING OFFICE THAT WILL...***

#### **ACT on Opportunities by:**

- Facilitating river projects that contribute to the economic prosperity of the City and Region and that restore and protect ecological functions

#### **ACT to Bring People and Opportunities Together by:**

- Forging partnerships within and outside the City's organizational structure
- Engaging citizens, Neighborhood Associations, local industry, stakeholders, and government partners in Rivers Office activities

#### **PROMOTE Economic Development by:**

- Supporting river dependent industry, commerce, and the associated infrastructure
- Helping coordinate river-dependent development that attracts investment in sustainable and clean industries that provide work-force development and demonstrate sustainable development practices

#### **IMPROVE Our Urban Rivers by:**

- Providing habitat connections and protection for critical life stages of fish and wildlife that reside in, or pass through, the Willamette and Columbia River corridors
- Supporting the Portland Harbor Superfund process to ensure an outcome that is cost effective and protects public health and the river ecosystems

#### **CONNECT the Community to the River by:**

- Promoting improved river access and ways for Portlanders to experience our rivers first hand
- Providing a point of contact for the community on river news, events, programs, and issues

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**For more information on planned actions, see the Rivers Office report to City Council available online at:** <http://www.portlandonline.com/fritz/> (see left side of page under Office of Healthy Working Rivers)

