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**Sent:** Saturday, August 06, 2016 12:29 PM

**To:** Planning and Sustainability Commission <psc@portlandoregon.gov>

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**Subject:** CC2035 Plan Testimony

**Importance:** High

Six Big Ideas emerged from the most expensive, robust and earnest public outreach process our city will undergo every 20 years – our 2035 Plan. One of these six overarching themes is [Enhance the Willamette for People and Wildlife](#).

The Willamette River is owned by the citizens of Oregon and is Portland's largest public open space. Portland Parks and Recreation estimates only 5% of our Central City has access to the Willamette River. Collectively our community paid \$1.44 billion to largely remove sewage overflows from the Willamette River. That is why we have among the highest sewer bills in the country. There is no disagreement, scientifically speaking, that the Willamette River is now safe for swimming. Much work lies ahead to improve the full ecological health of our river, but today we can celebrate that we can swim in the river that flows through the center of our town.

As Portland's relationship with our river improves, the DNA of our city and our most vital of values, livability, will change with it for the good. Naturally, the facilitation of getting people to the river's edge and into the river will foster a stronger relationship with the Willamette River and help enhance stewardship. People are drawn to rivers with healthy ecosystems. Human access and habitat restoration must go hand in hand.

Feedback on 2030 Plan. Specific comments.

- 1) [Establish Guidelines for Swimming in the Willamette River](#). We want the Willamette River to be safe and welcoming for people of all ages and disabilities. The 2035 plan calls for swimming throughout the document but provides no direction about how to do it safely. Portland Parks and Recreation should have an increased role and leadership in developing policy as it relates to recreation in the river. This needs to happen as soon as possible to reduce the clear exposure to the city. There are currently no policies in place that direct people how and where to swim.

Swimmers do not mix well with boat propellers or barges. Wake is bad for shallow water habitat. Designated swimming areas with floating buoys make swimmers feel safer and protect shallow water habitat from wake. Portland Parks and Recreation has no acknowledgement of swimming in the river presently. There is not one PPR designated place to swim in all of downtown and no basic information about safety in rivers on their website. The Willamette River is Portland's largest public open space. PPR is aware people are swimming and their present policy seems to be pretending it is not happening.

PPR needs at very minimum a link like this on their website that gives direction to the community where to swim and how to do it safely – this is currently in our opinion an area of exposure to the city:

<https://www.clark.wa.gov/public-works/swimming>

PPR needs to direct people to the safest places to get into the river so people don't pioneer their own spots, which is what will continue to happen without direction from PPR.

- 2) No net loss of river edge access in the central city (Kevin Duckworth Dock). PPR estimates only 5% of the central city has access to the river's edge. Daimler has made a proposal to move the Duckworth Dock from the central city to behind their company headquarters on Swan Island. It's difficult to build new docks. The existing facilities we have in the central reach need to be protected and preserved.

*Policy Recommendation:* Any loss of documented access to the Willamette River in the Central City will need to be replaced if taken away with something equivalent within ¼ mile from any access spot removed.

This does speak specifically to the Kevin Duckworth Dock which is perhaps the most ADA accessible water edge access point in all of downtown and does not present a conflict with shallow water habitat.

- 3) Structures in Parks - We do not like the idea of permanent structures in any parks. We like the idea of temporary structures such as food carts. It provides more flexibility. At the waterfront there is an extreme deficit of green space – we don't want any more space eaten up permanently. It would be better to allow temporary economic activities for the summer when people will use them most (ie food carts). It is more flexible and not permanent. That said, it would be nice to have economic activity in parks to serve people.
- 4) Rethink turf management in Tom McCall Bowl – Current policy needs to be reexamined. This needs to happen in the short term and can happen independently of any master planning at Tom McCall Park. When there is not an event at this space PPR is constantly watering and seeding. When this area is saturated with water it cannot be used, and the seed and grass is just food for the geese. Each goose poos 2-3 lbs a day! (not kidding). It would be great to develop an alternative strategy so that we can facilitate people using this park which has the best river's edge walking access in downtown (nothing is even close to 2<sup>nd</sup> place). The current turf management strategy principally considers its use for events, not for people when events are not being held. **This can happen in advance from the Waterfront Master Plan and independent of the Waterfront Master Plan.**
- 5) 50 foot set back – 50' is the minimum acceptable setback. We feel it needs to be 75' to provide a proper buffer for wildlife and recreation. Portland needs to make a decision about what defines our city and what our values are. As Portland grows we will need greater relief from our growing built environment. People who own land next to the river need to contribute 75' to the citizens of our city (both human and wildlife inhabitants). The idea of grandfathering a building if it is currently within the 50' setback is unacceptable. This significantly weakens the setback proposal and does not reflect the spirit of the

setback discussion. Setback area is critical to establish proper habitat for our city's critters and people. Wildlife in our rivers is what makes a river experience rich. A proper 75' setback will facilitate ecosystem health on the Willamette River.

- 6) Riverfront open space bonus – Provide either a second approach to open space bonus which would provide robust public access to the river with support facilities and laidback banks and other tests as determined by PPR once Swimming Guidelines are established (HAP point #1). Alternatively, creating access to the water's edge could be integrated into the existing density bonus with a less robust test.

Thank you in advance for your full consideration of our feedback to the plan. We have appreciated the excellent working relationship with planning bureau staff through this process. Specifically, Debbie and Sallie have demonstrated an earnestness about doing their best to collect feedback from the public for the issues we feel most strongly about. Planning is asked to cover a lot of ground with very little resources – we are lucky to have such great staff dedicated to this process.

Yours for the Willamette River,

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