

memorandum

date June 30, 2011

to Mitch Kneipp, Planning Manager, City of Washougal

from Reema Shakra, Teresa Vanderburg, Ikuno Masterson, ESA

subject Shoreline Master Program Update, Draft No Net Loss Summary – City of Washougal

Introduction

The purpose of this memo is to demonstrate how City of Washougal Draft Shoreline Master Program (SMP) achieves “no net loss” of shoreline ecological functions. This summary is based on the conclusions of the City of Washougal Cumulative Impacts Analysis which was an assessment of the following:

- The analysis of baseline conditions from the Clark County Coalition Inventory and Characterization Report (June 2010);
- The goals, policies, and regulations of the SMP; together with
- The proposed measures in the Clark County Coalition Shoreline Restoration Plan.

The integration of the overall SMP was evaluated to assess how ecological functions for shorelines in the city of Washougal and its urban growth area might be expected to perform as development occurs over the next twenty years.

The concept of no net loss of shoreline ecological functions has been rooted in the Shoreline Management Act since its enactment by the citizens of the state of Washington in 1971. The Act states that “permitted uses in the shoreline shall be designed and conducted in a manner that minimizes in so far as practical, any resultant damage to the ecology and environment of the shoreline area...” (WAC 173-26-176[2]). The concept was translated into the goals, policies, and governing principles of Ecology’s guidelines for updating local government SMPs. the guidelines suggest that “no net loss” is achieved primarily through regulatory mechanisms including mitigation requirements but that restoration incentives and voluntary actions are also critical to achieving the “no net loss” goal.

City Shorelines

Three shorelines of the state are located within the city limits and urban growth area of Washougal: Columbia River, Washougal River, and Gibbons Creek. There are a total of five linear stream miles in Washougal.

The Columbia River extends 2.7 miles within the city limits of Washougal, and contains approximately 930 acres of shoreline habitat. Shoreline alterations to the Columbia River in the jurisdiction include moorage facilities, docks and piers, clearing and conversion of riparian habitat for residential and industrial development, and levees. These modifications have several adverse impacts including decrease water quality and quantity, increased sedimentation, decreased riparian and shoreline habitat, and a reduction in salmon habitat.

The Washougal River extends for 2.3 miles within the city and urban growth area of Washougal, and contains approximately 188 acres of shoreline habitat. The Washougal River within the city jurisdiction contains several levees and bridge crossings that reduce river floodplain connectivity and contribute to channelization. Additionally, the reach contains a great deal of impervious surfaces that facilities increased stormwater and sediment runoff and ultimately contributes to reduction in water quality.

Gibbons Creek extends a short distance through the city of Washougal and contains approximately 9 acres of shoreline habitat. Portions of riparian forest within the reach have been cleared and converted to residential development and pasture. The reduction of riparian forest has contributed to increased runoff and erosion, a loss of stream shading, and a reduction in fish and wildlife habitat.

Ecological Functions

Based on the findings of the Shoreline Inventory and Characterization (ESA Adolfson, 2010), ecological functions most at risk as a result of future development in shorelines include:

- Reduced water quality;
- River/floodplain connectivity
- Salmon habitat.
- Stormwater and sediment runoff; and
- Shoreline and riparian habitat

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Development

There are nearly 300 acres of shoreline are in Washougal and its UGA. The majority of vacant lands are zoned for residential development, with a potential for an additional 108 units over the next 20 years. The number of future residential units is higher than would likely occur. The purpose of over-estimating development on vacant lands in this manner is to determine impact on ecological functions under a worst-case scenario. There is limited potential for industrial and high intensity development along the Columbia River and near Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge.

Cumulative Impacts Assessment

A cumulative impact assessment was developed on the Clark County Coalition Draft SMP in March 2011. A preliminary finding of potential net loss was determined. In response, the PMT, with input from citizens and advised by their Shoreline Stakeholder Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and Independent Science Review Panel, re-examined and changed several of the designations placed on specific shoreline reaches, revised regulations associated with specific use allowances, dimensional standards such as structure setbacks, and vegetation conservation. The City adjusted accessory parking and structure setbacks for the Urban Conservancy shoreline designation. These revisions were incorporated into the Final Draft SMP (June, 2011). The Clark County Coalition Draft Cumulative Impact Analysis (June, 2011) provides additional detail as to which regulations in the Final Draft SMP serve to protect ecological functions and processes. The assessment of future performance in the last column of the WRIA 28 tables in Appendix A are also applicable to the waterbodies in and around Washougal.

Based upon the anticipated moderate levels of foreseeable future development in Washougal, there is potential for cumulative impacts to occur on shoreline ecological functions in Washougal and its UGA under the City's proposed program. The recommendations identified in both the City of Washougal Draft Cumulative Impacts Analysis and Clark County Coalition Draft Cumulative Impacts Analysis (June, 2011) could serve to mitigate for these impacts.

Draft Conclusions

The baseline conditions of ecological functions and processes in the ICR were used as the basis for decisions made throughout the City's SMP update process. The inventory was integral to the development of the shoreline environment designations, informed goal and policy development, led to the establishment of protective regulations, and shaped the conclusions of the cumulative impacts analysis.

Based upon the foreseeable future residential development in Washougal, there is a potential for net loss of shoreline functions over time. Intense port industrial uses are also proposed immediately adjacent to the Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge and additional protection measures may be warranted to minimize impacts. Examples of measures from the City's Cumulative Impacts Analysis to remedy the potential for net loss are recommended below:

- Prioritizing restoration opportunities along Shorelines of Statewide Significance;
- Reconsideration of setbacks for industrial, recreational, residential setbacks;
- Additional protection for the Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge from shoreline development on abutting properties may be warranted; and
- Commitment to permit review and enforcement of activities in compliance with the goals, policies, and regulations of the SMP when exempt from shoreline permits;
- Prioritization and commitment to programs and projects identified in the Coalition Shoreline Restoration Plan focused on restoring degraded habitat on a citywide basis.