



# Meeting summary

## Smith and Bybee Wetlands Advisory Committee

January 28, 2025

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### Committee members in attendance

- Carrie Butler ..... Port of Portland
- Daryl Houtman ..... City of Portland, Bureau of Environmental Services
- Eric Stern ..... Friends of Smith and Bybee Lakes
- Jonathan Soll ..... Metro
- Pat Jewett ..... 40-Mile Loop Trust
- Troy Clark ..... Audubon Society of Portland
- Eugenia Tam ..... North Portland Neighbors

### Committee members not in attendance

- Andrea Berkeley ..... Metro

### Others in attendance

- Eeshoo Rehani ..... Metro
  - Jennifer D’ Avanzo ..... Metro
  - Sofia Bermudez-Eredia ..... Metro
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## WELCOME

The November 2024 meeting minutes were approved.

## ST. JOHNS PRAIRIE PLANNING UPDATE

Eeshoo Rehani provided a brief status update on the St. Johns Prairie Trail Project, outlining its current progress.

The liner’s condition is better than expected, with sufficient compressive strength to support loads for the next 25 years. While some deflection is anticipated, it is not significant enough to cause stormwater or sanitary issues. A memo detailing these findings is currently under Metro’s internal review. Once reviewed by all stakeholders, including Parks and Nature, the findings will be incorporated into the project. Additionally, the consultant has recommended installing instrumentation during preload to monitor liner deformation. The project manager supports this recommendation, as it will provide valuable data before construction begins. Metro’s review comments are expected by the end of next week, with the preload design anticipated to be finalized by mid-February.

The Columbia Boulevard Bridge project is nearing finalization of agreements, with Metro, Portland Parks & Recreation, and ODOT working to complete the intergovernmental agreement (IGA). While the project manager is not directly involved, they noted that the IGA is in its final stages, with recent comments exchanged between Metro and ODOT. Additionally, the design team is awaiting contract approval from ODOT’s Department of Justice, which is expected soon.

The Slough Bridge project, led by WPES, has completed its initial survey and assessment. A draft assessment has been submitted to Metro, and repairs are anticipated to take place in the fall when

water levels are low. The repair process is estimated to take approximately two to three months. The St. Johns Prairie Trail Project (including pre-load) is coordinating closely with this timeline, as the Slough Bridge must be deemed safe for construction vehicles before preload work can begin. Given these dependencies, preload work is expected to commence in approximately 1.5 years, assuming all aspects proceed as planned.

Finally, the preload must remain in place for a minimum of 12 to 18 months, with a longer duration being preferable. No additional questions or concerns were raised during the meeting.

Additional project updates were scheduled for later discussion to allow for more in-depth conversations and planning.

### **Vandalism concerns**

Concerns arose regarding rumors that Metro might delay the project due to vandalism concerns if all sections were not completed simultaneously. Metro representatives confirmed that while vandalism is a potential risk, mitigation efforts are being considered and will be integrated into the project at various stages, including design, construction, and operational phases. They emphasized that while the probability of significant vandalism is low, the consequences could be substantial, making these preventative measures essential.

### **Project phasing and design status**

Metro confirmed that the project remains divided into two distinct phases. Phase 1 has reached 90% design completion and extends up to the overlook. Phase 2, while planned, currently lacks funding, making its timeline uncertain. The original full design was only 10% complete before budget constraints required a phased approach to ensure project continuity.

### **Trail connection and regional planning**

One of the central themes of the discussion was the importance of linking the trail to regional paths, including connections to Kelly Point Park. Metro acknowledged the significance of this connectivity and stated that efforts are underway to identify funding opportunities that could support the design and construction of Phase 2.

No further questions were raised, and the meeting concluded with appreciation for the ongoing work

## **DISCUSSION OF JON BLASHER'S LETTER TO THE SBWAC**

Public participation remains an essential aspect of the planning process. Community members are encouraged to provide input during meetings, through written communication, or by directly engaging with elected Metro officials. Non-voting public members were reminded that their voices are valued, and their contributions can influence decision-making. Future meeting discussions will continue to monitor funding decisions, provide clarification on construction timelines, and assess budget allocations to ensure transparency and alignment with community needs.

### **Monitoring & accountability**

Concerns were raised regarding the lack of regular updates on restoration efforts and the accessibility of monitoring reports. Some committee members expressed frustration over the unclear process for obtaining public access to project outcome data. There is a strong desire among

members for increased transparency in how funds are allocated and how restoration success is measured.

### **FUTURE OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

A discussion ensued regarding the long-term role of the advisory committee, particularly once the trust fund is depleted. Questions remain about whether the committee will continue to operate in an advisory capacity or whether Metro's land management improvements will reduce the need for its oversight. Further clarification is needed on this matter to determine the committee's future role and responsibilities.

### **Interim vs. final master plan**

Concerns were voiced about the future of the Master Plan. There were questions regarding whether Metro is actively working towards a final Master Plan or if the interim plan will remain in place indefinitely. Jonathan clarified that, for now, the interim plan remains in effect until it is formally replaced.

### **Committee influence & metro's responsiveness**

Committee members expressed frustration over Metro's delayed responses to their input. Concerns were raised about the transparency of financial expenditures and the effectiveness of restoration efforts. The committee seeks a stronger role in influencing Metro's decision-making process to ensure that their recommendations and concerns are adequately addressed.

### **Volunteer opportunities & community engagement**

Several members expressed interest in direct involvement with restoration efforts. The discussion centered on whether Metro should take a more active role in facilitating engagement or if individuals should take the initiative independently. Troy emphasized the importance of proactive solutions and the need for community-driven action rather than solely identifying problems.

### **Public awareness & usage of smith & bybee lakes**

Concerns were raised about the lack of community awareness and engagement regarding Smith & Bybee Lakes. Metro representatives noted that they currently do not have recent data on trail usage but indicated that they may consult with other teams to gather relevant information.

### **GOALS FOR NEXT MEETING AND WRAP-UP**

- A copy of the prior bylaws draft will be distributed to all committee members before the next meeting to ensure they have the necessary context for upcoming discussions.
- Jonathan will follow up with Metro leadership to clarify the committee's long-term role and whether its advisory capacity will continue beyond the depletion of the trust fund.
- Committee members will individually reflect on their role and contributions to better define their collective purpose moving forward.
- A small group of volunteers will be formed to review and refine key elements of the bylaws.
- A formal inquiry will be drafted and submitted to Metro requesting clarity on the committee's influence in decision-making processes.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

