



Metro

600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736

Agenda

Meeting: Smith and Bybee Wetlands Advisory Committee
Date: Tuesday, September 24, 2024
Time: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Place: Zoom

5:30 p.m.	Welcome and introductions	All
5:35 p.m.	Approve March 2024 meeting minutes	Eric Stern
5:40 p.m.	Planning projects update	Eeshoo Rehani, Jennifer D'Avanzo
6:10 p.m.	Community Education and Stewardship Program Plan	Vanessa Pacheco
6:40 p.m.	Break	Presenter
6:45 p.m.	Conservation projects updates	Andrea Berkley
7:10 p.m.	Open floor additional news and updates	All
7:20	Goals and next meeting agenda	All
7:30 p.m.	Adjourn	

Upcoming SBWAC meetings:

Tuesday, November 19, 2024 on Zoom

For agenda/schedule information, contact Jonathan Soll at jonathan.soll@oregonmetro.gov.

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Meeting summary

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Advisory Committee

September 24, 2024

Committee members in attendance

- Carrie Butler Port of Portland
- Eric Stern Friends of Smith and Bybee Lakes
- Jonathan Soll Metro
- Pat Jewett 40-Mile Loop Trust
- Eugenia Tam North Portland Neighbors

Committee members not in attendance

- Troy Clark Oregon Bird Alliance
- Daryl Houtman City of Portland, Bureau of Environmental Services
- Ariana Scipioni Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Others in attendance

- Vanessa Pacheco Metro
- Andrea Berkley Metro
- Jennifer D’ Avanzo..... Metro
- Eeshoo Rehani..... Metro
- Sofia Bermudez-Eredia..... Metro

WELCOME

The March 2024 meeting minutes were approved.

PLANNING PROJECTS UPDATE EESHOO REHANI

The meeting update from Eeshoo focused on a range of concerns and developments. Geotechnical engineers raised issues about potential strain on the landfill's membrane in the area designated for an overlook. This area is a critical part of the site’s future design, and the engineers are currently conducting further testing and computer modeling to determine the exact extent of the problem. The goal is to assess whether the membrane is strong enough to support additional load or if modifications to the preload design will be necessary. The timeline for receiving the results of these studies is expected to be about a month to a month and a half. Once this information is in, the design team will determine the next steps, including whether changes need to be made to the preload plan.

Land use approval and permitting process

Eeshoo's team has obtained land use approval from the City of Portland, a crucial step in the overall permitting process. This approval allows them to move forward with the submission of a 1200C permit to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), which is mandatory for any project disturbing more than one acre of land. The 1200C permit approval process typically takes about 3-4 months, and during this period, other parts of the project will proceed, particularly the preload design. After this design is finalized, the team will apply for grading permits from the city, which are necessary before significant site work can begin.

Site Security challenges and WPES involvement

Site security has also emerged as a pressing issue, particularly after recent incidents involving homeless encampments on the landfill property. These encampments have raised concerns about safety and access to the site. In response, WPES (Waste Prevention and Environmental Services) has prioritized site security measures, working closely with local authorities to enhance safety protocols. The project team is also collaborating with KPFF Consulting Engineers to analyze the condition of the slough bridge, which is critical for access to parts of the site. The goal is to complete any necessary restoration work during the dry season, which typically spans September and October in 2025, minimizing the impact on construction timelines.

Regarding the bridge over Columbia Blvd., the design contract is currently under review by the Department of Justice. This review is a key step before final approval, and once granted, the project can move forward. In addition to the design contract, discussions are ongoing about a three-agency agreement involving Portland Parks and Recreation, Metro Parks, and other governmental bodies. This agreement is essential to ensure that all agencies involved are aligned on the project's goals.

PLANNING PROJECTS UPDATES FROM JENNIFER D'AVANZO

Jennifer provided an update on the ongoing progress of the Willamette Cove master plan, which is currently in phase two. This project focuses on the long-term development of the park and its associated remediation efforts. Collaborations with six tribes have played a key role in shaping the direction of the plan, and community engagement has been a top priority throughout the process.

Community Engagement and design alternatives

To ensure that the community's voice is heard, the planning team has gathered over 2,200 survey responses from residents. These responses are being used to evaluate three different design alternatives for the park. As part of this phase, the team is also working closely with engineering groups responsible for the site's cleanup to ensure that the park designs meet both environmental and safety standards.

Upcoming open house and survey

An important milestone in the planning process is an open house scheduled for October 26. This event will give the public an opportunity to review the proposed designs and offer additional feedback. Following the open house, another survey will be distributed to gather further input, specifically from North Portland residents.

Timeline for final master plan

The team anticipates having the final master plan ready by the fall of 2025. Once the plan is completed and approved, the next phases will include design, engineering, and obtaining the necessary permits to move forward with the park's development.

North Portland Greenway Trail integration

In addition to park development, Willamette Cove will also feature a segment of the North Portland Greenway Trail. However, the exact alignment of this trail is still under discussion. Input is being gathered from stakeholders and the community to ensure that the placement of the trail meets the needs of all parties involved.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Vanessa Pacheco provided an update on the Community Education and Stewardship (CES) team, highlighting its essential role in fostering community engagement in environmental stewardship efforts. The team has been busy over the past months, hosting a total of 21 events at Smith and Bybee that encompass a variety of activities such as turtle talks, mushroom hikes and park educator shifts.

About the CES program

The events organized by CES range from habitat restoration projects to educational field trips for students, as well as community gatherings. These activities are designed to provide hands-on experiences that encourage participants to connect with and learn about their local ecosystems.

CES target communities

A key aspect of CES's outreach is its focus on historically marginalized communities, including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), LGBTQ+ individuals, low-income groups, immigrants, refugees, and people with disabilities. By actively involving these communities in environmental work, CES seeks to foster a deeper connection to local ecosystems. Through its initiatives, CES aims to empower individuals from these communities to take active roles in conservation efforts. By promoting hands-on participation, the team hopes to inspire a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the environment, ultimately contributing to long-term stewardship.

CONSERVATION PROJECT UPDATES

In the September meeting, the conservation program will present a "State of the Wetlands" report, summarizing the year's updates and previewing upcoming projects for 2025. This will include recent seasonal developments from 2024, such as the winter completion of the sheet pile wall project at the water control structure. The installation of 206 linear feet of plastic panels is crucial for protecting the structure, wetlands, and surrounding land from erosion.

Tours and engagement

In 2024, the committee hosted multiple tours of the prairie and wetlands, including those for new employee cohorts, advisory committees, and the County Cooperative Weed Management Agency. These tours provided valuable engagement opportunities to showcase the work happening in the area.

Staff planning retreat

A spring staff retreat brought together conservation, science, and land management teams to discuss ecology, water management, and land management challenges at Smith and Bybee. As new complexities such as climate events and invasive species emerge, the teams are reconsidering strategies for managing this large and complex site. Water management was a major focus due to its critical role in supporting conservation targets and mitigating various site challenges.

Water management challenges

The staff retreat discussions highlighted the need to reassess the water management strategy at Smith and Bybee, which has been effective but now faces new challenges. Water management impacts key site issues such as invasive species, woody plant community shifts, and fish and bird populations. Adjustments may be necessary to adapt to factors like climate change and Oregon ash die-offs.

Turtle nesting survey

In the summer of 2024, a survey of turtle nests found that turtles are nesting in more areas than expected, though many nests were depredated by predators. This discovery is crucial for understanding where turtles are attempting to nest and suggests the need for conservation efforts to enhance these nesting areas.

Weed management and future plans

Weed management remains a challenge, with rising costs and increasing difficulty controlling aquatic invasives. However, a new chemical mix introduced in 2023 has proven effective. The team is also exploring alternative methods to reduce herbicide reliance and plans to improve monitoring efforts for more accurate effectiveness data.

ST. JOHNS PRAIRIE PLANNING UPDATE

Upcoming winter projects include the final phase of the St. John's Prairie restoration, avian botulism checks, and ongoing nutria control. Additional activities involve a power line upgrade project by Bonneville Power Administration at the landfill. The team will also continue exploring new ideas for water management while maintaining the current cycle.

Looking ahead to 2025

In 2025, the team will explore new water management strategies, secure funding for aquatic invasive work, and create a written plan for adapting to emerald ash borer threats. Other initiatives include enhancing turtle nesting areas by removing blackberry and cottonwood sprouts and collaborating with Pacific Power on a tower replacement project to reduce vegetation trimming and improve infrastructure longevity.

GOALS FOR NEXT MEETING AND WRAP-UP

- Updating the bylaws is a top priority, as is finalizing a communication plan that will help streamline information sharing across all parties involved in the project.
- Recruiting more folks, we have many positions open on the committee.
- The committee is preparing for a budget discussion scheduled for November, which will focus on funding for ongoing conservation projects at Smith and Bybee Wetlands.
- Ongoing security concerns and challenges related to site access remain a pressing issue that the team will continue to address as the project moves forward,

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.