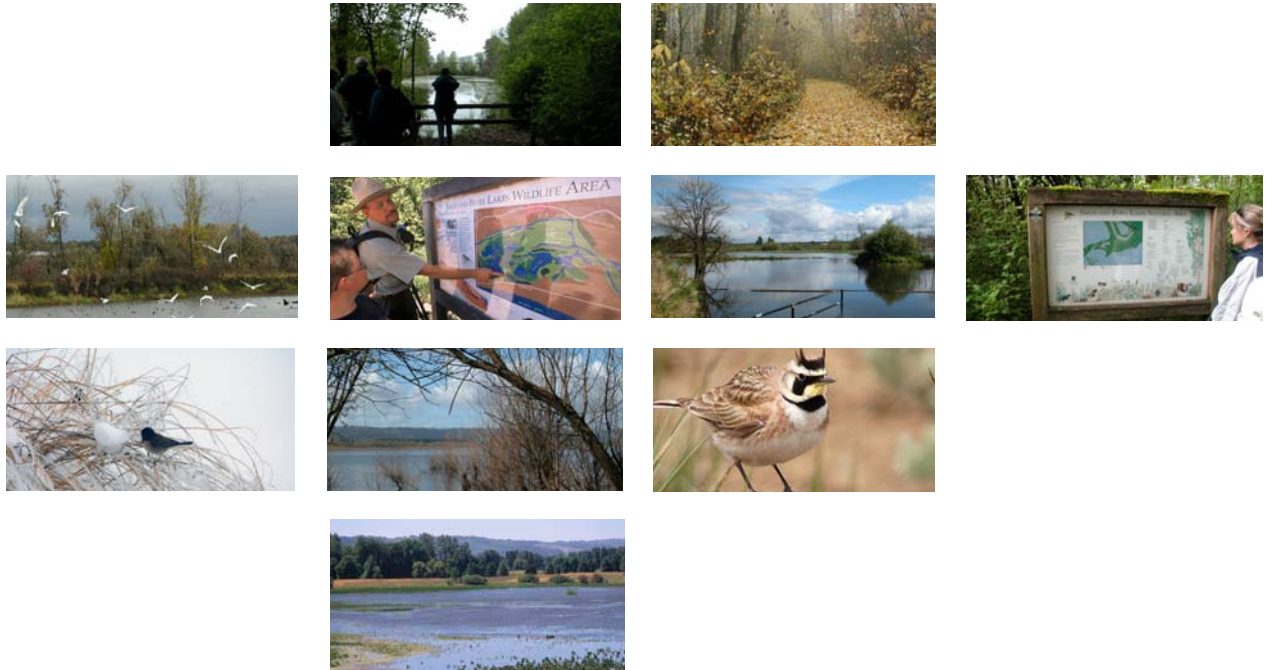


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area Comprehensive Natural Resource Management Plan



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Introduction

At nearly 2,000 acres, Metro's Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area is one of the largest protected wetlands within an American city and one of the region's best-kept secrets. Surrounded on all sides by industrial development, it provides essential habitat for rare plants and a suite of wildlife, from sensitive species such as the Western painted turtle, bald eagle and migrating songbirds, to ubiquitous species such as raccoons, striped skunks and robins. Pulses of wildlife enter and exit as the seasons and water levels change over the course of the year.



The management area is bounded by North Portland Road, Columbia Slough and the Rivergate Industrial District. The project area also includes Columbia Slough, the Ramsey Lake wetland mitigation area and the St. Johns Landfill. The Smith and Bybee Wetlands Comprehensive Natural Resource Management Plan is a tool for protecting and enhancing this area. First developed in 1988 (adopted in 1990), the original plan implemented a management framework, provided the funding and instituted the processes needed to begin restoration of the wetlands. The 1990 plan was first developed through a consensus of property owners,



neighborhood organizations and residents, environmental interest groups and governmental agencies. The common vision shared by this diverse group included a natural area reserved for fish and wildlife habitat and no-impact or low-impact recreational use. The adoption of the 1990 plan was a binding document that:

- preserved Smith and Bybee Wetlands and incorporated the landfill into the management area
- formed the Smith and Bybee Lakes Advisory Committee to coordinate the vision with landowners and the community
- opened the door for Metro's role as owner and land manager
- approved the use of the landfill's "end use fund" for the entire management area
- established a vision for the area and a set of initial policies and actions.

The Comprehensive Natural Resource Management Plan is a new vision. It builds on the legacy of the past 20 years, with an emphasis on the restoration of wildlife habitat. The plan also recognizes the importance of integrating human experiences in the Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area. Through these experiences, the area will continue to garner support and provide educational assets within an urban setting.

Goal and objectives

The goal of the comprehensive natural resource plan is to describe a course of action that will protect and enhance the area as an environmental and recreational resource for the region. The area will be maintained and enhanced, to the extent possible, in a manner that is faithful to the original natural condition. Upland habitats of the St. Johns Landfill will be functionally linked to the wetlands area, adding diverse habitats that support a greater assemblage of wildlife. Only those recreational uses that are compatible with environmental objectives of the plan will be encouraged. Smith Lake and adjacent uplands will be the principal location for recreational activities. Bybee Lake will be less accessible. Its primary use will be as an environmental preserve. The development of this plan involved many people. Special effort was made by the Smith and Bybee Wetlands Advisory Committee. They set the course for the next steps over ten years to include:



- restoration of seven significant conservation target areas
- construction of the regional trail and bridge around St. Johns Landfill
- leveraging the Wetlands Fund with substantial grants to accomplish the goals of the plan
- continuing the strong partnership with St. Johns Landfill in the transformation from landfill to upland prairie.

Development of the plan



The planning process began in the summer of 2009 with a discussion of key topics and identification of who should be involved. The Smith and Bybee Advisory Committee provided the forum and direction for the planning process. Meetings were open to the public and a comprehensive selection of interested stakeholders were invited. Meetings were held approximately every other month through May 2011. A public open house and landfill tour was held in October 2010 and presentations were made to interested organizations throughout the planning process.



The process was based on a two-tiered approach to improve conservation and integrate meaningful human experiences through physical and visual access. The plan recognizes that the conservation of species, habitat and natural features must occur simultaneously with the provision for human access to these natural systems. Education and exposure are the cornerstones for protecting the natural area for decades to come. This two-tiered approach also recognized that conservation and access have different stakeholders, different funding sources and different strategic approaches.

Along with the technical discussions around conservation and recreation, the committee viewed and revised the management plan for the wetlands. In 1990 there were multiple landowners and the designated manager, Metro, had no experience managing natural areas. After 20 years, the projects in the plan have either been accomplished or were found unfeasible and the document no longer provides relevant guidance. A time-consuming legislative action is required to modify the 1990 plan. The 2011 Comprehensive Natural Resource Management Plan is adopted through a land use process and will be easier to keep current.

The plan is anticipated to be in effect for the next ten years during which actions and strategies will be carried out, measured and evaluated.

Conservation

Conservation targets are species, communities or ecosystems that, when conserved, ensure the protection of all native biodiversity at a site. They reflect local and regional conservation goals, and are viable or at least feasibly restorable. The complexity of habitats and species at Smith Bybee Wetlands can be characterized in many different ways at varying levels of details. In order to be manageable, seven targets were identified. Each habitat includes numerous species that depend on the health of the target. The conservation targets identified in the plan include upland prairie, emergent wetlands and open water, shrub wetlands, bottomland hardwood forests, riparian forests, and the Western painted turtle and streaked horned lark.

Key ecological attributes are used to measure the health or viability of the conservation targets.

They are:

- aspects of a target’s biology or ecology that, if missing or altered, would lead to the loss of that target over time
- the biological or ecological components that most clearly define or characterize the conservation target, limit its distribution, or determine its variation over space and time
- the most critical components of biological composition, structure, interactions and processes, and landscape configuration that sustain a target’s viability or ecological integrity.

The condition of the conservation targets was evaluated and approximately 1,134 acres were found to be in good condition. 720 acres were found to be in fair or poor condition. Based on this assessment, priorities were established for the next ten years. Priority one are actions that provide significant ecologic, education or visitor benefits. These priorities will be implemented in the first five years of the plan. Priority two are actions that are important and will be implemented during the second five years of the plan. The third level of priorities are unlikely to occur during the ten-year time frame of the plan.

Conservation target	GOOD OR VERY GOOD CONDITION		POOR OR FAIR CONDITION	
	Acreage	Number of units	Acreage	Number of units
Open water/emergent wetland	778.5	14	45.2	13
Shrub wetland	177.6	13	185.6	14
Bottomland forest	0.0	0	259.9	13
Riparian forest	159.8	19	15.6	6
Upland prairie	18.1	6	213.5	2
Totals	1,134.0	52	719.8	48

Recreation and access

The opportunities for people to experience this rare remnant of the Columbia River and slough wetland system are limited but important. A goal of the plan is to create and maintain a delicate balance between increasing wildlife protection and providing opportunities for human interaction with nature. Proposed links and improvements to physical access at Smith and Bybee Wetlands are grouped into several major topic areas: the Interlakes Trail, viewing platforms, the 40-Mile Loop Trail at St. Johns Landfill, the development of viewpoints and a portage at the water control structure. The next ten years will bring a change in people's interaction with Smith and Bybee Wetlands.

The Intertwine at St. Johns Landfill

The Intertwine is the region's network of parks, trails and natural areas. One of the most exciting aspects of the plan is the development of a trail system with new access to Smith and Bybee Wetlands. With the creation of links to the 40-Mile Loop Trail and the North Portland Greenway Trail, the trail at the St. Johns Landfill will attract more people to and through the area. People from North Portland neighborhoods, as well as from neighborhoods with access to the regional trail system, will benefit from the healthy exercise and experience of nature at Smith and Bybee Wetlands. The trail will provide bicyclists, hikers, joggers and nature enthusiasts continuous, non-motorized access within the site with unmatched views from the St. Johns Landfill to the wetlands.



Monitoring

Monitoring at Smith and Bybee Wetlands is an integral part of an adaptive management approach to restoration and maintenance. Based on a plan developed by Metro, a feedback loop is created between monitoring and management decisions. Monitoring is done to evaluate habitat and population responses to management actions, as well as progress toward achieving objectives.

Funding

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area has a somewhat unusual arrangement of a dedicated endowment fund. The fund was established with the City of Portland's adoption of the St. Johns Landfill End Use Plan in 1987. Sources of income for the fund included a grant from the City of Portland's Refuse Disposal Fund, a portion of tipping fees collected by Metro at the St. Johns Landfill and Metro lease payments to the City of Portland.

The general practice has been to expend the interest on the fund and not touch the principal. Typical expenses include staff salaries and contract property services for restoration activities. In recent years the interest has not yielded sufficient funds to cover these expenses. The 2011 plan calls for higher levels of investment in both restoration and recreation projects. This approach was developed by Metro and the advisory committee and includes five key strategies.



The general approach for funding includes five key strategies

- Use the fund to attract significant grants over the next ten years. The aspiration for restoration is to match the fund one-to-one with grants. For recreation, the aspiration is to contribute to a match for the regional trail and other access-related projects.
- Bring additional resources to the project work. It is anticipated that the landfill fund will substantially contribute to restoration.
- Draw down the fund to achieve high priority goals of the plan. Bring the proposed project work and budget to the advisory committee annually for review and recommendations.
- Continue to fund the basic staff positions needed to manage the day-to-day work, as well as the restoration of Smith and Bybee Wetlands.
- Enlist the advisory committee's support for leveraging funds through grants.



Realization of the Comprehensive Natural Resource Management Plan's priorities relies on strong coordination between the advisory committee, regional partners, the community and Metro. The policies adopted here will help facilitate that coordination and be drawn upon as unexpected circumstances arise. The expectations in this plan are high. To fulfill those expectations, more targeted investment is needed.

To review the complete Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area Comprehensive Natural Resource Management Plan go to www.oregonmetro.gov/smithbyeeupdate.

For more information

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SMITH AND BYBEE WETLANDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Committee met regularly and made content decisions about the plan development process.

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CITY OF PORTLAND

The change from NRMP to CNRP was facilitated by Chris Scarzello and Roberta Jortner, City of Portland.

To volunteer at Smith and Bybee Wetlands or sponsor a work party, contact Metro at 503-797-1890 or parkvol@oregonmetro.gov.