

MITIGATED DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE

Description of proposal: Construction of a 150 foot boardwalk that will cross over a shallow permanent pond in Two Rivers Park.

Proponent: Benton County Parks Department
c/o Adam Fyall
Sustainable Development Coordinator
7122 West Okanogan Place
Kennewick, WA 99336

File No. EA 2014-030

Location of proposal: The location is Two Rivers Park on the Columbia River in the Southeast Quarter of Section 10, Township 8 North, Range 30 East, W.M.

Lead agency **BENTON COUNTY**

This MDNS is issued under WAC 197-11-340(2); no additional comments are being requested. The mitigation measures are as follows:

Introduction

In its 14 January 2015 letter to the Benton County Planning Department regarding the Nature Trail boardwalk proposed for Two Rivers Park in Finley, the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) noted that a boardwalk over and through a wetland is considered to be "fill" of said wetland, and is therefore subject to mitigation of adverse impacts. It was requested that the project sponsor – Benton County Parks Department (Parks) – propose a plan for mitigation, which follows.

Below, Parks has outlined three categories for work that it commits to complete for mitigating the effects of the boardwalk project. Restoration work will begin Fall 2015, with active monitoring, maintenance, and replacement continuing for five years hence. The educational elements will be completed within one year of finishing the work on the boardwalk. The County will work with any other parties or experts on the mitigation work that would be recommended to in order to improve or modify the work going forward.

Education & Interpretation

The primary and essential goal for this project is to simply connect dry ground with dry ground by means of a boardwalk between the existing Nature Trail and an existing primitive scratch trail out along the shoreline. Secondly, there is an opportunity for wildlife/wetland observation and interpretation.

Both Ecology and the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) have suggested that the addition of interpretive signage could enhance the project and benefit the visiting public. The Corps, as the landowner, has indicated that they would want to review any proposed signage or brochures before they were finalized.

Action: Parks will place 2 interpretive signs in the immediate boardwalk project area, with 2 to 4 more relevant signs elsewhere within the Nature Trail complex, all of the same style and following a fluid, linear narrative. Parks will develop the concepts with local experts and submit drafts for Ecology and Corps review. Installation will be in accordance with Corps regulations.

Invasive Species

Generally speaking, the project site has not been substantively compromised by invasive, non-native plant species. There are blackberry infestations in other parts of the Natural Area, but not in the immediate environs of the project site; and there has also been an occurrence of Ravenna grass near the project site (sourced from a neighbor), which has been addressed. Parks already has an ongoing weed monitoring program, with the greatest emphasis placed on control and eradication of species that are on the County's annually updated noxious weed list.

Ecology has recommended that Parks monitor for invasive species at the project site and control as needed. Specifically, we are aware that common reed grass (*Phragmites australis*) has made inroads into the Tri-Cities area and is a species of concern. We are not aware of any instances of this species occurring currently in Two Rivers Park.

Action: Parks provided additional training in 2015 to its park ranger who is assigned to Two Rivers Park, and will make monitoring of the project site for incursions of non-native species – and particularly common reed grass – a high priority.

Restoration

The project site (200-foot radius) is in good ecological condition, does not require remediation, and is not a priority location for further restoration effort. The pond, marsh, and associated uplands are high-functioning and not in need of further plantings or other corrective actions.

In lieu of mitigation actions in the immediate vicinity of the project site, there are two other locations at opposite ends of Two Rivers Park where Parks will do mitigation work as a part of this project. Parks will use one of the contractors that it has used in the past on similar projects, each of which has fluency in this area (Wildlands of Richland or BFI Native Seeds of Moses Lake):

- North End – There is a low area, currently landscaped with lawn, that is always wet and that has been under consideration for reversion to marsh/wetland for several years.
- East End – Beyond the Boat Launch is about ½-acre of property consisting of low-functioning shrub-steppe, below which is a short bluff and about 200 feet of degraded shoreline.

Action: Parks will establish marsh at North End of park (1/10-acre) by ceasing to mow the area and by...

- *Planting 20 coyote willow whips, spacing/grouping as advised by contractor.*
- *Planting 10 additional low-growing native shrubs by plug or rootstock such as currant or red osier dogwood, spacing/grouping as advised by contractor (Parks does not want tall shrubs/trees in this area due to its location in the park).*

Goal: 80% survival across all plants at Year Five.

Action: Parks will restore flagging upland shrub-steppe area in East End of the park (1/8-acre) by...

- *Planting 20 big sagebrush, spacing/grouping as advised by contractor.*
- *Planting 10 gray rabbitbrush, spacing/grouping as advised by contractor.*
- *Planting 10 balsamroot, spacing/grouping as advised by contractor.*
- *Planting 10 orange globemallow, spacing/grouping as advised by contractor.*
- *Planting 25 basin wild rye, spacing/grouping as advised by contractor.*
- *Seeding with 10 pounds of native grasses/forbs mix as advised by contractor.*

Goal: 75% survival of shrubs, 50% survival of forbs, 75% survival of grasses at Year Five.

Action: Parks will restore degraded shoreline area in East End of the park (200 linear feet) by...

- *Planting 10 cottonwood trees, spacing/grouping as advised by contractor.*
- *Planting 10 smooth sumac trees, spacing/grouping as advised by contractor.*
- *Planting 20 coyote willow whips, spacing/grouping as advised by contractor.*
- *Planting 20 other intermediate shrubs as advised by contractor.*

Goal: 80% survival of each species group after Year Five.

Maintenance

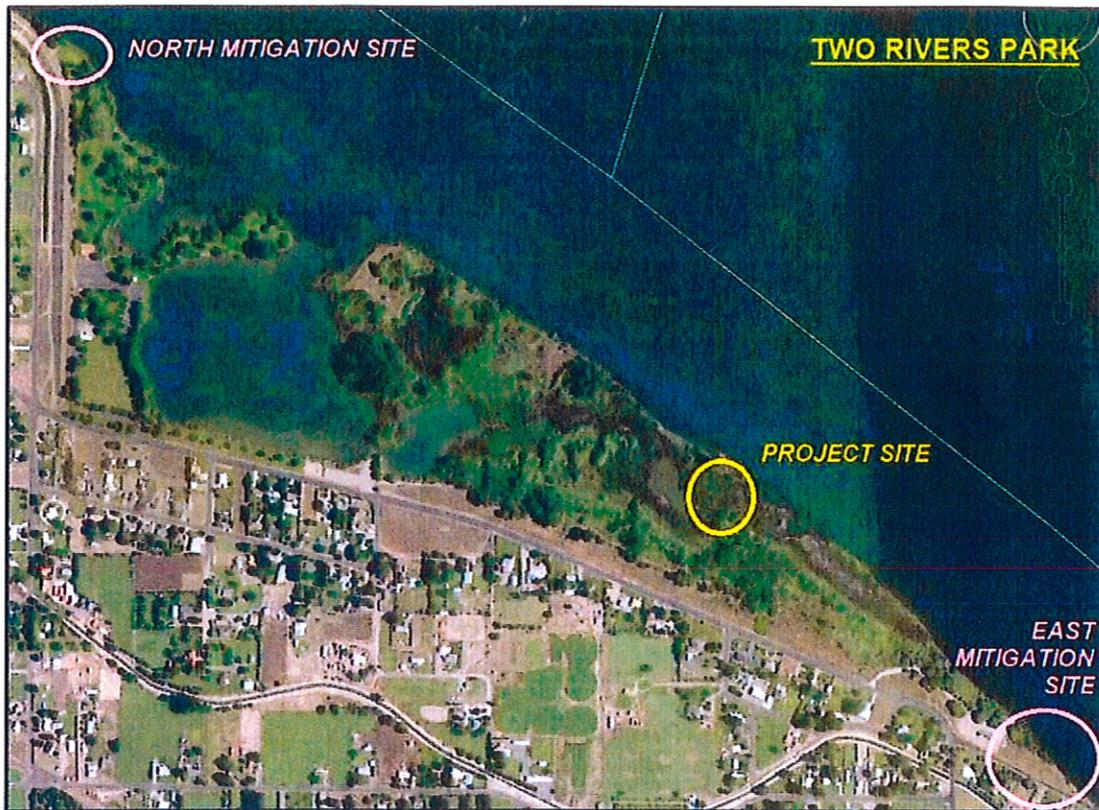
- Trees planted in the riparian area will be accompanied by “beaver guards” that will be maintained for the five years of the restoration project while the trees grow and gain stature. After the five years the guarding will be removed and nature allowed to take its course.
- Shrubs planted in the upland area will be accompanied by watering tubes and will be watered regularly by Parks staff for at least the first summer after planting.

Monitoring & Reporting

Benton County benefits from having a full-time employee assigned to Two Rivers Park throughout the year. The park ranger will be able to monitor on a regular basis for the incursion of weeds or damages to the project site and mitigation areas.

Parks will also do a regular inventory and assessment of the mitigation areas specific to the restoration efforts (survivorship of plantings and overall health of the area). A written monitoring assessment will be prepared in January of each year for five consecutive years, beginning in 2016, and submitted to the Benton County Planning Department, the Department of Ecology, and the Corps of Engineers for review and comment. The report will summarize the overall condition of the restoration sites, and specifically describe observed survival rates for planted plants, as well as measures taken and to be taken by Parks to pursue success at year-five if plants have died along the way.

Figure 1— Location of mitigation sites within Two Rivers Park. The sites are 1.3 miles from each other.



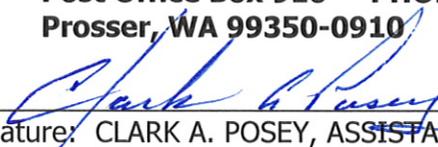
Substantive authority to require mitigation is derived from WAC 197-11-660, Benton County Code, Chapter 6.35.120. The decision was made after review of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the lead agency. This information is available to the public on request.

This mitigated determination of nonsignificance is issued under WAC 197.11.350(3); the lead agency will not act on this proposal for fourteen (14) days from the date below. Comments must be submitted by: **March 25, 2015.**

Responsible Official

MICHAEL E. SHUTTLEWORTH, PLANNING MANAGER
Benton County Planning Dept.
Post Office Box 910 PHONE: (509) 786-5612
Prosser, WA 99350-0910 (509) 736-3086

Date **March 11, 2015**

Signature:  CLARK A. POSEY, ASSISTANT PLANNING MANAGER

You may appeal this determination to Michael E. Shuttleworth – Planning Manager – P O Box 910 – Prosser, WA 99350, no later than March 25, 2015 by written notice. You should be prepared to make specific factual objections. Contact the Benton County Planning Department to read or ask about the procedures for SEPA appeals.

Agencies:

Applicant
News Media
Benton County Building Department
Benton County Fire Marshal
Department of Natural Resources/Shorelands Division/Olympia/Ellensburg
Benton Clean Air Authority
Benton County Engineer
Benton Franklin Health District
Columbia Irrigation District
Department of Transportation
Washington State Department of Health
Department of Ecology – Shorelands Division/Olympia/Yakima
Corps of Engineers
Fire District 1
Department of Fish/Wildlife
Bureau of Reclamation
Bureau of Land Management
Office of Archaeology/Historic Preservation
Futurewise
FEMA
Yakama Indian Nation
Umatilla Tribe