

BEFORE THE METRO COUNCIL

FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPROVING) RESOLUTION NO. 96-2358
A REFINEMENT PLAN FOR THE)
SANDY RIVER GORGE TARGET AREA) Introduced by Mike Burton
AS OUTLINED IN THE OPEN SPACE) Executive Officer
IMPLEMENTATION WORK PLAN)

WHEREAS, in July 1992, Metro completed the Metropolitan Greenspaces Master Plan which identified a desired system of natural areas interconnected with greenways and trails; and

WHEREAS, at the election held on May 16, 1995, the electors of Metro approved Ballot Measure 26-26 which authorizes Metro to issue \$135.6 million in general obligation bonds to finance land acquisition and capital improvements pursuant to Metro's Open Spaces Program; and

WHEREAS, the Sandy River Gorge was designated as a greenspace of regional significance in the Greenspaces Master Plan and identified as a regional target area in the Open Space, Parks and Streams Bond Measure; and

WHEREAS, in November 1995, the Metro Council adopted the Open Space Implementation Work Plan, which calls for a public "refinement" process whereby Metro adopts a Refinement Plan including objectives and a confidential tax-lot-specific map identifying priority properties for acquisition; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 95-2228^A authorizes the Executive Officer to purchase property with accepted acquisition guidelines as outlined in the Open Space Implementation Work Plan, now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED,

That the Metro Council adopts the Sandy River Gorge Refinement Plan, consisting of objectives and a confidential tax-lot-specific map identifying priority properties for acquisition, authorizing the Executive Officer to begin the acquisition of property and property rights as detailed in the Open Space Implementation Work Plan adopted in November, 1995 and in Resolution No. 95-2228^A.

ADOPTED by Metro Council this 11th day of July, 1996.



Jon Kvistad, Presiding Officer

Approved as to Form:



Daniel B. Cooper, General Counsel

Staff Report

CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 96-2358 FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPROVING A REFINEMENT PLAN FOR THE SANDY RIVER GORGE TARGET AREA AS OUTLINED IN THE OPEN SPACE IMPLEMENTATION WORK PLAN.

Date: June 26, 1996

**Presented by: Charles Ciecko
Jim Desmond**

PROPOSED ACTION

Resolution No. 96-2358, requests the adoption of a refinement plan and target area boundaries and objectives for the Sandy River Gorge Target Area. These boundaries and objectives will be used to guide Metro in the implementation of the Open Spaces Bond Measure.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

The Target Area description in the Bond Measure Fact Sheet (authorized by Council Resolutions 95-2113, 94-2050 and 94-2029B) is as follows:

"Acquire 808 acres along river for fish, wildlife, and water quality protection."

In the 1992 Greenspaces Master Plan, the Sandy River Gorge area is described as follows:

"Sandy River Gorge (Sandy River watershed). "Important wildlife habitat (elk, bear, deer, coyote, beaver, osprey, bald eagle, noted for native salmon and steelhead populations). Adjoins Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and extends scenic waterway systems."

"Sandy River Tributaries (Sandy River watershed). Would add important riparian and forest habitat for fish and wildlife, including steelhead, trout and salmon. Would provide critical ecological linkage between Mt. Hood and Columbia River."

Target Area Description

The Sandy River originates on Mount Hood and flows 55 miles northwest to the Columbia River, defining the eastern edge of the Portland metropolitan area. The Sandy River Gorge is a 12.5 mile stretch of the Sandy River which runs from Dodge Park on the south downstream to the Stark Street Bridge on the north. The gorge ends about six miles from the river's confluence with the Columbia River.

The Sandy River Gorge is a spectacular waterway, cutting through 800-foot-tall basalt and sandstone cliffs as it meanders toward the Columbia River. Above the bluffs on either side of the river is a mosaic of private and public forest land and agricultural tracts. The whitewater river passes through riparian woodlands, sand bars and old growth forests once common in lower elevations west of the Cascade Mountains. As the gorge cliffs recede, the river meanders through two large "oxbows" and begins to widen, slow and become more shallow.

The river provides excellent habitat for anadromous fish, including fall chinook salmon, steelhead, coho salmon and spring chinook salmon. Other wildlife frequenting the river corridor include osprey, bald eagle, elk, deer, bear and cougar. Vegetation consists of deciduous riparian species along the river (black cottonwood, big-leaf maple, willow, red alder) and upland coniferous forests up to the gorge rim (douglas fir, western red cedar, western hemlock). Although there are two substantial tracts of old growth douglas fir forest in the gorge, the majority of the forest is second growth between 50 and 100 years in age. Several important tributaries flow into the gorge, including the Bull Run River, Gordon Creek, Buck Creek and Trout Creek.

The Sandy River Gorge is designated both a State Scenic Waterway and a National Wild and Scenic River. The national designation makes a distinction between scenic and recreational segments, the former of which is afforded a higher degree of protection. The scenic section comprises the upper third of the gorge to about 1/4 mile north of Indian John Island. The recreational segment comprises the balance of the gorge. The Sandy Wild and Scenic River and State Scenic Waterway Management Plan, developed jointly in 1993 by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and Clackamas and Multnomah counties, delineates performance standards for development along the river. The upper two miles of the wild and scenic river lie within Clackamas County. The remaining 10.5 miles, from above Indian John Island to the Stark Street Bridge, are within Multnomah County. The management plan identifies "Outstanding Remarkable Values" found in the Sandy River Gorge, which include: recreation, geology, wildlife, water quality, scenery, anadromous sport fishery and botany/ecology.

The majority of the Sandy River Gorge appears natural and primitive. Between Oxbow Regional Park and Dodge Park, much of the land on either side of the river is in either public or Nature Conservancy ownership. Development is not readily apparent. Between Oxbow Regional Park and the Stark Street Bridge, most of the land is in private ownership. Development in this section is infrequent and largely located on the gorge rim. Development pressure is greatest in the lower segment of the river. Despite the state and federal designations, natural resources such as timber are subject to exploitation. The lower segment of the river also contains an "exhumed forest," remnants of trees buried in a mudflow caused by the last recorded eruption of Mt. Hood nearly 200 years ago.

Refinement Process

The Open Space Implementation Work Plan, adopted by the Metro Council in November 1995, required that a Refinement Plan be submitted to the Council for approval for each target area. The Refinement Plan will contain objectives and a confidential tax-lot-specific map identifying priority properties for acquisition, enabling Metro to begin the acquisition of property and property rights as detailed in the Open Space Implementation Work Plan and in Resolution No. 95-2228. Resolution No. 95-2228 "authorizes the Executive Officer to acquire real property and property interests subject to the requirements of the Acquisition Parameters and Due Diligence guidelines of the Open Space Implementation Work Plan." The resolution also provides for the acquisition of land prior to completion of the Refinement Plan. This Early Acquisition process may be employed when an opportunity to purchase a unique parcel of land would be lost due to lack of an adopted refinement plan.

Under this provision, two parcels have been purchased. The first parcel contains 30 acres and is located on the Sandy River abutting Oxbow Regional Park. The property was determined to

be important because of its scenic, water quality protection and habitat values. The acquisition expands the land base of Oxbow Regional Park, protects views from the park and protects the water quality of Buck Creek and Gordon Creek. The second property consists of 148.5 acres and spans both sides of the Sandy River for more than one-half mile. It contains primarily steep timbered slopes with a small hay field and an older residence located some distance from the river. It was determined to be important because of its scenic, water quality and habitat values. The ordinance and supporting information regarding these purchases is attached.

The scope of the Sandy River Gorge is well defined and established because of the previous planning and acquisition efforts of the state of Oregon, Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, Multnomah County and others. The thrust of this refinement process is to compliment and enhance the adopted management plan for the resource.

During the refinement process, available information about the target area was compiled, maps were analyzed and biological field visits were conducted. Individuals were interviewed representing various governmental agencies, property owners, interested friends groups, and natural resource experts. The key issues regarding land acquisition are summarized in Appendix A.

General objectives to guide Metro's land acquisition efforts throughout the target area include:

- Protect riparian and forest habitat for fish and wildlife along the Sandy River and its tributaries.
- Protect viewsheds within Sandy River Gorge.
- Complement implementation of the adopted management plan for the Sandy River Scenic Waterway.
- Protect biological linkages between the gorge and Mt. Hood National Forest.

Regional Parks and Greenspaces Advisory Committee

A presentation of the staff report was given by Metro staff at a public meeting at the Metro Regional Center on June 18, 1996. The advisory committee voted to recommend adoption of the objectives with two amendments. The amendments recommend:

1. The objective of "purchasing property interests to protect riparian and forested acreage for fish and wildlife habitat and water quality protection the west side of the Bull Run River from its confluence with the Sandy River to the power house" be changed from a Tier II to a Tier Ib objective; and,
2. A Tier II objective of purchasing property interests on a steep, forested promontory immediately downstream of the Stark Street bridge be added to the refinement plan.

Findings

- The Sandy River, including the Sandy River Gorge, is a regionally significant natural resource due to its fish and wildlife habitat and recreation values. These values have been recognized at the state and federal levels.

- Previous land acquisitions by the Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy and other agencies have placed much of the Sandy River Gorge in protective ownerships.
- There is strong consensus that existing land use, forest practice rules, state and federal scenic water way programs are insufficient to fully protect the values of the Sandy River and the Sandy River Gorge.
- Some areas of the gorge are vulnerable to impacts from residential development, forest and agricultural uses.
- The Water Resources Department has identified flows necessary to support fish, wildlife and recreation under the State Scenic Waterways Act. These flows frequently are not met during much of the year.
- Water withdrawal, primarily for municipal purposes, is the major factor in the reduction of natural flows.
- The reduction of natural flows has the capacity to negatively impact fish, wildlife, recreation and water quality.
- Municipal water withdrawal increases the value and importance of tributary streams in maintaining water quality and quantity in the main stem of the Sandy River and in providing spawning and rearing habitat for resident and anadromous fish populations. Tributaries of critical concern in the target area include Gordon Creek, Buck Creek, Trout Creek and Big Creek.
- Certain tributary streams provide important biological corridors that connect the Sandy River Gorge with vast blocks of federal lands in the Cascade Range. These corridors provide travel routes for a variety of wildlife, including bear, cougar, deer, and elk. Tributaries of critical concern in the target area include Gordon Creek, Buck Creek, Trout Creek and Big Creek.
- Efforts should be undertaken to mitigate, minimize or reduce the negative impacts of municipal water withdrawal on fish, wildlife, recreation and water quality.
- Private landowners are concerned about additional "taking" measures and impacts from recreational users.
- Existing parks (Dabney, Oxbow, Dodge) provide adequate public access to the Sandy River and the Sandy River Gorge. However, enhancements to these access points would improve public use and enjoyment and allow better management of access.
- Immediately downstream of the Stark Street Bridge is a steep bluff on an oxbow that is highly visible from the Columbia River Scenic Highway. Protection of its forested slopes would enhance the river's scenic qualities and prevent water quality impacts of timber harvest.

GOAL:

Complement the federal management plan and protect biological linkages by acquiring property interests on 1000 acres along the Sandy River and its tributaries for the protection of fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, geologic, scenic and recreation values.

OBJECTIVES:

Tier Ia Objectives:

- Acquire riparian and forested acreage for fish and wildlife habitat, water quality and geologic resource protection along the Sandy River from Dodge Park to the Stark Street Bridge.
- Acquire and protect important segments of major tributaries to the Sandy River, including Trout Creek, Big Creek and Gordon Creek.

Tier Ib Objective:

- Acquire riparian and forested acreage for fish and wildlife habitat and water quality protection in the Buck Creek Watershed.
- Acquire property interests on riparian and forested acreage the west side of the Bull Run River from its confluence with the Sandy River to the power house.

Tier 1c Objective:

- Work with non-profit organizations to ensure continued wise stewardship of camp properties.

Tier II Objective:

- Protect scenic and forest resources by acquiring property interests on steep bluff overlooking oxbow immediately downstream of the Stark Street bridge.

Partnership Recommendations:

- Coordinate with BLM and The Nature Conservancy on potential land trades and joint acquisitions to leverage acquisition resources.
- Cooperate with PGE and City of Portland on the Bull Run, Roslyn Lake opportunities.
- Cooperate with the City of Troutdale and Gresham to coordinate open space, trail and bikeway connections.
- Coordinate with State Parks and the City of Portland to expand recreational opportunities through existing and, where appropriate, new or expanded facilities.

Executive Officer's Recommendation

The Executive Officer recommends passage of Resolution No. 96-2358.

APPENDIX A
Sandy River Gorge
Summary of Comments from Stakeholder Interviews:

Commonly mentioned ideas:

- The most important criteria for acquisition priorities are preservation of wildlife habitat and watershed and water quality protection.
- Conservation easements are workable alternatives to fee simple acquisition if sufficient monitoring is conducted.
- Gordon Creek is the only low elevation tributary of the Sandy which provides significant spawning habitat for Fall Chinook, steelhead coho and trout. In addition, it is extremely important for water quality and as a wildlife corridor (elk, bear, cougar, deer, fish) connecting Larch Mountain with the Sandy River system.
- The Trout Creek / Gordon Creek delta area is extremely valuable as spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous fish, as well as valuable riparian habitat for amphibians, birds, and other wildlife.
- Oxbow Park is hard to find and the steep hill down into it discourages bicycle access.
- Private land owners are adversely impacted by the public trespassing onto private property (human waste, litter, vandalism, foul language, drinking etc.)
- Private land owners are suspicious of "Government" and don't want Metro involved, particularly if Portland people are attracted to new areas open to the public.

Individual Ideas:

- It is important to protect the west rim from development visible from the river.
- There is a perception on the part of private property landowners that Metro is trying to buy all of the private land along the river.
- There are significant user problems (human waste, litter, alcohol, guns) along Gordon Creek Road, and at the confluence of Buck Creek, Gordon Creek and the Sandy River.
- Also along the Sandy River by Roslyn Lake up to Revenue Bridge has similar problems.
- Dodge Park is an unrealized opportunity in terms of serving as the launching point for Sandy River boaters. The park should be upgraded with additional educational information incorporated.
- Consider acquiring development easements along Lusted Road terrace to retain agricultural use.
- Metro should not be involved in the Bull Run Trolley Trail, habitat will likely be degraded due to people attraction.

Stakeholders Interviewed:

Cathy MacDonald, The Nature Conservancy
Bert Brehm, Reed College/The Nature Conservancy
Sam Diack, Multnomah County Planning Commission
Esther Lev, biologist
Glenyce Denson-Moyer, landowner
Alan Smart, USFS Hydrologist
Charlie Ciecko, Metro Parks and Greenspaces Director
Bob Ratcliffe, Bureau of Land Management
Jim Lind, Oxbow Park Ranger
John Campbell, Camp Namanu
Ric Buhler, Bull Run Community Association
Jack Wiles, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Valerie Lantz, Troutdale City Parks
Steven Broucher
Jurgen Hess
Mark Bachmann
John Lilly, Division of State Lands
Tom Murtagh, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Jay Massey, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Appendix B: Comments and Questions

**Sandy River Gorge Target Area Public Workshop
Glen Otto Community Park, Troutdale
May 20, 1996**

Attendance: Approximately 36 persons

- I think you should preserve area primarily for wildlife habitat and natural values.
- I am against Metro involvement in the area.
- I object to the Bull Run Trolley Trail proposal. It shouldn't be used as public access.
- I want Metro "off my back;" I'm "not interested in the program; it's a joke."
- What makes Metro think it can do a better job than private landowners in protecting the land?

Staff responded that the land was in good condition precisely because of private stewardship, but that the program's goal was to insure it continued into the future and that changes in ownership frequently were associated with changes in stewardship practices.

- What areas aren't preserved well? Cite examples of land not being taken care of.

Consultant responded that we're looking at bigger picture, a broad area and aren't analyzing individual sites.

- There's limited development already; why do we need the government to buy land, and/or regulate it?

Staff replied that public ownership provides best protection over the long term and that small developments could occur, as well as logging, within areas purchased or protected with conservation easements.

- If you force trails, parking lots into the area, it will bring people in to "ruin" the land.

Staff responded that management issues would be addressed through a master planning process in which the community would have extensive involvement.

- I fear public access to land.

Staff replied that Metro, through the bond program, intends to landbank the properties, not invite the public to use them.

- Nature Conservancy-owned lands are not posted for no trespassing, and thus a major problem exists. They're some of the worst maintained in the area.
- Who carries out management of the public lands?

Staff replied that Oxbow Park is an example of how Metro would manage land, that is was done by a development company and Metro, and that Metro will work with the neighbors to see that their needs are addressed.

- The Buck Creek culvert at Sandy River outfall - I want a clarification of ownership and management; which government is in charge?

Staff responded that repairing the culvert was a county responsibility.

- Oregon was once a progressive state. Now they are taking away private property rights. It means a loss of everything we worked for; now they'll attract people and charge admission, etc.

Staff replied that this is a willing seller program and that land will not be open to the public in the next four years.

- The use of the old trolley line for a trail; we need to look at areas to save, and I think this is a good one.
- Yes on trolley line for trail.
- How much are private consulting fees? Stream conservation study by PSU cost \$12,000.

Consultants declined to disclose fees, and staff responded that it would become public record once an invoice was submitted.

- On Gordon Creek - the best thing you can do is leave it alone! Why is Metro getting involved?
- If land is so good since PSU stream study, why spend taxpayer money; why fix what isn't broken?
- What if one absolutely refuses to sell? What will Metro do? condemn?

Staff replied that Metro would not condemn; that it is a willing seller program.

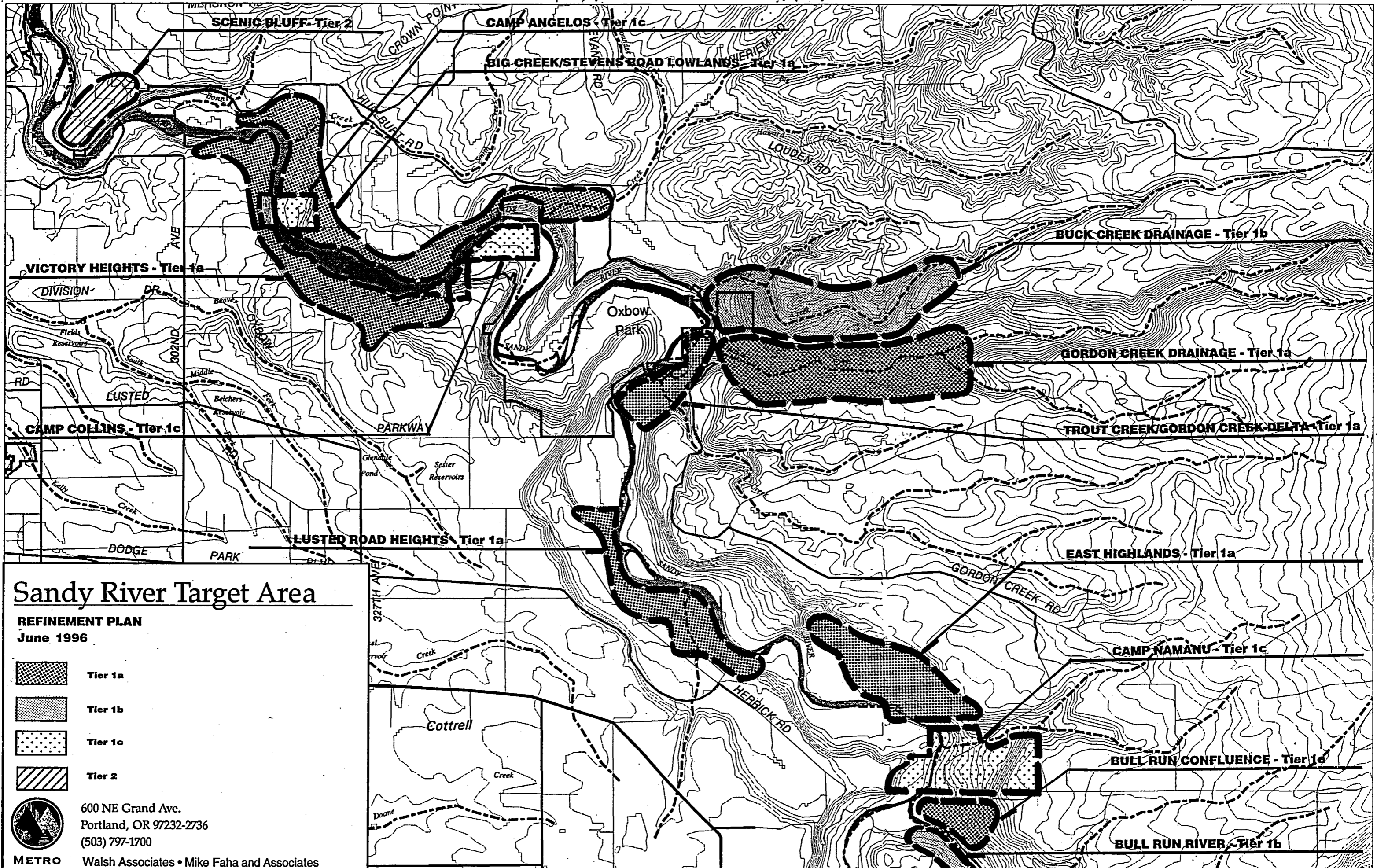
- I think Metro has a good idea and process, and that the plan makes sense.
- What is a river trail versus a land based trail?

Staff replied that it was access of a river by boat or raft.

- I'm concerned about the proposed river trail and private property rights; anchoring of a boat on private property is a problem.



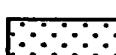

Staff reiterated that management issues would be addressed through a master planning process in which the public would be involved:


- Show of hands: 1/2 positive about Metro's involvement; 1/2 want Metro to "get out of town."



Sandy River Target Area

REFINEMENT PLAN
June 1996

-  Tier 1a
-  Tier 1b
-  Tier 1c
-  Tier 2

 600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736
(503) 797-1700

METRO Walsh Associates • Mike Faha and Associates