

# Agenda



**Metro**

600 NE Grand Ave.  
Portland, OR 97232-2736

Meeting: Smith and Bybee Wetlands Advisory Committee (SBAC)  
Date: Tuesday, September 24, 2019  
Time: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.  
Place: Metro Regional Center - Room 270  
600 NE Grand Ave., Portland

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5:30 p.m.	Welcome and introductions	All
5:40 p.m.	Approve March and August 2019 meeting minutes	Troy Clark
5:45 p.m.	Railroad berm along N. Portland Rd.	MCDD
6:20 p.m.	Harsch presentation debrief	All
6:40 p.m.	Smith and Bybee planning updates (written)	Allan Schmidt
6:45 p.m.	Conservation projects update	Jonathan Soll
7:10 p.m.	Parks and Nature bond update	Jonathan Soll
7:25 p.m.	Goals and next meeting agenda	All
7:30 p.m.	Adjourn	

#### **Upcoming SBAC meetings:**

Tuesday, November 26, 2019 at Metro Regional Center  
For agenda/schedule information, contact Annie Toledo at 503.813.7565 or [annie.toledo@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:annie.toledo@oregonmetro.gov)

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# Meeting minutes

## Smith and Bybee Advisory Committee

September 24, 2019

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### Committee members in attendance

Troy Clark .....Audubon Society of Portland (Chair)  
 Carrie Butler ..... Port of Portland (Vice Chair)  
 Matthew Lee ..... Columbia Slough Watershed Council  
 Emily Roth ..... Friends of Smith & Bybee Lakes  
 Jennifer Devlin ..... City of Portland, Bureau of Environmental Services  
 Jonathan Soll ..... Metro, Parks and Nature  
 Patt Opdyke ..... North Portland Neighbors

### Others in attendance

Eryn Mitchell..... Multnomah County Drainage District  
 Annie Toledo..... Metro, Parks and Nature

### Committee members not in attendance

Bill Briggs..... Oil Re-Refining Company (ORRCO)  
 Jen Levy ..... St. Johns Neighborhood Association  
 Eric Tonsager..... Oregon Bass and Panfish Club  
 Pat Jewett ..... 40-Mile Loop Land Trust

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## WELCOME

The March and August 2019 minutes were approved.

## RAILROAD EMBANKMENT ALONG N. PORTLAND ROAD

Eryn Mitchell, Levee Ready Columbia public affairs and communications manager, came from the Multnomah County Drainage District (MCDD) to present on the railroad embankment along N. Portland Road. She gave an overview of how the Columbia River levee system works and the history of the four drainage districts that manage the 27-mile levee system that extend along the Columbia River from the edge of Smith and Bybee Lakes on the west to the Sandy River on the east.

The levied area along the Columbia River was historically a floodplain until 1917 when the first levees were put in place to reclaim the land for agricultural purposes. Congress authorized the Flood Control Act of 1936 which gave the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) funding to build and strengthen flood control infrastructure around the country, including along the Columbia River. From 1936 to 1942 the USACE partnered with local drainage districts to build the comprehensive levee system that we have today. The flood of 1894, the highest on record at 39.7 feet, was used to determine the height of some of the levees.

The railroad embankment on the western edge of the system is owned by three different railroad companies: Union Pacific, Pacific Terminal Co. and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF). The embankment was built sometime between 1907 and 1911, predating the levee system. USACE later designed the levee system to tie into the existing railroad embankment. The embankment was

constructed around an existing railroad trestle. The timber piling supporting the trestle were incorporated into the fill along with other debris, including telegraph poles, railroad ties, and rails.

In 1948, the railroad embankment breached, flooding the city of Vanport. Following the flood, a temporary trestle was constructed across the railroad embankment breach to restore rail operations. The breach site was subsequently reconstructed with material dredged from Smith Lake. Once again, the timber pilings from the temporary trestle were left embedded within the reconstructed embankment.

In 1957, USACE proposed significant improvements to the system, including improvements to the embankment to make it qualify as a levee. Unfortunately, no project ever materialized due to insufficient support and funding. A major flood was predicted for the spring of 1972, which led to improved cooperation between the drainage district and the railroad companies. Because access agreements were provided by the railroads, the USACE was able to fund some of the improvements that were authorized in 1957.

Although we have experienced high water events more recently, the flood of 1996 was the last time the levee system was seriously tested. During the flood, the embankment held but there was some floodwater that seeped through the southwest corner and portions of the 1972 improvements eroded. This led to a new agreement between USACE and PEN 1 to reinforce areas of the embankment and between PEN 1 and Union Pacific to access the embankment to make repairs. During the negotiations, PEN 1 agreed to construct and maintain the work at its own expense, to indemnify the railroad for claims arising out of the work, and to indemnify that the embankment was not constructed as or is suitable to be a levee. To this day, the railroad companies do not acknowledge this embankment serves as a part of the levee system.

In 2012 the drainage districts were notified that the federal standards for levee systems had changed, becoming more stringent following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Superstorm Sandy in 2012. In order for the drainage districts to maintain accreditation of the levee system from FEMA, the districts had to prove that the system met these new standards. Between 2013 and 2017, the Levee Ready Columbia partnership completed the first comprehensive geotechnical investigation of the levee system, identifying about seven areas where improvements need to be made to maintain accreditation, including the railroad embankment. Congress recently designated a USACE feasibility study of the levee system, which will build on the work of LRC, identifying vulnerabilities in the system and offering solutions to make the system more resilient. They are currently a third of the way through the 3-year process, which will culminate with USACE delivering a report to Congress including recommendations to improve the system and a funding request to complete the work.

*Attachment 1.*

#### **HARSCH PRESENTATION DEBRIEF**

There was discussion about a recent Oregonian article which reported that the former Wapato Jail site is once again being considered as a potential homeless shelter. Troy spoke with a representative of Harsch earlier in the day who denied the possibility of this use and confirmed that they are going through with the redevelopment as proposed at the August meeting.

The committee also discussed the presentation that Harsch Investment Properties gave in August. They reiterated their suggestions from the previous meeting (see August 2019 meeting summary)

and agreed to write Harsch a letter in order to have a record of these suggestions. They'd like to have the maximum investment be in making no light or sound impact; this is the main point the committee wants Harsch to be aware of. This letter was written on September 25 and is included as an attachment. *Attachment 2*.

### **SMITH AND BYBEE PLANNING PROJECTS UPDATE**

Metro Parks and Nature planner Allan Schmidt submitted a written update regarding planning projects going on at the site: St. Johns Prairie Trail and Columbia Blvd. Bridge. The committee would like the public involvement processes for both of these projects to be in tandem with one another in order to make efficient use of the community's time. They've requested for Allan to discuss this at the November meeting. The written updates can be found in *Attachment 3*.

### **CONSERVATION PROJECTS UPDATE**

Jonathan Soll gave updates about conservation projects at Smith and Bybee. This summer's work has consisted of mainly weed treatments so that plants are free to grow. The overall ecological health of the site is good; the biggest threat to the wetlands is *Ludwigia* right now. He mentioned that Metro recently engaged a scientist from UC Davis to study the *Ludwigia* at the site. Working alongside Elaine Stewart and Integrated Resource Management, study plots were developed to dig into some of the issues about how herbicides are affecting *Ludwigia*. For instance, are the herbicides really able to kill the plant or is there remaining root tissue? Data was collected and treatments were done. Jonathan can send out more information if anyone is interested.

Current projects happening include: St. Johns Prairie phases 1, 2, 3; planting around future St. Johns Prairie Trail viewpoint; Columbia sedge units 1, 2; Ash units 1, 2, with a proposal to start on 3; and continued weed treatments. The channel reconfiguration went well, including the drawdown. The beaver didn't build their dam where projected, but there's nothing to be done about that. Nutria are predicted to return—the USDA wildlife services contract is still in place to combat the issue.

The committee inquired about the success of the Columbia sedge planting. They are wondering whether or not it is economical to continue to use funds on restoration if the survival rate is not high. Jonathan will talk with Elaine about this and get back to them.

Metro's budget timing has changed. Budget submissions for the upcoming fiscal year are now due at the end of November instead of January. There won't be much of a change in terms of funding for projects. The only change would be to reallocate funds if Metro leadership accepts the committee's recommendation regarding capping the Smith and Bybee fund at 1 million. Jonathan will follow up with Dan Moeller regarding the leadership's thoughts and about responding to the letter sent last spring.

### **PARKS AND NATURE BOND UPDATE**

The bond measure is on the November 2020 ballot. The Intertwine Alliance is running a campaign for the measure called Nature for All. One target area identified in the bond is referred to as the "urban target area" which encompasses the entire urban growth boundary. Metro will be working with the community to discuss a refinement process in early 2020 should the bond pass.



**ACTION ITEMS**

- Jonathan to follow up with Dan Moeller regarding Smith and Bybee fund letter.
- Jonathan to report back to the committee about the success of Columbia sedge plantings.

**GOALS AND NEXT MEETING AGENDA**

- Parks and Nature planner Allan Schmidt to attend November meeting to discuss St. Johns Prairie Trail and Columbia Blvd. Bridge projects.
- January or March of 2020: 5-year CNRP check-in with Elaine Stewart and Allan Schmidt
- January 2020: Katy Weil to report on bird monitoring at the site.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.



# Our History of Flooding & the Infrastructure Along the Columbia River in Multnomah County

presentation for the  
Friends of Smith & Bybee  
September 24, 2019

# Levee Ready Columbia



FEMA



MULTNOMAH COUNTY



OREGON SOLUTIONS



COLUMBIA CORRIDOR ASSOCIATION



Metro



US Army Corps of Engineers®



PORT OF PORTLAND

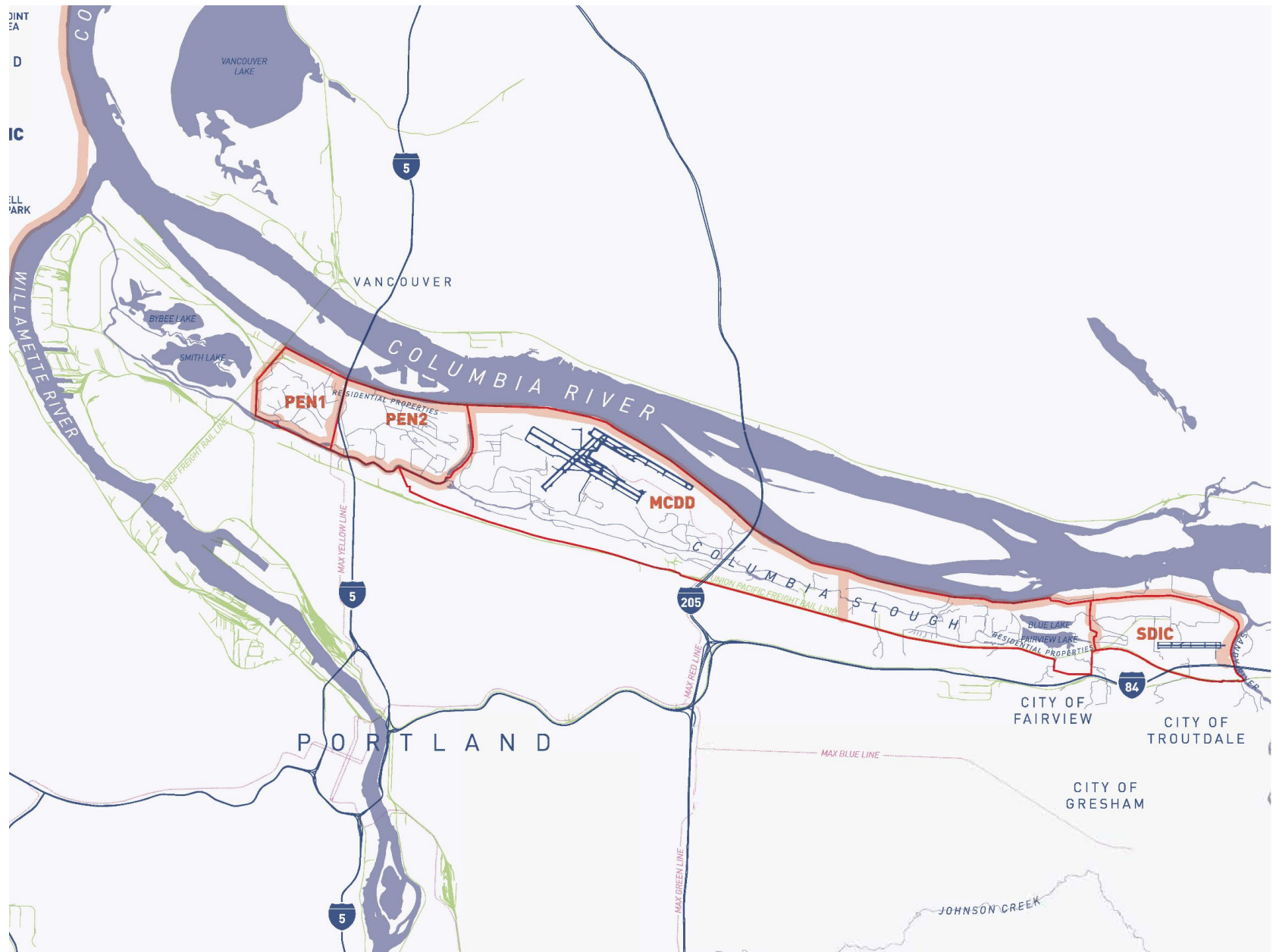
Possibility. In every direction.®



FAIRVIEW LAKE  
Property Owners Association

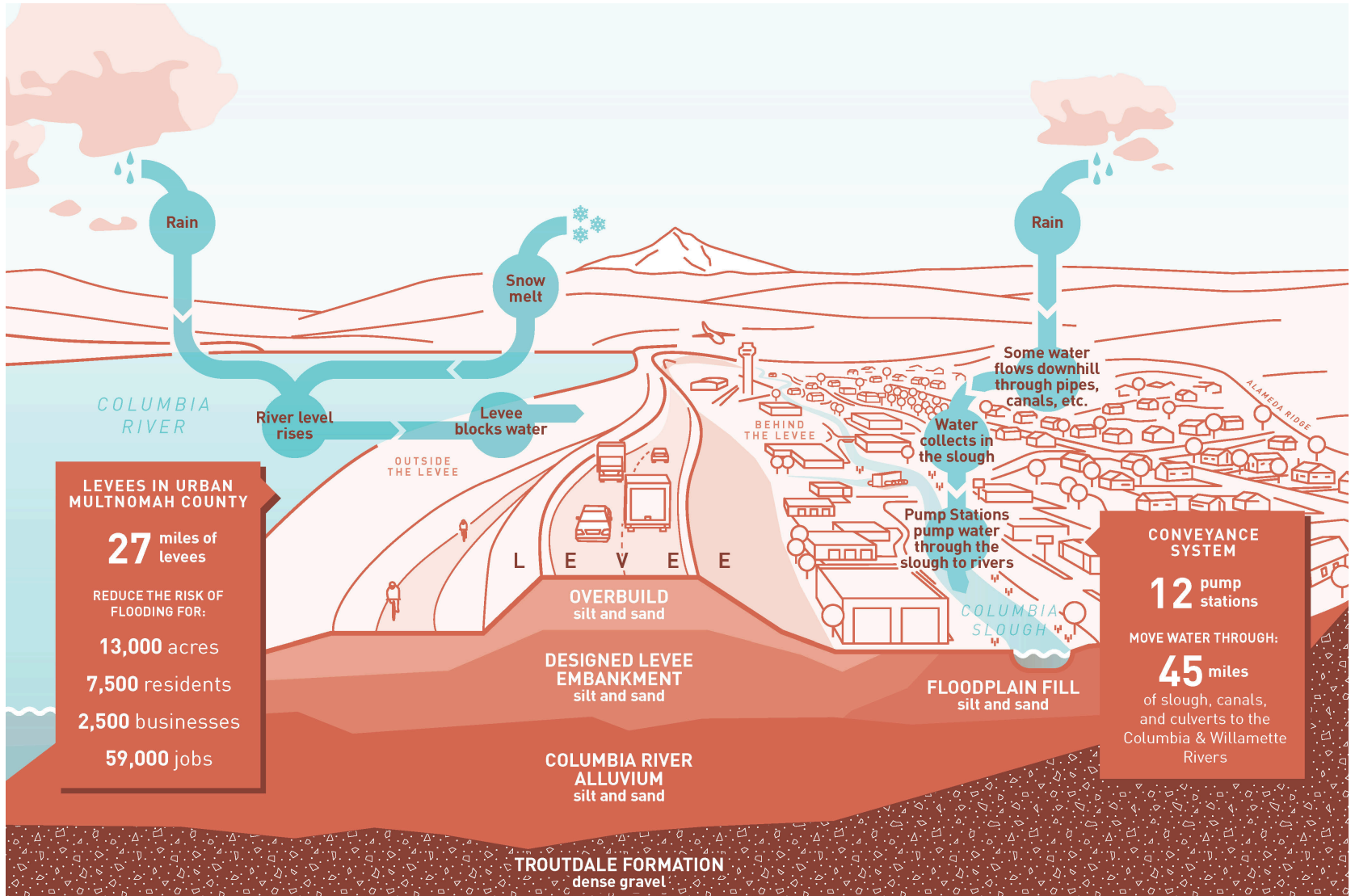
Interlachen Home Owners Association

# ATTACHMENT 1

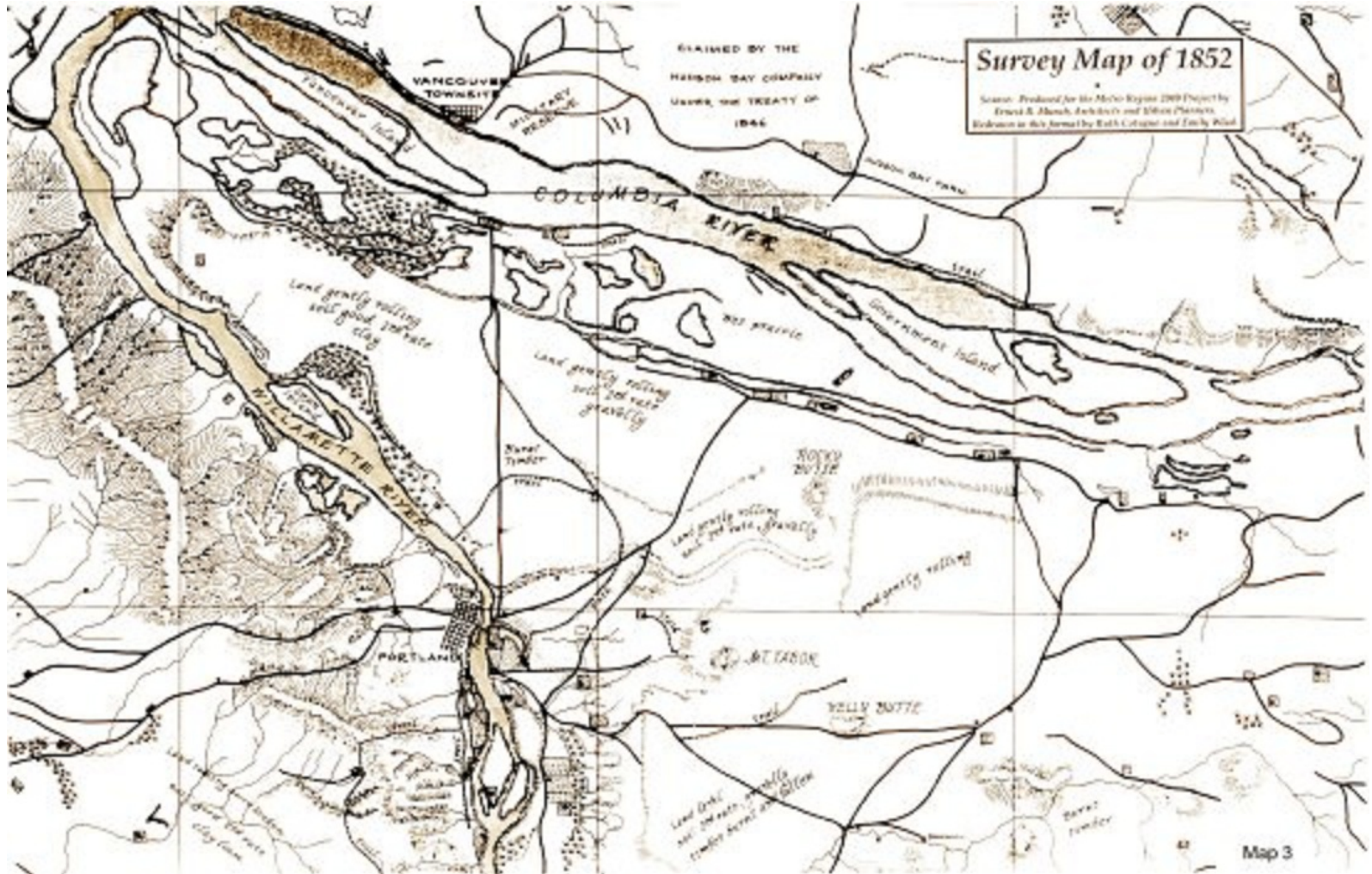




# How our system works



# A Brief History



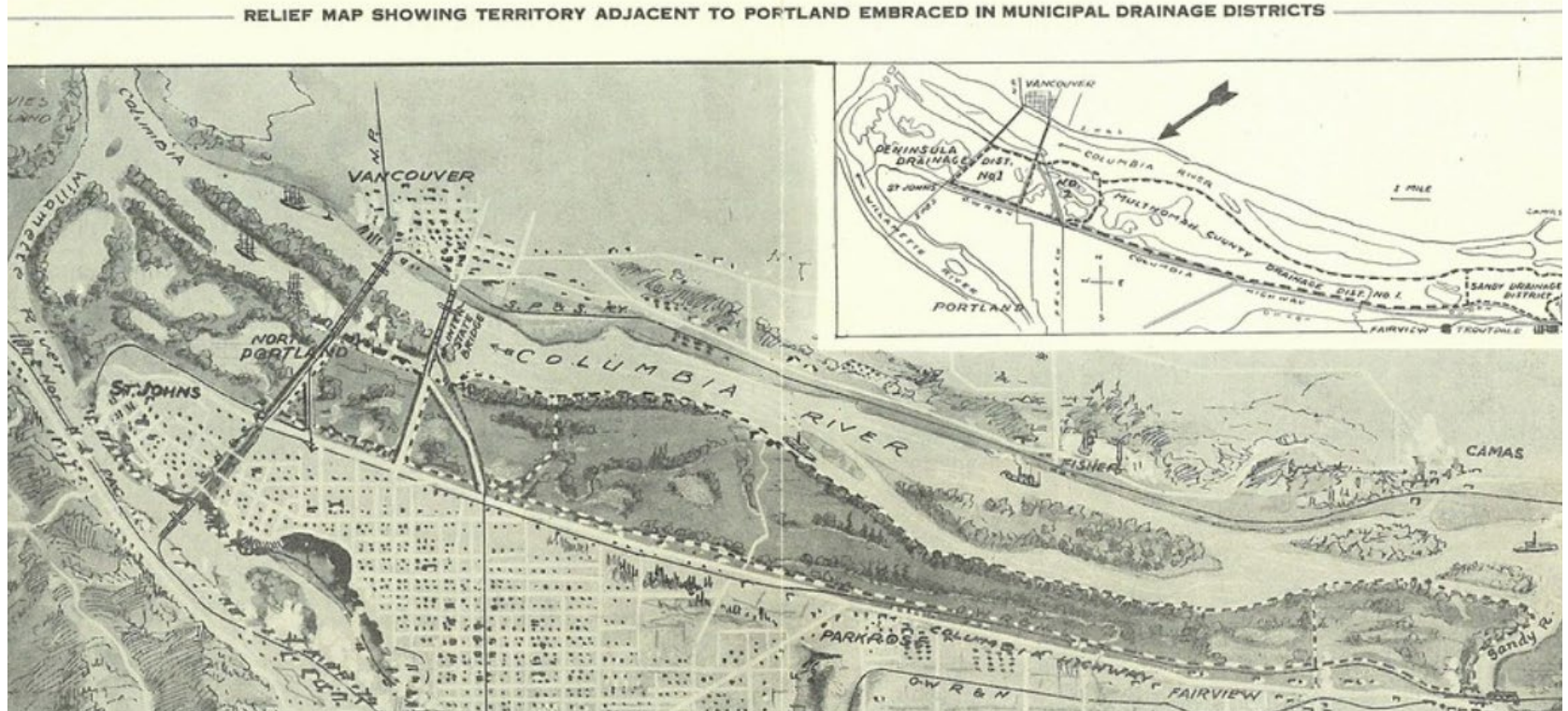


# A Brief History





# A Brief History



"...and herewith present to our Honorable body their petition that they may form a drainage district **for the purposes of having such lands reclaimed and protected by drainage or otherwise, from the effects of water for agricultural purposes,** the same being conducive to the public convenience and welfare, and of public utility and benefit..." *1917 petition to establish MCDD*



# A Brief History



# A Brief History

## 1936:

Congress authorizes the Flood Control Act of 1936, providing USACE with authority and funding to build and strengthen flood control infrastructure around the country

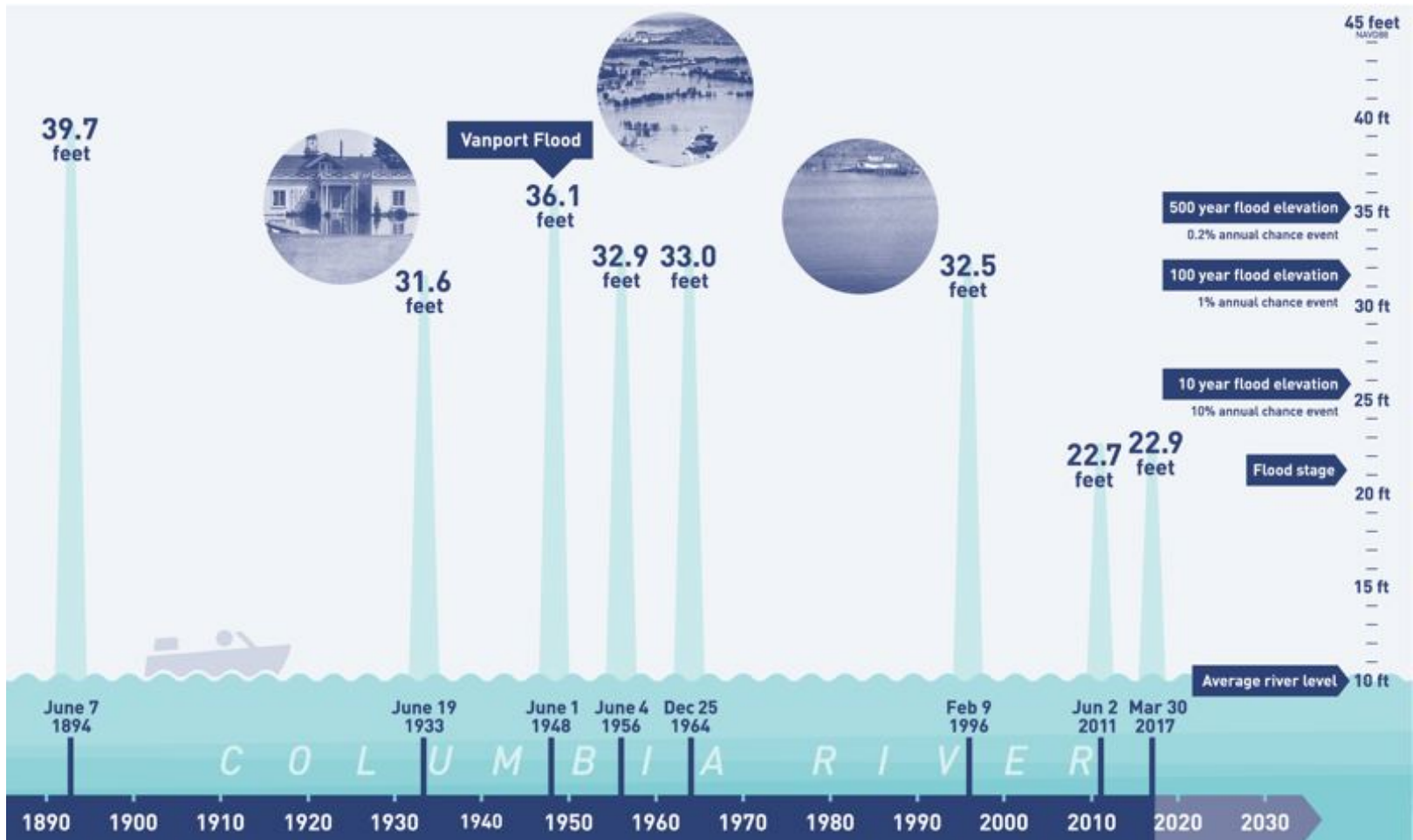
## 1939-1942:

USACE partners with local drainage districts to build comprehensive levee system we have today





# Flood History



# 1942: wartime housing built along the Columbia

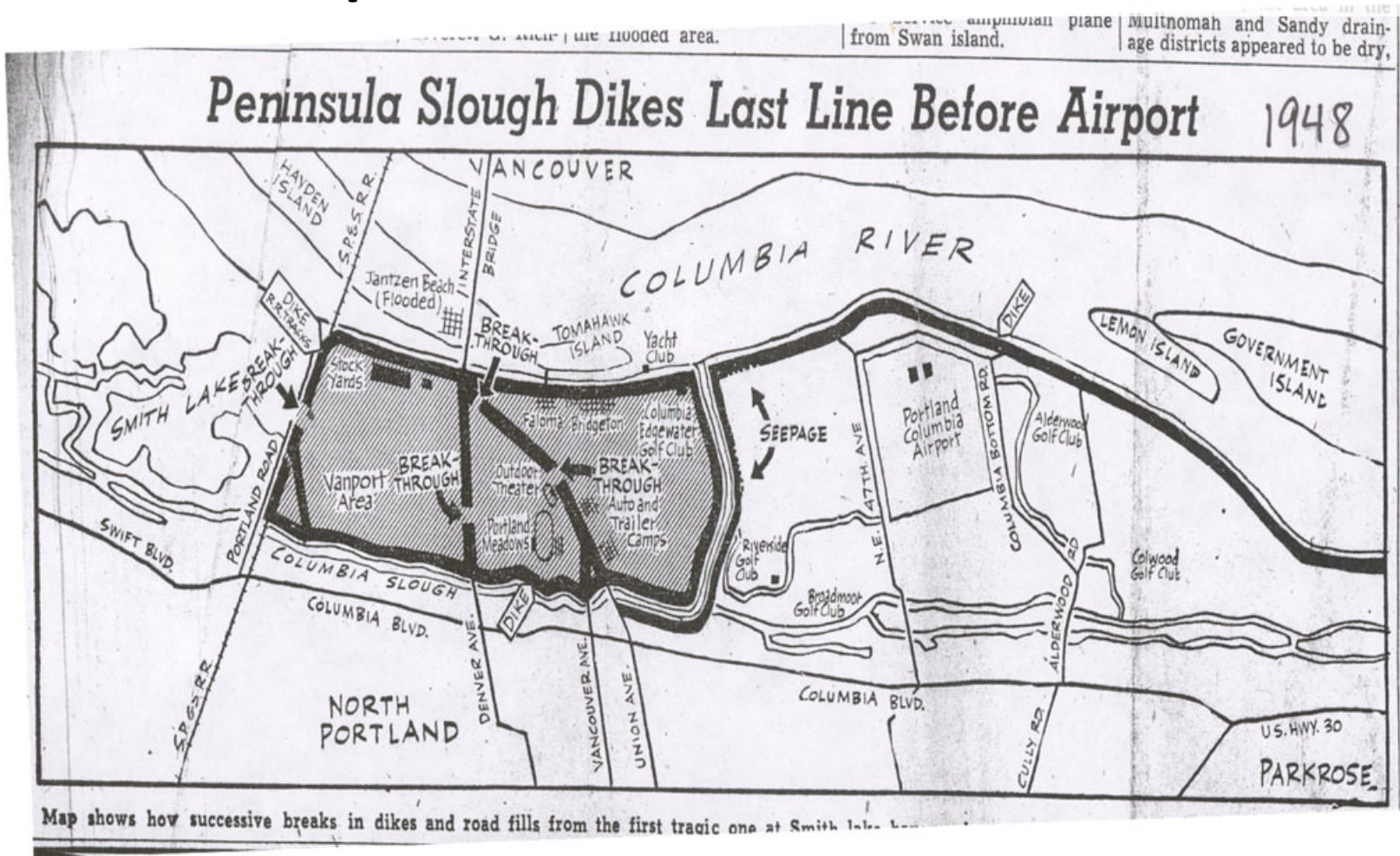


# 1948: Vanport Flood





# 1948: Vanport Flood



# 1948: Vanport Flood



# 1948: Vanport Flood





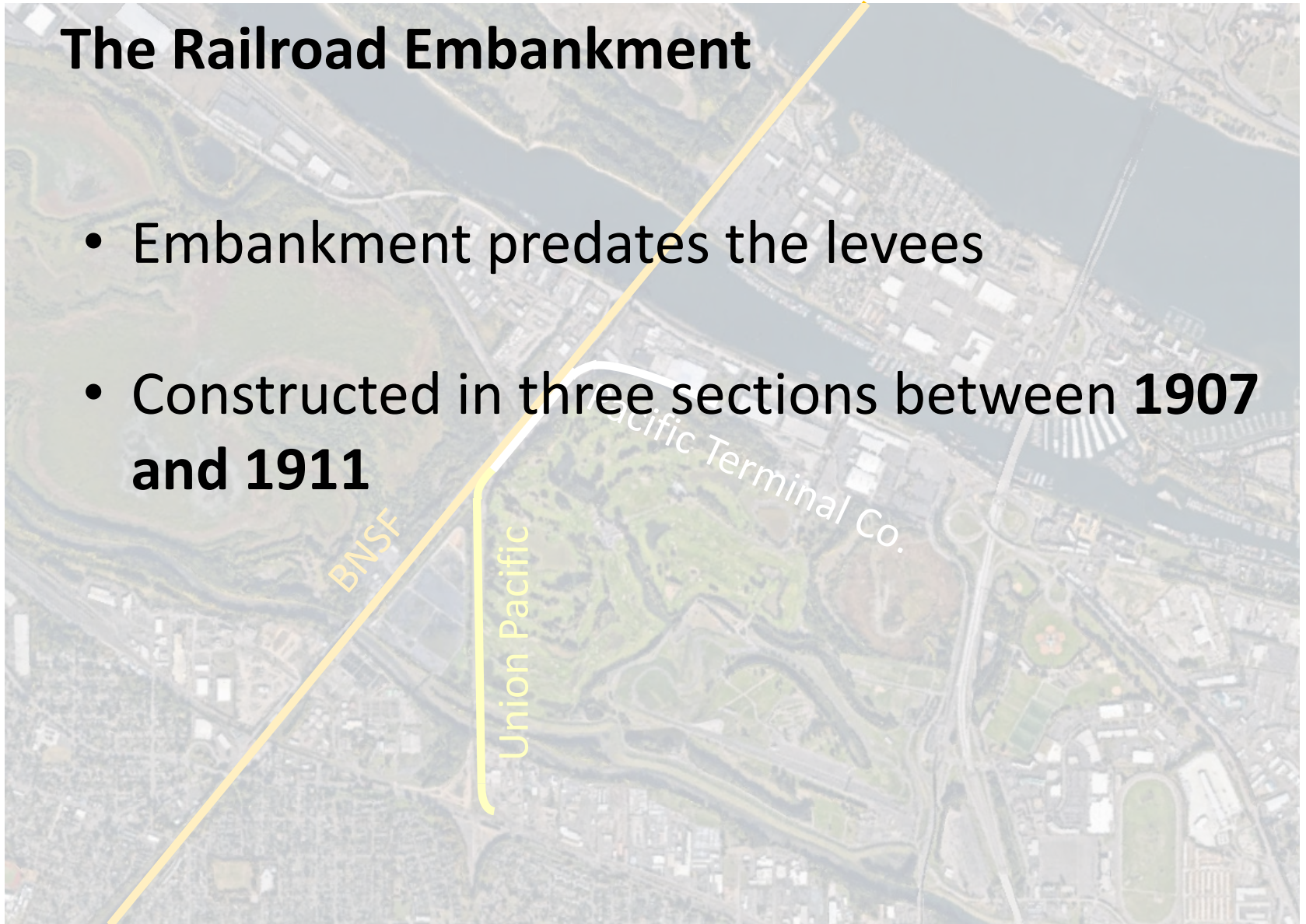
# The Railroad Embankment





# The Railroad Embankment

- Embankment predates the levees
- Constructed in three sections between **1907** and **1911**



## The Railroad Embankment

- The fill was dumped into an existing wooden trestle to construct the embankment.

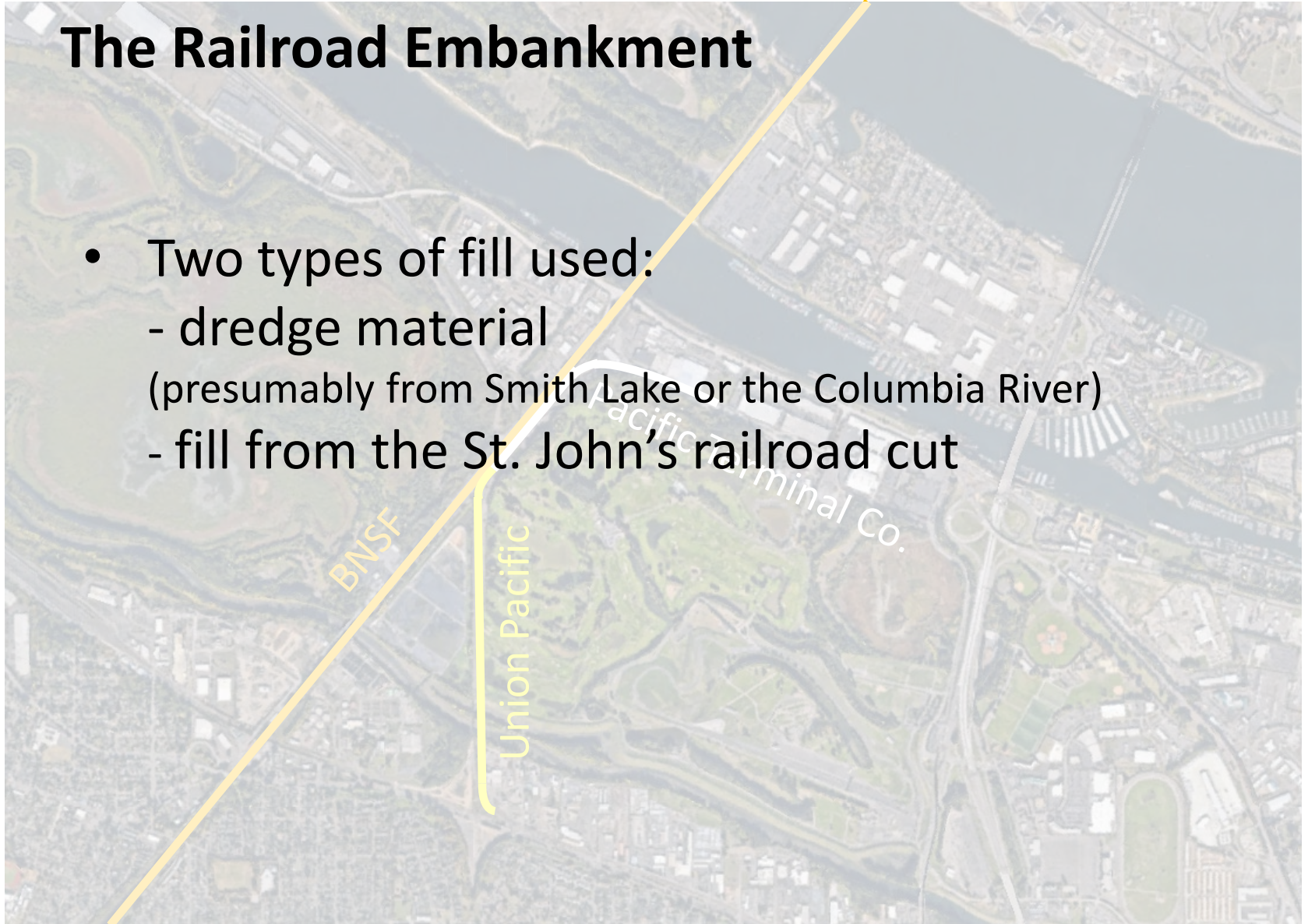


- The timber piling supporting the trestles were incorporated into the fill along with other debris



# The Railroad Embankment

- Two types of fill used:
  - dredge material  
(presumably from Smith Lake or the Columbia River)
  - fill from the St. John's railroad cut



## The Railroad Embankment

- **1948:** Following the Vanport Flood, a temporary trestle was constructed across the breach location to restore rail operations
- The embankment was then reconstructed with material dredged from Smith Lake
- The timber pilings from the temporary trestle were left embedded in the embankment



# The Railroad Embankment

- **1957:** significant improvements suggested by USACE, including adding levee buttresses to stabilize the railway embankment, and adding thousands of feet of toe drains around the inside of PEN 1, including the embankment
- Most of the embankment related improvements were not made until 1972

# The Railroad Embankment

## 1972: Operation Foresight

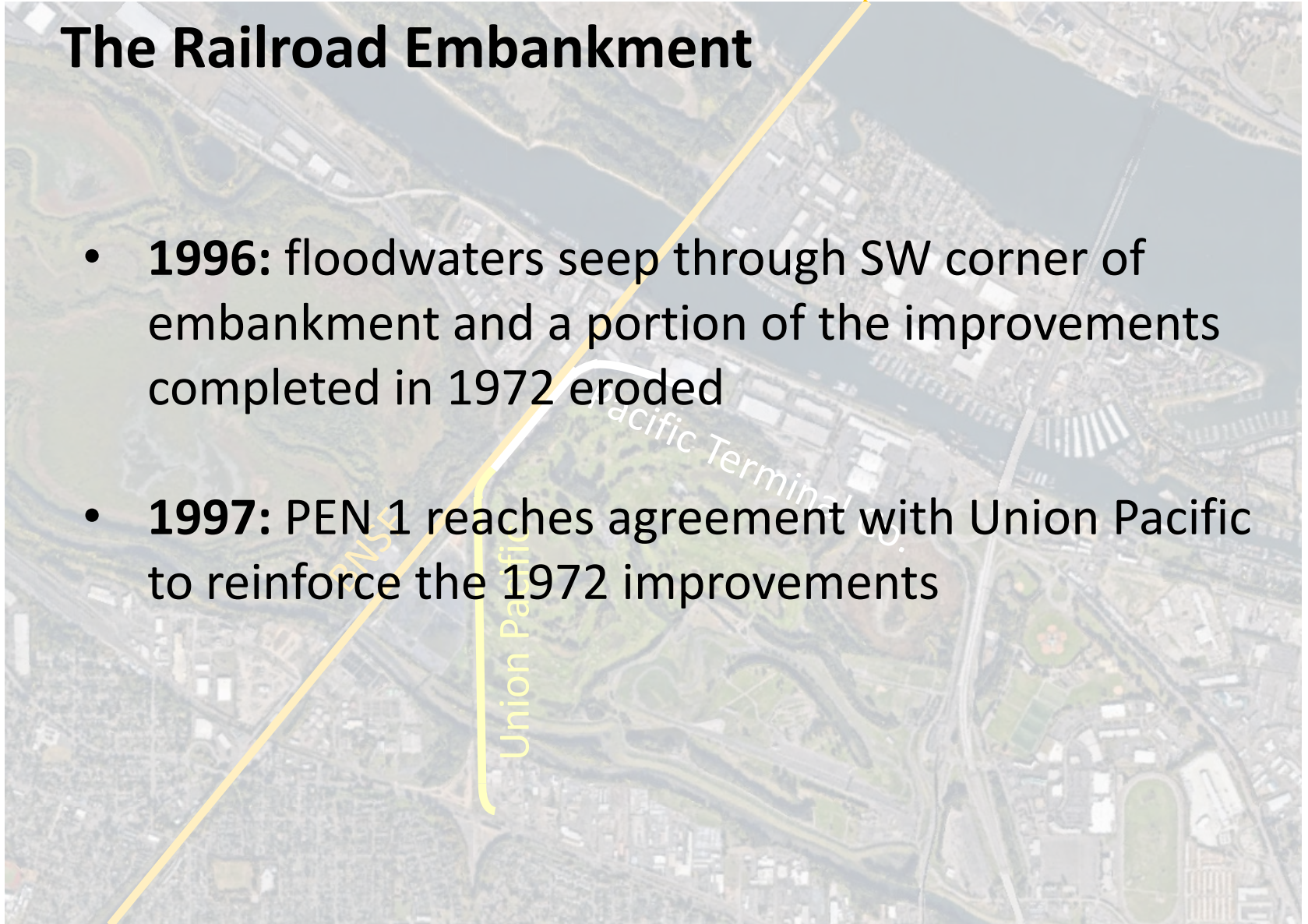
- USACE installs a sand blanket and toe drain to railroad embankment to improve stability
- PEN 1 authorized to build a maintenance road on the embankment and negotiates right to maintain improvements with BNSF and Union Pacific





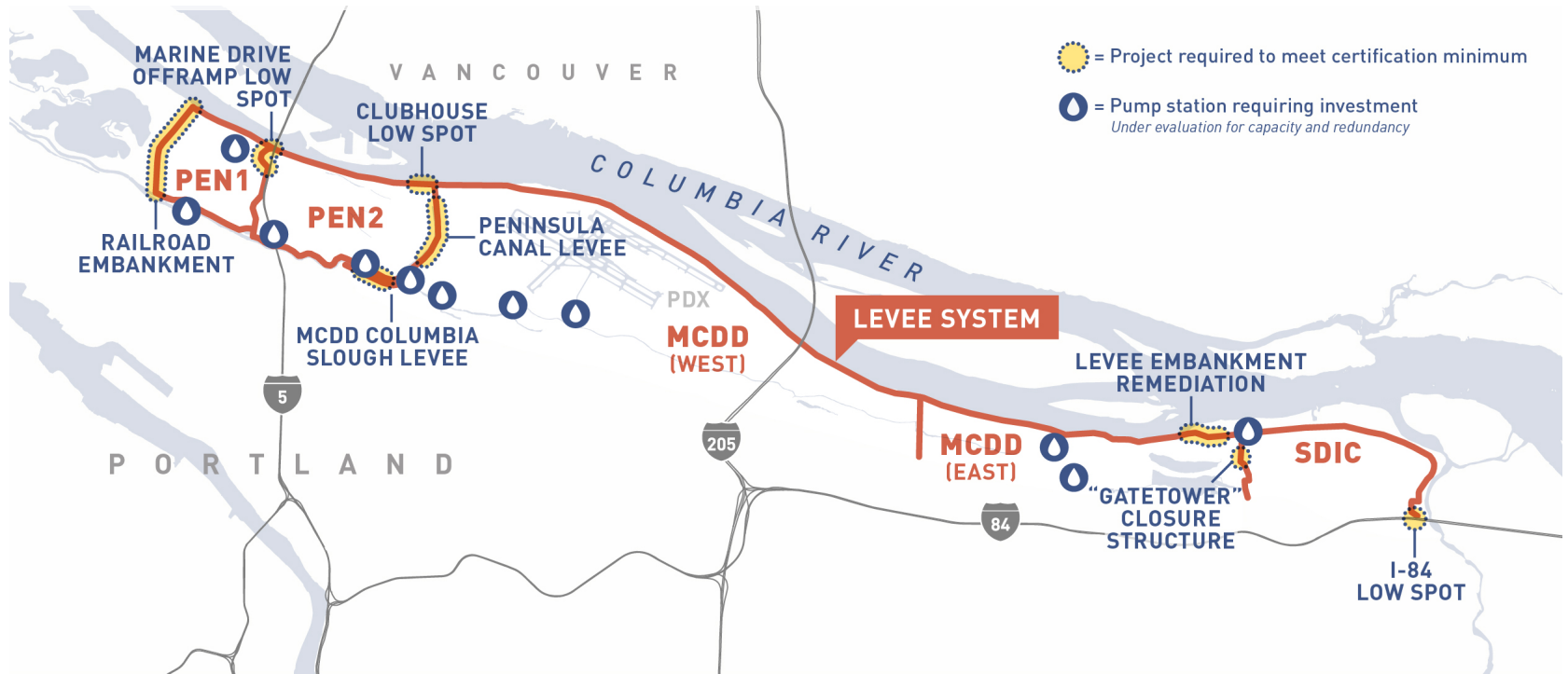
# The Railroad Embankment

- **1996:** floodwaters seep through SW corner of embankment and a portion of the improvements completed in 1972 eroded
- **1997:** PEN 1 reaches agreement with Union Pacific to reinforce the 1972 improvements





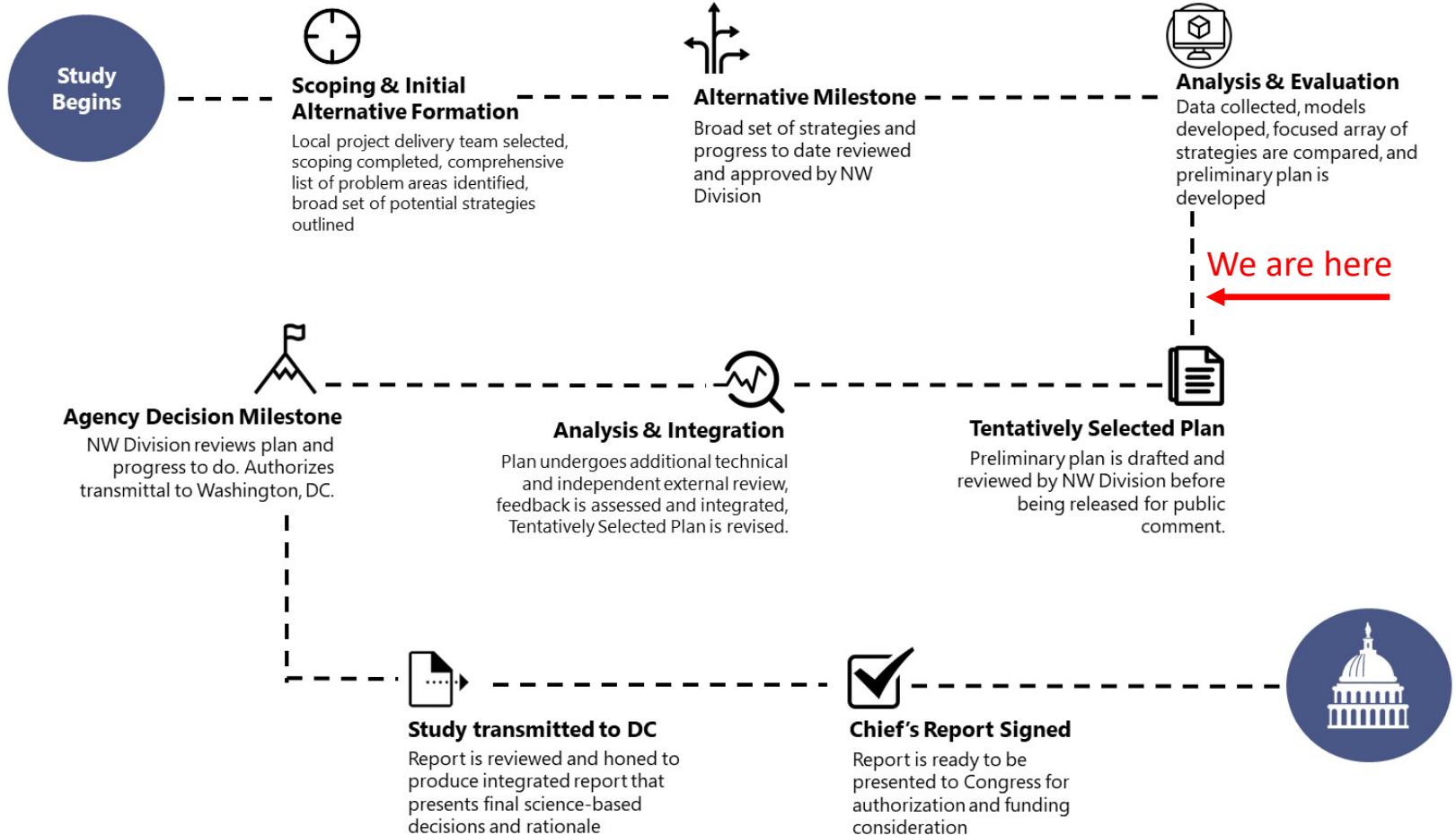
# Present Day: New Federal Standards & Levee Recertification Needs



# US Army Corps of Engineers Feasibility Study

**US Army Corps of Engineers Identifies  
Long-Term Disaster Recovery Projects to  
be Accomplished with 2018 Supplemental  
Funding**

# US Army Corps of Engineers Feasibility Study





# Questions

Eryn Mitchell | [emitchell@mcdd.org](mailto:emitchell@mcdd.org) | 971-285-0677

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**Smith and Bybee Advisory Committee**

Coordinated by:  
**Metro**  
600 NE Grand Ave.  
Portland, OR 97232

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September 25, 2019

Jordan Schnitzer, President  
Andrew Goodman, Development Manager  
Harsch Investment Properties  
1121 SW Salmon #400  
Portland, OR 97205

Dear Mr. Schnitzer and Mr. Goodman,

The Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area Advisory Committee (SBAC) would like to thank you again for sharing your current plans for the Wapato Jail site. We greatly appreciate your commitment to making this project a community benefit beyond the economic benefits it may provide. The SBAC met again on September 24 to discuss these plans and to formulate our recommendations for the site. We stand ready to provide any assistance we can moving forward.

Beyond all other concerns we encourage you to focus your investment on minimizing the impact of the project on the wetlands, emphasizing light, sound and wastewater impacts as well as visibility from the natural area.

We would appreciate your careful consideration of these recommendations:

- Preserve as much of the existing buffer as possible for the benefits of reducing sound and light impacts on the wildlife area and to limit the visual effects of this industrial property on users of the 40-mile loop trail and on paddlers on the waters around the site.
- If the entire 40-foot buffer is found infeasible to retain, we recommend preserving 20 feet of the buffer at a minimum depth around the property. The vegetated buffer serves as a barrier rather than as habitat. Those functions should be emphasized in any re-design.
- Lighting on the property should be “dark sky” compliant. ([darksky.org](http://darksky.org))
- There should be no stormwater from the site directed towards the wildlife area. The existing outfall exiting into the Columbia Slough should comply with current water quality standards.
- Best management practices should be employed to eliminate bird strikes on windows or walls of the new building(s).
- It is strongly urged that adequate buffering be employed to keep turtles out of the developed area. A below ground barrier is recommended in conjunction with the perimeter fence.
- We ask that the 40-foot buffer be kept in place during the demolition phase of the existing building. The buffer will help limit airborne dust from affecting the wildlife area as well as some much needed noise buffering.
- We mentioned that the Comprehensive Natural Resources Plan (CNRP) for the Smith and Bybee Wildlife Natural Area requires that the Bybee Lake portion be less accessible for public recreation and devoted principally to wildlife habitat. As a reminder, any proposed wildlife viewing platforms and trails are restricted to the Harsch property.

**Smith and Bybee Advisory Committee**

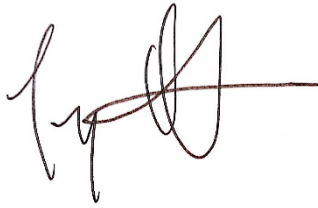
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We hope you find these recommendations constructive. We also request that you keep us apprised of the ongoing thinking for the property as your team re-imagines the long term utilization of this industrial site. We would like to invite you back to an SBAC meeting periodically so we can hear directly from you about the redevelopment.

Thank you again for being proactive about your plans and open to our suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Troy Clark', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Troy Clark, Committee Chair  
Smith and Bybee Advisory Committee

## ATTACHMENT 3

**Annie Toledo**

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**Subject:** FW: [External sender]Re: September SBAC meeting - agenda topics

**From:** Allan Schmidt

**Sent:** Monday, September 09, 2019 2:38 PM

**To:** Annie Toledo

**Subject:** RE: [External sender]Re: September SBAC meeting - agenda topics

Things are beginning to happen...!

Planning Update:

1. Columbia Blvd. Bridge (CBB)
  - a. We have received 'notice to proceed' from ODOT to start designing the bridge with KPFF Engineers
  - b. We are planning a tech. advisory committee kick off meeting this September. This will be internal City and Metro staff.
  - c. The team will review two alternative alignments and recommend an option with the least impact to existing park uses and project budget.
  - d. A public involvement process led by PPR will begin after this information is gathered (*to begin Early 2020*)
  - e. The team will advance to 30% design under this scope of work. This field work includes:
    - i. survey
    - ii. hazmat assessments
    - iii. archeological
    - iv. historical
    - v. biological
    - vi. geotechnical
  - f. When 30% design is reached and alignment agreed upon the consultant contract will be updated to include the remaining design / construction admin.
2. St. Johns Prairie Trail Design (SJP)
  - a. Metro is refining the scope of work with a local engineering firm to design the Prairie Trail. We hope to have a contract soon and begin work this fall/winter.
  - b. The intent is to advance the Prairie Trail design along with the CBB so users can access the prairie as soon as the bridge is complete.
  - c. There is not a date to kick off the project or engage the community at this time. The committee will have a role in the process as a valued partner in the management of Smith & Bybee.

Please feel free to contact me with questions!

Allan

**Allan Schmidt**

Senior Parks & Nature Planner

[Allan.Schmidt@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:Allan.Schmidt@oregonmetro.gov)