
**Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area
Management Committee**

Larry Devroy, Chair



METRO

600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Management Committee Meeting

5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, January 23, 2007
Metro Regional Center, 600 N E Grand Ave., Room 270
Portland, Oregon 97232

AGENDA

Welcome and introductions	(Devroy)	5:30 pm
Approve previous meeting's notes	(Devroy)	5:30 – 5:35 pm
Balancing public access and habitat restoration		5:35 – 7:15 pm
• Willows blocking Smith Lake blind views	(Kromer)	
• Water flooding public trails and viewing blinds	(Kromer)	
Updates		7:15 – 7:30 pm
Adjourn		7:30 pm

SPBMC

1/23/07

pr 1

Attending: Troy Clark
Dan Kromer
Larry Devroy
Nancy Hendrickson
Dale Svart
Brenda Hanke
ams
Pam Arden
Jim Sjulin

Dale Svart - needs to have things via email mod.

Notes: not ready @ mtg time due to turnover

Willows / Smith L. blind

Metro's been getting inquiries re willows blocking view. When wetlands were reservoir, willows didn't grow there. Now they do, & view is becoming blocked.

^{Metro}
Internal decision - do selective cutting & open view lines.

Handout - pros & cons.

Discussion

- ✓ need to ~~be~~ establish view goals/objectives.
- ✓ maintenance - ongoing requirement?
- ✓ Habitat disturbance

Recommendation: motion - Cut one ^{selective} swath, noting that reservations are maint. & hab. disturb., and then re-evaluate.
move - NH, JS - 2nd; agreed.

Also discuss - willow harvest ~~for~~ for W + K art installation - what was the resolution?

- DK - would come to ante

- ems - wouldn't allow again unless benefit to habitat

Next steps re Smith street?

Dan - will talk w/ James Davis, other staff.

Will photo-document.

Water flooding trails to blind

Background - if WES used to retain water to max extent poss., then floods walk (grated) to blind.

Trade-off - accessibility v. PHAR control.

What would it cost to raise path + blind, or other solution? Get estimate ~~from~~ & see what it would cost.

Several members felt the PHAR control was a high priority.

Smith blind - willow small hab. impact; want to make max. use of WES bcs. of broader/wider hab. implications.

Motion: bcs of hab. concerns, do not support removing bds.; want metro to look into raising path/blind as solution.

Motion - NH; 2nd - LD. Approved.

NH Stewardship Saturday coming up @ Ramsey
Refugia.

NH Ramsey sampling doc. upriver Col. R. fish -
quite a finding & revelation

DK Vandalism - orientⁿ sign + 2 mem plaques taken.

DK Pgms starting up again.

ems Bender has banded nearly 500 birds since
late Sept.

Summary of Recreation Discussion

Maintaining Smith and Bybee Wetlands “in a manner that is faithful to their original natural condition” is the essence of the Goal Statement in the Management Plan adopted by the Portland City Council and the Metro Council in 1990. In 2006, the Smith and Bybee Wetlands Management Committee examined a long list of recreational activities, some of which were mentioned in the original Plan and some of which have come into being since the plan was created. Each of these activities was compared to the goal statement and objectives in the original plan. The Committee created and evaluated a list of existing and potential recreational uses. Each listed activity was determined to be compatible or incompatible. In the future, case-by-case decisions ^{what} on will be and what will not be allowed need to be made for recreational activities not yet invented or recognized and for those that may be allowed if the number of individuals involved is low, e.g., two runners versus 5,000 competitors. This matrix is provided below and the committee recommends that it be adopted as an update to the original Management Plan. (Matrix not provided herein.)

CUTTING WILLOWS IN FRONT OF SMITH BLIND

Pros

1. The viewing blind was built for people to have a view of Smith Lake, especially wintering waterfowl, and now that view is obstructed. Visitors should continue to have the long-range views from that location as they have had for 10 years.
2. There was a cost to construct the Smith blind for wildlife viewing (around \$20,000 – \$25,000) and it's prudent that Metro protects that invested.
3. Keeping the Smith blind useable for wildlife viewing eliminates the need, cost and possible habitat destruction of putting in another blind someplace else within the natural area (e.g. pass the Bybee blind) for such activities.
4. We have received numerous inquiries and complaints from people who want to preserve the views they're accustomed to.
5. There is a lot of regenerating willow in and all of Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area. The cutting of willow in front of Smith Blind will not even marginally reduce that habitat in the wetland.
6. Metro has removed trees and altered habitat to provide views for the public at other areas, so this is consistent with management practices at sites which are open to the public.
7. The Smith blind is wheelchair-accessible and we feel a greater need to preserve views where we have this accessibility.
8. Decision isn't irreversible, we can always stop cutting the willows and let them grow back.
9. If we don't provide the view from that location, people will go off-trail and seek the view elsewhere, creating more problems.

Cons

1. This is not a one-time only task but creates an ongoing maintenance responsibility at a time when staff is stretched thin.
2. The natural regeneration of willow is part of the planned restoration work, and this is a teaching opportunity to show recovery of one of the region's most threatened wetland types (bottomland hardwood wetlands).

3. Conditions have changed since the viewing blind was placed and we should accept that it is becoming a forest shelter rather than a viewing blind.
4. Instead of cutting willows, look at how the Smith blind can be retro-fitted (second level) to better viewing opportunities.
5. People can still view wintering waterfowl at the Bybee blind so we don't need to damage habitat at Smith blind for that view.
6. Cutting vegetation to preserve birding opportunities provides preferential treatment to birders; we asked paddlers to accept the loss of 6 months' paddling every year, and bass anglers to accept the loss of one of the state's best bass fisheries, so we could restore habitat at Smith-Bybee. Plus, birders can still view the waterfowl elsewhere at S&B, just like paddlers can still get on the water at some times of year so the opportunities are not completely lost under current conditions.
7. Cutting the willows will remove the incentive to provide other creative solutions, such as placing a higher platform or providing interpretive information about the evolving wetland forest or improving the social/bandit trail beyond the Bybee blind.
8. We decided to locate the canoe launch 0.25 miles from the main facilities because it was not a good idea to cut the willows to accommodate the paddlers. The Smith blind situation is no different, it's just accommodating a different group.