

Salem River Crossing Project
Proposed FHWA Section 4(f) de minimis Comment Opportunity
Wallace Marine Park
Wallace Natural Area
Willamette River Water Trail

COMMENT OPPORTUNITY FOR PROPOSED FHWA SECTION 4(f) *de minimis* IMPACT TO WALLACE MARINE PARK, WALLACE NATURAL AREA, and WILLAMETTE RIVER WATER TRAIL. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has proposed to construct a new bridge across the Willamette River in Salem, as well as other road system modifications in North and West Salem. The purpose of the proposed Salem River Crossing Project is to improve mobility and safety for people and freight for local, regional, and through-travel across the Willamette River in the Salem-Keizer metropolitan area while alleviating congestion on the Center Street and Marion Street Bridges and on the connecting highway and arterial street systems.

Wallace Marine Park

ODOT plans to permanently acquire 1.4 acres from Wallace Marine Park near the intersection of Glen Creek Road/park entrance road and the proposed new Marine Drive; this represents 1.6% of the total park property.

Wallace Marine Park is owned and maintained by the City of Salem and is located in West Salem at 200 Glen Creek Road NW. The City of Salem is the official with jurisdiction for this park. Existing facilities at Wallace Marine Park include the softball complex, four soccer fields, an open turf field, a boat dock and launch, restrooms, a concessions building, drinking fountains, three picnic areas, benches, two playgrounds, four parking lots, and an unpaved pedestrian trail. The primary function of Wallace Marine Park is for active recreational use, although the park also functions as a place for passive recreational use (i.e., picnicking).

Anticipated impacts to Wallace Marine Park are (from north to south) are:

- The construction of the proposed Marine Drive and adjacent multi-use path would permanently incorporate a thin strip of land from the western edge of the park between Glen Creek Road and a point approximately 510 feet south of Glen Creek Road. From this point south for approximately another 330 feet to the southern boundary of the park the impact along the western edge of the park would be from fill and columns to support the elevated ramp from Marine Drive to OR 22. The impacted area is landscaped with trees and grass, but there are no existing or planned recreational amenities or features.
- The installation of a stormwater treatment swale/pond facility to the northeast of the intersection of Glen Creek Road NW and Marine Drive in tandem with the widening of this intersection would result in the incorporation of parkland that is landscaped with trees and grass but contains no existing or planned recreational amenities or features.

The area of Wallace Marine Park affected by the Salem River Crossing Project does not include any existing or planned recreational activities, features, and/or attributes that qualify the park as a Section 4(f) recreational property.

Wallace Natural Area

ODOT plans to permanently acquire 1.62 acres from Wallace Natural Area in the northern panhandle of the natural area; this represents 2.8% of the total natural area property.

The City of Salem's *Comprehensive Park System Master Plan Update* notes that 57.66 acres of riverfront city-owned property that was formerly considered part of Wallace Marine Park was re-classified as "natural area" and is now referred to as the "Wallace Natural Area". Wallace Natural Area is owned and maintained by the City of Salem, therefore the City of Salem is the official with jurisdiction for this resource.

Currently there are informal trails that traverse the Wallace Natural Area which allow visitors to engage in passive recreational pursuits such as birdwatching as well as access to the riverbank. Per the *Draft Wallace Marine Park Master Plan*, a formal non-paved crushed-rock trail network is planned through the southern part of the natural area east of Wallace Marine Park; the area of these planned trails is well south of the area that would be impacted by the Salem River Crossing Project. Overall the Wallace Natural Area consists of an overstory of poplars and alder, with

an understory of ferns, dogwood, Oregon grape, grasses, and sedges. Invasive species such as English ivy and blackberry are rampant along the river frontage.

The impact from the Salem River Crossing Project would be associated with the installation of six bridge piers in the northern panhandle of Wallace Natural Area and the introduction of an elevated bridge structure over the natural area. The total amount of actual ground disturbance at the Wallace Natural Area from the installation of the bridge piers would be 0.12 acres. Because the Project would acquire all land underneath the elevated roadway structure, the total size of land at Wallace Natural Area that will be permanently incorporated by the Project is 1.62 acres; this represents 2.8% of the total size of the natural area.

The part of Wallace Natural Area that would be permanently incorporated by the Salem River Crossing Project is undeveloped and does not contain any existing or proposed park features or attributes, therefore no impacts to any recreational activities are anticipated as a result of Project actions. The area to be permanently incorporated consists predominantly of non-native forest and other vegetation.

Willamette River Water Trail

The Willamette River Water Trail is 217 miles in length and extends from Creswell, Oregon in the south to St. Helens, Oregon in the north. The Willamette River Water Trail, which consists of the entirety of the river (from west bank to east bank), is utilized by non-motorized watercraft users such as kayakers and canoeists. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) is the official with jurisdiction for the Willamette River Water Trail.

The Salem River Crossing Project would result in a permanent incorporation of the Willamette River Water Trail resource due to the installation of concrete bridge piers in the river. Four piers would be placed in the river itself; each column is expected to be approximately 8 feet by approximately 16 feet, for a total permanent incorporation of approximately 512 square feet of the Willamette River Water Trail resource.

The Salem River Crossing Project was designed to provide for a wide and open west channel (around McLane Island) that would be navigable for all potential watercraft using this stretch of the Willamette River. The presence of the new bridge piers will not inhibit the ability of non-motorized water craft users to continue to recreationally utilize the water trail in the same manner they do currently; and, the presence of a new bridge structure over the river would be a similar condition for users to that which they experience currently with the multitude of other bridges that cross the Willamette River in other segments of the river. No impacts to any recreational watercraft using the Willamette River Water Trail during construction are anticipated.

The design of the Salem River Crossing Project has and will continue to ensure that recreation activities that currently occur within the Willamette River Water Trail will be maintained both during and after construction of the Project. As such, the Project would not adversely impact the recreational activities, features, and attributes that qualify the river trail as a Section 4(f) resource.

Conclusion

Based on an evaluation of Project impacts, the Federal Highway Administration is proposing Section 4(f) *de minimis* findings for the impacts described in this notice at Wallace Marine Park, Wallace Natural Area, and the Willamette River Water Trail. ODOT, on behalf of FHWA, is seeking comment on these proposed Section 4(f) *de minimis* findings.

This notice is seeking comments explicitly related to the proposed Section 4(f) *de minimis* findings described herein, not to issues related to any other aspects of the Salem River Crossing Project. Comments on the Project itself can be provided following the publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). FHWA expects to publish the FEIS for the Salem River Crossing Project near the end of 2017. The Record of Decision will address all comments received within 30 days of the publication of the FEIS. Comments received by **July 28, 2017** in response to this notice that are not relevant to the Section 4(f) *de minimis* findings presented in this notice will not be considered as part of FHWA's Section 4(f) decision-making process.

FHWA will consider all Section 4(f) related comments on the proposed Section 4(f) *de minimis* findings prior to making a Section 4(f) decision for each of these three resources. Please provide written comments regarding the proposed Section 4(f) *de minimis* findings for Wallace Marine Park, Wallace Natural Area, and the Willamette River

Water Trail no later than **July 28, 2017** by contacting Anna Henson, ODOT Region Environmental Project Manager, via US post mail or email at: 100 Antelope Road, White City, Oregon 97503 **OR** Anna.Henson@odot.state.or.us. Please contact Anna Henson at 541.774.6376 if you have any questions.