



MEMORANDUM

To: Portland Water Bureau
From: Anita Cate Smyth, SPWS
Date: April 15, 2025
Re: **Bull Run Filtration Project – Wetland Evaluation**

The wetland evaluation process for the Portland Water Bureau's Filtration Facilities project occurred over several years as part of the overall vetting of potential building sites and pipeline alignments for raw and finished water. The original study area focused on an initial envelope of operation and anticipated pipeline alignment corridors. The study expanded over time to include additional areas of investigation, allowing consideration of new alignment possibilities that arose during the multidisciplinary evaluation process.

Wetlands and waters of the state were a primary consideration in the evaluation process of all the alternatives. A wetland delineation was conducted for the entire project area, inclusive of the filtration plant, pipeline alignments, staging areas, access points, and areas temporarily disturbed by construction. The nature of the wetlands in the study area, preliminary alternatives analysis discussions, and regulatory concerns were presented and discussed at Streamlining Meetings attended by Melinda Butterfield, Department of State Lands (DSL) Aquatic Resource Specialist and Melody White, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Project Manager. The wetland delineation report (WD2023-0085) received concurrence from the DSL on July 10, 2023. Through the alternatives analysis process, the Water Bureau succeeded in avoiding wetlands by employing measures such as locating pipes in roadways and using trenchless construction techniques.

As documented in Clean Water Act¹ and Removal / Fill² permitting for the Bull Run Filtration Facilities Project, the project successfully avoided all permanent impacts to wetlands and water resources subject to federal and state regulation. Temporary impacts were reduced to a single location between the toe of the Dodge Park Boulevard roadway embankment and an area of active agricultural use. Permits document that the affected area would be disturbed for a short period of time during the summer months when the site would be dry, and then restored to current contours and reseeded with native herbaceous species.

The area of wetland subject to temporary disturbance is 83 square feet in size. The dominant vegetation is reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*), both of which are noxious species on the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Noxious Species List³ and would be considered a nuisance species under Multnomah County⁴ rules. They are also listed as noxious

¹ USACE Nationwide Permit 58, NWP-2024-102, issued September 16, 2024; this approval includes the DEQ 401 Water Quality Certification as part of the authorization

² DSL General Authorization 64845-GA, issued April 2, 2024

³ <https://www.oregon.gov/oda/weeds/oregon-noxious-weeds/Pages/default.aspx>

⁴ <https://multco.us/info/nuisances>

agricultural weeds by the Multnomah County Soil and Water Conservation District⁵⁶. A photograph of the subject wetland prior to any construction activity is provided below.



Dewatering

The possibility of the pipeline creating a dewatering effect was discussed with DSL and USACE staff during the permitting process. Per the permit application documents, trench cutoff walls will be installed at intervals to prevent expedited conveyance of water through pipe bedding material that is more permeable than the native soil. This is a standard practice and the agencies were satisfied that this would address the possibility of inadvertent wetland loss through dewatering.

Best management practices

Best management practices for sediment control were presented in the DSL General Authorization permit application as follows. They are part of the approved permits which are part of the contract documents for the Bull Run Filtration Facility Projects. The following clip was taken from the Nationwide Permit application package Supplemental Narrative dated February 24, 2024.

⁵ <https://wmswcd.org/species/invasive-reed-canarygrass/>

⁶ <https://emswcd.org/on-your-land/weeds/weeds-to-know/blackberry/>

Best Management Practices include the following:

- Isolation of the work area with construction fencing, as well as sediment control fencing and compost filter socks along the roadway embankment and the edges of the disturbance area, including the topsoil stockpile areas shown on Appendix A.4.
- Straw wattles in the area of the existing stormwater pipe under Dodge Park Boulevard.
- Contractor will prepare a dewatering plan for accumulated water from precipitation and uncontaminated groundwater seepage in excavation.
 - Dewatering systems will be required to filter the discharge through at least two sediment barriers including a filter bag and sediment fence.
 - Dewatering systems will be required to limit discharge quantity as specified for each stormwater basin.
- Dust control will be addressed by water spraying and covering of soil piles to mitigate wind-blown soil.
- Temporary soil stabilization following construction will be done with blown straw, compost, and/or tackifier. During inclement weather, additional stabilization will be provided to prevent sediment discharge.
- Permanent soil stabilization will be provided by establishment of an herbaceous groundcover via seeding at the earliest appropriate seeding season following construction. The blend below will provide permanent stabilization of disturbed soil.

Mitigation

Federal and state wetland laws do not require *compensatory* mitigation for temporary wetland impacts; this is reserved to compensate for wetland *loss*, which is defined as a permanent loss of wetland function or area. Because no permanent impact was proposed, no compensatory mitigation was required by DSL or the USACE. While construction is not within the scope of this land use proceeding, note that the effects from construction of the project are mitigated by restoring the surface contours and reseeded with native plant species. Functionally, this would represent a post-construction improvement above the pre-construction conditions, as no native plant species were identified at this location in the wetland delineation report.

Conclusion

After years of alternatives generation and analysis, all permanent impact to wetlands and waters of the state were fully avoided. The only temporary wetland impact is to an 82 square foot area dominated by noxious weeds which will be restored with native plantings. As a result of the limited temporary impact and the post-construction functional improvement to the impacted area through native vegetation restoration, the project will not adversely affect wetlands.