



Notice of Section 4(f) *de minimis* Finding

This notice serves as an opportunity to comment on the NEPA Section 4(f) *de minimis* finding for the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) Willow Creek Fish Passage Restoration Project.

Project: SDOT Willow Creek Fish Passage Restoration Project (the Project)

Applicant: SDOT

Land Owner:

The Project will be constructed on three parcels (King County parcels 2568300210, 2568300211, and 2568300220) that are part of the LaVilla Meadows Natural Area, the 4(f) resource. The parcels are owned by the City of Seattle and managed by Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR).

Project construction would also occur within right of way (ROW) owned by the City of Seattle and managed by SDOT, and on three adjacent private properties —2503 NE 100th Street, 2511 NE 100th Street, and 2518 NE 100th Street (King County parcels 1566100005, 1566100010, and 2568300207).

Location:

The Project is located near 2500 NE 100th Street.

Proposal:

This Project will correct a partial fish passage barrier by rerouting Willow Creek so that it no longer flows through a culvert that creates a partial barrier to fish passage. To do this, the Project will reconfigure the west end of NE 100th Street as a cul de sac located to the east of the west end of the street. The Project will then reroute Willow Creek to flow north between the west end of NE 100th Street and the South Branch of Thornton Creek (SB Thornton Creek), east along the north side of NE 100th Street's current location, and then north to Willow Creek's confluence with SB Thornton Creek. The Project will improve habitat within and adjacent to the creek; plant and replace groundcover, shrubs and trees; update stormwater drainage connections in the vicinity of NE 100th Street; and install a pedestrian bridge linking the cul de sac to the LaVilla Meadows Natural Area, thereby maintaining access to that 4(f) resource. SDOT is planning to construct this Project in 2024.

Details on aspects of this Project are as follows:

- The relocation of Willow Creek around the west end of NE 100th Street will eliminate two culverts. The culvert crossing NE 100th Street is currently identified by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as a fish passage barrier. The removal of this culvert will restore fish access to approximately 420 linear feet (3,780 square feet) of Willow Creek upstream of the culvert, generally the distance between the culvert and the fish passage barrier upstream at NE 98th Street.
- The rerouting of Willow Creek will increase the creek's length and meandering, resulting in the creation of about 78 linear feet (1,816 square feet) of Willow Creek stream channel.
- The rerouting of Willow Creek will improve its confluence with SB Thornton Creek by widening and slightly altering the geometry of the confluence. About 62 square feet of the confluence and SB Thornton Creek will be temporarily impacted during construction.
- The improvement of overall stream and riparian habitat function in Willow Creek and its confluence with SB Thornton Creek will occur by:
 - Installing more large woody material than would be needed to meet the recommendations of Fox and Bolton¹ for a degraded urban stream.
 - Including slash piles of smaller woody material that will naturally recruit to Willow Creek and the downstream system of SB Thornton Creek over time.
 - Restoring the relocated Willow Creek channel with streambed sediment sized to both balance observations from its reference reach upstream of the Project and anticipate how the future channel will settle over time.
 - Restoring all temporarily impacted riparian areas with native riparian vegetation, including a combination of trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and emergent herbaceous vegetation where suitable.

Section 4(f) Information:

The Federal Highways Administration proposes that this project will have a *de minimis* impact on resources qualifying for protection under Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act of 1966. Section 4(f) resources include properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, public parks, recreation areas, and wildlife refuges. A *de minimis* impact will not adversely affect the features, attributes, or activities qualifying the properties for protection under Section 4(f). Per 23 CFR 74.5(b), this opportunity is provided to comment on the *de minimis* determination for the project described above.

Affected Section 4(f) Properties:

This Project would affect three SPR parcels (King County parcels 2568300210, 2568300211, and 2568300220) that are part of the LaVilla Meadows Natural Area. This natural area, a public park, is a 4(f) resource. Overall, the Project is anticipated to benefit or minimally affect this 4(f) resource, as the Project will preserve or improve its existing uses of providing wildlife habitat and access for passive recreation, such as for recreational wildlife viewing.

Minimization Measures:

SDOT has worked throughout Project design to improve the benefit and minimize the impact the Project will have on the 4(f) resource. The LaVilla Meadows Natural Area's function of providing habitat and passive recreation will be improved by the Project's rerouting of, and improving the habitat within and adjacent to, the creek; the planting of new groundcover, shrubs and trees; the updating of stormwater drainage connections; the installation of an accessible pedestrian bridge; and signage detailing park open hours and other access information.

Project impacts were kept to a minimum by keeping the majority of Project infrastructure improvements in the ROW and off the three SPR parcels of the 4(f) resource, with just the pedestrian bridge having one abutment on the SPR properties. The pedestrian bridge will replace informal footpaths leading from NE 100th St onto the three SPR parcels and may also improve opportunities for community members to interact with Willow Creek and the restoration process of the SPR parcels affected by the Project.

While the Project will remove landscaped and native vegetation from the three SPR parcels to construct the rerouted creek and install the pedestrian bridge, the Project will plant replacement vegetation consisting of a diverse native assemblage of riparian vegetation adjacent to and within the margins of Willow Creek and SB Thornton Creek. Though the replacement vegetation may take 10 years or more to mature, it is anticipated to provide increased wildlife habitat opportunities. All removed trees will be replaced at a greater than 2:1 ratio either within the three SPR parcels or within adjacent undeveloped portions of the ROW.

Finally, while two informal dirt, gravel, and mulch adjacent parking spots exist along NE 100th Street adjacent to the three SPR parcels, the new cul-de-sac configuration will provide a reserved parking spot for SPR maintenance vehicles while other street parking in the neighborhood will allow parking for visitors to the Lavilla Meadows Natural Area.

Comment Period:

Comments will be accepted for 21 days, through 5:00 PM (27 April 2023).

Contact:

To submit comments, contact the following:
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