

Salmon Recovery Funding Board

Individual Comment Form



Lead Entity:	WRIA 8 LE (King County)
Project Number:	18-1259
Project Name:	Meadowdale Beach Park and Estuary Restoration
Project Sponsor:	King Co Water & Land Res
Grant Manager:	Lambert, Josh

	Date	Status¹
Post-Application	9/26/18	POC
Final	10/23/18	POC

PROJECT SUMMARY *(for Review Panel reference only)*

Snohomish County will complete a Puget Sound nearshore restoration project at Meadowdale Beach Park located at the N end of Browns Bay at the inlet of Lund's Gulch Creek. They will re-establish a historic (pre-railroad) pocket estuary creating 1.3 acres of high functioning, low energy, sustainable rearing habitat for non-natal juvenile Chinook (threatened), coho, and chum salmon. Elements include: a) restoring freshwater and tidal exchange by replacing undersized 6' wide culvert under the BNSF rail-line and 130 lf (2,000 CY) of shoreline armor with a 5-span railroad bridge and removing 17,000 CY of post-railroad construction fill; b) improving (X? LF) instream habitat by removing 75 lf of stream bank armoring, placing LWD, and planting native vegetation. The 90-foot opening and widened channel meander will restore sediment delivery processes to the nearshore (80-250 CY/YR) along a section of Puget Sound considered "most degraded" (PSNERP). Project will also improve quantity and quality of creek delta and lower stream reach habitats known to be used by juvenile Chinook salmon originating in large river systems. Restoring healthy coastal ecosystems to co-exist with critical transportation infrastructure offers a resilient solution to a long-standing conflict. The project also enhances recreational and educational experiences for the 65,000 annual visitors, addressing public safety, and providing ADA access to one of only three saltwater access parks in Snohomish County. Preliminary Design funded by SRFB Project 15-1056.

FINAL REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS

Date: October 23, 2018
Full Panel Review

Final Project Status: POC

- 1. If the project is a POC, please identify the SRFB criteria used to determine the status of the project:**
"Criterion 4. The project has a high cost relative to the anticipated benefits and the project sponsor failed to justify the costs to the satisfaction of the review panel." (SRFB Manual 18, p 143)

- 2. If the project is Conditioned, the following language will be added to the project agreement:**

- 3. Other comments:**

The Salmon Recovery Technical Review Panel appreciates the constructive dialogue with the project sponsor regarding the evaluation of project costs. We are impressed by the sponsor's ability to move the project forward with Burlington Northern and the large amount of funding being provided by local stakeholders. We understand the sponsor has maximized the habitat restoration benefit potential at the site, and the project offers a unique opportunity to provide salmon access and habitat connectivity beyond the railroad grade.

While the project will be funded through multiple sources, the Technical Review Panel must consider the proposed project in the broader context of salmon recovery. The \$13.5 million restoration project, with \$2.3 million (ESRP, ALEA, and SRFB) in habitat-related funding, would restore only 1.3 acres of estuary habitat along a relatively small stream draining an urbanized watershed. The approximately \$10.5 million per acre cost of restored habitat at Meadowdale Beach would be precedent setting for future restoration projects and warrants review by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

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POST-APPLICATION REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS

Date: September 26, 2018

Project Status: POC

Full Panel Review

1. If the project is a POC, identify the SRFB criteria used to determine the status of the project:

Criterion 4. The project has a high cost relative to the anticipated benefits and the project sponsor failed to justify the costs to the satisfaction of the review panel.

2. If the project is a POC, identify the changes that would make this a technically sound project:

Given the constraints and fixed costs associated with the railroad crossing of Lund's Gulch Creek, the only option to improve the cost-benefit comparison would be to expand the estuary area being inundated by tidal process.

3. If the project is Conditioned, the following language will be added to the project agreement:

¹CLEAR=Cleared to proceed; CONDITIONED=Cleared to proceed with a condition; NMI=Needs More Information; POC=Project of Concern; NOTEWORTHY=Exemplary Project

4. General comments:

The habitat-related portion of the Meadowdale Beach Park and Estuary Restoration project is estimated to cost \$10.5 million to construct and also includes roughly \$1 million in design costs and \$2 million for an operating and management agreement with Burlington Northern railroad (BNSF). The overall cost for the restoration of 1.3 acres of estuarine habitat (exclusive of park amenities) is \$13.5 million or approximately \$10.5 million per acre of restored habitat. While the SRFB grant request is for only \$800,000, much of the money to pay for the project is expected to come from additional state funding programs, such as ESRP, ALEA, and WWRP grants, that are often used by other salmon recovery projects.

As stated in the 15-1056 Review Panel comments, the roughly \$10 million per acre cost of the proposed restoration project is significantly higher than past estuary and shoreline restoration projects submitted for SRFB funding. For example, one of the highest-cost SRFB-funded nearshore projects presented to date is the Fir Island Farm restoration project (12-1205) that cost approximately \$17 million but restores approximately 130 acres of nearshore/estuary habitat for a cost of about \$130,000 per acre. The total costs (including design) for a similar type of project to replace an active railroad culvert with a bridge and improve public park amenities (Titlow Estuary Restoration Design 16-1575) is estimated to be about \$8 million, but restoration costs translate to about \$1.5 million per acre due to the greater amount of estuarine area (5.5 acres) being restored compared to Meadowdale Beach.

The Review Panel has been formed to specifically highlight projects for the SRFB where the estimated costs may outweigh the anticipated benefits of the project. The proposed Meadowdale Beach Park and Estuary Restoration project would cost almost 10 times more per acre than other previously funded estuary restoration projects. The largest factor in the high cost-per-acre calculation is the small amount of area being restored for a small stream draining into Puget Sound. While we recognize that many other community values are being addressed at the project site, the Review Panel is asked to focus on evaluating the overall costs and biological benefits of a project independent of these other societal benefits.

The Review Panel recognizes that the project sponsor has worked diligently with multiple stakeholders to move this project forward and maximize salmon habitat benefits. We understand that the high costs of the project are in large part attributable to working with BNSF and their design requirements. We also very much appreciate that the sponsor has revised their revegetation cost estimates based on our feedback. However, the Review Panel has a responsibility to identify such projects of concern for the SRFB and allow them to make a final decision that can consider a broader view of the project costs and benefits to Puget Sound Chinook salmon recovery.

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DRAFT APPLICATION / SITE VISIT REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS

Note that comments provided in this section are preliminary and based on basic information provided in the project pre-application and site visit. Full Review Panel review will occur after the final application materials are submitted for the project and may identify technical issues not previously discussed or identified.

Date: April 27, 2018

Project Site Visit? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Review Panel Member(s): Jeanette Smith and Steve Toth

1. Recommended improvements to make this a technically sound project according to the SRFB's criteria:

We recognize the unique opportunity to create a small pocket estuary in association with Lund's Gulch Creek given the disconnection between the shoreline and uplands due to the Burlington Northern railroad grade. We also understand that juvenile chinook and other salmon species are likely to utilize the restored estuary area. The project is well designed to maximize the available habitat. Unfortunately, the restored estuarine area is just over an acre in size and has an overall price tag of nearly \$14 million (with a \$2 million SRFB grant request). The cost-benefit ratio for restoration of 1.3 acres of habitat is about \$10.6 million per restored acre. As outlined in the 2015 Review Panel comment form for the design grant (15-1056), the cost-benefit ratio is far higher than any other SRFB-funded shoreline restoration project. We believe that the Review Panel will again consider this proposal a project of concern due to the high cost relative to the anticipated benefits for the recovery of Puget Sound chinook salmon.

Please provide greater detail/justification for costs outlined in the overall riparian/estuarine planting element listed at \$461,000 as this per acre cost appears quite high for 1.7 acres of riparian and 1.3 acres of estuarine area and includes large amounts for coir matting and goose exclosures. Is the estuarine area expected to be high energy or high slope necessitating the coir matting? Was a more passive restoration approach for the intertidal/tidal marsh portion of the estuary considered?

2. Review Panel Comments:

3. **Staff Comments:** Please see comments from your grant manager provided through the PRISM Application Review tool, which will be provided by May 17, 2018.



SPONSOR RESPONSE INSTRUCTIONS

Revise your project proposals using "track changes" and update any relevant PRISM questions and attachments. Fill out the section at the end of your project proposal to document how you responded to comments.