



Staff Report

File #: 23-356

Version: 1

Date: 9/25/2023

Item #: 3.3a.

TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Keith Stahley, City Manager

FROM: Brian D. Martin, PE, Public Works Director

SUBJECT:

Continue partnership with Willamette Riverkeeper and approve allocation of in-kind match for grant application to reduce aquatic invasive weeds in Oxbow Slough.

Ward(s): Ward 7

Councilor(s): Nordyke

Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

Result Area(s): Natural Environment Stewardship

SUMMARY:

Over the past four years, the City has been a partner with Willamette Riverkeeper, working together to restore habitat and reduce the invasive species *ludwigia* to help open the water in Willamette Slough in Minto Brown Island Park. This project is now coming to a close. In October 2023, with the City's support, Willamette Riverkeeper will apply to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) for funding to conduct a similar project upstream of the original area, this time at Oxbow Slough. Willamette Riverkeeper has requested the City support the project by providing a letter of support and approximately \$70,000 of in-kind match in the form of technical advice, environmental monitoring, logistics assistance, disposal of any collected debris, and public outreach over the five year period of the project.

ISSUE:

Shall City Council provide a letter of support for Willamette Riverkeeper's grant application to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and commit an in-kind match of approximately \$70,000 over five years in support of the grant-funded project?

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize the Mayor to provide a letter of support for Willamette Riverkeeper's grant application to

the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and commit an in-kind match of approximately \$70,000 over five years in support of the grant-funded project.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

1. The OWEB restoration grants program provides grants for watershed projects that protect or restore watershed functions. Minto-Brown Island Park is an eligible location for this grant source.
2. Willamette Riverkeeper will be the applicant for the grant. If awarded, the grant will be managed by Willamette Riverkeeper.
3. Oxbow slough is infested with non-native water primrose (*Ludwigia spp.*) and waterweed (*Egeria densa*). These two invasive species are currently estimated to cover 75 percent of the total 55 acres of water surface area.
4. Willamette Riverkeeper will contract with a licensed herbicide applicator who has conducted this type of work on other public lands in the Willamette Valley.
5. The OWEB restoration grants program requires a 25% match, which can be cash or in-kind. If approved by Council, the City would provide its 25% in-kind match through staff time and resources related to technical advice, environmental monitoring, logistics assistance, and public outreach. The City match is estimated at \$70,000 over the five years of the project.
6. Including the \$70,000 in-kind support and the \$280,000 grant request, the total value of the grant from the OWEB program for the project at Oxbow Slough is estimated at \$350,000.
7. If the grant is awarded, a new Memorandum of Understanding will be signed between the City and Willamette Riverkeeper.
8. The deadline for the full proposal to be submitted by Willamette Riverkeeper to OWEB is October 30, 2023.
9. The funding decision will be made in April 2024 and the project could begin as early as May 2024

BACKGROUND:

Oxbow Slough is located in the southern portion of Minto-Brown Island Park and is approximately 55 acres (Attachment 1). The slough is infested with non-native water primrose (*Ludwigia spp.*) and waterweed (*Egeria densa*), which form dense colonies, inhibit native plants, decrease oxygen, impair aquatic habitat for fish, turtles, and amphibians, and impede recreational access. It is estimated that 75% of Oxbow Slough is now covered by these invasive species during the growing season.

Additionally, the riparian areas adjacent to the sloughs contain dense areas of invasive blackberry (*Rubus armenicus*), Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), and English ivy (*Hedera helix*), which adversely impact native plants and wildlife.

The 1,205-acre Minto-Brown Island Park is classified in the *Comprehensive Parks System Master Plan* as a natural area. As such, reducing invasive plants and enhancing natural habitat is an important component of park management. Oxbow Slough was previously used by the public for recreation including fishing, paddling, and swimming. The project would improve conditions for these recreational activities in the Slough.

The project will reduce aquatic and terrestrial weeds through an integrated pest management program that will begin with water quality and habitat monitoring, and include herbicide application over two to three years, followed by planting along the banks and another two to three years of combination of herbicide application and manual removal of plants. This method has proven to be the most effective way to reduce these invasive species. The project is expected to run from 2024 to approximately 2028.

Robert D. Chandler, PhD, PE
Assistant Public Works Director

Attachments:

1. Map of Oxbow Slough at Minto-Brown Island Park