

March 7, 2022

MEMORANDUM

To: Campus Planning Committee

From: Liz Thorstenson, Campus Planning  
Campus Planning and Facilities Management (CPFM)

Subject: **Record** of the February 15, 2022 Campus Planning Committee Meeting

Attending: Dean Livelybrooks (chair), Deborah Butler, Liska Chan, Claressa Davis, Zak Gosa-Lewis, Michael Harwood, Shawn Kahl, Ken Kato, Moira Kiltie, Janet Rose, Philip Speranza, Christine Thompson, Kyle Trefny, Chuck Triplett, Laurie Woodward

CPC Staff: Liz Thorstenson (Campus Planning)

Guests: Craig Ashford (General Counsel), Jeff Diez (Biology), Emily Eng (Campus Planning), Michael Geffel (Landscape Architecture), Harper Keeler (Landscape Architecture), Jeff Krueger (JK Environments), Aaron Olsen (Campus Planning), Abby Pierce (Landscape Architecture Student), Bitty Roy (Biology), Masayo Simon (Landscape Architecture Fellow), Cami Thompson (University Advancement)

**CPC Agenda**

Staff shared that each agenda item would be presented consecutively, with questions and comments reserved and consolidated at the end of the agenda item presentations.

**1. Willamette River Natural Area Landscape Management Plan – Review and Comment**

Background: The purpose of this agenda item was to review and comment on the Willamette River Natural Area Landscape Management Plan for the Willamette River Natural Area.

Campus Planning and Facilities Management (CPFM) is developing a landscape management plan that supports the long-term vision established in the *Campus Plan* for the Willamette Natural Area designated open space. As an implementation plan, the purpose of the landscape management plan is to provide more detailed guidance on

landscape maintenance activities, habitat management, and restoration efforts to preserve and improve habitat values while accommodating compatible education, research, and recreation uses. See one-page summary in mailer. Because this is an implementation plan, it is not an action item for the committee but CPFM is soliciting input.

Staff reviewed relevant *Campus Plan* principles and patterns, and the locations and definitions of *Campus Plan* natural areas, including the Willamette Natural Area designated open space.

Aaron Olsen (Campus Planning) gave an overview of how the first three agenda item projects relate to the Willamette riverfront and to each other, and reviewed the purpose of the Willamette River Natural Area Landscape Management plan, project process, and key aspects of the plan.

Jeff Krueger (JK Environments) provided an explanation of the value of this plan, additional local and regional project context, and project site examples.

## **2. Landscape Laboratory Research Project – Review and Comment**

Background: The purpose of this agenda item was to review and comment on the temporary Landscape Laboratory Research project located in the Willamette River Natural Area.

Beginning in 2018, Michael Geffel, Professor of Practice, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Oregon, has been conducting research in the riverfront area to explore how maintenance using “drift mowing” can better control blackberry while supporting meadow succession. Michael’s research has been coordinated with Facilities Services maintenance regime and demonstrates a positive collaboration between research and operations. As an expansion of the Landscape Laboratory concept Michael is proposing to expand the area of “drift mowing” as a temporary use, incorporate temporary art, and install native annuals within the research area, and include interpretive installations providing information about the Landscape Laboratory. The intent is to have the annual plants and temporary art installed for the influx of pedestrians anticipated through this part of campus during the Oregon 2022 Track and Field Championships. The timeframe for using this space to support Landscape

Laboratory Research is on a year-to-year basis. Because this proposal is for a temporary use for research, it is not an action item for the committee but CPFM is soliciting input.

Staff reviewed relevant *Campus Plan* principles and patterns.

Michael Geffel (Landscape Architecture) provided additional project details and goals, project process, research findings, site information, project examples, and schedule.

### **3. Willamette Valley Prairie Restoration Research Project – Review and Comment**

Background: The purpose of this agenda item was to review and comment on the temporary Willamette Valley Prairie Restoration Research Project located in the Willamette Design Area.

Jeff Diez, Institute of Ecology and Evolution, University of Oregon, proposes the creation of “restoration gardens” as a temporary use to support research, education, and restoration of Willamette Valley prairie. The project will be a collaboration of other UO faculty and graduate students in the UO chapter of the Society of Ecological Restoration. The general goals of the research project will be:

- To contribute to general understanding of plant population and community ecology through tests of modern ecological theory
- To use ecological research to inform prairie restoration and management
- To help support the use of the unique UO riverfront as a premier site for combined research, education, and student engagement

The research project will create visually appealing “restoration gardens” (colorful mix of species) consisting of native species common to the Willamette Valley prairie ecosystems. The seed mix will include annual and perennial native forbs and grasses with seeds sourced locally from Friends of Buford Park nursery. The timeframe for the research will be three years (Fall 2022 – Summer 2025) at which point there would be an opportunity to re-evaluate the research and determine next steps. The final location for the research project will be coordinated with the Willamette River Natural Area Landscape Management Plan recommendations. Because this proposal is for a temporary use for research, it is not an action item for the committee but CPFM is soliciting input.

Staff reviewed relevant *Campus Plan* principles and patterns.

Olsen provided an overview of the project details and timeline.

Jeff Diez (Biology) provided an overview of the project process and goals.

**Discussion (for all agenda items):**

The following is a summary of questions and comments from committee members:

- Members support the presentations, research projects, ideas, collaboration, and involvement.
- Will materials be available for outreach to donors who may have interest in this type of restoration work?
- The Alumni Association has an E-newsletter called “Shout”, it reaches thousands of alumni, and is a good place to share project information.
- What are the impacts to the recreation fields in this area?
- Members support the use of wildflowers and goat mowing.
- Suggestion to include temporary interpretive signage with information about pre-settlement native grasslands.
- Students use the landscape circle area for picnics; this might disturb research uses if located in the area.
- Member support for the varied university disciplines collaborating in this area.

The following is a summary of questions and comments from guests:

- Will native vegetation diversity be monitored in the research studies?
- Move the wildflower planting to the center of the landscape circle?
- Has there been communication / coordination with Oregon ‘22 regarding the art installations?
- Suggestion to include native plants around the potential future sculpture placement.
- Compacted soil is preferred for native plants.

In response to questions and comments from committee members, Diez, Geffel, Krueger, and Olsen provided the following clarifications:

- During field mowing, native vegetation has been monitored each year, however no substantial change in native plant diversity was noted. The grasslands are mainly non-native species, and there has been no change.

- There has been a new observation of some wildlife using the space, which was not observed at the beginning of the project when this was a completely mown field. Prior to the drift mowing (2018) the field was mown short every year.
- Support for monitoring the wildflower seeding and results on the surrounding grasslands.
- The final project locations will be informed by the Willamette River Natural Area Landscape Management Plan. Future additional areas may be used for further research; those locations are open for discussion. Diez's research project is in a 3-year trial period; focus is currently on areas that are disturbed.
- The landscape circle is a special location and will require future planning for creative design. East of the landscape circle is heavily compacted by utility work, and further east is dominated by meadow grass.
- Support for incorporating space for students and public into the research areas, e.g. use of benches.
- Student involvement will be key to help answer the research questions; a Population Ecology class will ideally interact with this experiment. It is a prime location; goal is to make an interactive, useful space also for teaching.
- Michael Geffel has met with Travel Oregon regarding the art installation and opportunities for promotion in conjunction with Oregon 22.
- Geffel's research or the Landscape Management Plan will not impact the existing recreation fields in the area or preclude any future development of recreation fields or other future uses.
- CPFM is considering introducing goat mowing in Spring 2022 to remove blackberry.
- When the Landscape Management Plan is completed, the information will be ready to share with others, e.g. working with Communications and celebrating this project work.
- Regarding habitat restoration and site management, both research proposals utilize native seed in areas that are already disturbed; there is no conflict, and building up the native seed bank is a positive outcome.
- As temporary uses, some of these prairie areas might eventually transition to, for example, riparian forests. Short term uses are very compatible and could work toward the overall restoration of the site. Applying seed as soon as possible to the site is important to take advantage of the natural moisture currently occurring in that area. Both projects need to be located on disturbed soil for success and will require site preparation.

- The habitat advisory team identified the landscape circle area as a gateway to the Willamette River system and an opportunity to highlight native plants. This area is highly visible with an estimated 1.6 million trips across the Frohnmayer Bridge per year.
- One possible idea for use of the landscape circle area is placement of a phenology clock in the circle.
- The research plots are not fenced off; purpose is to engage people, being mindful and coordinating how all uses can coexist.
- The CPC previously approved a portion of the landscape circle area for a future sculpture; there are many potential uses for this area.

Action: No formal action was requested.