



Towey Ecological Services

24211 S. Harmony Rd.
Cheney, WA 99004
509-939-5203

Date: July 4, 2023

RE: Wetland Buffer Mitigation Plan Review-14073.0253 14182.0402

The City of Medical Lake requested a review of available information related to the proposed project. The review was conducted by William T. Towey, Towey Ecological Services (TES) (Spokane County Qualified Wetland Specialist, WA Dept. of Ecology Trained-E. WA Wetland Rating System- 20+ years of conducting wetland assessments and wetland buffer mitigation plans in Eastern Washington). A site visit was conducted on June 30, 2023 to assess the habitat conditions and recommendations presented by T-O Engineers- Wetland Buffer Mitigation Plan, dated July, 2020. Information provided in the three reports and the site visit was utilized in the review towards the TES evaluation and conclusions.

Proposed Project Description:

The proposed project is for a single-family dwelling (1,248 square feet) and related infrastructure (1,452 square feet). The proposed project is located in the northeastern portion of the property. The project is proposed utilizing guidance provided by minimum lot setbacks and the critical areas (wetland) sections within 17.10.090-Wetlands of the CMLO.

Review of Existing Information:

Prior to the field site assessment, TES reviewed three wetland assessments conducted for the project parcel and adjacent parcel. Materials reviewed included:

- Vincent Barthels, (Spokane County Qualified Wetland Specialist, WA Dept. of Ecology Trained-E. WA Wetland Rating System) T-O Engineers, July 2020 Wetland Buffer Mitigation Plan
- Dr. Hugh Lefcort (PWS Wetland Scientist)- E. WA Wetland Rating Summary, May 17, 2023
- Dr. Robert Quinn (Spokane County Qualified Wetland Specialist, WA Dept. of Ecology Trained- E. WA Wetland Rating System)- Wetland Evaluation, May 7, 2020

The determinations of the three Wetland Assessment yielded:

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- Vincent Barthels- Category 3 Wetland (Water Quality 5, Hydrologic 7, Habitat 5)



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- Dr. Lefcort- Category 2 Wetland (Water Quality 7, Hydrologic 7, Habitat 6)
 - Dr. Quinn- Category 4 Wetland (Water Quality 4, Hydrologic 5, Habitat 4)

Existing Habitat Conditions:

Habitat species were identified in all three wetland assessments. TES conducted a site assessment on June 30, 2023. Intact wetland and upland plant species, as described in all three wetland assessments, were observed within a majority of the wetland area and perimeter. However, within the proposed project vicinity, the habitat was observed with relatively low function and value (minimal vegetation diversity, low habitat structural diversity, low composition of native plant (majority invasive/noxious weeds), presence of imported concrete material and an adjacent single-family dwelling).

The wetland area, in close proximity to the proposed project, is clearly of the lowest function and value and is fragmented from the remainder of the wetland habitat. The wetland vegetation in the proposed enhancement area is characterized by reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and transitions to thistle (*Cirsium* spp.) and bedstraw (*Galium aparine*), all three invasive/noxious weeds. The wetland area transitions to mostly intact snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) and wild rose (*Rosa* spp.) vegetation. The proposed project disturbance area is characterized by pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), snowberry and wild rose.

Proposed Compensatory Mitigation:

The proposed T-O mitigation plan recommends a suite of actions to increase the function and value of the wetland and wetland buffer, while providing perpetual protection for those enhanced conditions. The proposed mitigation actions include¹:

- Native vegetation planting (960 square feet)
- Maintenance and monitoring of mitigation actions
- Noxious weed removal
- Installation of protective fencing
- Wetland protection signage
- Perpetual deed restriction or conservation easement
- Removal of discarded concrete material

¹ Mitigation approach utilized guidance provided in the City Medical Lake Ordinance (CMLO) No.1108 Table 17.10.090 (5)-Measures to minimize impacts to wetlands Mitigation actions guided by CMLO 17.10.090 (Section F-Performance Standards), (Section G-Signs and fencing of wetlands) and (H- Compensatory Mitigation).



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The actions are targeting increased native plants within the wetland area, increased function and value over current conditions, and perpetual protection by deed restriction or conservation easements. The approximate disturbance of 2,700 square feet of wetland buffer will be compensated by the successful implementation of the recommended measures.

Comments received by the City of Medical Lake regarding the proposed project, included references for the need to increase compensatory mitigation within the proposed mitigation plan. The comments refer to Table 17.10.090 (6) that define *Wetland* mitigation ratios. The ratios outlined in the table are for *Wetland* mitigation not *Wetland Buffer* mitigation. Rather, wetland buffer mitigation is guided by Table 17.10.090 (5) and Sections F, G and H outlined in 17.10.090.

Discussion:

The three-wetland assessment reports reviewed relative to the proposed project area had three different determinations. A Category 3 (90' wetland buffer-medium intensity), a Category 2 (120' buffer-medium intensity) and a Category 4 (40' wetland buffer-medium intensity) were presented in the Barthels, Lefcort and Quinn assessments, respectively. Regardless of the category of wetland, a total area of 2,700 sq. ft of disturbance is being proposed. Given the proposed action would be within both the Category 3 and Category 2 wetland buffer, the enhancement and protection to the wetland area would be considered similarly based on guidance provided in the CMLO. If hypothetically, the Quinn rating was utilized, the project would be within reduced portions of the required wetland buffer, however, compensatory mitigation/protection measures would also be considered equally with a Category 2 or 3 wetland.

Therefore, for purposes of this review for consistency with the CMLO guidance, the analysis is based on protection and no net loss of the wetlands functions and values and does not address the disparities of the three different assessments. The T-O recommendations, applied to the protection and no net loss of function and value of the identified wetland, would be consistent when applied to any Category of wetland buffer.

Conclusion:

Based on the review of the available field wetland assessments (Barthels, Lefcort and Quinn) information, review of the proposed project and associated wetland buffer mitigation plan and conducting a field site visit, the proposed T-O Wetland Mitigation Plan sufficiently addresses the proposed project impacts.

The plan outlines an approach for enhancing and protecting wetland functions and values by implementing a suite of actions consistent with guidance from the CMLO. Due to the



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low function and value of the proposed enhancement/protection area, the proposed area affords the highest opportunity on the parcel for increasing function and values of both the wetland and wetland buffer. The enhancement will provide continuity with the well-established vegetation structure and higher functions and values that currently exists in the wetland and buffer areas outside of the proposed enhancement/protection area.