

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE**

**WEST EUGENE WETLANDS PROJECT
DANEBO DEMONSTRATION AREA**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT No. ORO90-95-13

I. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The West Eugene Wetlands (WEW) Project is a cooperative venture by the Eugene District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), to protect and restore historic wetland ecosystems in the southern Willamette Valley of Oregon. This unique project involves federal, state and local agencies and organizations in partnership to manage lands and resources in an urban area for multiple public benefits. Major partners in the WEW Project include the BLM, City of Eugene, The Nature Conservancy, and Lane Council of Governments. BLM became an active partner in 1993 when they adopted the local WEW Plan (WEWP)(City of Eugene 1992). To date the BLM has been primarily involved in land acquisition, with current ownership at approximately 600 acres.

A variety of management activities for the WEW project area are recommended in the WEWP. In 1994 the BLM began limited management actions on various properties that included planning, research on special status species, prescribed burning, environmental education, trash removal, and noxious weed control. Public use of federal land within the WEW Project is currently allowed under the Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR 8365.1-6).

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the WEWP(1992). The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of implementing a variety of land management actions on BLM ownership within the Danebo Demonstration Area, located in Township 17 S., Range 4 W, Section 33 (Appendix A). It is anticipated that these land management activities will be carried out over a 5 year period, at which time management of this site would be re-evaluated. These activities may include wetland creation and restoration, control of undesirable non-native plant species, special status species management, wildlife habitat improvements, and public use.

Additional management activities will be taking place along the Amazon Creek on an easement controlled by the City of Eugene. This project is referred to as the Amazon Creek Enhancement (ACE) Project and includes extension of the Fern Ridge Bike Path on the north bank, widening of the existing channel, and enhancement of the riparian vegetation. The existing easement will be amended as necessary to accommodate the Fern Ridge Bike Path construction. A public scoping meeting was held on January 25, 1995, that included conceptual representations of the ACE Project and management proposals for the Danebo Demonstration Area. The ACE Project is addressed in this EA solely in the context as how it will relate to the proposed BLM activities.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action (Alternative A)

The Proposed Action would implement a variety of land management activities on the Danebo Demonstration Area with an emphasis on wetland restoration and enhancement, and integrating this with environmental education. It would provide a small amount of wetland mitigation opportunities, primarily restoration of filled sites or changes to agricultural use. The wetland restoration work would be cost-shared with the City of Eugene, and they would retain the wetland mitigation "credits" for the site. All plant sources used in site restoration, including seed, transplants, or cuttings, would come from the WEW Project area. Much of the restoration work is scheduled for the summer and fall of 1995, although follow-up work will be continuing for several years. The public use features are contingent on funding and may not be constructed until 1996. The BLM would implement measures necessary to comply with City of Eugene ordinances regarding vegetation adjacent to public roads. The following are general descriptions of activities that are considered in the Proposed Action.

Office Site. This area will remain essentially unchanged from its present condition. Changes may be made to the office building and grounds to accommodate increased public use as a result of environmental educational programs (see Public Use section). Native plants may be established across the site to facilitate environmental interpretation and wildlife habitat.

Wetland Prairie. The management objective of this site is to maintain the wet prairie plant community. This would require a variety of measures to control non-native or other undesirable vegetation (see related section). Removal of woody species and blackberries is necessary for the long term existence of many wet prairie species. Woody species would be removed by hand or by low impact ATV during the dry season to minimize site disturbance. Material would be taken off-site and may be used to create brush piles as habitat for small birds and mammals. Tractor mowing may be used for additional treatment on sprouting vines and shrubs in future years. Study plots that were established in 1994 within the wet prairie would be maintained for long term monitoring and may require additional treatments as described in Environmental Assessment OR090-94-29.

North Bank Upland. This site would have fill removed down to native hydric soils (.5-2 feet) to match the approximate elevation of the adjacent wet prairie, except for a slightly elevated berm to prevent overland flow of surface water directly into Amazon Creek. The fill material would be hauled to an off-site disposal area. The restoration objective for this area is to establish native wet prairie similar to the adjacent site. Activities would include tillage and seeding, and may take place over two years. A portion of this site will be included in the ACE Project. The pump house adjacent to Beltline Road would be removed.

Willow Creek Confluence. A majority of the fill that has been placed on this site would be removed. Removal may take place in stages depending on suitable disposal sites, with some being stockpiled on-site prior to removal. In addition, native subsoil would be excavated along the Willow Creek channel to expand the creek channel and riparian zone. Excavation may include a small backwater pond adjacent to the channel and a broad fan-shaped delta as Willow Creek enters Amazon Creek. The existing steep banks would be benched and cut with more gradual slopes. Wetland topsoil would be removed and stockpiled prior to excavation of the subsoil, and then would be replaced within the floodplain zone to facilitate wetland and riparian vegetation. If additional topsoil is needed it would be brought over following excavation from the hay meadow north of the channel. Erosion control measures such as fiber mats and mulching would be used following excavation in the channel areas. Use of rock for rip-rap along bank edges may occur but will be discreet and placed only where

necessary for bank protection. In conjunction with the ACE Project, a side channel of Amazon Creek may be excavated along the north side of this site.

The edges of the site would be planted with native shrubs and trees to serve as a visual screen and buffer to the adjacent streets. Restoration objectives for the interior portions would be to establish native wet prairie and shrub habitat, using tilling, grading, and planting. Water that currently flows through a pipe on the northeast side into Amazon Creek would be redistributed across the restored wetland. This drain is presently fed by a ditch along the east side and a culvert draining from a large field east of Beltline Road.

Hay Meadow. A number of management actions would be implemented in this portion of the project. Over 50% of the site would be converted to seasonal wetland, both emergent and wet prairie plant communities. Sod from the non-native pasture grass and varying depths of soil (3-18 inches) will be excavated using heavy equipment from the lower elevations. This material would be redistributed and spread across the upland portions of the meadow. Emergent wetland species would be established in the western portion where maximum water depths would be 12-18 inches. Similar emergent species would be established in the existing channel that drains both the wetland prairie and the east half of the meadow. The remainder would be restored to wetland prairie. Tilling, grading, and planting would be used to establish the wetland species, and may continue over several years as necessary. The existing culvert draining the west end of the meadow would be blocked. The culvert draining the wetland prairie and east end would be replaced with a water control structure. This structure would allow excess water from the wet prairie to fill the west end of the hay meadow. It would also allow controlled outflow of water into Amazon Creek to prevent excessive flooding of the wet prairie. Water level monitoring in 1994-95 revealed that full retention of surface water across the Danebo site may result in excessive water depths through the lower portion of the wet prairie. Over the long term this may result in replacement of wet prairie species with those species more tolerant of extended inundation. The existing north bank of the Amazon Creek will be re-contoured as part of the ACE Project and tied in with the restored wetland.

Amazon Channel. The Amazon Creek and adjacent banks are covered by a City of Eugene easement. Existing and planned management related to the ACE Project is not part of this proposed action and analysis.

Control of Noxious Weeds and Non-native Plants. Measures taken to control undesirable vegetation may include mowing (multiple times if necessary), tilling, mechanical removal, hand removal of sprouts or seed heads, propane burning, and prescribed burning. It is anticipated that within 3 years much of this program will be reduced to occasional maintenance as seed sources are removed and native species are established. Blackberries would be virtually eliminated in some areas and simply controlled in others, depending upon site-specific objectives. These objectives include providing food and cover for a variety of wildlife, including many birds and small mammals. Blackberries would be retained in places where it would be easy to prevent their expansion, such as the hedgerow along the north property line. Teasel would be cut to avoid seed head maturity. Scotch broom would be pulled or cut in the late summer to prevent further expansion into the area. Prescribed burning would be used on a limited basis when necessary to stimulate native plant species, and not solely to reduce fuel loading or unwanted vegetation. Propane burning (single burner by hand) would be used if found effective on sprouting blackberries. All burning would be conducted in accordance with City of Eugene burning ordinances. Foam may be used when prescribed burning is conducted to help with control lines and avoid unnecessary ground disturbance. Vegetation control activities would occur from spring through fall, depending on the optimum window for each species, the specific botanical recommendations relative to the surrounding plant community, and potential impacts to wildlife. The

BLM would implement measures necessary to comply with City of Eugene ordinances regarding vegetation adjacent to public roads. The use of herbicides is not being considered as part of this proposed action.

Special Status Species. No federally listed species will be affected by this Proposed Action. However, the Western pond turtle, a federal candidate species, is known to use the Amazon Creek as a travel corridor. The Proposed Action includes two items that would benefit pond turtles, including the introduction of basking logs and enhancement of emergent vegetation near the confluence of Willow Creek.

General Wildlife Habitat Enhancements. Nest structures would be used to improve nesting habitat for a variety of birds, including wood ducks, purple martins, swallows, kestrels, and osprey. In addition, perching sites for raptors and roosting boxes for bats would also be used to improve habitat use by those species. Brush and rock piles may be used at various locations to improve habitat for wildlife including reptiles.

Public Use. Upon completion of the acquisition phase of the WEW Project, it has been suggested that the office building could be converted and developed into an environmental education center for area schools. Several features of the Proposed Action are designed with that goal. The combination of the existing facility and outbuildings, plans for site restoration and maintenance, established research plots, diversity of habitats and plant communities, proximity to the Fern Ridge Bike Path, and accessibility are the major reasons for consideration of this site for this type of public use.

The Fern Ridge Bike Path is scheduled for construction in 1996 along the north bank of the channel. A connecting spur would be constructed from the path to the office site, intersecting at the east end of the hay meadow (see Appendix A). An elevated boardwalk would be used to span the outflow from the wetland prairie, to lessen impacts to the wetland and avoid impoundment of water into the prairie. An extension boardwalk would be built approximately 150 feet into the wet prairie to facilitate environmental educational activities during the wet periods. Interpretive materials and signs would be developed to match the sites and restoration activities. All boardwalks and paths would be constructed to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A central kiosk with a covered bicycle rack would be constructed near the office, replacing the existing shed. The barn may also be used to house outdoor educational activities.

B. Alternative B.

This alternative would be a modified version of the Proposed Action, maintaining the emphasis on the restoration of wetland plant communities without features for environmental education. This alternative would focus on wetland prairie habitat, removal of non-native species, and limited public access. The BLM would implement measures necessary to comply with City of Eugene ordinances regarding vegetation adjacent to public roads. The following are general descriptions of activities considered in Alternative B where they differ significantly from the Proposed Action.

Public Use. In general, public use of the area would be limited to traffic along the Fern Ridge Bike Path. Public access to the interior portions would not be encouraged. No trails including boardwalks are planned. Interpretive signs would be limited to those along the Fern Ridge Bike Path.

C. Alternative C (No Action Alternative)

This alternative would limit management activities on the Danebo site to minor habitat improvements

and control of noxious vegetation. The BLM would implement measures necessary to comply with City of Eugene ordinances regarding vegetation adjacent to public roads. Control of noxious vegetation, primarily blackberries, would be done with periodic mowing or hand removal. There would be no alterations of wetland sites beyond the treatments to research plots as described in Environmental Assessment OR090-94-29. Some general wildlife habitat enhancements, such as nest structures for birds, could be implemented. Public use of federal land within the WEW Project would continue as currently allowed under the Code of Federal Regulations 43 CFR 8365.1-6.

III AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Existing Conditions

Office Site. This three acre area consists of the BLM Wetlands Office and grounds, gravel parking area, fruit orchard, and equipment barn. The grounds are dominated by a mowed but otherwise unmanaged lawn and a variety of large trees and shrubs, both native and introduced. Management of the orchard is limited to occasional mowing and pruning. The north property line is an extensive hedge of rose and blackberries.

Wetland Prairie. The northeast portion of the Danebo site contains approximately three acres of tufted hairgrass prairie, a once extensive plant community throughout the Willamette Valley. Shrubs, trees, and blackberries are encroaching within the wetland prairie. Ash trees present on the site are generally less than 30 feet in height. Plant diversity is extremely high, with over 100 species identified. The eastern edge adjacent to Beltline Road is dominated by emergent wetland species. Water retention is influenced by an old concrete culvert on the southwest side that drains into the Amazon Creek.

North Bank Upland. This is a narrow strip approximately 45 feet wide and 600 feet long between the wet prairie and Amazon Creek. It appears the upland characteristics are a result of dredge spoil deposits from Amazon Creek. The site has primarily non-native grasses and teasel, although some tufted hairgrass has seeded in. It is estimated that between .5 -2 feet of fill covers the site, based on topography and soil sampling. A non-operational pump house is located adjacent to Beltline Road.

Willow Creek Confluence. This area covers about three acres on the south side of Amazon Creek and includes the mouth of Willow Creek, which flows in from the south under W. 11th St. Beltline Road forms the eastern boundary and an RV dealership is located on the west side. The area has approximately 1-2 feet of fill across most of the parcel, including gravel and asphalt surfaces. The site has both non-native grasses as well as some wetland plants where water is seasonally trapped in shallow pools. Prior to filling the area was probably dominated by wet prairie species. The Willow Creek channel that bisects the parcel has been altered and may not be near its historic outlet. Surface flow in Willow Creek generally disappears in August and returns in mid fall. The channel is deeply incised with steep but well vegetated banks and a shrub dominated riparian zone. Rock has been placed in the bottom of the channel to slow downcutting. A small stand of scotch broom is located close to W. 11th St. A shallow ditch is located adjacent to Beltline Road and drains directly into Amazon Creek. This drain also pulls water from the field across Beltline Road to the east.

Hay Meadow. The four acre meadow surrounds the office site in a half circle, bordered by Amazon Creek to the south, Danebo Road to the west, and wetland prairie on the east side. It is dominated by non-native pasture grasses and was used for annual hay production. Two culverts drain the site, one flowing west under Danebo Road and the other that jointly drains the wetland prairie into Amazon Creek. The west end holds some standing water in the winter months for short periods. A long narrow mound of fill is located east of the barn. Blackberries are present around all edges.

Amazon Channel. Amazon Creek flows westerly through the Danebo site in a deeply incised channel. Blackberries are common along the north bank, with some willow, rose, and cottonwood. Much of the wetland area in the channel is dominated by reed canarygrass. The City of Eugene has an easement covering the existing channel and banks and has management responsibility under agreement with the Corps of Engineers.

B. Impacts of the Proposed Action

Irreversible and Irretrievable Resources: There are no irreversible or irretrievable resources affected by the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Effects: This proposal is not expected to result in negative cumulative effects. Sedimentation and erosion may occur, but effects are anticipated to be short-term and minor due to erosion control measures. However, this action would result in an increase in public use. It is also anticipated that the habitat changes proposed would result in an increase in the wetland acreage.

Cultural Resources: No cultural resources are expected to be affected by this Proposed Action.

Threatened and Endangered Species: The Proposed Action is considered to be "No Effect" on Federally listed (or proposed for listing) plant and animal species.

Vegetation: Some vegetation is expected to be significantly altered by the Proposed Action, however it is not anticipated to adversely influence desirable plant communities. In general, the control of blackberries and other non-native species would facilitate maintenance and expansion of native species. Areas to be restored or altered to wetland conditions would change from non-native grasses to emergents, wet prairie, and shrubs. There would be some impacts to native vegetation from the boardwalk into the wet prairie, including ground disturbance during construction and shading under the completed structure.

Soils: The Proposed Action would result in significant changes to soil resources across the area. The largest alterations would be the removal of imported fill material on two sites that currently have upland characteristics. This removal would result in the exposure of native surface soil, primarily with hydric characteristics, and changes from an upland to a wetland type condition. In some areas a limited amount of topsoil would be removed and re-contoured, but this is not expected to have negative impacts on hydric characteristics, water retention ability, or the ability to grow wetland vegetation. Work with heavy equipment would occur during periods of low soil moisture, primarily during the summer and early fall. This is not anticipated to result in significant soil compaction. Boardwalk construction would occur during the dry season, reducing soil impacts.

Wetlands/Water Quality: Former wetlands would be restored under the Proposed Action, which requires permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Oregon Division of State Lands to comply with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and other regulations. No alterations of the wetland sites would occur prior to permit approval. There are no anticipated long term impacts to water quality from the Proposed Action. There may be some short term increases in sedimentation from erosion, however measures would be taken to minimize those effects. Most areas should be vegetated within 1-2 years of disturbance. Although wetlands can function to naturally filter out excess nutrients and pollution, this would not be a planned function for the existing wetlands on the Danebo site. The water collected in this area has a low potential for concentrations of polluting substances. If foam is used to aid in prescribed burning, it will not be dispensed into standing or flowing water.

Hazardous Materials: The operation of heavy equipment as necessary to implement the Proposed Action would take place during the summer and early fall when the seasonal wetlands are dry but the Amazon Creek would still have flowing water. The chance of diesel fuel or hydraulic fluid spills into water during the operation of heavy equipment is possible. Spill containment kits would be available in the event of a spill, and removal, transport, and disposal would be done in accordance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality laws and regulations. The foam used to aid in prescribed burning is not considered a hazardous material.

Air Quality: The Proposed Action would not exceed the DEQ ambient air pollution standards. All burning would be done in compliance with the City of Eugene open burning regulations and with Lane Regional Air Pollution Authority. Air pollution impacts would be short-term and minimal.

C. Impacts of Alternative B

Implementation of Alternative B would have impacts similar to the Proposed Action for most of the proposed activities. Use of the area for environmental educational purposes would be minimal because the site would not be developed to facilitate public use. There would be no disturbance to vegetation as a result of the boardwalk. The types of public use allowed on the Danebo site would remain as listed under the current Code of Federal Regulations.

D. Impacts of Alternative C (No-Action)

The present status of the Danebo site would remain largely unchanged. No restoration of wetland sites would be undertaken. The hay meadow would remain dominated by non-native pasture grass. There would be no short-term impacts to air quality from prescribed burning and no alterations to soil resources. Limited wildlife habitat improvements and control of noxious vegetation could occur. Current grounds maintenance activities around the office site would continue.

IV. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Specialists contacted for review, consultation, and coordination included:

Dan Crannell	BLM Wildlife Biologist (T&E)
Kathy Pendergrass	BLM Botanist
Nancy Wogen	BLM NR Specialist (Botany)
Alan Schloss	BLM Hydrologist
Barry Williams	BLM Soil Scientist
Phil Dills	BLM Fire/Fuels Specialist
Sandra Miles	BLM Recreation Planner
Mike Southard	BLM Archeologist
Ed Alverson	Preserve Steward, TNC
Deborah Evans	Water Resources, City of Eugene
Dal Ollek	Water Resources, City of Eugene
E.L. "Bud" DeSantis Jr.	Engineering, City of Eugene
Gale Mills	Engineering, City of Eugene
Diane Bishop	Bicycle Coordinator, City of Eugene
Steve Gordon	Senior Planner, LCOG

Prepared By: Jonathan T. Beall
Project Manager

Date: 5/15/95

Reviewed By: Don Willen
Planning & Environmental Coordinator

Date: 5/16/95

Approved By: W. S. Still
Coast Range Resource Area Manager

Date: 5/15/95

Attachments:
Appendix A- Vicinity Map

1792A
EA-95-13

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Environmental Assessment No. OR090-95-13

The Bureau of Land Management Eugene District has analyzed a proposal to conduct management activities within the Danebo Demonstration Area of the West Eugene Wetlands Project.

The proposal, associated design features, and potential mitigation measures are described in the attached Environmental Assessment No. OR090-95-13.

The proposed action would comply with the goals and recommended actions found in the West Eugene Wetlands Plan (1992). It is also in accord with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Determination:

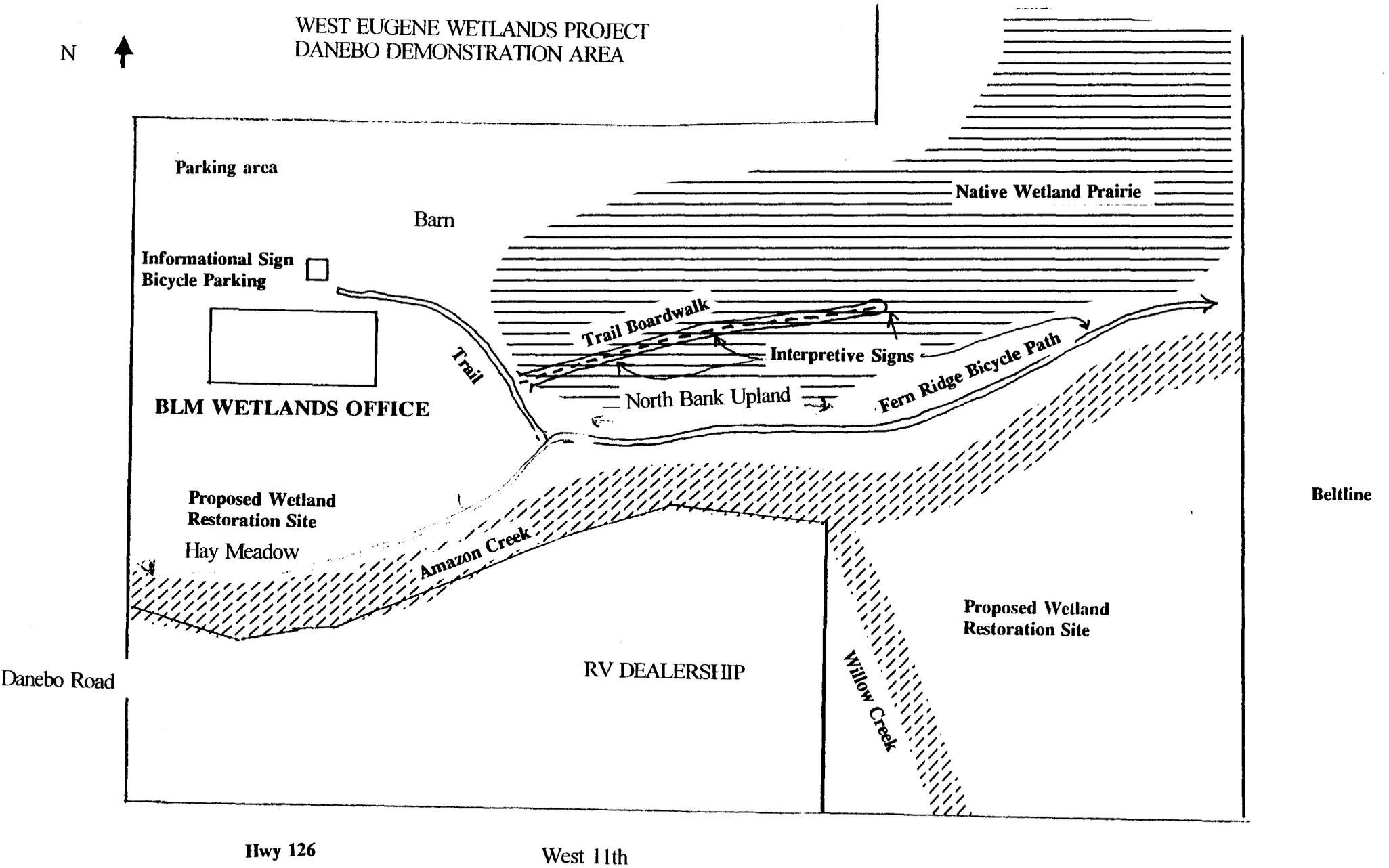
On the basis of the information contained in the attached Environmental Assessment and all other information available to me as summarized above, it is my determination that completion of the proposed action does not constitute a major Federal action affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement or supplement to the existing West Eugene Wetlands Plan is not necessary and will not be prepared.



Area Manager
Coast Range Resource Area

Date: 5/15/95

WEST EUGENE WETLANDS PROJECT
DANEBO DEMONSTRATION AREA



United States
Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Eugene District Office

DECISION RECORD

Environmental Assessment No. OROR90-95-13

Proposed Action: My decision is to proceed with the land management activities described in the Proposed Action (Alternative A) of the Danebo Demonstration Area Environmental Assessment.

Rationale

It is my decision to implement this project because it will result in the enhancement and restoration of wetlands; control of non-native plant species; habitat improvements for a variety of wildlife species; and environmental education opportunities. No comments were received regarding the project.

Alternative B was not selected because of the limited opportunity for public use. The No-Action Alternative (Alternative C) was not selected because it provided no opportunities for wetland restoration and enhancement.

Right to Appeal

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 4 and the enclosed Form 1842-1. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in this office within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition (pursuant to regulations 43 Code of Federal Regulations 4.21 (58 Federal Register 4939, January 19, 1993)(request) for a stay (suspension) of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards list below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in the decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 Code of Federal Regulations 4.43) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's succession on the merits,
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the say is not granted and,
- (3) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

Approved by: Gary A. Hoyer
acting Coast Range Resource Area Manager

Date: 6/16/95

Enclosure:
Form 1832-1