

Steigerwald Reconnection PROJECT



Reconnecting to the River

Since its designation as a National Wildlife Refuge in 1987, Steigerwald Lake has evolved into a beloved destination for travelers and neighbors from both sides of the Columbia River. Stunning views, meandering trails, and an amazing mix of birds invite a sense of wonder. Now, another evolutionary leap is underway.

Through the Steigerwald Reconnection Project, the Refuge is poised to fulfill its promise as both a haven for wildlife and an Urban National Wildlife Refuge, greatly enhancing habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species while partnering to address critical community needs.

The project will restore a direct tie between Refuge lands and the waters of Gibbons Creek and the Columbia that has not been seen in generations. As wetland habitat improves, so too will the quality of life for Refuge neighbors, through flood protection, jobs, and the health benefits of a deeper connection to nature.



©Ken Pitts, Channel leading Gibbons Creek to Steigerwald Lake

Reconnection Benefits

965 acres

of floodplain habitat for juvenile salmon restored including **115 acres of wetland habitat** to benefit various species of plants & wildlife



503 jobs

local family wage jobs created

Adds **\$67.4 million** to the Southwest Washington economy.

Project Contractors are Local to the community:

Rotschy of Vancouver, WA and LKE of Washougal, WA

Flood Protection



The project will reconfigure the levee system—which disconnected the Refuge from the river for decades—to reduce flood risk to the Port of Camas-Washougal, Washougal's wastewater treatment plant, a mobile home park, a working ranch and WA SR-14.



The Refuge will greet **90,000** plus annual visitors with a larger parking lot and a more complex, immersive trail system

2,000 students and volunteers will engage in riparian (streamside) plantings

This is the largest restoration project on the lower Columbia River to date

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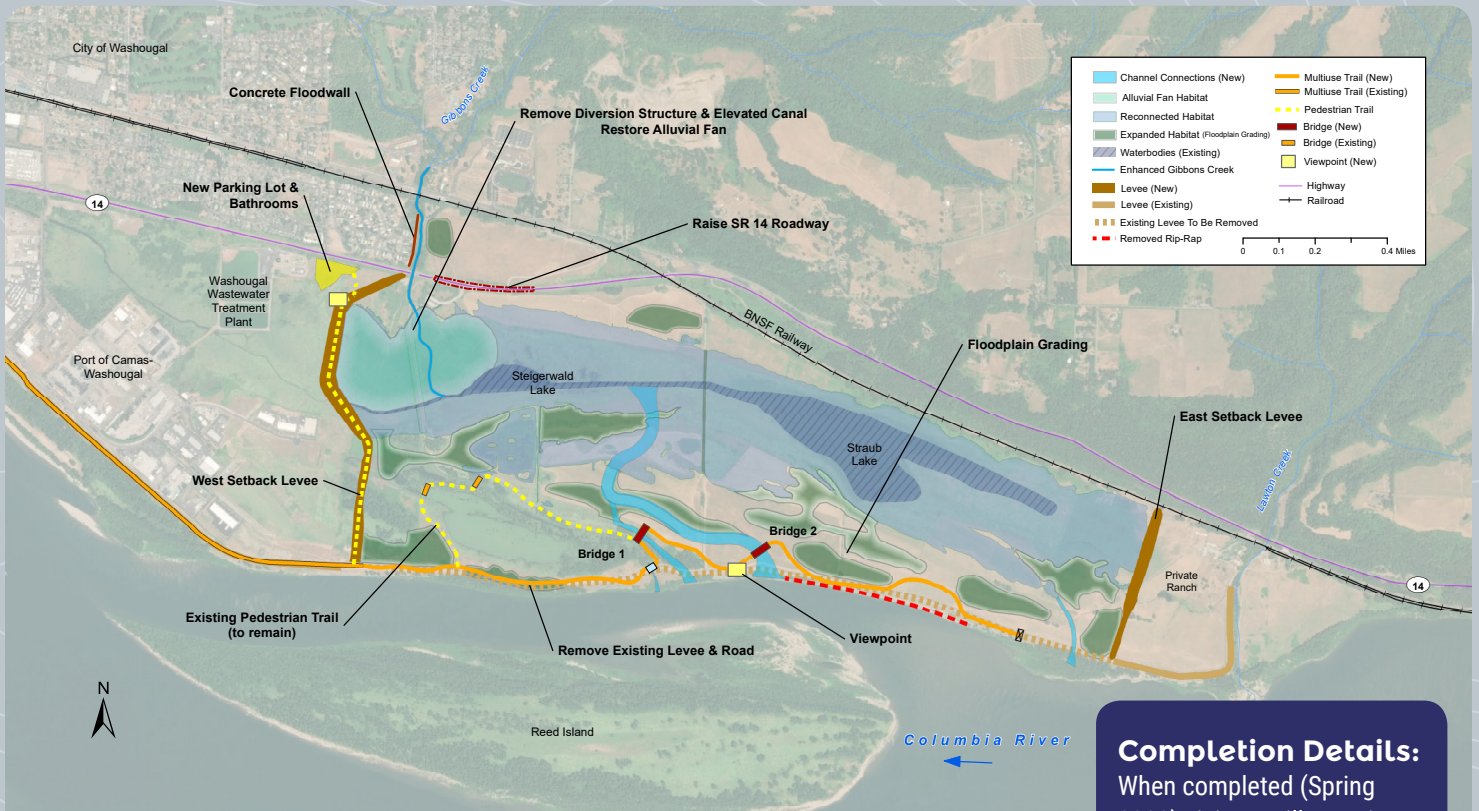


Project Details:

Refuge habitats will function more naturally by **restoring the natural flow** and path of Gibbons Creek and removing its diversion structure and fish ladder.

Public and private lands will be protected from the natural ebb and flow of the floodplain by removing 2.2 miles of existing levee and creating two new setback levees. Neighbors and travelers will also see **improved flood protection** as SR-14 is raised to the 500-year flood level (~five feet above the peak of the 1996 flood) and the capacity of the Gibbons Creek bridge is increased.

Wildlife habitat will increase from restored wetlands and over 200 acres revegetated with native trees and shrubs. **Habitat quality will be enhanced** by adding large wood debris and other natural features. Removal of the fish ladder and levee will provide **unobstructed passage for salmon and lamprey** as well as much needed place for juvenile salmon to rest on their challenging migration to the ocean.



How will this impact Refuge Access?

June 1, 2020, Construction begins

The existing Refuge parking lot will be permanently closed. Visitors can access the Refuge, when open, from the levee trail via Captain William Clark Park.



June through September 2020

SR-14 construction will cause intermittent single lane closures in both directions

July through October 2020 and April 2021 through April 2022

The entire refuge will be closed for project work until the re-opening spring of 2022.

Completion Details:

When completed (Spring 2022) visitors will experience a new trail system with one mile of additional trail, two new footbridges, and new viewpoints. They will see wetlands developing, native forests regenerating, and Gibbons Creek flowing through the site's floodplain to the Columbia River.

Project Partners:

Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership
Port of Camas-Washougal
Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards
Friends of the Columbia River Gorge
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Camas-Washougal Community Chest
One Tree Planted Foundation
M Bar J Ranch
BNSF Railroad

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bonneville Power Administration
Washington State Department of Transportation
Washington State Department of Ecology
City of Washougal
Washougal School District
City of Camas
Camas School District

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