Environmental mitigation: Enhancing natural resources and parks

When planning transportation projects, WSDOT tries to limit or avoid adverse effects to the environment. When that isn’t possible, we look for ways to mitigate those effects. How? We coordinate with regulatory agencies, local jurisdictions and others on mitigation projects in specific parks, wetlands and other sensitive areas.

As reconstruction of SR 520 moves forward, we continue to refine the highway project’s design and reassess its impacts. Because of various project design refinements, we have reduced SR 520’s environmental impacts. Below are key mitigation projects for the SR 520 Program.

1. Bear Creek
   - Improved about 16 acres of important stream and riparian habitat for salmon by stabilizing creek bank, adding stream gravel and wood, and planting native vegetation. **Completed in 2015.**

2. Cedar River Elliott Bridge Reach
   - Restored about 5 acres of wetlands, side channels, floodplain and river habitat for migrating fish, including Chinook salmon. **Completed in 2016.**

3. Evans Creek
   - Restored about 32 acres of wetlands on land previously farmed at the confluence of Bear Creek and Evans Creek, near Redmond. **Completed in 2013.**

4. Grass Creek
   - Restored wetlands and shoreline habitat in the 68-acre Grass Creek site in Grays Harbor County by removing a portion of earthen dike and re-establishing tidal channels. (SR 520 pontoons were constructed in Aberdeen, Grays Harbor County) **Completed in 2011.**

5. Portage Bay Park
   - Creates a new, approximately 4-acre public park in Seattle on the north shore of Portage Bay, with water access for boaters and open space for other uses. **Completion expected in 2018.**

6. South Lake Washington
   - Improved about 4 acres of lake-shore salmon habitat by planting native vegetation, removing decades-old industrial structures, and enhancing near-shore habitat. **Completed in 2015.**

7. SR 520 East Approach
   - Improved about 1 acre of sockeye-spawning habitat beneath the east end of the new floating bridge by adding lakebed gravel, removing bulkheads and rubble, and restoring/replanting the shoreline. **Completed in 2017.**

8. Union Bay Natural Area
   - Improves existing wetlands and buffers, and creates new wetlands – about 22 acres combined – within the University of Washington’s Union Bay Natural Area, northeast of Husky Stadium. **Completed in 2018.**

9. Washington Park Arboretum
   - Makes a variety of improvements in the Arboretum, including creation of a new north entry, improved multiuse trail. **Loop trail open. Other projects are underway; completion date TBD.**

10. WSDOT Peninsula
    - Enhances wetlands and wetland buffers, controls invasive plant species and adds habitat features within this 6-acre WSDOT-owned property next to the Washington Park Arboretum. **Mitigation planned following Montlake Phase.**

11. Yarrow Creek
    - Restored wetlands and rehabilitated the stream to improve fish and wildlife habitat, and added eight large, fish-friendly culverts within SR 520’s Eastside corridor to improve fish migration. **Completed in 2014.**

Mitigation Reserves Program

Wetland mitigation

The King County Mitigation Reserves Program allows participants to pool financial resources for larger restoration projects with greater environmental benefits. WSDOT is contributing to the county’s program to mitigate for a portion of the SR 520 program’s impacts to wetlands. **Financial commitments made in 2017 and 2018.**
What is Section 106?

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act seeks to accommodate historic preservation concerns with the needs of a Federal undertaking by identifying historic properties potentially affected, assessing effects, and seeking ways to avoid, minimize or mitigate any adverse effects. Federal agencies, and their designees, must consult on these effects with other agency officials, federally recognized tribes, and parties with an interest in the effects of the project on historic properties.

Section 106 and the SR 520 Program

In 2011, after a two-year consultation process, WSDOT executed a Programmatic Agreement (PA) committing to a number of mitigation measures for the SR 520 Program. There are six signatories to the agreement and 21 concurring parties. Some Section 106 PA commitments include: measures to reduce construction effects on historic properties, interpretive signage throughout the project area, consultation on landscape and urban design, regular consultation with consulting tribes and quarterly meetings between WSDOT, PA signatories and concurring parties.

SR 520 PA signatories and concurring parties include:

- **Signatories**
  - Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
  - Federal Highway Administration
  - US Army Corps of Engineers
  - NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science Center
  - Washington State Historic Preservation Officer
  - Washington State Department of Transportation

- **Concurring Parties**
  - City of Seattle - Department of Neighborhoods
  - Concerned Citizens of Montlake - SR 520
  - Eastlake Community Council
  - Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks
  - Historic Seattle Preservation Foundation
  - King County Historic Preservation Office
  - Madison Park Community Club
  - Montlake Community Club
  - Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
  - North Capitol Hill Neighborhood Association
  - Portage Bay/Roanoke Community Council
  - Seattle Yacht Club
  - Shelby-Hamlin Residents
  - Snoqualmie Indian Tribe
  - Stillaguamish Tribe
  - Suquamish Tribe
  - Tulalip Tribe
  - University of Washington
  - Washington Park Arboretum Foundation
  - Washington Trust for Historic Preservation
Montlake Historic District: Potential sign locations

Montlake-area greenways, parks and historic residential architecture

Text excerpts from Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (May 2011)

WSDOT will consult with the concurring parties ... to develop a sign plan for historic markers or signage for the Montlake Historic District. Once the sign plan is approved by WSDOT, in consultation with DAHP and the City of Seattle, WSDOT will fund fabrication and installation of up to five historic markers or signs within the district. (III.C.3)

Within the area of Montlake Boulevard where WSDOT plans modifications to medians, WSDOT will consult with the concurring parties to this Agreement, DAHP, and other stakeholders as appropriate on design, wording, and placement of a sign about the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition and the Olmsted design for this portion of Montlake Boulevard. (III.A.4)
New Washington Park Arboretum Loop Trail open!

- The Washington Park Arboretum Loop Trail project provides a multiuse loop trail from the intersection of East Madison through the Arboretum to the intersection of Foster Island Road and Lake Washington Boulevard.

- The addition of the 1.2 miles of paved multiuse trail creates a "loop" with the existing Arboretum Drive, providing an accessible path for all visitors. The path offers recreation opportunities and access to new parts of the Arboretum collection.

- WSDOT and the SR 520 Program provided $7.8 million to help fund the project.

Vine-cutting ceremony at the Loop Trail Grand Opening.

A jogger runs on a new 1.2-mile paved walking and cycling path in the Washington Park Aboretum. (Photo courtesy Ellen M. Banner/ The Seattle Times)

LEGEND

- White dash - new loop trail
- Existing access on Arboretum Drive
- Reference points for construction updates

1. South end of trail at 31st Ave. E.
2. Trail below Pacific Connections Garden
3. Birch parking lot
4. Willcox bridge
5. North end of trail/Aboretum Drive