

Soundview Consultants LLC

Environmental Assessment • Planning • Land Use Solutions

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Technical Memorandum

To: Anna Nelson, Gages Crossing LLC File Number: 1916.0003
From: Jon Pickett, Soundview Consultants LLC Date: October 19, 2023
Re: Response to City of Burlington Comments – Gages Crossing- Comment Response

Dear Anna,

Soundview Consultants LLC (SVC) has been assisting Gages Crossing LLC (Applicant) with environmental planning for proposed residential development on a 13.30-acre site located at 900 South Pine Street within the City of Burlington, Skagit County, Washington (Skagit County Tax Parcels P62772, P72178, P72179, P72180, P72181, P133597 and P133596). The subject property is situated in the Northwest ¼ of Section 05, Township 34 North, Range 04 East.

This Technical Memorandum has been prepared in response to review comments provided on September 27, 2023, by the City of Burlington regarding the review of the *Shoreline, Wetland and Fish and Wildlife Assessment- Gages Crossing* report completed by SVC on July 17, 2023, and the *Conceptual Mitigation Plan- Gages Crossing* completed by SVC on July 17, 2023. The following are the City of Burlington’s comments (italicized) followed by SVC’s responses:

1. Wetland Report

- a. *The wetland report and mitigation plan submitted with the application has rated the portion of Gages Slough adjacent to the development site as a category II wetland. This rating is not consistent with ratings submitted for other nearby projects. In fact the City is unaware of any previous ratings involving Gages Slough that have arrived at a category III rating. For example:*
 - i. *A wetland report submitted for a site located adjacent to the proposed subdivision at 880 South Pine Street rated arrived at a category II rating.*
 - ii. *A report submitted for a property at 700 South Holly, east of the proposed development, identified Gages Slough as category II wetland.*
 - iii. *A report submitted for 199 Pease Road, west of the development site identified Gages Slough as a category II wetland.*

- iv. A report submitted for a city road project along Fairhaven Boulevard rated Gages Slough as a category II wetland.*

Copies of the reports identified above are attached. Please have your wetland professional address the rating discrepancy between these reports and the report submitted for your project.

After revising the Wetland A rating form to include points for the requested sections or a rational on the awarded points, the Wetland A rating remained as a Category III wetland with (5) habitat points. After updating the Wetland 1 rating form to include points for all the sections mentioned by the City within their comments, the Wetland 1 rating changed from a Category III wetland with (5) habitat points to a Category II wetland with (5) habitat points. Below is an analysis of the rational and responses.

- b. Sections D 2.1 and D 5 of the wetland rating form included with your application indicate the wetland does not receive stormwater discharges. Please have your consultant carefully review this conclusion and address relevant Department of Ecology (DOE) Guidance related to assessing the source of stormwater discharges. It is our understanding that the DOE guidance directs wetland raters to include not only piped stormwater discharges, but also discharges originating from stormwater ponds, ditches, and surface flow (see below). The City is aware of at least one large stormwater pond located to east of the project site at the intersection of Picket Lane and Homestead Drive (see below). A stormwater report prepared for the access road associated with the Wilcox farm to south the project site indicates stormwater surface flows north from the road towards Gages Slough. In addition, wetland reports for nearby sites have concluded that Gages Slough receives stormwater discharges.*

Sections D 2.1 and D 5.1 on the Wetland A and 1 rating forms have been updated to include points for the wetlands receiving stormwater discharge based on the stormwater and drainage information provided by the City. However, this does not change the scoring for Section D2.1 and D 5.1 as these were already awarded a “high” functional score, and therefore does not increase the scoring for Water Quality or Hydrological Functions.

- c. Section 4.1 indicates the outlet of the wetland is either unconstructed or slightly constricted. Please clarify how this conclusion was reached. The farm road and culverts located to the west of the site appear to constrict outflow, at least until the road is overtopped and water flows beneath the BNSF bridge. Further support is needed for the answers provided for questions 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3. It is also worth noting that Gages Slough is constricted by the pump station at the far western end of the Slough that discharges to the Skagit River. The culverts are described in a WDFW fish passage report available here.*

Section D 1.1 of the Washington State Wetland Rating System for Western Washington (WSDOE 2014) defines a highly constricted outlet as permanently flowing outlet but small relative to the overall flow. Marks of flooding or inundation 3-feet or more above the bottom of the outlet are required for the outlet to be considered highly constricted. Wetland A has unilateral flow into offsite Wetland 1; however, the depth of live storage from Wetland A into Wetland 1 is at the same elevation. In addition, water marks 3-feet or greater were not observed. The rational for the indicator on highly constricted outlet relates to the volume of water a wetland is capable storing in reduce flooding and erosion. The water levels in the unit must fall below the elevation of the outlet. The marks of ponding and depth of storage are only calculated on the maximum depth of “live storage”. Having water present year-round is important in particular for groundwater recharge; however, the storage below the elevation

that does not fluctuate does not contribute to reductions in peak flows (dead storage), and is not considered in the marks ponding calculation. As the culverts located at the outlet of Wetland A are not highly constricted and do not display watermarks with fluctuations of 3-feet or greater, it was determined that the outlet to Wetland A is best described as a slightly constricted.

In addition, for a wetland to have an intermittently flowing outlet means that unit has water leaving the unit through a stream or ditch that dries out at some point in the year. As the images from the WDFW fish passage report from July 23, 2019, show surface hydrology flowing through the culverts at the southwest end of Wetland A, and surface water is visible in most areas throughout Wetland A on Google Earth imagery from August 2022 during the driest times of the year, it was determined that water is present flowing out of Wetland A through a permanently flowing outlet year-round. Therefore, Wetland A has a slightly constricted, permanently flowing outlet.

Section D 4.2 was determined to remain allocated 3 points based on marks of ponding being 0.5-feet to less than 2-feet from the surface or bottom of the outlet, as was observed during SVC's site investigation on March 29, 2023, which occurred during the time of year when hydrology is usually highest.

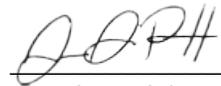
Section D 4.3 was allocated 0 points based on GIS mapping for Wetlands A and 1, which found the area of the contributing basin to be approximately 72,312,963- square feet and the area of Wetland A to be approximately 131,783-square feet, which equates to Wetland A consisting of 0.18% of the contributing basin. This data can be found on the Wetland Rating map set provided within the *Shoreline, Wetland and Fish and Wildlife Assessment- Gages Crossing* report completed by SVC on July 17, 2023.

- d. *Section D 6.2 of the wetland rating form asks whether the site has been identified as important for flood storage or flood conveyance and indicates that the site is not important for flood conveyance or storage. This answer is not correct. Gages Slough is designated as both a "Special Management Area" (14.15.436) and the wetland and deep water habitat areas associated with Gages Slough are designated as a "Special Flood Risk Zone" (BMC 14.15.400.A.6). As noted the Burlington Comprehensive Plan (V1 4.5.1) Gages Slough provides important floodwater storage and conveyance functions).*

Based on the information provided by the City regarding the specific use for this section of Wetland A as a flood conveyance system, SVC has updated section D 6.2 of the Wetland A and 1 rating forms to contain 2 points, as the site has been identified as important for flood storage or flood conveyance in a regional flood control plan. However, section D 6.0 was already awarded a "high" functional score, and therefore does not increase the overall scoring for Hydrological Functions.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Pickett
Principal
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October 19, 2023

Date

References

Soundview Consultants LLC (SCV). 2023. *Shoreline, Wetland and Fish and Wildlife Assessment- Gages Crossing*. July 17, 2023.

SVC. 2023. *Conceptual Mitigation Plan- Gages Crossing*. July 17, 2023.

Washington State Department of Ecology. 2014. *Washington State Wetland Rating System for Western Washington*. January 1, 2015.