



December 8, 2023

City of Stevenson  
Planning Commission  
C/o Ben Shumaker, City Planner  
7121 East Loop Road  
Stevenson, WA 98648

Subject: Rock Cove Hospitality Mitigation Addendum

Dear Mr. Shumaker,

This letter has been prepared to address changes to the Rock Cove Hospitality site plan and to address comments from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Department of Ecology (Ecology). This letter is a supplement to the *Critical Areas and FWHCA Report for Rock Creek Cove Hospitality* updated on May 3, 2023 (ELS 2023). Based on results and comments from a hearing with the City of Stevenson on October 9, 2023, the Rock Cove Hospitality site plan was revised to reduce the proposed impacts to the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Area (FWHCA) buffer for the Columbia River (Rock Cove) which is a Shoreline of Statewide Significance (Type S). Alternative designs and their impact on the economic feasibility of the project are also discussed.

### ***Critical Area Recap***

According to the Stevenson Code of Ordinances (SCO) Table 18.13.095-1, Rock Cove is afforded a 150-foot FWHCA buffer. The SCO further designates under 18.13.095(D)(3), that this FWHCA buffer may be functionally isolated by “lawns, walkways, driveways, other mowed or paved areas, and areas which are functionally separated from a FWHCA and do not protect the FWHCA from adverse impacts due to pre-existing roads, structures, or vertical separation”. There is existing rip rap along the majority of the shoreline bank for stabilization, as well as existing mowed and maintained areas within the site that are functionally separated from the FWHCA. The area landward of these features shall be excluded from the FWHCA buffer per the RCO. The remaining, reduced FWHCA buffer areas are moderately degraded due to lack of protection and the presence of non-native and invasives plant species. These reduced FWHCA buffer areas (not including areas waterward of the existing rip rap) shall be enhanced in accordance with 18.13.095(D)(5) and 18.13.095(F) as detailed in the May 2023 report (ELS 2023). The Stevenson Shoreline Master Program (SMP), additionally designates this site as Active Waterfront which, according to Table 5.1, is afforded a 33-foot shoreline setback for commercial lands uses for water related/water enjoyment purposes. Existing conditions can be seen in Figure 1.

### ***Mitigation Sequencing-Compliance with RCO 18.13.055***

The proposed project includes the development of 19 recreational dwellings, an event space, massage hut, parking area, and paved walkway partially within the remaining reduced FWHCA buffer. Due to the

shape, size, and location of the peninsula the site is located on, it is highly constricted on all sides by the FWHCA buffer. The revised site plan maximizes the available buildable area to the greatest extent practicable while meeting parking and access requirements, utility requirements, shoreline use requirements per the SMP, and while remaining aesthetically pleasing which is desirable for all shoreline uses. All impacts to the FWHCA buffer on the northern portion of the site have been **avoided**. Additionally, the project proposes to use the existing walking path along Rock Cove Drive for public access rather than constructing a new bridge or trail through the FWHCA, thereby avoiding additional impacts. The recreational dwellings on the southern portion of the site have been repositioned, with the total number reduced by one, **minimizing** the total proposed impacts. The total impact proposed in the May 2023 report was 0.19 acres with a proposed 1.12 acres of FWHCA buffer enhancement equating to an approximate enhancement ratio of 1:5.9 (Figure 2). The revised site plan proposes 15.8 percent less impacts totaling 0.16 acres with a 3.45 percent increase in enhancement area with 1.16 acres of FWHCA buffer enhancement equating to a 19.2 percent increase in enhancement ratio at approximately 1:7.3 (Figures 2 and 3). According to the SCO Table 18.13.095-3, a ratio of only 1:1 for enhancement of the FWHCA is required. The impacts cannot be **reduced over time** as they are permanent structures and impervious surfaces; however, proper maintenance of the proposed structures and impervious surfaces will prevent any further impact. In addition to the enhancement measures specified in the May 2023 report (ELS 2023), a total of \$5,280 will be paid to the Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement fund to compensate for the 0.16 acres of impacts to the FWHCA. This in-lieu mitigation will fully **compensate** for the impacts ensuring there is no net loss of ecological function as a result of this project. The updated planting table below should be utilized instead of the table listed in the May 2023 report (ELS 2023) as the plant counts have been updated to reflect the adjusted size of the enhancement areas. Plant species have also been updated to reflect Skamania County’s “recommended plants for screening” for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (<https://www.skamaniacounty.org/departments-offices/community-development/planning-division/national-scenic-area>). The enhancement areas will be maintained and **monitored** for a period of 5 years. If dead or failed plants are identified during monitoring, corrective actions will be implemented to meet the minimum performance standards as detailed in the May 2023 report (ELS 2023) to ensure compliance.

**Table 1: Recommended Plants for Screening of the Enhancement Areas**

Common Name	Scientific Name and FAC Status	Stock	Spacing (feet)	Quantity
<i>Trees</i>				
Red alder	<i>Alnus rubra</i> (FAC)	Gallon	10 feet on-center	<b>126</b>
Black cottonwood	<i>Populus balsamifera</i> (FAC)			<b>126</b>
Sitka willow	<i>Salix sitchensis</i> (FACW)		6 feet on-center	<b>175</b>
Pacific ninebark	<i>Physocarpus capitatus</i> (FACW)			<b>175</b>
Oceanspray	<i>Holodiscus discolor</i> (FACU)			<b>175</b>
Pacific dogwood	<i>Cornus nuttallii</i> (FACU)			<b>175</b>
			<b>Total</b>	<b>952</b>

*Plants more suited for wet conditions (FACW) should be located closer to the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) of Rock Cove while plants more suited for upland conditions (FACU) should be located further from the OHWM.*

### ***In-Lieu Mitigation***

After development of the proposed project including the enhancement of all of the FWHCA, there is no room left onsite for any mitigation activities. Additionally, the SCO states that the enhanced buffer shall not count as mitigation and the buffer cannot be further reduced through onsite mitigation. Therefore, the 0.16 acres of impacts to the FWHCA will be mitigated via a one-time payment to the Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement fund. As there is not an established price per impact acre associated with this fund, the pricing of comparable funds in other jurisdictions was investigated. A similar fund in Clark County that is utilized for impacts to riparian habitat and in-water areas called the Cumulative Effects Fund has an established cost of donation of \$33,000 per acre of impact. Utilizing this cost, the applicant proposes to pay a total of \$5,280 to the Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement fund to compensate for the 0.16 acres of impacts to the FWHCA.

### ***Alternatives Analysis***

At the hearing on October 9, 2023, City Staff and the Planning Commission discussed the possibility of a pedestrian crossing that utilized the existing easement shown on the prior approval. The current proposed design utilizes the existing path along Rock Cove Drive to connect the site to the property to the south. The existing path is located within the street right-of-way and because it is existing, no further impact to the FWHCA would be necessary. This design was chosen as the most practical, efficient, and cost-effective method of providing public access to the site.

The applicant has provided two design alternatives for the public access connection. However, when the construction expenses associated with each alternative, coupled with the financial setback resulting from the elimination of a dwelling unit, the costs associated with enhancing the entire FWHCA onsite, and the in-lieu mitigation expense are considered, the economic feasibility of the project is significantly compromised. Brad Kilby of HHPR provided exhibits of each alternative and included a rough description of how the project would be accomplished and projected costs. The alternatives are summarized below.

The first alternative proposes crossing the ravine via a pedestrian bridge. The pedestrian bridge would span over 220 feet in length, have a width of 8 feet, have a minimum of six abutments for support, and cost approximately \$972,000. The entirety of the bridge would be located within the existing pedestrian easement and within the FWHCA. This alternative would require additional mitigation.

The second alternative proposes a paved pedestrian path at grade higher upslope from the bridge crossing. The paved pedestrian path would span approximately 200 feet in length, have a width of 8 feet, require an approximately 6-foot tall retaining wall along the downslope side, and cost approximately \$200,000. The entirety of the paved pedestrian path would be located within the FWHCA. This alternative would require additional mitigation.

### ***Responses to WDFW Comments***

In a letter dated October 6, 2023, a number of recommendations were made by Amaia Smith of WDFW. Below the recommendations are listed in *italics* with responses by ELS following in regular font.

- *We do not recommend developing within 100ft of the ordinary high-water line to protect the pollutant removal function.*

Although ELS acknowledges WDFW's new riparian guidance standards, they have not been recognized in the SCO nor the SMP so adherence to these guidelines is not currently required. Due to the shape, size, location of the peninsula, and the existing site conditions (functionally isolated FWHCA buffer) complete avoidance of development within 100 feet of the OHWM isn't practical nor would it allow the project to be feasible. The guidance does state that "the riparian setback should encompass the width of the existing riparian vegetation community", and in this case it does. The entire vegetation community onsite exists within the FWHCA buffer area shown in Figure 1. This area will be enhanced via invasive species removal and installation of native plants with species recommended by Skamania County for screening of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Due to these factors, it is ELS' opinion that this project will protect the pollutant removal functions to the greatest extent possible.

- *Implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs) will meet shoreline access objectives while protecting riparian ecosystem functions.*

This project will utilize certain BMPs to protect ecosystem functions. An adequate number of trash receptacles will be installed throughout the site and along the walking path to minimize human impacts on the surrounding natural areas. Additionally, the enhancement areas will be protected with fencing and signage designed to prohibit access by humans and pets. These areas will be further protected via a conservation covenant. Other construction BMPs will be utilized during site development such as installing orange construction fencing and silt fencing along the edge of the work area, applying native grass seed to temporarily disturbed areas, stabilizing work area entrances via installation of gravel, and making a water truck available to prevent wind erosion and dust blowing during construction.

- *We discourage any road surfaces within 100ft of the active floodplain/channel.*

No new roads are proposed as a part of this project. The proposed parking area will have curbs and stormwater grates to collect any runoff. No tire particles will be able to discharge to Rock Cove.

- *If the existing rip rap is being used as justification to lessen riparian protection, WDFW recommends further review to determine if the rip rap was legally permitted and installed.*

The existing rip rap is more than 10 years old and although ELS is not aware of when or if it was permitted, it is not being used as a justification to lessen riparian protection. Protection and enhancement of the entire remaining FWHCA buffer is proposed as part of this project. Removing the rip rap and replacing it with a bioengineered solution is not financially feasible nor is it a requirement by the SCO or the SMP. Additionally, removal of the rip rap would pose erosion and water quality hazards that could not feasibly be contained and would likely cause greater harm to the riparian and aquatic habitat.

- *WDFW wants to avoid a situation where structures are approved for development near waters that will require future emergency protection.*

Due to the presence of existing rip rap along the shoreline area that experiences greatest exposure to water movement, future erosion is unlikely. This site will not require any greater emergency protection than any other water related development in this area.

### **Responses to Ecology Comments**

In an email dated October 3, 2023, Meghan Tait of Ecology expressed a few concerns related to the project. Below the concerns are summarized in *italics* with ELS responses following in regular font.

- *Ecology does not think the maintained vegetation areas shown in Figure 1 should qualify as functional isolation.*  
According to the SCO 18.13.095(D)(3), lawns and other mowed areas can be considered as functional separation from FWHCA buffers. These areas have been mowed and maintained since the year 2000 as can be seen on Google Earth aerial imagery. Additionally, these areas were photographed in January of 2020 in preparation of the original draft of the critical areas report by ELS (Photoplate 3 and 4). It is ELS' opinion that the provided evidence meets the requirement in the SCO and that these areas do indeed meet the definition of functional isolation.
- *Ecology states any area where the remaining buffer is less than 50% shall be enhanced unless the area is utilized for water-dependent uses.*  
All of the remaining buffer, even if greater than 50 percent, is proposed for enhancement. The only area of further "reduction" (impacts) is in the southern enhancement area where the recreational dwellings are proposed. This project is considered "water related/water enjoyment", which is comparable with the term, "water dependent". There is an existing boat launch area that will serve to provide access to the water for facility patrons. Due to the purpose of these recreational dwellings to provide short-term accommodations for patrons who are utilizing the facilities for water enjoyment, it is ELS' opinion that this project meets the requirements of the SCO and the impacts to the FWHCA should be allowed.
- *Ecology states the enhanced buffer area shall not count as mitigation and the buffer area cannot be further reduced through averaging or onsite mitigation.*  
Averaging is not proposed as a part of this project. No further (non-water dependent/related) reduction of the FWHCA buffer is proposed. A total of \$5,280 (the cost for 0.16 acres at \$33,000 per acre) will be paid to the Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement fund to compensate for the 0.16 acres of impacts to the FWHCA.
- *Ecology states that it should be demonstrated how this project follows mitigation sequencing requirements and achieves no net loss.*  
See the Mitigation Sequencing and the In-Lieu Mitigation sections earlier in this letter.
- *Ecology states that vegetation removal within shoreline jurisdiction requires mitigation at the mitigation ratios listed in the SMP Table 6.2*  
A nominal quantity of shrubs will be removed from the impact areas shown on Figure 3. These shrubs consist of native groundcover and understory, non-native vegetation, and invasive species such as Himalayan blackberry. According to Table 6.2 of the SMP, the required mitigation ratio is 1:1 for these vegetation types. A total of \$5,280 (the cost for 0.16 acres at \$33,000 per acre) will be paid to the Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement fund to compensate for the 0.16 acres of impacts to the FWHCA which lie within shoreline jurisdiction.

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- *Ecology states that it is unclear how the project will meet the requirement of the SMP to provide public access for water enjoyment.*

The proposed project is a public facility that will provide access to the public during daylight hours. The walking trails and boat launch area can be utilized by the public without reserving a recreational dwelling.

Please feel free to contact me at [kt@eco-land.com](mailto:kt@eco-land.com) if you have any questions regarding the above letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate'Lyn Wills".

Kate'Lyn Wills

Biologist/Environmental Scientist V

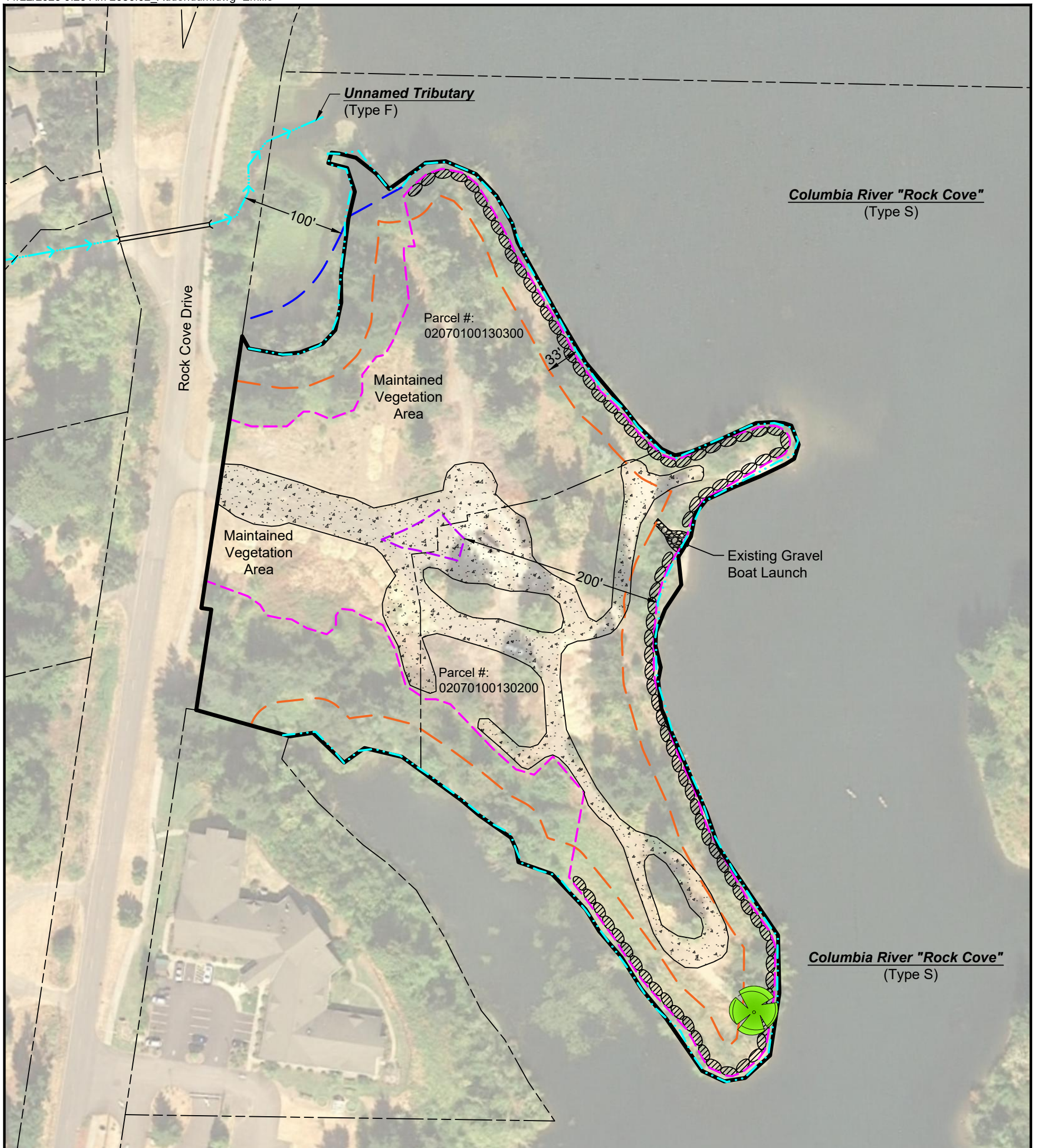
Enclosures:

Figure 1: Existing Conditions

Figure 2: Proposed Conditions – April 2023

Figure 3: Proposed Conditions – November 2023

Photoplates 1-4

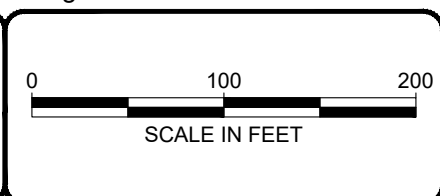
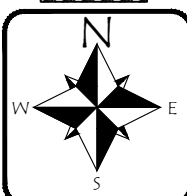


**LEGEND:**

- Site Boundary
- Parcel Boundary
- OHWM
- Stream with Flow Direction
- 100' FWHCA Buffer for Type F
- Functionally Isolated FWHCA Buffer for Type S (150')
- 33' Shoreline Setback
- 200' Shoreline Jurisdiction
- Culvert
- Oak Tree Location
- Existing Graveled or Concrete Surfacing
- Existing Rip Rap
- Existing Gravel Boat Launch

**NOTE(S):**

1. Aerial from Google Earth™. (2018)
2. OHWM line was determined through a joint effort by Ecological Land Services and Washington Department of Ecology on December 30, 2019. OHWM flags were professionally surveyed by S&F Land Services December 30-31, 2019.
3. SMC 18.13.095(D)(3) identifies functionally isolated buffer as lawns, pre-existing roads and structures, vertical separation, and other areas that do not protect the FWHCA from adverse impacts. It is ELS' opinion that existing maintained vegetation areas and rip rap functionally isolate the FWHCA.



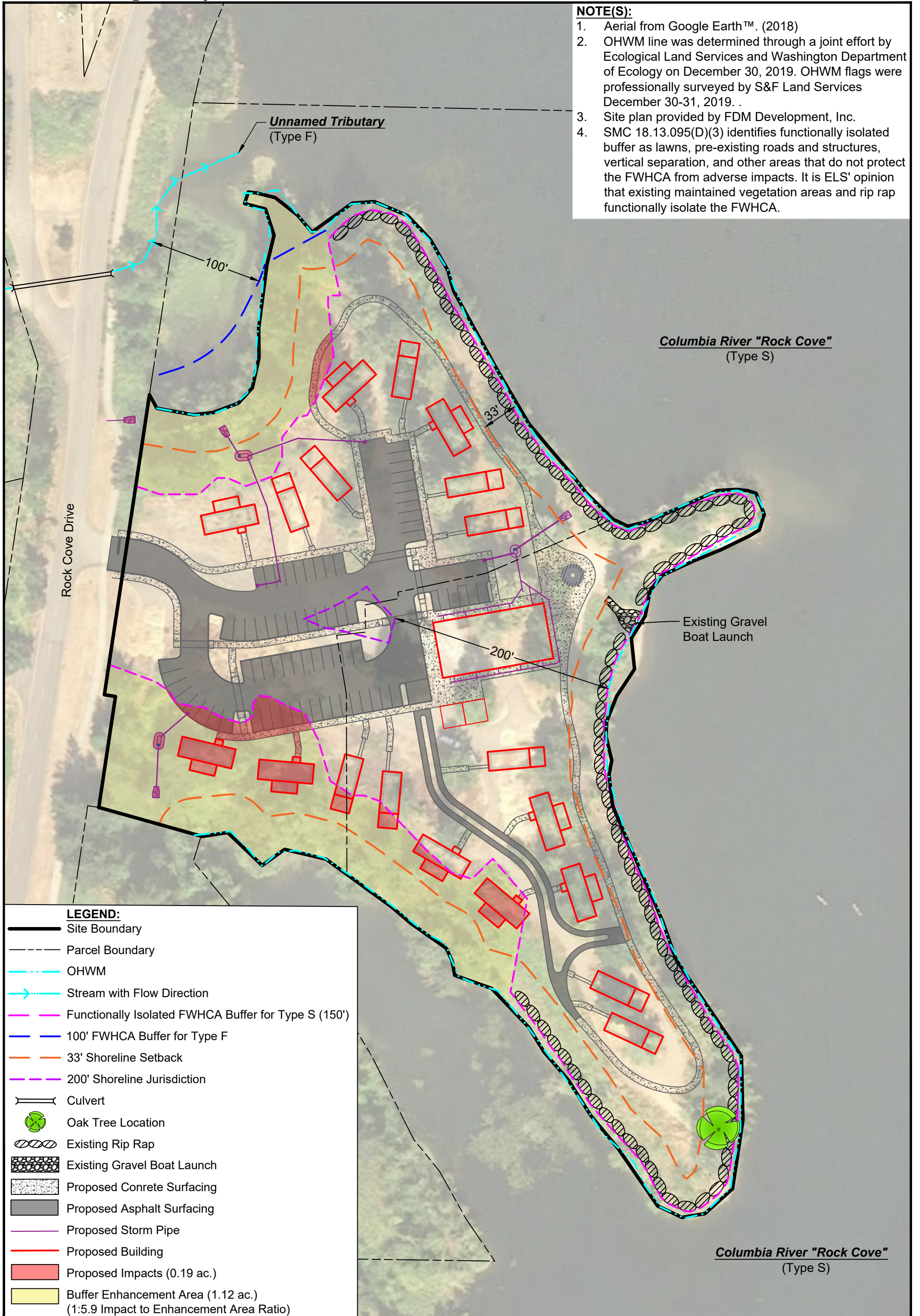
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DATE: 12/8/23  
 DWN: EF  
 REQ. BY: KT  
 PRJ. MGR: KT  
 CHK: JKJ  
 PROJECT NO:  
 2682.02

Figure 1  
 EXISTING CONDITIONS  
 Rock Cove Addendum  
 FDM Development  
 City of Stevenson, Skamania County, Washington  
 Section 1, Township 2N, Range 7E, W.M.

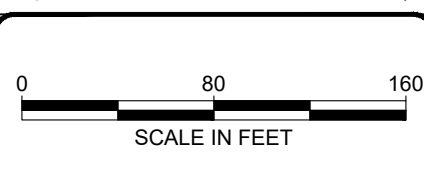
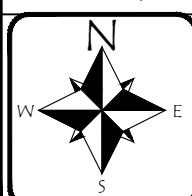
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3. Site plan provided by FDM Development, Inc.
4. SMC 18.13.095(D)(3) identifies functionally isolated buffer as lawns, pre-existing roads and structures, vertical separation, and other areas that do not protect the FWHCA from adverse impacts. It is ELS' opinion that existing maintained vegetation areas and rip rap functionally isolate the FWHCA.



**LEGEND:**

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- Parcel Boundary
- OHWM
- Stream with Flow Direction
- Functionally Isolated FWHCA Buffer for Type S (150')
- 100' FWHCA Buffer for Type F
- 33' Shoreline Setback
- 200' Shoreline Jurisdiction
- Culvert
- Oak Tree Location
- Existing Rip Rap
- Existing Gravel Boat Launch
- Proposed Concrete Surfacing
- Proposed Asphalt Surfacing
- Proposed Storm Pipe
- Proposed Building
- Proposed Impacts (0.19 ac.)
- Buffer Enhancement Area (1.12 ac.)  
(1:5.9 Impact to Enhancement Area Ratio)



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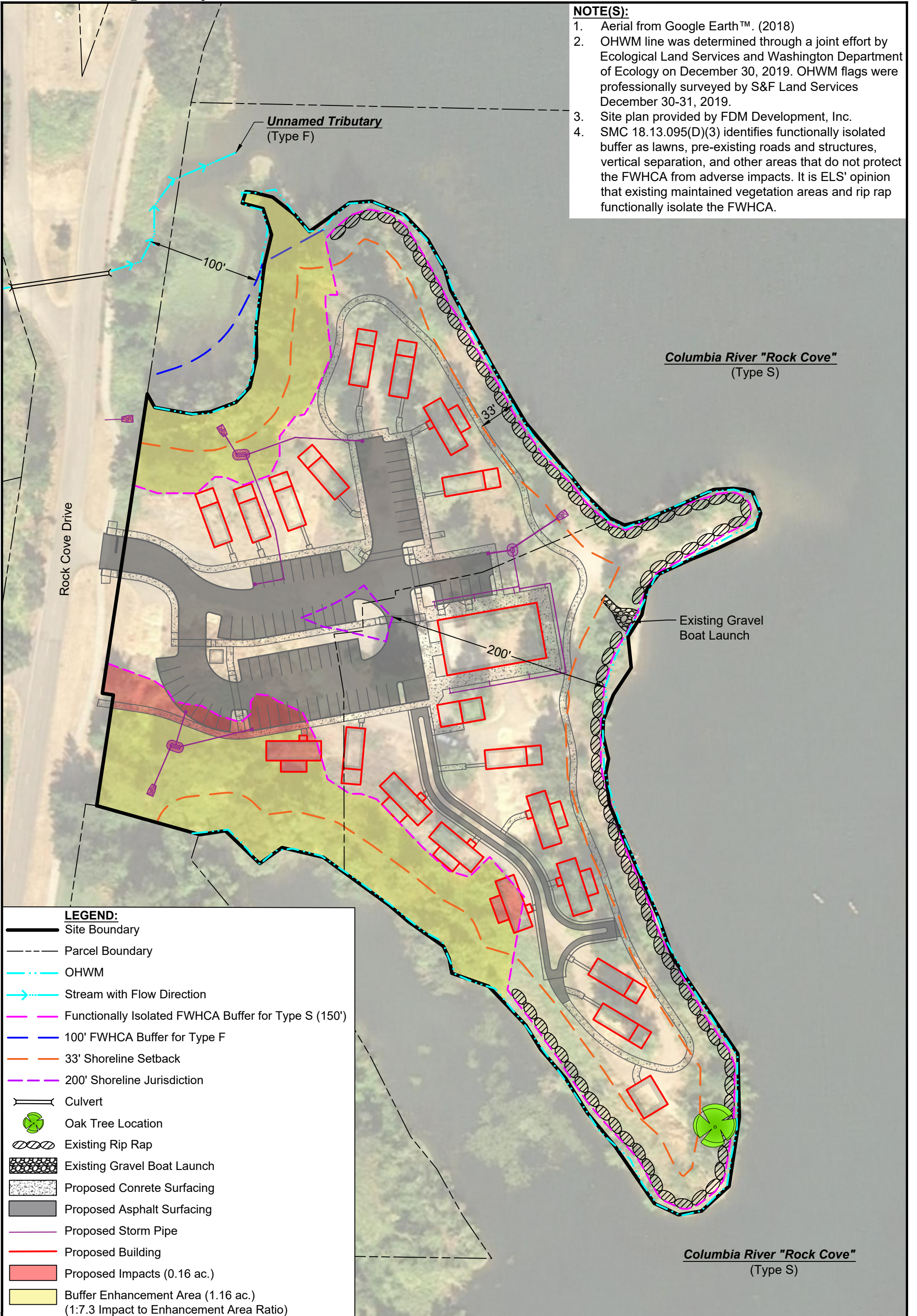
DATE: 12/8/23  
 DWN: EF  
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 PRJ. MGR: KT  
 CHK: JKJ  
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Figure 2  
 PROPOSED CONDITIONS - APRIL 2023  
 Rock Cove Addendum  
 FDM Development  
 City of Stevenson, Skamania County, Washington  
 Section 1, Township 2N, Range 7E, W.M.



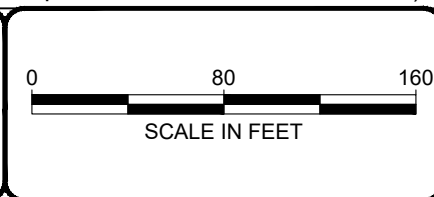
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**LEGEND:**

- Site Boundary
- - - Parcel Boundary
- OHWM
- Stream with Flow Direction
- Functionally Isolated FWHCA Buffer for Type S (150')
- 100' FWHCA Buffer for Type F
- 33' Shoreline Setback
- 200' Shoreline Jurisdiction
- Culvert
- ⊗ Oak Tree Location
- ⊗ Existing Rip Rap
- ⊗ Existing Gravel Boat Launch
- ⊗ Proposed Concrete Surfacing
- ⊗ Proposed Asphalt Surfacing
- Proposed Storm Pipe
- Proposed Building
- Proposed Impacts (0.16 ac.)
- Buffer Enhancement Area (1.16 ac.)  
(1:7.3 Impact to Enhancement Area Ratio)



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REQ. BY: KT  
PRJ. MGR: KT  
CHK: JKJ  
PROJECT NO:  
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Figure 3  
PROPOSED CONDITIONS - NOVEMBER 2023  
Rock Cove Addendum  
FDM Development  
City of Stevenson, Skamania County, Washington  
Section 1, Township 2N, Range 7E, W.M.



**Photo 1. Inflow point of the unnamed tributary via concrete culvert.**



**Photo 2. Unnamed tributary flowing toward Rock Cove.**



**Photo 3. Overview of unnamed tributary's confluence with Rock Cove.**



**Photo 4. Mud flat adjoining Rock Cove.**



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**Photoplate 1**  
**Site Photos**  
Rock Cove Preliminary Critical Areas Assessment  
FDM Development, Inc.  
City of Stevenson, Washington



**Photo 1. Vegetated shoreline on the north end of the study area.**



**Photo 2. Vegetated shoreline extending toward the unnamed tributary.**



**Photo 3. Riprap on the eastern shoreline, facing north.**



**Photo 4. Riprap on the eastern shoreline, facing south.**



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**Photoplate 2**  
**Site Photos**  
Rock Cove Preliminary Critical Areas Assessment  
FDM Development, Inc.  
City of Stevenson, Washington



**Photo 1. Graveled boat launch on the east side of the study area.**



**Photo 2. Vegetated shoreline on the west side, facing south.**



**Photo 3. Vegetated shoreline and mud flat in the southwest portion of the study area, facing south.**



**Photo 4. Groomed vegetation in the center of the study area.**



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**Photoplate 3**  
**Site Photos**  
Rock Cove Preliminary Critical Areas Assessment  
FDM Development, Inc.  
City of Stevenson, Washington



**Photo 1. Existing concrete and gravel surfacing.**



**Photo 2. Existing concrete and gravel surfacing.**



**Photo 3. Groomed vegetation in the center of the study area.**



**Photo 4. Existing gravel road.**



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**Photoplate 4**  
**Site Photos**  
Rock Cove Preliminary Critical Areas Assessment  
FDM Development, Inc.  
City of Stevenson, Washington