



City of Stevenson

Planning Department

(509)427-5970

7121 E Loop Road, PO Box 371
Stevenson, Washington 98648

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Ben Shumaker, Zoning Administrator
DATE: September 11th, 2023
SUBJECT: Integrated Shoreline Public Access and Trail Plan

Introduction

At the August meeting, the Stevenson Planning Commission requested changes to the draft Integrated Shoreline Public Access and Trail Plan (Attachment A).

At the time of this writing (September 7th), the requested changes are unavailable, however their delivery is expected on September 11th.

Next Steps

If, when available, the changes are satisfactory to the Planning Commission, a recommendation for adoption may be made to the City Council.

Prepared by,

Ben Shumaker

Attachments

1. Edits Requested (6 pages)
2. Public Comment (7)

History of the Shoreline

Public Access

The shorelines of the Columbia River have been important for settlements, trading, and fishing for thousands of years. European settlers began to change that landscape in the 1800's. Over the next 200 years the shoreline of Stevenson became dominated with mills, flumes, and skid roads for timber, followed by the construction of the railroad, highway, and finally the Bonneville Dam. Today, the shorelines of Stevenson have continued to change, with a focus now on recreation and restoration. Stevenson is internationally renowned for wind sports, including such popular spots as Bob's Beach along the Columbia River waterfront. The Port of Skamania has restored large sections of riverfront with new trails as well as native vegetation. Further, Stevenson is also known regionally for summertime events including the Fair and Timber Carnival, and Gorge Blues and Brews festival at the Skamania County Fairgrounds.

Natural Resources

The Columbia River waterfront and Rock Cove are modified shorelines, highly impacted by the construction of the Bonneville dam, dredging for industry, and regular use by recreational watercraft. The shorelines are often armored or devoid of natural vegetation. Rock Creek on the other hand has limited human disturbance along its banks and has retained significant native vegetation. Impacts to the middle and lower portion of the creek were caused by a landslide. The lower creek portion entering Rock Cove becomes more modified with armoring due to bridge crossings, and vegetation is more highly modified to retain views. Opportunities exist to improve shoreline vegetation along targeted shoreline areas and should be prioritized with any public access project.

Cultural and Historical Resources

Historically, several native tribes—including the Cowlitz, Yakama Nation, and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs— inhabited the Stevenson area and relied upon its fish, animal, and plant resources, particularly along the region's waterways. **Post European settlement, these tribes were resettled**



Local residents walk along the Mill Pond Trail year-round.

onto what is now the Yakama Reservation and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation.

This Plan acknowledges the traditional rights tribal representatives have to this area from a cultural resources and traditional perspective. At the planning-level, city officials consulted with tribal officials to ensure projects herein avoided known sensitive cultural resource sites. At the project-level, further consultation will occur with tribal cultural resources representatives.



Stone petroglyph relocated from Hamilton Island.

Scenic and Aesthetic Resources

Views are paramount within Stevenson. The downtown waterfront and Mill Pond Trail views of the Columbia River Gorge highlight this amenity. Further, Rock Creek Falls provides a breathtaking experience that is only readily accessible at certain times of year via the publicly accessible riverbed when dry during summertime. This plan intends to draw the community to these resources in an appropriate manner while respecting private property rights.

Public Partners

The Port of Skamania and Skamania County are key landowners along Stevenson’s shorelines. The Port embraces its shoreline stewardship through Goal 3 of its 2018 Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements. This text-based plan states the Port’s intent to “develop the Stevenson Waterfront as a pivotal Port and community asset” and establishes 5 objectives to do so. Skamania County is steward of much of the Rock Creek shoreline. The Skamania County Fairgrounds and Hegewald Center are the prominent land use along the Rock Cove shoreline. This plan anticipates partnering with these public agencies to design their public access systems and advance public enjoyment of shoreline areas more fully.



AFTER

New shoreline trails give the public access to the mouth of Rock Creek, Rock Cove, and the Columbia River.

Shoreline Public Access & Trail Plan Goal Met:

Increase recreational opportunities for the public in the shoreline (RCW 90.58.020(6))

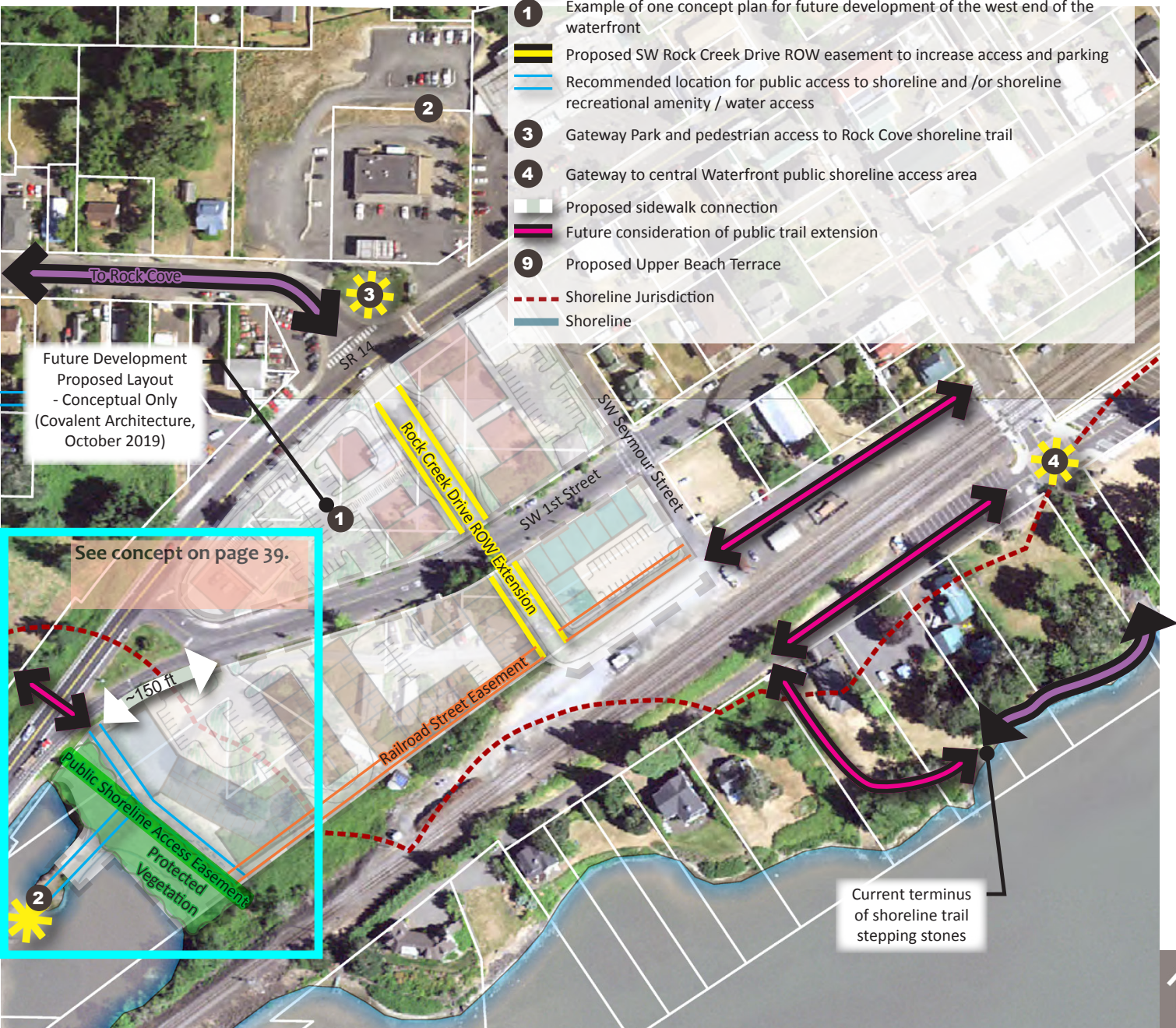
Sequence of Opportunities:

- City coordinates with developers to understand opportunities for easement for public shoreline access

- City works with developers to streamline permitting and construction of shoreline improvements
- City dedicates funding and staff to maintenance of shoreline improvements

Legend

- Proposed Railroad Street Public Access trail easement to connect to shoreline
- 1** Example of one concept plan for future development of the west end of the waterfront
- Proposed SW Rock Creek Drive ROW easement to increase access and parking
- Recommended location for public access to shoreline and /or shoreline recreational amenity / water access
- 3** Gateway Park and pedestrian access to Rock Cove shoreline trail
- 4** Gateway to central Waterfront public shoreline access area
- Proposed sidewalk connection
- Future consideration of public trail extension
- 9** Proposed Upper Beach Terrace
- Shoreline Jurisdiction
- Shoreline



SA.4 Enhance Pedestrian Connections to West Waterfront and Rock Creek			
Description/Proposed Feature and Amenity	Proposed pedestrian improvements to connect Waterfront and Downtown to Rock Cove. Proposed features include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 900 LF of new sidewalk • 400 LF of trail • QTY 1: ROW Rock Creek Dr extension • QTY 1: 20 foot wide trail easement Railroad Street • QTY 1: 20 foot wide trail easement along shoreline 	Category	Score
		GIS Score	6
		Alignment with Existing Long Range Planning	Yes (1)
		Community Support	12
		Score Summary	26
		Project Readiness Score	8
Cost	Appraisal: \$185K for waterfront trail, \$400K for railroad trail (on-site) and \$545K for Rock Creek Drive Right-of-Way Extension. Total cost including improvements: \$4,080,000.		
Project Readiness	X Can be executed immediately <input type="checkbox"/> Enact by 2030 <input type="checkbox"/> Enact by 2040 and beyond.		
Public Access Type	X Physical Access (Beach/Boat Launch) X Visual (Trail/View Point) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Trailhead, Non-Physical, etc.)		
Project Type	X Maintenance/Rehabilitation X Infrastructure Improvement X New Infrastructure X Restoration of Ecological Functions X Acquisition/Easement <input type="checkbox"/> Other – Educational resource		
Summary of Public Comments	In general, the public supported public access, both in connecting the waterfront/downtown area to Rock Cove, as well as direct water access to Rock Cove. The public did bring up concerns about historic structure preservation (unregistered farm equipment shop building) as well as existing low income rental housing with the existing mobile home park. However, it was noted that the concept was brought by the owner/applicant in 2019 based on the existing zoning for this site and is also recognized as a catalyst site per the City's Downtown Plan.		
Need Addressed	<input type="checkbox"/> Continuous pedestrian experience <input type="checkbox"/> Connection between districts <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Amenity <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor Trailhead <input type="checkbox"/> Non-motorized water access <input type="checkbox"/> Reconnection to the Columbia River		
Proposed Next Steps	Majority of work requires easements to be in place prior to proceeding. Hire consultant to design trail and streetscape improvements, evaluate separate pedestrian/bike, emergency access, and angled parking ROW extension or easement feasibility, as well as stormwater options. Coordinate with adjacent and nearby landowners, including BNSF if ROW containing railway is considered for multi-use trail. A moderate level of coordination is expected with both the subject site property owner and BNSF. Engage windsurfer community to ensure suitability of connections between the Columbia River to West Cascade Avenue and Russell Street.		
Permits Required	Shoreline Substantial Development permit (SSDP), Site Plan application, Critical Areas Checklist. Any updates to the existing pier would also trigger an SSDP, building permit, US Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permit, Ecology 401 Water Quality Certification, and WDFW HPA permit. A moderate level of permit coordination is expected.		
Mitigation Sequence & Environmental Impact	Recommended trail alignment along Rock Cove avoids direct shoreline vegetation impacts. Further, through creation of this trail, pedestrian traffic will be directed away from this shoreline vegetation, minimizing the impact over time. Existing mature trees will need to be surveyed. Construction may require some tree removal. Proposed paving closer to the shoreline, to be offset by overall decrease in impervious surface in and near shoreline jurisdiction. Indirectly anticipated to benefit multiple areas by reducing trampling and trailblazing.		
Potential Issues/ Additional Information	Align with long-term stormwater and utility improvements from a timing perspective. Trees need to be compatible with overhead powerlines.		
Ongoing Maintenance & Estimated Annual Cost	To be determined.		
SMP Amendment	Consider provision for payment-in-lieu of on-site continuous pedestrian experiences for projects that are less desirable/feasible to establish a public/private partnership.		
Comprehensive Plan Objectives Met	1.4, 1.5, 2.2, 2.5, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 4.2, 4.7, 4.10, 4A.3, 4A.4, 6.1, 6.3, 6.6, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.8, 8.7, 8.21, 9.2, 9.6, 9.7	Downtown Plan for SUCCESS!	Vision: Reconnect to the River, Foster Catalyst Projects, Build Places to Live, Create 5-Minute Loops Priority Projects: West End Redevelopment
Recommended Option	To be determined.		

SM.4



Aquatic Weed Control

SM.24 Milfoil Removal	
Description/ Proposed Feature and Amenity	Development of an aquatic management plan and application of state-approved herbicides in Rock Cove to treat aquatic invasive species, such as milfoil.
Cost	\$53,000
Timeframe	Short-term (Can be executed immediately)
Public Access Type	- Physical Access (Beach/Launch) - Visual (Trail/View Point) X Other (Trailhead, Non-Physical, etc.)
Project Type	X Maintenance/Rehabilitation - Infrastructure Improvement - New Infrastructure - Restoration of Ecological Functions - Acquisition/Easement - Other
Summary of Public Comments	This project resource was identified during the 2nd public meeting (Charrette) as a key option to improving the recreational capabilities of Rock Cove.
Need Addressed	- Continuous pedestrian experience - Connection between districts X Neighborhood Amenity - Visitor Trailhead X Non-motorized water access - Reconnection to the Columbia River.
Proposed Outreach and/or Coordination	The city or port may apply for funding to establish a management plan for aquatic invasive species treatment, starting with an application for funding from Department of Ecology. With the plan in place, herbicide treatment could then begin on aquatic invasives.

OPPOSITION TO THE FOLLOWING PROPOSALS INCLUDED IN THE STEVENSON INTEGRATED SHORELINE PUBLIC ACCESS AND TRAIL DRAFT PLAN:



- 1- CONSTRUCTION OF AN ASPHALT TRAIL EXTENSION ACROSS BOB'S BEACH
- 2- CONSTRUCTION OF SIDEWALKS ON CASCADE AVENUE ACROSS FROM BOB'S BEACH

THESE PROPOSED ITEMS SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED IN THE STEVENSON INTEGRATED SHORELINE PUBLIC ACCESS AND TRAIL PLAN.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>EMAIL/PHONE</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
Pet Albaugh	petealbaugh.org / 541-399-2997	
Bernard Versari	bversari@hotmail.com	

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<u>NAME</u>	<u>EMAIL/PHONE</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
Deb Seagris	dseagris@gmail.com	waste of time & money
Robert C Hawken	rhawken@icloud.com	Impacts to the park and evidence
DAVID CHENAULT	DR C567@GMAIL 360/566-5376	would create conflict w/ current usage
Terry Thomas	tthomas@7111@gmail.com	No benefits even to pedestrians
George Feliciano	503-260-5725	IT SEEMS UNNECESSARY AS THERE ARE PLENTY OTHER PLACES TO GO
Robert Roseenthal	530 400 4471	waste of \$
Michael Sullivan	503-317-0230	Bad idea!
Bruce Ross	208 841-2567	(EXISTING) WE NEED THE GRASS & PARKING
David Presser	509 281 3066	we use the area for parking.
GREG GOTTLIEB	206 817 9179	Interfere with historical use of Bob's beach
Peter Weddigen	604-764-5249	Don't kill the goose that lays your golden eggs!

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<u>NAME</u>	<u>EMAIL/PHONE</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
PAUL TRAVIS	ptofaulttravis.com	I THINK WE SHOULD DO METRIC MANAGEMENT INSTEAD
Ken Breitzell	Ken.Breitzell@roadrunner.com	An asphalt trail will be a waste of money to the taxpayer. I am opposed to this proposal.
Chris Riccitelli	cricitelli@roadrunner.com	The milfoil is a hazard. Since there is a solution to get rid of it please do so at Bob's Beach & not just Rock Creek. Waste of money no one will use it extend milfoil treatment to Bob's beach
William Pollock	sandluna@aol.com	BAD IDEA
Geg Nelson	grego1@aol.com	DONT CHANGE
Kevin Murphy	Kmurph0113@gmail.com	The current set up with the walk way & Bob's is excellent. Why not go up near the old wash room? Waste of money

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<u>NAME</u>	<u>EMAIL/PHONE</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
Chris Combs	cscombs22@outlook.com	I park all season long here
Lisa Young	lisayoung2003@yahoo.com	
Rich May	rich@mayandassociates.net	
Karen Berglund	farmgrl27@yahoo.com	
Ben Young	byoung1@cocc.edu	
Wade J. [Signature]	musicman4ever@hotmail.com	Negative impacts on current recreational use + parking
Ken [Signature]	KENFS@hotmail.com	IMPACTS PARK SPACE & PROVIDES NO DESTINATION. People is destination. Detrimental to public recreation use.
Chris Riccitelli	ericcitelli@roadrunner.com	
Jannie Juster	jeanniejuster51@gmail.com	
Barb Cline	mtamma@gmail.com	Bad idea
Kevin Cline	kevincline8@gmail.com	
Amy Weissfeld	amyweissfeld@gmail.com	Parking is already very limited → negatively impacts water rec. access to water/Bob's beach. Very busy in summer. Better to goop trail up @ Stevenson beach.

Date: August 9, 2023

To: Stevenson Planning Commission, Planning Director

From: Bernard Versari

RE: Integrated Shoreline Public Access and Trail Plan – **Proposal #3 Pedestrian Connection to Waterfront West end**

I attended several meetings regarding this plan over the last few months. I met with City staff, participated in the Watershed Consultant's Charrette exercise at the Library, attended the consultant's draft presentation and final draft presentation to the Planning Commission in May and June, respectively, and I also provided comments to the City Council in June.

I was surprised to find out, upon reviewing the final draft Plan submitted at the May Planning Commission, that **several important changes had been introduced after the charrette without public participation**. Specifically, the **addition of an asphalt trail across Bob's Beach park and the addition of sidewalks along Cascade Ave near Bob's Beach**.

Public participation at and since the May Planning Commission meeting has clearly demonstrated the **public opposition to these proposals at Bob's Beach from the various users and the Port of Skamania County. Additional comments from the users of the park are also attached for this meeting and SEPA comments.**

None of these projects have been tested for feasibility. More consulting would be required. This is a concerning approach to planning, especially knowing that after approval by the City Council, after considering the recommendations of the Planning Commission (if any), the next steps would be to update the Comprehensive plan and regulatory documents, submitting grant applications, and hiring consultants for feasibility studies for projects that the users of this park clearly do not want.

Recommendations regarding Proposal #3:

It is therefore recommended that the following items be removed from the final report:

- 1- **The asphalt trail extension going across Bob's Beach.**
- 2- **The construction of sidewalks along Cascade Ave near Bob's Beach**

Discussion/Justifications for recommendations:

Trail extension going across Bob's Beach

Bob's Beach is a long established (30+ years) favorite river access point to Stevenson residents and visitors alike for various water sports, including windsurfing. This beautiful tree-shaded park offers a well maintained lawn for rigging and staging water related equipment for water sports enthusiasts. This park uniquely provides a safe direct low-bank access to the river through beautiful natural flagstone stairs.

An asphalt trail across this park would negatively impact the functionality of this unique river access park in the Columbia River Gorge. It would likely bring safety, equipment staging, water access and conflicts issues.

At the May Planning Commission meeting several people expressed their doubts that people would want to use an asphalt trail that would go behind the Port Office Building to loop to Cascade along the railroad tracks. Instead, people are likely to continue doing what they currently do, which is after having visited Bob's Beach, going back along the current river trail towards Russell or walking over the current stepping stones trail back to Cascade Avenue.

The white box shown on the SA.4 map, on page 40 of the Draft Plan, indicating where the end of the current stepping stones are located is incorrect and misleading. In fact, Bob's Beach already provides a looping trail for pedestrians between the river trail and Cascade Avenue on beautiful stepping stones. This **existing stepping stones trail** is safe, attractive and environmentally friendly (unlike the proposed **asphalt** trail across the water access).

This negative assessment of the proposed asphalt trail at Bob's Beach is clearly corroborated by the attached public comments from regular users of Bob's Beach, as well as by the prior comments provided to the Planning Commission.

Construction of sidewalks along Cascade Ave near Bob's Beach

Parking at Bob's Beach is at full capacity during the spring/summer months and should not be reduced for sidewalks. The proposal latest cost estimate on page 41 reflects 900' of new sidewalks (a large portion near Bob's Beach since this estimate was kept unchanged from a prior draft). Adding sidewalks to this area would likely reduce the amount of parking to the Bob's Beach parking capacity and the accommodations for vehicles with trailers (which is very common). Clearly, all users of Bob's beach and the Port of Skamania County are opposed to the sidewalk proposal.

Sidewalks would also likely add safety issues by facilitating trespassing across the railroad tracks instead of using the current Russell Street railroad crossing to/from the Port of Skamania Landing.

Additional comments in regards to milfoil management along the shorelines

It was encouraging to read in the Final Draft (SM-4 on page 77) that steps toward milfoil control plan will be initiated. Milfoil invasion is an issue that was identified during the development of the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) and earmarked as a restoration action item (to be completed by 2022).

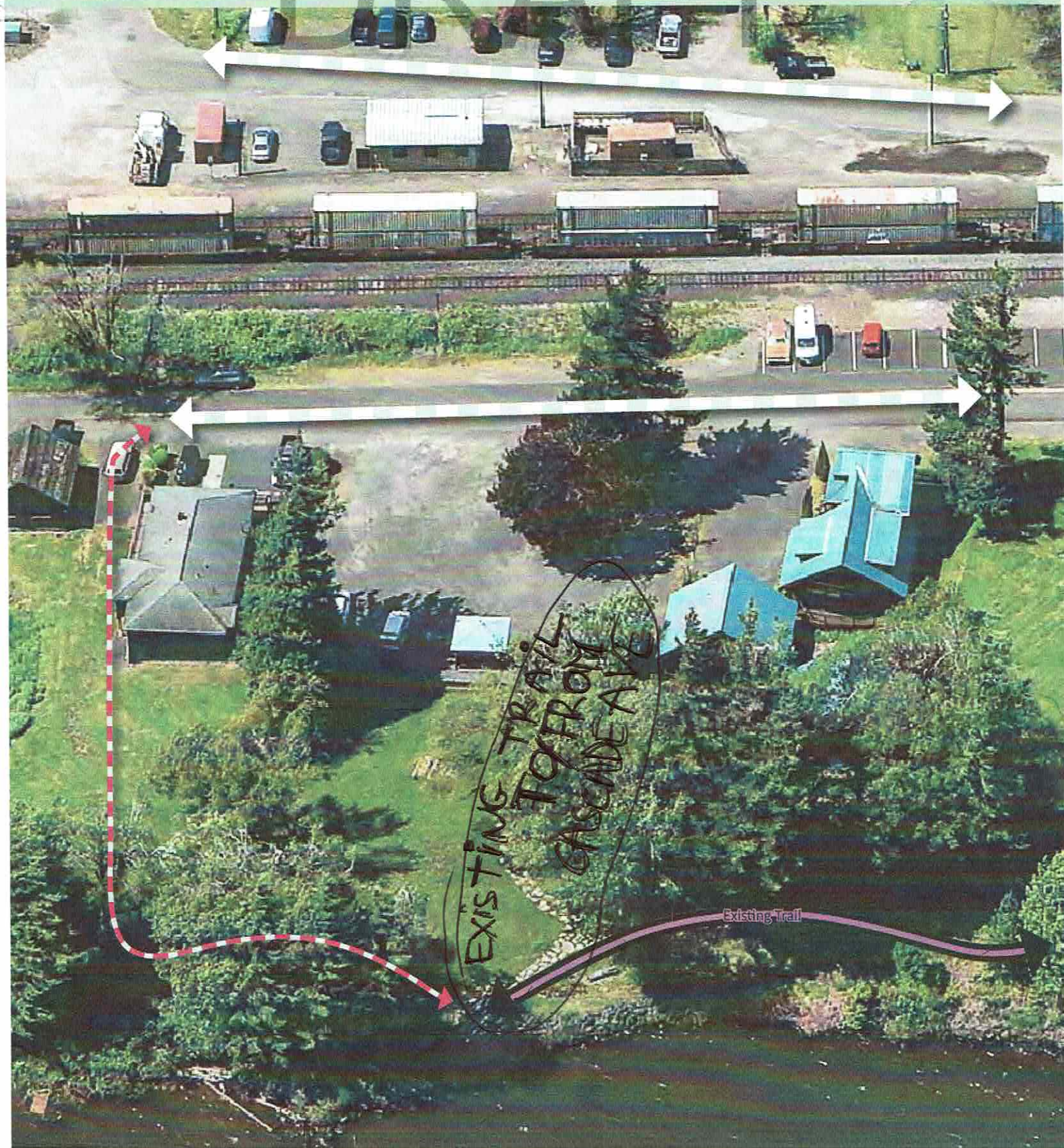
Milfoil has now invaded the entire Stevenson shorelines. However, the current Draft Shoreline Public Access and Trail Plan limits the restoration efforts to Rock Cove. The Final Draft should address the milfoil invasion throughout the Stevenson shorelines shallow and stagnant waters and should consider conducting feasibility studies of various control options. The attached comments support this conclusion.

Please consider the recommendations presented above for your review of the Final Draft of the Integrated Shoreline Public Access and Trail Plan.

Sincerely,

Bernard Versari

DRAFT



EXISTING TRAIL TOY FROM CASCADE AVE

Existing trail