



Memorandum

November 26, 2013

TO: Michael Traffalis, Federal Highway Administration Western Lands Division
Don Owings, HDR Engineering, Inc.

FROM: Kyle Brown, Normandeau Associates

SUBJECT: National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) River S Unit Access Project – Public Outreach Summary

Overview

This memorandum summarizes the outreach process to date for the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) River S Unit Access Project, led by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Western Lands Division.

In 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the FHWA; that study was a preliminary review of alternatives for providing access improvements to the River S Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River S Unit in its final CCP, meaning a new access point for River S was desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

In 2011, the USFWS requested that the FHWA lead the River S Unit Access Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). By building upon past planning efforts and through an Environmental Assessment (EA) process, the FHWA would produce an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location and identify specific alternative locations to the River S Unit. With this effort, the FHWA intended to engage in a public scoping process under NEPA to develop the purpose and need and a full range of alternatives to address access-related problems to the River S Unit.

As the NEPA process progressed, it was determined that an EA was unnecessary, and that the project could be assessed through a Categorical Exclusion. As such, this memorandum summarizes all public outreach undertaken as part of the EA process, beginning in December 2011 and concluding with a public meeting in January 2013.

Outreach

The purpose of the public outreach process was to obtain input at all stages of the project. An initial coordination meeting with Refuge staff was held at the beginning of the project to ensure that the project was aligned with the Refuge's goals and objectives. Stakeholder interviews were conducted from December 2011 through March of 2012 to gather feedback and unique perspectives prior to the project beginning in earnest. Once the project began, the community was updated through e-mails, newsletters, the project website, and an open house public meeting held January 31, 2013.

Coordination Meeting

A coordination meeting was held with Refuge staff on November 8, 2011. The meeting was an opportunity for Refuge staff to interact with the FHWA in seeking solutions regarding aligning the Refuge's goals and objectives with the NEPA process for the new access.

See Attachment A for the full meeting summary.

Stakeholder interviews

From December 2011 through March 2012, Normandeau Associates, Inc. (Normandeau) collaborated with FHWA staff to identify parties to participate in a series of stakeholder interviews. Stakeholders were selected to represent a cross-section of views and concerns regarding the project or area. The interview questionnaire was intended to obtain stakeholder feedback, gather unique or new information, and identify community perceptions. The stakeholders comprised 34 community members and interested parties who represented a broad range of perspectives.

The stakeholder interviews were compiled into a summary report that highlighted their key ideas, concerns, and comments regarding the proposed access improvements. See Attachment B for the full stakeholder interview summary report.

E-mails

Two mass-distribution e-mails were sent to a list of 448 recipients, which included federal, state, and local agencies, tribes, non-profit organizations, businesses, the general public, and regional media contacts, including: *The Oregonian*, *The Portland Business Journal*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Columbian*, *Vancouver Business Journal*, and the *Battle Ground Reflector*.

E-mail #1 was sent on December 12, 2011, and was intended to introduce the project, announce the first project newsletter, and provide a link to the project website. E-mail #2 was sent on January 18, 2013, and was intended to announce the January 31, 2013 public meeting.

See Attachment C for copies of emails sent.

Newsletters

Three newsletters were posted to the project website for public review. Newsletter #1 was posted in December 2011 and provided an introduction to the project's purpose and need, as

well as opportunities to become involved. Newsletter #2 was posted in June 2012 and provided a project update for the spring through fall 2012. Newsletter #3 was posted in January 2013 and announced the public meeting and highlighted the alternatives screening process.

See Attachment D for project newsletters.

Website (<http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/wa/ridgefield-wildlife-refuge/>)

A project website was established December 9, 2011 as a source for project information, updates, newsletters and documents, and contact information for the project team. The website was updated at key points in the project and corresponded with newsletter updates.

See Attachment E for a screen shot of the website as of November 21, 2013.

Open House Public Meeting

An open house was held from 4-6 p.m. on Thursday, January 31, 2013, at the Ridgefield Community Center, 210 North Main Avenue, in Ridgefield, Washington. Twenty-one attendees signed in and viewed the project materials. The open house was promoted via an e-mail to 448 recipients in the project mailing list, which included regional media contacts, including: *The Oregonian*, *The Portland Business Journal*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Columbian*, *Vancouver Business Journal*, and the *Battle Ground Reflector*.

The purpose of the open house was to obtain comments on the range of alternatives and the screening process. Project staff members were available to present information, answer questions, and gather input from attendees regarding the project's purpose and need and screening criteria.

See Attachment F for a public meeting summary including comments, attendees, and information presented.

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Attachment A: Coordination Meeting Summary

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**Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project
Project Team Meeting With
Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge)
November 8, 2011
1 - 4 PM**

Attendees:

Eric Anderson, Refuge
Kyle Brown, Normandeau Associates
Elisa Carlson, FHWA
Karen Ciocia, Normandeau Associates
Robert Flores, Refuge
Randy Hill, Refuge

Jeff Holm, Refuge
Christopher Lapp, Refuge
Kirk Loftsgaarden, FHWA
Brian Minor, FHWA
Don Owings, HDR
Michael Traffalis, FHWA

Introductions:

Michael welcomed the group and attendees introduced themselves. He reviewed the meeting agenda and noted that he intended the meeting to be interactive and the FHWA was seeking solutions regarding aligning the Refuge's goals and objectives with the current National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the new access.

Discussion:

Michael provided an overview of the need for a new access and Refuge-wide transportation issues (see Attachment A: Presentation). The group provided the following comments and discussion:

Access

Michael asked if the Refuge was aware of any access issues. Eric responded that it is difficult to enter and exit the River S unit in snowy conditions. He also noted a 1996 landslide which closed the road and almost injured a worker. Robert added that trains can block the access and noted a recent six-hour delay due to an accident.

Christopher asked about inspector reports for the bridge. Michael noted a 2010 report which found that the bridge, while at the end a typical lifespan for a timber bridge, could sustain legal load limits. Randy noted that they recently closed the access for three weeks to transport 5,500 tons of gravel into the refuge. The Refuge has found that there is an issue with large trucks using the access for construction projects, as a result, they have used the "truck & pup" type delivery resulting in twice the traffic across the existing bridge.

Robert stated that the Port of Ridgefield (Port) wants visitors to access the Refuge via the Port property since that aligns with their business plan for Millers Landing. Jeff added that the Port prefers an access option south of the current access, which would place it through the existing marina. Robert said that the Port expects to acquire the McCuddy's property soon. Karen responded that the marina is in its second year of a 25-year lease. Michael responded that the project team will be considering an array of access points.

The group agreed that the project is primarily an access improvement project and not a bridge replacement project.

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

Michael asked about ADA requirements. To meet ADA requirements, a 5 percent slope is warranted, which adds to the project cost and footprint. He recommended that ADA requirements not be included in the Purpose and Need. He noted that the access is not required to meet ADA requirements and added that the Port's overcrossing would not meet ADA standards. The group agreed that ADA standards would not be in the Purpose and Need.

Dike

Michael asked about ownership of the dike. Robert responded that he was not sure, but speculated the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers owns it. Michael displayed an engineering drawing of a potential crossing that would tie in with the Port's overcrossing. He noted that connecting the overcrossing at grade with the dike would decrease the profile and footprint of the project. Michael asked if the Refuge would prefer the overcrossing allow a pedestrian crossing at the dike. Robert responded that it should be an objective. Don asked whether there is an existing trail on the dike. Robert responded that one exists, and it is closed during bird migration and hunting seasons.

Easement

Randy stated that the current access is through an easement with the adjacent landowner. There is no designated road access and only an easement for access, though this information is only speculative. Randy stated that current gate is within the easement, however, the existing sign is outside the easement. Eric said he believes the easement is defined in a legal description and will be providing that information to the project team.

FTP Site

Randy asked whether a FTP site could be created to share information between the project team and Refuge staff. Michael responded that a FTP site has been created and he would share the access information with the project team and Refuge staff.

Goals

Michael asked if the Refuge would like to address short-term or long-term goals through the NEPA process. Christopher said that he would meet with Refuge staff to discuss and would respond within two weeks.

Grade Separation

Michael noted that there is an issue with identifying a need for a grade-separated crossing in the Purpose and Need since it ties the Refuge's project to the Port's overcrossing, which has uncertain funding. Christopher stated that grade separation is an objective, not a need. Jeff added that the Refuge needs to position itself to complete its project without being tied to the Port's. Karen noted that the Port's overcrossing hinges on a Categorical Exclusion, and they would prefer that the Refuge's project not jeopardize that decision. Michael confirmed with the group that the need for the project is access-related, not a grade-separation (railroad crossing) or bridge replacement project.

Maintenance

Kirk asked if the Refuge performed maintenance on the current access. Randy responded that they perform maintenance, and they are aware that it is only an access easement. Michael suggested that an objective should be legal ownership of an access and a deed detailing maintenance and construction. The group agreed with Michael's suggestion.

NEPA Process

Michael noted that the Port requested an extensive alternatives analysis and the FHWA is conducting that analysis along with an outreach process. Christopher asked whether the FHWA was conducting an impact assessment. Michael responded that it was part of the NEPA analysis.

Overlook Park

Karen asked about Overlook Park. Eric responded that the development is stalled due to on-street parking issues and truck access.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

Eric noted that some pedestrian access is allowed on the auto tour route in the summer months. Michael asked whether bikes would eventually be allowed on the auto tour route. Eric responded that they would not be allowed, though the Refuge has been exploring the idea of a bike storage facility at its headquarters. Robert added that the Refuge has had some discussions regarding bike access at the Carty Unit. Christopher asked how considering only pedestrian and vehicle access would influence the proposed access relocation. Mike noted that any crossing structure could be narrower since the project would not be accommodating multi-modal transportation. The group agreed that the new access would aim to accommodate pedestrians and vehicles only.

Project Agreement

The FHWA and Refuge agreed that the project agreement was suitable, and both parties signed the document.

Project Web Site

A project web site will be drafted and the Refuge will include links and direct questions regarding the project to the site.

Public Meeting

Eric asked if a single public meeting would be held in Ridgefield. The Refuge held meetings in Ridgefield and Vancouver for the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), and attendance was higher in Ridgefield. Kirk responded that one public meeting would be held in Ridgefield, and a public involvement plan would be formulated following that meeting.

Jeff asked how the notification list would be developed. Michael responded that the list would comprise the Refuge's CCP list and the mailing list for the Port's overcrossing project. Randy added that local transportation agencies should also be included in the notification.

Purpose and Need & Evaluation Criteria

Michael stated that, based on the results of the meeting, the project team will be developing the draft Purpose and Need and evaluation criteria for the Refuge staff's consideration. Michael noted that the Purpose and Need and evaluation criteria will be reviewed by the public prior to developing the range of alternatives. The group confirmed

that a grade-separated access is one objective and will not be included in the Purpose and Need. The access will accommodate pedestrians and will be a two-lane facility to the Refuge's toll booth.

Michael asked whether the Refuge would prefer to identify any criteria that would preclude the new access, such as contaminated properties. Christopher responded that the Refuge will be confirming this with its real estate representatives.

Refuge Point Of Contact

Michael will be FHWA's point of contact, and Christopher will be the point of contact for the Refuge.

Safety

Karen asked if there were any documented accidents at the access. None apparently exist, though Refuge staff noted the potential for accidents due to sight line issues, fast Amtrak trains, and trains blocking the entrance which would hinder emergency response.

Stakeholder Interviews

The group reviewed the preliminary stakeholder list. Robert noted that the Chinook tribe is not federally-recognized. The Refuge coordinates with the tribe through an agreement, though it is not compulsory. Michael noted that they were identified as a stakeholder since they were part of the CCP. Christopher asked whether the Refuge would be contacting the tribes. Elisa responded that the project team will need to discuss the coordination details and noted that any contact with the tribes will be on a federal entity to federal entity basis.

Eric asked if the Waterfowl Association should be added as a stakeholder. Robert responded it is unnecessary to include them as a stakeholder, though they should be part of the notification list.

Eric asked which schools would be stakeholders. Approximately 95 percent of the schools visiting the Refuge are from southwest Washington, and they mostly visit the Carty Unit due to access issues at the River S Unit. Robert suggested that the project team conduct interviews with Vancouver and Ridgefield school districts.

Michael asked if the Refuge has had any contact with BNSF Railway. Randy responded that their inquiries are typically routed through a Chicago office. Eric added that the Refuge has had some contact with a local representative in Kelso, and Bob noted that they could provide contact information to the project team.

Michael noted that the Washington Department of Natural Resources will be involved through the project's navigational assessment.

Robert suggested adding Taverner's Ridge to the stakeholder list. The group agreed that since Taverner's Ridge LLC is the adjacent property owner to the current access, it should be interviewed.

Jeff suggested changing the questionnaire title to emphasize that the project is now primarily an access project.

Traffic

Michael asked about a recent traffic analysis conducted by Kittleson and whether it detailed trips to and from the Refuge. Eric responded that the Refuge uses a multiplier of 2.3 to determine the number of trips. He added that the Refuge also has a car counter

and can provide that data to the project team. Michael noted that American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards for less than 50 visits per day allows for a single-lane bridge. The project team will analyze the traffic volumes and types of vehicles that access the facility and determine which configuration is best for the new access. Eric said the CCP calls for significant growth at the Refuge, which should be considered in this process. Michael responded that the project team will look to the future and scale the project accordingly.

Michael noted that, if an access location is selected near the City of Ridgefield, the effects of Refuge traffic on the city will need to be considered. Christopher noted that traffic impacts to Ridgefield will be a key issue and asked whether the project's connection to the Port's overcrossing would also have an effect on City traffic. Michael responded that the Port's overcrossing would indeed have an effect. Randy noted that the current access allows visitors to enter without travelling through the city and tying the Refuge's project to the Port's would necessitate travel through the city. Michael responded that the project team would be considering that effect. Robert added that the downtown Ridgefield business group would presumably prefer a project tie-in with the Port's overcrossing since it would create a more obvious connection to downtown.

Elisa asked whether reducing automobile mileage on the auto tour route was a goal of the CCP. Eric responded that the Refuge has accomplished that goal.

Agreements & Action Items:

Agreements:

- Purpose and Need will not include any language regarding a grade-separated crossing or ADA.
- A new crossing will include two lanes to the toll booth and will accommodate pedestrians.
- The Waterfowl Association will not be a stakeholder, though it will receive information.
- Add Taverner's Ridge LLC to stakeholder list.

Action Items:

- Project Team
 - Draft Purpose and Need
 - Provide access to FTP site (completed 11/8)
 - Draft web site
 - Draft postcard
 - Develop mailing list
 - Revise questionnaire
 - 11/8 meeting summary
- Refuge (will send or post to the project FTP site)
 - Send easement/legal language for current access road to project team.
 - Provide car count information to project team.
 - Send Kittleson report to project team.
 - Send CCP mailing list to project team.
 - Chris, Bob, and Jeff will be discussing (within the next two weeks) short-term vs. long-term goals.
 - Chris and Bob will send BNSF letter to project team (need contact from BNSF).

- Chris will be discussing his agency's liability and hold-harmless agreements, as they pertain to contaminated property.

Attachment A: Presentation

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**FHWA Ridgefield River S Unit
Project Team Meeting with Ridgefield National
Wildlife Refuge**

**November 8, 2011
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM**



AGENDA

1. Why we are here
2. Confirm background and assumptions of CCP:
 - a) What are the project needs?
 - b) What was the criteria used for evaluation?
3. Discuss FHWA process overview
4. Review and approve agency Project Agreement
5. Review and approve stakeholder list and questionnaire
6. Review schedule
7. Review action items
8. Next steps



Need

- Universal safe access is important to the refuge and its programs



Refuge Wide Transportation Issues

- Aging infrastructure
- Lack of funding for major upgrades to existing facilities.

Specific Issues to the River S Unit Access

- Visitors to the River 'S' Unit currently drive along an access where the Refuge:
 - holds an access only easement for using the road, that is:
 - flanked by steep slopes subject to slides and slumps;
 - narrow and steep gravel road;
 - Holds an access only easement at the BNSF RR crossing
 - That is periodically blocked by queuing trains limiting
 - emergency service access on or off the Refuge to Helicopter or boat
 - and can delay the public for hours;
 - RR use in the future is expected to grow as a High Speed Rail corridor is developed btw Portland -Seattle
 - uses a 40-year-old wooden bridge, that
 - 2008 required major structural repairs;
 - 2009 required barrier rail upgrades; and
 - 2010 Inspection report reports
 - Some piles rotting above water line
 - Abutment pile rot
 - Wing wall deterioration
 - Also - No Load Posting Required.

"During the winter of 1996, a slide blocked the road and trees fell on refuge equipment working to clear the debris. This event underscores the potential of this access point (in its current condition) to fail, trap visitors, preclude access to the refuge, and potentially risk the safety of visitors and staff." Refuge CCP

Transportation Needs

- **Allows visitors safe, efficient access to the Refuge**
 - What are the safety issues with the current access/bridge?
 - Does this mean Grade separated crossing with the RR ?
 - Why is a grade crossing that undesirable?
 - Blocked Access?
 - Does this mean having a easement or ownership that is defined and recorded with a Highway Easement Deed?
 - Providing the Refuge rights to adequately maintain the road?
 - Does this mean reduce road maintenance costs?
- **Accommodates the volume and types of traffic for current and future uses**
 - CCP Chapter 5 – sites 55,000 Auto Tour trips in 2007-
 - Does this mean: $55,000/365=164$ trips per day(average)?
 - What is a trip? Are hunters accounted for? What about unpaid trip estimates?
 - Uses- has a traffic uses analysis been performed that further defines what type of traffic is using the road/bridge
 - Bus %
 - Car %
 - Etc
 - Future Uses- Were traffic projection made in the CCP?
 - Do future uses also include Pedestrians and bikes?
- **and that provides ADA access for those with disabilities**
 - CCP states wildlife impacts are higher from Ped's and Bikes vs. cars.
 - Are bikes and pedestrians allowed on the Auto Tour route? What will this sidewalk service? The future Dike Trail?
 - This will limit grade of roadways and bridges with sidewalks to 5% maximum. Are you sure you want to comply with ADA or simply provide Pedestrian and Bikes a sidewalk along the road?

Criteria Used to Rank and Compare Alternatives

- **Refuge Resources** compares impacts of the alternatives to the Refuge's wildlife, habitats, and cultural resources; and the Refuge's ability to conduct its wildlife and habitat management activities.
- **Safety and ADA Compliance** compares the relative safety of each alternative, and how well each alternative meets ADA guidelines.
- **Accommodates Increased Visitation** compares how well each alternative accommodates projected increases in visitation.
- **Impact to Visitors** compares how well each alternative meets the Refuge's goal of quality opportunities for waterfowl hunting, wildlife observation and photography, fishing, interpretation, and environmental education. Included in this analysis is the quality of visitor experience provided, ease of visitor access, and how well each alternative minimizes conflicts between or within different user groups.
- **Impact to Community** compares impacts of the alternatives to neighboring landowners and/or renters, and the local community. This includes impacts of increased visitor traffic through neighborhoods and through town, impacts of constructed elements on view-sheds, and impacts of the alternatives on community development projects (for example the proposed Port of Ridgefield development).
- **Cost/Feasibility** compares costs of land acquisition, construction, and maintenance. It also includes with feasibility of implementing the alternative (i.e. Section 4(f) and NEPA compliance).



FHWA Process Overview

Conduct a FHWA NEPA process that starts with:

- NEPA Scoping;
 - Purpose and Need Development;
 - Public Process for Input including specific Stakeholder Interviews;
 - Development of Newsletters, Project Web site, and Public Meeting; and
 - Develops corridors for a full range of alternatives to be vetted through NEPA process.



Agency Project Agreement



Stakeholder List and Questionnaire

- Port of Ridgefield (staff and elected officials)
- City of Ridgefield (staff and elected officials)
- Marina residents
- McCuddy's Marina
- Washington Department of Ecology
- Friends Of The Refuge
- Ridgefield Downtown business group
- School districts
- BNSF
- Tribes(FHWA/Refuge)-Chinook, Cowlitz, and Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde



Stakeholder Questionnaire

- *Hand out developed questionnaire*

Schedule

Task	Date
Development of Draft Purpose and Need	Early December
Development of project newsletter and website	Early December
Standing coordination meetings	Monthly (2 nd Tuesday of each month) Dec 13, Jan 10, Feb 14, & March 13
Stakeholder interviews	Early December through March
Alternative locations w/concepts	January through March
Public meeting	April
Public involvement plan	May

- Development of updated plan and activities moving forward
 - River Navigation study
 - Traffic Impact assessment
 - Resource reports
 - Preliminary Engineering

Attachment B: Stakeholder Interview Summary Report

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RIVER S UNIT ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SUMMARY REPORT

May 14, 2012

**Submitted to:
Federal Highways Administration (FHWA)
Western Federal Lands Division
& HDR Engineering**

**Submitted By:
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FHWA River S Unit Access Improvements Stakeholder Interview Summary Report

INTRODUCTION

In 2009 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); that study was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River S Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River S Unit in its final CCP, meaning a new access point for River S was desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

The USFWS requested FHWA's, Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver, Washington, lead the River S Unit Access Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). By building upon past planning efforts, the FHWA will produce an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location and identify specific alternative locations to the River S Unit. With this new effort, FHWA is planning to engage in a public scoping process under NEPA to develop the purpose and need and a full range of alternatives to address access related problems to the River S unit.

METHODOLOGY

From December 2011 through March of 2012, Normandeau Associates, Inc. (Normandeau) collaborated with FHWA staff to identify parties to participate in a series of stakeholder interviews. Stakeholders were selected to represent a cross-section of views and concerns regarding the project or area. The interview questionnaire was intended to obtain stakeholder feedback, gather unique or new information, and identify community perceptions. The stakeholders comprise 34 community members and interested parties who represented a broad range of perspectives. This stakeholder report outlines their key ideas, concerns, and comments regarding the proposed access improvements.

Normandeau interviewed the following community members and interested parties:

- Brent Grening, Port of Ridgefield, Washington
- Justin Clary, City of Ridgefield, Washington
- Jeff Warren & April Coss, McCuddy's Marina Residents
- Larry & Penny Rasmussen, McCuddy's Marina Residents
- Terry Nelson, Taverner Ridge Resident
- Jeffrey Evans, Taverner Ridge Resident
- David & Ginna DeFreitas, Taverner Ridge Residents
- Maury & Linda Wilson, Taverner Ridge Residents
- Tom & Sue Carroll, Taverner Ridge Residents
- Scott Hughes, Ridgefield Hardware Store & Port of Ridgefield
- Don Griswold, Old Liberty Theater
- Todd Chenoweth, Pioneer Marketplace/Ridgefield Market
- Tony Zebrun, Zebrun's Starliner Deli
- Bev Arnoldy, Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge
- Russ Roseberry, Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

- Susie Bishop, Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge
- Mark McCuddy, McCuddy's Marina Owner
- Charlotte Clevidence, McCuddy's Marina Resident
- Richard Wagner, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway
- Ken Burgstahler, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Keith Molyneux, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Tim Dawdy, Clark County Fire & Rescue
- Todd Horenstein, Vancouver School District
- Art Edgerly, Ridgefield School District
- Gail Alexander, McCuddy's Marina Resident & Ridgefield Kayak
- Mark Shaff, McCuddy's Marina Resident
- Guy Barrett, Washington State Department of Ecology
- James DeMay, Washington State Department of Ecology
- Craig Rankine, Washington State Department of Ecology

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many stakeholders would like to see the access to the River S Unit and the Refuge improved to increase tourism and economic development. The stakeholders involved recognized that while increased visitation and tourism may bring economic benefits, there are also potential impacts to plan for and address. Generally, it is acknowledged the existing access to the River S Unit of the Refuge is inadequate and there are multiple safety and longevity concerns for the approach via the access road and the bridge across Lake River. In general, the stakeholders agree it would be beneficial to provide a route to the River S Unit that draws tourism through the City of Ridgefield downtown core, provides safe access for vehicles as well as pedestrians and bicyclists, closes the at-grade rail crossing (eliminating the need for train whistles), ties into the regional trail system, and above all protects the Refuge as a major tourism attraction and habitat sanctuary. Stakeholders had suggestions for alternative access points; the most often mentioned access was at Pioneer Street. Some suggested combining any new access with the current Ridgefield Rail Overpass project already underway or developing a tie into that project at a later point. Other stakeholders suggested evaluating an upgrade to the existing access. Other access points to consider would be at Mill Street or Division Street. However, those two options may be more problematic in that they may conflict with existing waterfront development plans already underway by the Port of Ridgefield. If the Pioneer Street access moves forward, the stakeholders acknowledged the potential impacts to the residents of McCuddy's Marina. Regardless of which option is chosen, stakeholders were concerned with potential increases in traffic and pollution, inadequate parking, and environmental impacts to the habitat and Refuge.

This report summarizes the information learned from the stakeholders and contains a list of considerations for the Federal Highway Administration to consider as this project procures funding and moves into the next phase of development.

CURRENT INTEREST AND ACCESS

1. Do you access the River S Unit or visit the Refuge?

The majority of stakeholders have visited the Refuge. Some visit the Refuge on a regular basis. A few stakeholders visit the River S Unit, but most tend to visit the Carty Unit more often. A few stakeholders visit on a professional basis while many have visited the Refuge with family and friends; several have taken the auto-tour on the River S Unit. Generally speaking, the Refuge is regarded as an attraction and local asset to area residents, City of Ridgefield, recreation interests, local businesses, and the education community. However, the Carty Unit currently has more vehicle amenities and accommodations than the River S Unit.

Considerations:

- The Refuge is part of the "Soul of the Community." It brings over 100,000 people to Ridgefield per year.
- Maintaining access to the River S Unit is important as is allowing for sailboats to pass under the access.
- Closing the at-grade rail crossing at the existing access is generally considered desirable and beneficial.
- The cost of retrofitting existing bridge versus building a brand new bridge should be examined.
- Well holes may need to be drilled on the Refuge property in the future.

2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance?

Each stakeholder and stakeholder group has a unique interest in the River S Unit entrance. Some are personally connected to the River S Unit entrance of the Refuge because their homes are located near the entrance, they know hunters who use the River S Unit, or they volunteer on the Refuge. Other stakeholders have professional interests and are responsible for emergency management, science education, or maintaining the Refuge for environmental and wildlife purposes. Others have commercial business interests in the entrance. Some businesses are located adjacent to the River S Unit and others would like to see the current entrance moved closer to town to attract more people to their businesses to generate more revenue for their and other local businesses. Generally, most stakeholders expressed interest in moving the existing automobile access closer to downtown Ridgefield to help businesses. A few stakeholders would like to maintain the existing access at its current location or maintain it for pedestrian and bicycle access only and link it to the trails system. A couple of marina residents are concerned about visual impacts if the access is moved downtown and suggested revamping the access to include a ferry boat as opposed to a bridge. Some stakeholders believe the current access poses some safety concern with respect to response time, ability to get equipment over the bridge, and blockage of trains at at-grade crossings. Regardless of their individual interests, each stakeholder acknowledges the importance of the Refuge, including the River S Unit, to the City of Ridgefield's economy, tourism, environment, and quality of life.

Considerations:

- The Port has waterfront property development and would like to see the entrance moved closer to town to increase interest in the waterfront development and capture more revenue from tourism.
- The City of Ridgefield is concerned about impacts to downtown's transportation system, particularly the availability of parking; it would support options which direct traffic away from downtown, if appropriate.
- The Taverner Ridge residents would like to preserve the existing access for pedestrian and bicycle access only. They consider easy access to the Refuge as an amenity that increases their property value and the attractiveness of the development.
- Some of the marina residents would like the access to stay at its current location to prevent development impacts, more traffic, changes to the character of the town, and visual impacts to the marina and Refuge.
- Regardless of the entrance location, it needs to maintain a connection to the auto-tour on the Refuge.
- Eliminating at-grade crossings will create safer crossing and eliminate need for train whistle. BNSF is willing to partner to eliminate as many at-grade crossings as possible.
- A new bridge should be tall enough to accommodate sailboats passing underneath and accommodate the structural, parking, and turning radius needs of school buses and emergency vehicles.
- The Washington State Department of Ecology's (Ecology) only interest is in any easements or pilings on contaminated property.

3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit?

Virtually all stakeholders expressed concerns with various safety aspects of the existing access which includes:

- Steep, winding slope of the narrow access road and lack of safety side rails
- Access road that is not paved; the gravel road gets worn from weather like a washboard
- Level of development to the south has exposed trees, and high wind leads to blow down of the trees
- Age of the bridge and weight loads it can handle (school buses and emergency vehicles)
- Bridge has only one lane, is difficult to maintain, and is not aesthetically pleasing
- Lack of a signal light to ensure traffic flows safely on the bridge
- Railroad at-grade crossing at the base of the access road to cross the bridge and the speed of passing trains
- Potential for damage to the bridge by vibrations of passing trains
- Bridge being a tall, creosote timber structure that is designed to burn and would be difficult to extinguish if it caught on fire and difficulty evacuating people from the River S Unit if the bridge burns

Additional concerns expressed include:

- Loss of access if the Taverner Ridge Development revoked the current easement
- Liability for the public access attributed to the Taverner Ridge Development as a result of the access road being located in the Taverner Ridge Development
- Volunteers from the Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge being trapped on the River S Unit for hours because the access is blocked by trains
- Inadequate signage to direct people and tourists to the existing access

Considerations:

Any improvements should consider the following:

- The experience of getting to the refuge should be consistent with expectations of its visitors. If the bridge is a flat concrete structure, some believe the appearance would detract from the Refuge experience. Perhaps consider a covered bridge to add to the charm.
- A few stakeholders expressed concerns the funding will be spent on outside contractors rather than hiring locally.
- Improvements to the access may generate more traffic which would have an impact on the local community.
- An Memorandum of Understanding between the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the City of Ridgefield would spell out the improvements and character changes of SR-501 through town. It is unknown if these character changes would necessitate the elimination of parking on Pioneer Street in town or not.

4. Do you have ideas for improvement?

The stakeholders made several suggestions for improvement. Some believe that evaluating the existing access for improvement should be considered as an alternative. The stakeholders would also like to see the estimated costs of options to leave the access where it is as well as establish a new access. If the access remains in its existing location, the following suggestions were provided:

- Widen the access road for buses and emergency vehicles and make it safer for use in inclement weather or by less skilled drivers.
- Close the existing access to vehicle traffic and reconstitute it as a bicycle and pedestrian trail only.
- Pave the road instead of leaving it as a gravel road.
- Consider a public transit option such as a ferry that connects to electric bus or electric vehicles to transport people to the Refuge and decrease potential emission pollution.
- Consider a covered bridge rather than a standard unattractive concrete bridge; something that has character and fits the setting, not a freeway into the Refuge.
- Consider splitting the funding between improving the existing bridge and building a center for the Refuge in downtown Ridgefield to draw people to the town; whatever gets people out of their cars and visit Ridgefield as well as the Refuge.
- Establish a trail along the perimeter of the dike at the River S Unit of the Refuge.

- Mount a payment box at the current River S Unit property entrance to collect donations

The following suggestions were provided if the access is moved to an alternate location:

- Consider establishing an access to the River S Unit via the Pioneer Street/Overlook Park area or down Main Avenue.
- Consider options that bring people through Ridgefield to get to the Refuge. However, if the access is moved to Pioneer Street, the only concern is traffic load and how it will affect parking; the downtown businesses rely on adequate parking for their customers.
- The Port Commission will not support a Refuge access at Division Street or north of Division Street.
- Some residents believe the Taverner Ridge developer will need to revise marketing materials to delete “easy access to the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge” as a selling point to encourage buyers within the housing development because that would no longer apply if the current access location is closed.
- If additional development at Taverner Ridge occurs and the residents no longer desire outside vehicles accessing the River S Unit, revoking the easement will close off the auto tour to the public, which is the signature attraction for the River S Unit and the Refuge.
- Create a new, modern bridge with an overpass to eliminate the at-grade crossing and BNSF may be able to contribute up to 5 percent of the structure costs to close the crossing.
- Clark County Fire and Rescue would like water pipes on the new access bridge and the ability to pump water so that a hydrant could be installed at the end of the bridge; the preferred choice is to run a waterline and have water available for water tender response vehicles.

Considerations:

- McCuddy’s Marina owns land to the base of the Lake River bank, the railroad has an easement, and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) leases some of the land.
- WSDOT does not have a preference whether the access remains where it is or if it is moved. The location of the access is not anticipated to dramatically affect the traffic count on SR-501/Pioneer Street and the SEPA permits are valid for three years before the applicant must revisit NEPA issues, unless new issues or discoveries (i.e., pollutant leaking or archeological issues) come up.
- The Ridgefield School District does not have any policies that require it to review roads in advance, but the bus drivers and transportation safety managers determine the routes and where buses can and cannot go. As yet, school bus drivers have not expressed concerns with the River S Unit access, but the district tends to use the Carty Unit instead.
- The two major units of the Refuge are not connected and the signage is inadequate to allow for cohesive functioning; creating a road that would connect the two units would be ideal.
- Lower River Road is designated as a public free zone so there is no way to establish access there.

- After the two at-grade crossings are closed, there will be only one entrance to the Port of Ridgefield and marina via the new overpass.
- Regardless of location, add bicycle and pedestrian access to the new access.
- Trains currently block the road for about 10 to 15 minutes but sometimes up to 45 minutes and it is very difficult to get BNSF to move or separate the box cars if there is an emergency.

NEW ACCESS

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why?

The majority of the stakeholders and stakeholder groups responded that the entrance should be moved from its current location. The existing road is eroding and the trees are being impacted by wind. It would require reducing the steep slope, closing the at-grade railroad crossing, and building a new bridge that boats can clear underneath. The existing entrance would be easier to deal with but would not bring much benefit for the downtown Ridgefield area. There was also consensus that the access should be grade separated from the rail line; closing the existing at-grade crossings present a positive benefit to the surrounding community and transportation safety.

The option mentioned most often was to include the new access as part of the Rail Overpass Project currently under development by the City of Ridgefield and the Port of Ridgefield. Some stakeholders believe consolidating the effort will lead to an overall cost savings. In addition, if the access is moved to Pioneer Street, the response time of Clark County Fire and Rescue could be shortened by approximately 10 minutes. While some were concerned with construction feasibility, the primary stakeholder concern regarding the Pioneer Street option was the potential impacts to the marina residents. Division, Cook, and Mill streets were also mentioned as possibilities to explore, and a couple of stakeholders suggested using a ferry system. Stakeholders stated if the existing access is improved, a new bridge as well as a new approach will be needed. There was some concern about soils being unable to support improvements

Considerations:

- The marina homes move up and down based on the tides, and the view is different depending on where the home is located and height of the tide.
- A kayak launch is already located at Division Street and the boats access Lake River at the boat launch at the end of Mill Street. The existing boat access has been there for a long time and could use improvement.
- The steep grade of the current access presents an issue for BNSF.
- At the Carty Unit access, the Refuge is currently paying \$9,000 per month to BNSF for the private crossing lease. If it is a private crossing the owner of the crossing pays for maintenance and testing the traffic signals. Private crossings leases can be cancelled.

A few stakeholders indicated the entrance should remain at its existing location to minimize potential damage to the Refuge and visual impacts. Also, the existing structure can accommodate sailboats passing underneath it without needing to drop their masts.

a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance?

Many stakeholders are open to the possibility of moving the existing access. The most often mentioned alternative is to tie this project into the Pioneer Street Rail Overpass Project. Possible alternatives to consider include:

- Two alternatives at Pioneer including south of McCuddy's Marina off a T bridge or separate access to River S unit from Division Street (to the dike)
- Mill Street at boat launch, north of parking lot
- End of Main Street
- Possible access north of the Port (referenced "North DOT crossing" on map) and east of Lake River for a new access

Considerations:

- If the project is tied to the new Pioneer Street access, a few of the stakeholders expressed concerns for the potential impacts to the marina residents. The marina residents are very diverse and range in age from infants to seniors. The residents are already impacted by dust from the dirt "pyramids" at the Port of Ridgefield. Some of the dust creates respiratory problems and covers the homes and docks.
- Some stakeholders believe that if a new bridge were to be constructed somewhere else, it should not be between Cook Street or south of Pioneer Street, and a new location should be as close to the existing location as possible.
- Some stakeholders want to maintain the existing access for pedestrians and bicyclists. This would also be advantageous if the City of Ridgefield plans to purchase property on both sides of the Taverner Ridge entrance on Hillhurst Road to build a city park.
- BNSF finds Pioneer Street to be the preferred option. BNSF would like to grade separate crossings. If a new access is chosen, BNSF cannot leave anyone landlocked. However, BNSF can pull the permits as needed if alternate access is available. BNSF finds that grade separating crossings increases safety and accessibility.
- The two school districts are not as concerned with the location of the access to the River S Unit as they are with the safety and ease of use of the access. It would be easier to use if it were off Pioneer Street and connected directly to the River S Unit from the highway, but safety is the number one priority.
- Wherever the access is located, it should be planned for what is needed for the next 20 years.

IMPACTS

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access?

Environmental impacts identified by the stakeholders include:

- Impact to the wetlands located to the northwest of Division Street.
- Several stakeholders want to see trail enhancement as an aspect of the project.
- A few stakeholders were concerned about potential habitat impacts to the bird populations and wonder if the birds would be affected by a new access at Pioneer Street. The Refuge is an asset and a “refuge,” so it should be protected as such.
- It will be important to ensure there is a good working relationship between Ecology, FHWA, and the Refuge regarding the issues for which Ecology is responsible and ensure Ecology’s water quality department is involved.
- Any excavation along the shorelines would likely involve the tribes.

The primary impact to residents identified by stakeholders focused almost exclusively on the marina residents. Concerns include:

- One stakeholder believes the new bridge would be too low to overpass the homes at Pioneer Street, and it would be better to move the new access to Mill Street or Division Street.
- Visual impacts to the marina view shed.
- Impacts to floating homes are a socio-economic concern, particularly since they are identified as low-income in the City’s comprehensive plan.
- A few stakeholders are concerned about potential flooding impacts to the marina residents. Need to be conscious of flood plain and impacts to McCuddy’s Marina and houseboats.
- The marina owner may sell some of the property to the state and would consider the new bridge going over the C Dock as an option. Land would need to be leased from DNR and the moorage. It may be possible to lease land if funding is available to upgrade roads and local access. The owner would like to leave the floating homes and also sees a need for more boat moorage. If the floating home residents cannot get sailboats under the new access at Pioneer Street, accommodations can be made if necessary.

Stakeholders anticipate potential impacts to businesses such as:

- Potential changes could impact the Ridgefield setting and the character of the town. Reference the book “Reflections of Ridgefield.”
- There will be downtown traffic impacts if the access is moved to a more central location. How will traffic flow east and west?
- If the access is moved to Pioneer Street, the concern is that parking will be inadequate, especially if Pioneer is not wide enough to accommodate parking on both sides of the street.
- How the City will be able to divert people into the downtown to patronize businesses rather than bypassing the town to get straight to the Port.

Other potential impacts identified by stakeholders include:

- Coast Guard standards must be met with respect to river navigation impacts and sediment issues.
- Access to the Columbia River should not be impeded.
- Consider the aesthetics and how to incorporate the landscape and preserve the view shed.
- The project may not be economically viable, and the reason for funding a new bridge is not obvious.
- More traffic could limit access for school buses to parking at the Refuge and limit use by school groups or environmental science classes.
- Getting rid of the at-grade crossings would be a great benefit to the residents of the community because it would eliminate the need for the BNSF train whistles.

Considerations:

- Pedestrians and bicyclists need access to the waterfront, and the dike could also include a pedestrian/bicycle path on top.
- Access should be ADA compatible, auto friendly, and have adequate signage.
- A few stakeholders prefer to see improvements to the existing tour loop, such as creating additional pullouts with binoculars for viewing the Refuge, renovating the entrance to the marina, improving the visual look, and pollution control measures of the marina itself rather than building a new access.

7. What potential impacts do you see associated with the new refuge access?

Some of the stakeholders would like to see businesses benefit from more tourist traffic. The stakeholders reiterated most of their previous concerns regarding impacts to increased traffic, inadequate parking, protecting the Refuge as an asset and refuge, possible impacts to the view and sailboat access, bird habitat, cultural resources, and marina residents.

If the new access is located at Pioneer Street, the stakeholders are concerned about the following potential impacts:

- The view from Overlook Park could be obstructed by the access bridge.
- Congestion, traffic, pollution, litter, and induced growth without proper planning.
- Merchants expect it will bring more people through downtown Ridgefield and into their businesses while it will also mean less vehicle traffic, noise, and dust through the Taverner Ridge development.
- If the flashing stoplight at Pioneer Street and Main Avenue is replaced with a regular light, drivers will speed up to “beat the light” making unsafe conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Potential impacts to marina parking, storage, and utility lines if the access is moved to create a bridge over the marina to the River S Unit.

If the new access is located elsewhere, the following potential impacts were noted:

- A new access at Division Street could impact the Port’s Millers Landing development.

- An access at Main Street is possible, though the state of Washington owns right of way in that area.
- Moving the access may detract from the point of driving to the Refuge to get away and be in a different setting.

If the current access is upgraded, a couple of stakeholders identified the following impact:

- Increased traffic in the housing subdivision.

Considerations:

- The marina owner sees multiple alignment options and, of the potential alignments, the least desirable is across the marina property. However, the owner is willing to look at the alternatives and evaluate financial options for improvements to the marina and local access. The land leased to McCuddy's Marina is up in seven or eight years.
- The Ridgefield School District is only concerned with improving safe access to educational opportunities and creating more partnership opportunities.
- BNSF would like to see right of way fencing for safety as well as easily understood signage.
- The only BNSF financial match would be the 5 percent for the theoretical structure of a grade separation.
- The process is to inform BNSF where/what BNSF property rights are ; BNSF will then determine whether or not to agree with the project property assumptions and whether or not the 1890 Act is in force. For a real easement, FHWA needs to determine who owns the right of way. If FHWA provides a map that outlines what is owned by which entity, BNSF will respond regarding BNSF property and right of way.
- BNSF can provide maps, and the project has to account for an additional rail line. BNSF requires 25 feet centerline clearance for an additional track, five feet for a flat bottom ditch, and 24 feet for the roadway for a total of approximately 50 feet.
- BNSF will close a crossing through the Road Authority if an alternate access can be found.
- WSDOT owns right of way at the overlook and the interest ends at the intersection of Pioneer Street and Main Avenue. However, a park has been built in the WSDOT right of way by a Boy Scout project.

COMMUNICATION

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone?

The vast majority prefer email as their primary form of communication. A few would also like to receive phone calls.

Things to consider:

- Bev Arnoldy is the main point of contact for the Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.

- Terry Nelson is the main point of contact for the Taverner Ridge Homeowners Association.
- Send meeting notices and invitations via email to agency staff or representatives.
- Send invitations via U.S. Mail to the Ridgefield School District.
- Phone calls and voice mail messages to some of the marina residents would assist them in spreading the word among the other marina residents about meetings or events.

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings?

The vast majority of stakeholders plan to attend public meetings.

Things to consider:

- The owner of McCuddy's Marina will follow the project but does not anticipate involvement in public meetings.
- Send information about the public meetings in advance to the primary points of contact for the Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge and the Taverner Ridge Homeowners Association.
- The agencies will send staff as appropriate and as time allows.

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings?

The general consensus is to hold the public meetings on Mondays, Tuesdays, or Thursdays in the evenings after normal work hours. A few suggested Wednesday evenings, two had no preference, and only one stakeholder suggested meeting on the weekends.

Things to consider:

- Do not overlap public meetings on the same nights of the week as City Council, Port Commission, Planning Commission, Ridgefield School Board, or School Foundation Board meetings.
- The first week of April is spring break for school districts.

FOLLOW UP

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview?

Many of the stakeholders suggested were already interviewed as part of this process such as the City of Ridgefield, Port of Ridgefield, the Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, downtown businesses, marina residents and owner, Taverner Ridge Homeowners Association, BNSF Railway, and WSDOT. Many of the stakeholders also suggested additional stakeholders to involve in the process. The following is the list of additional suggested stakeholders:

- Downtown Ridgefield Business Association/ Ridgefield Merchants Association
- Chamber of Commerce

- Businesses along the Ridgefield Junction at I-5
- Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
- USFWS
- Paul DeBoni, Taverner Ridge developer
- Developers
- Osprey Point Homeowners Association
- Hillhurst Neighborhood Association
- Lee Wells, Ridgefield Junction Neighborhood Association
- Boaters
- Fishermen
- Washington Waterfowl/Ducks Unlimited
- Columbia Riverkeepers
- Fort Vancouver Regional Library-Ridgefield
- Axel Swanson ,Clark County Commissioners' Office
- Clark College
- Washington State University-Vancouver
- Woodland School District
- Battle Ground School District
- Evergreen School District
- Ridgefield Women's Club

12. Any other comments?

Many of the stakeholders had additional concerns or comments to add to the record for future consideration as the project moves forward including:

- The Port purchased property north and east of the boat launch parking lot for a future pedestrian overpass to the waterfront.
- Main Street is planned for a one-way conversion in the summer 2012, which could affect traffic circulation if an access is considered for that roadway. The project could be contentious, and there could be numerous private property and socio-economic issues.
- There is concern improvement to infrastructure could make it difficult for people to continue to afford to live in Ridgefield if the costs to maintain or build new infrastructure keep driving up living expenses.
- The Friends of the Refuge would like a new visitors center/administration building/education center that is tied to the Refuge. This new center would be located close to the Carty Unit; if the new access to the River S Unit is closer to the Carty Unit that would be more attractive for them.
- The Ridgefield waterfront is underdeveloped and underutilized. Ridgefield has unique amenities but not much water access for boaters and sailboats.
- There are approximately 53 people who live in the marina and approximately half of those people live at the marina full time. There are some rental homes and one duplex on B-Dock.
- Barges pass by and cause surges in waves.

- It needs to be determined if the River S Unit access is public or private. BNSF can close at any time as long as BNSF does not leave anyone landlocked but can contribute up to 5 percent for closing public at-grade crossings for this project. However, if BNSF partners with FHWA on the project, BNSF can contribute 5 percent if the FHWA builds a separate grade separation for the Refuge access as well as contribute 5 percent to the Port of Ridgefield Rail Overpass project.
- A better understanding of ownership and existing right of way is needed.
- Easement is not perpetual, however there is no public access on Lower River Road. Access to BNSF property is forbidden unless granted from the railroad.
- BNSF can arrange for a flagger at a cost of \$800-1000 per day. However, if the Refuge moves the access, the private crossing permit goes away. However, BNSF would not provide fencing along the road and believes that would be the Port's responsibility.
- The rock pit at the base of the hill off existing access provides open space for shooting, parking, etc.
- Controlled access for parking may be an issue. There may be an interest to change Pioneer Street to a one way access but so far there has been no coordination.
- There used to be another marina at the Port of Ridgefield. The City code is still in place to allow for another marina. There is a lot of planned activity on the water and possibly a restaurant.

Ecology had extensive additional comments and information to more fully inform the environmental picture of the project including:

- Contamination still exists at Western Wood Products site but the site will be capped, a covenant will be implemented, and continued monitoring will occur. Cell #3 has been capped, and #2 is scheduled for summer 2012. Anything that would disturb the cap would need to be coordinated with Ecology. Ecology can supply FHWA with the boring logs, which are included in the remedial investigation report. New bridge footings could penetrate the cap so Ecology would need to be involved to ensure the cap is situated around the footings correctly. The groundwater contamination has migrated under Lake River and it is assumed that it doesn't cross into the Refuge property. Sediment is contaminated to a depth of approximately four feet at the shoreline, and a depth of one foot at the center of the river. The river is contaminated with dioxin and only spans the extent of the site's northern and southern boundaries.
- Both Carty Lake and Lake River have been contaminated with dioxins. Aside from Carty Lake, no other contamination is assumed at the Refuge.
- Ecology is tied to any right of way decisions for the former Western Wood Products site. Other sites, such as Carty Lake and Lake River shorelines, could also be a factor.
- Ecology is aware of the planned development for Millers Landing, but it has not coordinated with the Port. Also, Ecology has not coordinated with the Port but the Rail Overpass Project may require some soil testing.
- The RJ Frank Property is a concern due to its proximity to Lake River, though Ecology is unsure of the property's contamination extent or whether the site has had previous remediation. However, Ecology is aware of the site's above-ground storage tanks.

- Solid waste disposal for sediments would be required. There are no landfills in Clark County, so alternative sites in Oregon will need to be considered.
- Ecology, particularly the water quality staff, would be available for an agency alternatives workshop. However, no permit actions would be required for construction in Ecology's cleanup sites as long as FHWA is within the site's institutional controls.

APPENDIX A – Individual Stakeholder Interview Summaries

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 02/27/2012

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Richard Wagner, BNSF NW Public
Projects, Ken Burgstahler,
Transportation Planner, Keith
Molyneux, WSDOT Local Programs,
Tim Dawdy, Battalion Chief

Representing:

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In 2009 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published their Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); that study was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River S Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River S Unit in their final CCP, meaning a new access point for River S was desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

The USFWS has now requested FHWA's, Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver WA to lead the River S Unit Access Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). By building upon past planning efforts, the FHWA will produce an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location and identify specific alternative locations to the River S Unit. With this new effort, FHWA is planning on engaging in a public scoping process under NEPA to develop the purpose and need and a full range of alternatives to address access related problems to the River S unit.

The FHWA is seeking your input in this process. As this project gets underway it is important that we establish a conversation with people interested in this project. By agreeing to this interview, you will be helping the project team identify and understand your interests, issues, and concerns regarding current conditions and the proposed new access location for the River S Unit. Our intention is to use your input to help define and locate access options that best meet the needs of the community, the stakeholders, and meets the goals of objectives of the Refuge's Comprehensive Plan.

1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge? **On a personal level, several access the Refuge with their families and have driven on the auto tour. Clark Fire & Rescue has accessed the River S Unit and the Refuge many times to respond to incidents and provide emergency services. BNSF is waiting to see what will happen to the at-grade crossing at the Carty Unit of the Refuge. The City of Ridgefield anticipates finding out about grant funding in June for the footbridge with ADA access to the Carty Unit so BNSF is holding off on termination of at-grade crossing contract for that crossing until after the City hears about the funding award. Clark Fire and Rescue and BNSF are aware a TIGER IV grant to close at-grade crossings at**

Mill and Division Streets was awarded. BNSF is interested in terminating any and all at-grade crossings possible.

- 2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance? Clark Fire and Rescue is responsible for responding to emergencies on the Refuge and River S Unit and incidents on the railroad tracks and crossing at the entrance to the River S Unit. There have been 15 or 16 deaths between the River S Unit and Lewis River. WSDOT is responsible for the maintenance of SR-501 (Pioneer Street) which currently ends at the intersection of Pioneer Street and Main Avenue. BNSF is interested in increasing safety of operations through elimination of at-grade crossings such as the at-grade crossing located at the entrance to the River S Unit.**
- 3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit? Clark Fire and Rescue is concerned about the primitiveness of the road. The access road was closed two years ago and the rescue vehicles could not get across it. Fire trucks can traverse the bridge now, but not if the bridge is downgraded. The bridge is reaching the end of its life span. From a fire suppression perspective, the bridge is a tall standing creosote timber structure that is designed to burn and be difficult to put out. If the access bridge burns, how will people be evacuated from the River S Unit of the Refuge? BNSF would prefer cars and pedestrians to go over or under the tracks but not across them. This stretch of the rail line has multiple at-grade track crossings which is problematic. There are no current safety issues with the at-grade crossings other than people crossing over them. However, BNSF maintenance staff is not currently allowed to drive down to the River S Unit access in freezing or snow conditions. WSDOT does not have any operational issues or vested interest in the access road or bridge in its current location. An MOU between WSDOT and the City of Ridgefield would spell out the improvements and character changes of SR-501 coming through town. It is unknown if this character change would necessitate the elimination of parking on Pioneer Street in town or not.**
- 4. Do you have ideas for improvement? If the access stays where it is, Clark Fire and Rescue would suggest creating a new, modern bridge with an overpass to eliminate the at-grade crossing. However, Clark Fire and Rescue is very receptive to extending the rail overpass project at Pioneer Street to include access to the River S Unit. Clark Fire and Rescue would like to see pipes on the new access bridge and ability to pump water so that a hydrant can be installed at the end of the bridge. The preferred choice is to run a waterline and have water available for water tender response vehicles. BNSF can contribute 5% of structure costs to close public at-grade crossings. If the access remains where it is or if it is moved, WSDOT does not have a preference regardless of traffic impact to SR-501/Pioneer Street. The location of the access is not anticipated to dramatically affect the traffic count on SR-501/Pioneer Street. The SEPA permits can sit for 3 years before the applicant has to revisit NEPA issues unless new issues or discoveries such as pollutant leaking or archeological issues come up.**
- 5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why? Clark Fire and Rescue would like the access to be moved to Pioneer Street and would like to see the three**

at-grade crossings eliminated for safety reasons. The Refuge gets 100,000 visitors per year and there was a fatal accident last year on the Refuge. If the access is moved to Pioneer, the response time of Clark Fire and Rescue could be shaved by approximately 10 minutes. For BNSF, the steep grade of the current access presents an issue. At the Carty Unit access, the Refuge is currently paying \$9k per month to BNSF for the private crossing lease. If it is a private crossing then the owner of the crossing pays for maintenance and testing the traffic signals. Private crossings can have leases cancelled.

- a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance? **Clark Fire and Rescue would like the access moved to Pioneer Street and close the at-grade crossings at Mill and Division Streets. BNSF finds Pioneer Street to be the preferred option. BNSF would like to grade separate crossings. If a new access is chosen, BNSF cannot leave anyone landlocked. However, BNSF can pull the permits as needed if alternate access is available. BNSF finds that grade separating crossings increases safety and accessibility.**

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access? **BNSF is the City of Ridgefield's neighbor and must blow the train whistles for safety and compliance issues. Getting rid of the at-grade crossings would be a great benefit to the residents of the community because it would eliminate the need for the train whistles.**

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access? **The only BNSF match would be the 5% for the theoretical structure of a grade separation as per the FHWA guideline states in Title 23, Sec. 646.210, (b), (3) -- "On projects for the elimination of existing grade crossings at which active warning devices are in place or ordered to be installed by a State regulatory agency, the railroad share of the project costs shall be 5%". BNSF would like to see Right of Way fencing for safety and easily understood signage. BNSF will not grant easements and for a project plan to go forward inform BNSF where/what BNSF Property rights are and then BNSF will determine whether or not to agree with the project property assumptions and whether or not the 1890 Act is in force. For a real easement, then FHWA needs to determine who owns the right of way. If FHWA provides a map that outlines what is owned by which entity, BNSF will respond regarding BNSF property and right of way. If WSDOT owns it, then can give it to FHWA, but if BNSF owns it, then what? BNSF can provide maps and the project has to account for additional rail line. BNSF requires 25 feet centerline clearance for an additional track, 5 feet for a flat bottom ditch, and 24 feet for the roadway for a total of approximately 50 feet. BNSF will close a crossing through the Road Authority if an alternate access can be found. WSDOT owns right of way at the overlook. However, a park has been built in the WSDOT right of way by a Boy Scout project. WSDOT right of way interest ends at the intersection of Pioneer Street and Main Avenue. The land leased to McCuddy's Marina is up in 7 or 8 years.**

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone? **Send email and Outlook meeting invitations.**

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings? **They will attend as appropriate and available. WSDOT would like to attend but is not sure it is appropriate until alignment development at Pioneer Street and Main Avenue. Richard will try to attend as appropriate on BNSF's behalf.**

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings? **Monday or Thursday evenings work best.**

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview? **Axel Swanson at Clark County, the Port of Ridgefield, City of Ridgefield, Columbia Riverkeepers, and Mark McCuddy.**

12. Any other comments? **BNSF will check on whether or not the River S Unit access is public or private. BNSF can close at any time as long as BNSF does not leave anyone landlocked but can contribute up to 5% for closing public at-grade crossings for this project, but not 5% per at-grade crossing only 5% per overall project. However, if BNSF partners with FHWA project, then they can contribute 5% if the FHWA builds a separate grade separation for the Refuge access as well as contribute 5% to the Port's project as well. A better understanding of ownership and existing right of way is needed. Easement is not perpetual, however there is no public access on Lower River Road. BNSF access is forbidden unless granted from the railroad. BNSF can arrange for a flagger for a day at a cost of \$800-1000.00 per day, however if Refuge moves the access, then private crossing permit goes away. However, BNSF would not provide fencing along the road and believes that would be the Port's responsibility. The rock pit at the base of the hill of existing access provides open space for shooting, parking, etc. Washington State Department of Ecology will have some concerns regarding the oil contamination at the Port of Ridgefield site and the former dry-cleaner storefront. There could also be archaeological impacts. Controlled access for parking may be an issue too. There may be an interest to change Pioneer Street to a one way access but so far there has been no coordination. There were also already questions on whether or not the flashing red light will remain at the intersection of Pioneer Street and Main Avenue. The Port has been shortlisted to receive project funding with a TIGER IV grant. The current access is in a logistically odd place to address. The agencies would like the opportunity to review and approve the summary report of the meeting. Ken Hash will be the main contact for local programs.**

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River 'S' Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 12/20/11

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Brent Grening and Scott Hughes Representing: Port of Ridgefield

Mailing address: _____
Ridgefield, WA 98642

Phone: 360-887-3873 E-mail address: bgrening@portridgefield.org

In 2009 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published their Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); that study was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River S Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River S Unit in their final CCP, meaning a new access point for River S was desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

The USFWS has now requested FHWA's, Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver WA to lead the River S Unit Access Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). By building upon past planning efforts, the FHWA will produce an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location and identify specific alternative locations to the River S Unit. With this new effort, FHWA is planning on engaging in a public scoping process under NEPA to develop the purpose and need and a full range of alternatives to address access related problems to the River S unit.

The FHWA is seeking your input in this process. As this project gets underway it is important that we establish a conversation with people interested in this project. By agreeing to this interview, you will be helping the project team identify and understand your interests, issues, and concerns regarding current conditions and the proposed new access location for the River S Unit. Our intention is to use your input to help define and locate access options that best meet the needs of the community, the stakeholders, and meets the goals of objectives of the Refuge's Comprehensive Plan.

1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge?

Yes, it is an attraction. The Refuge is a part of any discussion about Ridgefield's assets (resource lands). It also serves as an attraction for businesses and recreation. The Refuge is part of the "Soul of the Community." It brings over 100,000 people to Ridgefield.

2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance?

The Port has been planning to develop the waterfront for years, and the Refuge visitors create a demand for the Port waterfront development. The Refuge enhances economic development opportunities and brings people to a central node which makes for a better community. The Port development means development of brownfield areas instead of greenfields, recreation, entertainment, and education.

The Port is also concerned with safety. Two people died on the Refuge, due in part to response time. Uninterrupted access is needed, desire is to separate at-grade rail crossings.

3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit?

Yes. Safety concerns as they relate to interrupted access: emergency vehicles need to get across a bridge, the railroad tracks, and Lake River to access the Refuge. In addition, the bridge's maintenance is difficult, not aesthetically pleasing, and not consumer friendly. The current access is confusing to people, poor signage. Accessing the refuge is not easy.

4. Do you have ideas for improvement?

When the Port began the environmental process for the Overpass Project in 2005/2006, one option was to access the Refuge from the new overpass. The span of tracks between Woodland and Ridgefield is dangerous. By combining the projects, federal funding would be easier since there was collaboration, not competition. In 2006, the Port received \$1 million for a safety/traffic study. Unfortunately, the Port and the Refuge were on different timeframes and we were not able to combine the projects. In 2012, the Port will be moving to the first phase of construction on the overpass.

The Port Commission will not support a Refuge access at Division Street or north of Division Street.

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why?

Yes. The bridge should be moved to a location that everyone can support. The port wants pedestrian traffic to its planned development. Port supports a new bridge south of Pioneer Street.

- a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance?

Possible alternatives (that have to be considered): See map.

- **Division Street (to the dike)**
- **Mill Street at boat launch, north of parking lot**
- **2 Alternatives at Pioneer**
- **South of McCuddy's off a T bridge or separate River S unit**
- **Tie to new overpass bridge**
- **End of Main Street**
- **Existing bridge**

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access?

Pedestrians need access to the waterfront. There needs to be a bike path. The dike could also include a pedestrian path on top. Access should be ADA compatible and auto friendly.

River navigation impacts include sediment issues, and Coast Guard standards must be met. Also need to be conscious of flood plain and impacts to McCuddy's Marina and houseboats. This should be a functional waterfront with a boat basin at the north end. Concerned about access to the mouth of the Columbia.

Aesthetics: how do we incorporate into the landscape and preserve view shed (Port has GPS coordinates, simulations and virtual bird's eye view).

Traffic impacts: there will be increased traffic on Pioneer Street. How do we get traffic to go east and west? Traffic impacts will be outside of "rush hour."

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access?

The proposed Overlook Park could be impacted by a Pioneer Street access and grade-separated rail crossings could impact views from the Park and existing and proposed development. A new access at Division Street could impact the Port's Millers Landing development. An access at Main Street is possible, though the State of Washington owns right of way in that area.

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone?

E-mail

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings?

Yes

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings?

Not 2nd and 4th Wednesday (Port Commission Meetings – 3:00 p.m.)

Not 2nd and 4th Wednesday (City Council Meetings – 6:30 p.m.)

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview?

- **Downtown businesses and Business Association (Scott to send downtown business list)**
- **Friends of the Refuge**
- **Marina residents**
- **BSNF**
- **School Districts**

12. Any other comments?

The Port purchased property north and east of the boat launch parking lot for a future pedestrian overpass to the waterfront.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 02/09/2012

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Scott Hughes, Don Griswold, Todd
Chenoweth, and Tony Zebrun

Representing: Ridgefield Hardware Store, Old
Liberty Theater, Pioneer
Marketplace/Ridgefield Market,
Zebrun's Starliner Deli

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The FHWA is seeking your input in this process. As this project gets underway it is important that we establish a conversation with people interested in this project. By agreeing to this interview, you will be helping the project team identify and understand your interests, issues, and concerns regarding current conditions and the proposed new access location for the River S Unit. Our intention is to use your input to help define and locate access options that best meet the needs of the community, the stakeholders, and meets the goals of objectives of the Refuge's Comprehensive Plan.

1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge? **Most of them admit they do not usually access the River S Unit of the Refuge. However, Scott visits the Carty Unit approximately twenty times a year. Tony visits the Carty Unit two or three times a year. Todd walks the Refuge with his dogs and does the driving tour approximately once every other year. Don visits the Refuge approximately one or two times per year. They believe it is confusing for people to find the existing access to the River S Unit. They believe the Taverner Ridge residents would prefer less traffic through the subdivision and the businesses favor moving the main access to the downtown area at Pioneer Street. They believe this location would help businesses attract customers as they come to visit the Refuge. EDAW did a study of the Welcome Center/kiosk to direct people to the Refuge. There is now Overlook Park that is a**

gateway to the Refuge. They would like to preserve the view corridor and believe this can be done even if access to River S Unit is located at Pioneer Street near the Overlook Park. They believe it would bring the Refuge out of the woods and into town more.

2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance? **For the downtown core, they believe moving the access to Pioneer Street would help funnel traffic into one area from the highway and help centralize it. They believe this to be a common sense approach and very practical. They believe it will help people get directly to the Refuge in addition to helping the downtown businesses. They believe the existing access bridge will fall down eventually. They are also looking forward to closing the at-grade crossings on the railroad to stop the “abusive” train whistle. By removing the at-grade crossings, they believe BNSF will be able to pass town at higher speeds and that BNSF desires this too. From a financial standpoint, they believe it may make more sense to consolidate the effort with the City of Ridgefield and the Port of Ridgefield’s plans to develop the rail overpass and revitalize downtown. They believe BNSF will contribute funds to help eliminate the at-grade crossings.**

3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge’s River S Unit? **They believe the existing access is very dangerous. The hill is steep, the bridge is old, and there is a housing development nearby. They are unsure if emergency management vehicles could make it across the bridge given their size and weight. They noted that a car went down the bank into a ditch and the people in the vehicle drowned. In addition, the trains pass by very quickly and it is difficult to gauge their speed. The at-grade crossing also presents a safety issue.**

4. Do you have ideas for improvement? **Move the access to Pioneer Street. The only concern with this option is the traffic load and how it will affect parking. They rely on having adequate parking for customers in order for their businesses to survive. They would also consider moving the bridge down Main Street as well. They are open to options that bring people through the town to get to the Refuge.**

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why? **They believe the work on this project should be done in conjunction with other efforts to save money and consolidate effort. They would like to see Main Avenue become more pedestrian friendly. They believe this is achievable if the River S Unit Access is moved to Pioneer Street and tied to the rail overpass project. They understand Division and Cook Streets are also being considered but they do not believe it makes as much sense as the Pioneer Street location.**
 - a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance? **Pioneer Street already has elevation needed. They believe the other options would require additional elevation to be added, extending the road, and finally getting up and over to the other side. They understand the needs of the marina residents will need to be considered as part of this**

option. In addition, the impacts to views and height needed for boats to get under the bridge will also need to be considered. They believe putting the bridge further south of the marina would impact fewer marina residents and impact the view corridor less as well.

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access? **No. The only concern is parking. They believe the resulting impacts should be favorable to businesses and most of the residents too.**

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access? **They view the new access as a potential opportunity to enhance downtown business. They suggest abandoning the existing access and would rather like to see additional walking trails developed to connect the two entrances of the Refuge. The new footbridge will be ADA compliant and they suggested adding a trail along the dike. They believe it is a relatively short distance to tie the existing access to the dike road and hook into the existing trail system. The new neighborhoods that have been developed in Ridgefield have trails built into them and attempt to make it easier for residents to walk to downtown. They believe having these trails tie into this project would be a good fit in purpose. They suggested approaching BNSF for funding to eliminate the at-grade crossings to help pay for development. They believe there are enough laws in place to govern protection of the environmental resources during the permitting process so they are not concerned about environmental impacts. Again, they reiterated their concern for adequate downtown parking if the new access is moved to Pioneer Street. If the parking issue cannot be addressed, then the City of Ridgefield will need to address development of additional parking space near Pioneer Street. Currently at Pioneer Street and Main Avenue, there is a flashing stoplight. They would prefer to keep the flashing light in order to keep people driving slower through town instead of speeding up to “beat the light”. In addition, the slower traffic is safer for pedestrians.**

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone? **Email**

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings? **Yes.**

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings? **Evenings work best, especially on Wednesday evening. They suggested checking the City Council, Port Commission, and Planning Commission to find out their meeting schedule to avoid overlapping meeting schedules. They would be happy to post flyers about the meetings at their business storefronts.**

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview? **Ridgefield Business Association, the businesses along the Ridgefield interchange at I-5, Lee Wells of the Ridgefield Junction Neighborhood Association, Mark McCuddy, and the marina residents.**
12. Any other comments? **While they do not believe moving the access to Pioneer Street will be a problem, they do believe the design of the new access will generate questions. Will it visually blend in with the area? Will it have one or two lanes? Will it be pedestrian friendly? Will it be tall enough for boats to get under? They feel it would be best to blend the overlook area, town, and Refuge together rather than keep it divided. They also have questions to ask of WSDOT - Where will SR-501 end? Will it continue over the Pioneer Street overpass?**

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 02/09/2012

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Bev Arnoldy, Russ Roseberry, Susie Bishop Representing: Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

Mailing address: PO Box 1022, Ridgefield, WA 98642

Phone: 503-298-3180, 360-887-9495, 360-524-2284 E-mail address: bev.arnoldy@leadtoresults.com,
mele1@comcast.net,
bishopfineart@comcast.net

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1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge? **Yes. They all visit the Refuge often. Susie visits the Refuge approximately three times a week to help with bird counts. They enjoy both the River S Unit and the Carty Unit but visit the Carty Unit more because there is an office for the volunteers there and they work out of the storage shed for the most part. She visits the River S Unit approximately one time each month, however she walks the Carty unit more.**
2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance? **They are amazed by the auto tour visitation and the numbers of out of state license plates that visit the River S Unit for the auto tour. They believe it is a rare experience to be able to drive through a Refuge and also have walking access.**

3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit? **The current access road is winding and rough with gravel. The road becomes worn from water, like a washboard, and can become very muddy. There is only room for one car across the bridge at a time so there is a safety concern. The level of development to the south has exposed the trees to more wind and they experience an increased level of blow down. The Friends are very concerned about the potential loss of access if the Taverner Ridge development no longer allows people to access the River S Unit via the existing easement. They are concerned about the age of the bridge. It was originally farmland and the bridge was used to get cattle across in addition to a barge. They understand the bridge was condemned at one point due to pilings sinking in the mud creating a gap between the bridge supports and cross members. They would like to see some sort of light system put in to guide traffic over the single lane bridge for safety. They also have concerns regarding the railroad crossing. It is a short distance between the time the arm comes down and when the train comes by. According to the Friends, the trains can block the access for hours making it difficult to get on or off the River S Unit. The number of trains can also create an issue for trying to get on and off the Refuge because the access can be blocked for a long time. They believe the railroad crews use the area as a holding area and to switch crews. The USFWS has staff at Bachelor Island and it is inconvenient and creates an emergency management access issue to have the access blocked by the trains.**

4. Do you have ideas for improvement? **There are some safety concerns over the access road especially if the driver is less skilled and if the weather is inclement. If the easement is taken away, then it closes off the auto tour to the public which is the signature attraction for the River S Unit and the Refuge. They have a strong concern that additional development will force the closure of the existing easement. They fear that the housing development residents will not longer tolerate the number of autos accessing the River S Unit and will push to close off the easement to birders, hunters, tourists, bicyclists, pedestrians, etc. The two major units of the Refuge are not connected and the signage is inadequate to allow for cohesive functioning. Creating a road that would connect the two units would be ideal. They would like the additional safety of going over the railroad rather than at-grade crossing. They would also like to address the safety on the gravel road. The Lower River Road is designated as a public free zone so there is no way to establish access there. They are aware of a potential to have the access at Pioneer Street and over the marina.**

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why? **They believe the access road at the existing access needs to be improved as does the bridge across to the River S Unit. They are very worried about loss of access via the current easement and would consider moving the access off of Hillhurst. However, it would be a cost to create new and improved access road off of Hillhurst especially with the steep slope of the hill.**
 - a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance? **They are curious if the Port of Ridgefield has the funding to start construction east of the railroad tracks. They understand the Port wants more traffic through their property and that moving the access to Pioneer Street may help boost the local businesses as a gateway to the Refuge. They believe the Taverner Ridge residents do not want additional traffic**

through their neighborhood but are concerned that residents of the houseboats would be displaced if the access goes over at Pioneer Street.

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access? **They believe the solution should respect the interests of the residents, wildlife, businesses, the City, and the Port. If the access is moved to Pioneer Street, they have concerns about the traffic and parking impacts especially if Pioneer is not wide enough to accommodate parking on both sides of the street. The new footbridge to the Refuge at the north end near the Plankhouse will be ADA compliant and able to accommodate increased visitation. They are concerned about the impact to the downtown area and how the City will be able to divert people into the town to use businesses rather than bypassing the town to get to the Port. They believe BNSF should be willing to participate because closing at-grade crossings increases safety and BNSF will not have to blow the train whistles in town. They believe it is possible to construct a bridge over the railroad tracks at the existing access.**

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access? **If the access is moved to Pioneer Street, they are concerned about disrupting the marina residents and the kayaking business. They also believe the McCuddy marina will not want to lose visibility. They are also concerned about impacts to wildlife, function of the habitat, and cultural history. If the new access is located at the existing location, then the only main impact is increased traffic in the housing subdivision. There are about 100,000 visitors to the River S Unit each year including hunters. They are concerned about the access easement being taken away especially if there is continued development of the housing subdivision.**

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone? **Email is best and Bev Arnoldy is the main contact for the Friends of the Refuge.**

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings? **Yes.**

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings? **Tuesday or Thursday evenings work best.**

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview? **The Port of Ridgefield, City of Ridgefield, businesses in downtown, Ridgefield Merchants Association, boaters, fishermen, Washington Waterfowl/Ducks Unlimited, Bruce Wiseman, Randy Mueller, Brent Grening, and Justin Clary.**

12. Any other comments? **This is just one of several projects that affect the Refuge. The footbridge is another project. They would like a new visitors center/administration building/education center that is tied to the Refuge. This new center would be located close to the Carty Unit so if the access to the River S Unit is closer to the Carty Unit that would be more attractive for them. The Port offered property to the Refuge to build a new office, but the land was contaminated and the railroad did not allow access. In addition, the funding did not come through either.**

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 1/9/12

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Justin Clary Representing: City of Ridgefield

Mailing address: 230 Pioneer Street
Ridgefield, WA 98642

Phone: (360) 887-3557 E-mail address: justin.clary@ci.ridgefield.wa.us

In 2009 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published their Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); that study was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River S Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River S Unit in their final CCP, meaning a new access point for River S was desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

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The FHWA is seeking your input in this process. As this project gets underway it is important that we establish a conversation with people interested in this project. By agreeing to this interview, you will be helping the project team identify and understand your interests, issues, and concerns regarding current conditions and the proposed new access location for the River S Unit. Our intention is to use your input to help define and locate access options that best meet the needs of the community, the stakeholders, and meets the goals of objectives of the Refuge's Comprehensive Plan.

1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge?

From a City perspective, no.

2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance?

The City's interest is to ensure that any new access does not negatively affect Ridgefield's downtown transportation system. There needs to be adequate mitigation for any impacts that may occur, though more traffic through the downtown could be beneficial to businesses. However, the City would support options which direct traffic away from downtown, if appropriate.

3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit?

It is an old bridge past the end of its expected lifespan. The Fish & Wildlife Service has concerns regarding weight loads.

4. Do you have ideas for improvement?

A new access is needed. Replacing the current span at the existing location may not be feasible, though it should be considered as an alternative.

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why?

Yes. A grade-separated crossing would be preferred, and the Port's Pioneer Street overpass could achieve this. The geography of the current access area may prevent a grade-separated rail crossing at that location.

- a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance?

Possible alternatives:

- **Combining the access with the Port of Ridgefield's rail overpass project**
- **Main Street extension (through Eagle's Look Park)**
- **Division Street**
- **Possible access north of Port (referenced "North DOT crossing" on map)**
- **Use Port property and area north of Port and east of Lake River for a new access**

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access?

Impacts to floating homes are a socio-economic concern, particularly since they are identified as low-income in the City's comprehensive plan. There will be downtown traffic impacts if the access is moved to a more central location. More downtown traffic could be a benefit to businesses, to a point; an excessive amount of traffic would not be positive.

There are wetlands to the northwest of a potential Division Street access that could be impacted.

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access?

The proposed Overlook Park could be impacted by a Pioneer Street access and grade-separated rail crossings could impact views from the Park and existing and proposed development. A new access at Division Street could impact the Port's Millers Landing development. The Ridgefield Living Center development may be impacted by a new access. An access at Main Street is possible, though the State of Washington owns right of way in that area.

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone?

E-mail

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings?

Yes

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings?

No preference

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview?

- **Downtown businesses and Business Association**
- **Marina owner and residents**
- **BNSF**
- **WSDOT**
- **Fire District**
- **Friends of the Refuge**
- **State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation**

12. Any other comments?

- **Main Street is planned for a one-way conversion in the summer 2012, which could affect traffic circulation if an access is considered for that roadway.**
- **The project could be contentious, and there could be numerous private property and socio-economic issues.**

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 02/13/2012

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Charlotte Clevidence Representing: Marina Resident

Mailing address: PO Box 24, Ridgefield, WA 98642

Phone: _____ E-mail address: potts8c@aol.com

In 2009 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published their Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); that study was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River S Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River S Unit in their final CCP, meaning a new access point for River S was desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

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1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge? **Yes. Photography is her hobby and she takes pictures at the Refuge every other month. Her brother was Dave Dynes and he used to drive the Refuge to write down the tracking data from the traffic detector on the River S Unit.**
2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance? **Providing more access through town or finding a way to get people who visit the River S Unit to visit the town, stop at the coffee shop, and frequent the other businesses. She believes that many people currently access the River S Unit and never visit the downtown area. She also believes there are many Ridgefield residents who do not visit the downtown businesses either.**
3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit? **The current access is very narrow and the road is covered with gravel. There are no siderails and it looks**

dangerous. She does not walk the access but she does drive it. She does not drive down the hill to the access during the winter when there is snow or ice. The bridge looks intimidating to her and she is unsure if a bus can drive over it. She finds the rock pit area at the railroad tracks a little scary to drive and would not want to walk near there. There are tracks on the bridge and a driver needs to keep their tires in the tracks and avoid falling out of the tracks to get across safely.

4. Do you have ideas for improvement? **She did not know if moving the access from its current location would cost more to tie into existing roads and trails.**

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why? **She is not sure if Pioneer Street or Mill Street could work as a new access but it may be a possibility. Her concern with the access being located at Pioneer Street is building a bridge over the top of the homes of the people who live at the marina. She believes this would be a negative impact and would obstruct the view. She pointed out that the homes move up and down based on the tides and the view is different depending on where the home is located and height of the tide. She believes it may make more sense to move the new access to Division Street or Mill Street. A kayak launch is already located at Division Street and the boats access Lake River at the boat launch at the end of Mill Street already. The existing boat access has been there for a long time and could use improvement.**
 - a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance? **Regardless of the location of the bridge, it will be important to consider the height of the new bridge across Lake River. Taller boats and sailboats currently have to wait until low tide to maneuver. If the current access is improved, it would be a good idea to add siderails and pave it instead of leaving it as a gravel road.**

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access? **She believes tourists and people are impressed with the Refuge because there is nothing currently developed there. High water events, such as the flooding in 1996, can create an issue for the people who live at the marina. If the access is moved to Pioneer Street, then the bridge would be built over the homes of the marina and “who would want to live under a bridge?” The view from her home is best at high tide. She is not sure if the birds would be affected by a new access at Pioneer Street. She believes the bridge would be too low to come over the homes at Pioneer Street and it would be better to move the new access to Mill Street or Division Street. There is also the possibility of coming over the Ridgefield rail overpass at Pioneer Street, continuing down Pioneer, and crossing over a new bridge at Mill Street or Division Street. If the access is located at Mill Street or Division Street, people would have to drive through the downtown to get to it.**

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access? **She does not see where there will be impacts since the goal is to get more people to come through the town.**

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone? **Email is best.**

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings? **Yes. She suggested holding a meeting with just marina residents around 7:00pm in the evening at the Port of Ridgefield since it is within walking distance for the marina residents and has a large enough facility to hold the 53 marina residents. She also offered to assist with distribution of flyers to marina residents to encourage participation.**

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings? **She is retired so she can meet anytime. However most people work during the day so evenings would work better. She indicated the best way to get increased marina resident participation is to hold a meeting just for marina residents and let them know plans are being discussed that will affect them. She suggested checking with the City Council and Port Commission to ensure the meeting with marina residents does not conflict with City Council or Port Commission meetings.**

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview? **Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, the library, Ridgefield Women's Club, and the Chamber of Commerce. There is a Loaves and Fishes meeting/activity on Tuesday.**

12. Any other comments? **The Refuge is important to the community so any impacts to the birds need to be considered carefully. Many birds also land near the marina. There is also the potential that if the parking lot for boaters is full, then they will park up in town and take up customer parking spaces. Currently, they can park on Mill Street, however it is closed, then they would have to park on Pioneer and that is farther away. The parking lot for the boaters should be bigger to accommodate the volume of boaters. There is a Heritage Celebration in September that honors long time residents and they use "no parking" signs. She does have some concerns regarding the shotgun pellets that rain down on the roofs of the homes in the marina. Growing up in this area, she went arrowhead hunting along the shoreline by the mill. According to Charlotte, there are approximately 53 people who live in the marina and she has lived on C-Dock for 20 years. Approximately half of the people live at the marina full time. There are some rental homes and one duplex on B-Dock too. She has neighbors who moved to the marina from Astoria and New Mexico. She believes the services from McCuddy are better than before. Last year, there was a houseboat that sank and was leaking. She sees beaver, otter, and many kinds of birds. She can take a boat out to the Columbia River but many have to wait for the right level of tide to get in and out. There are also barges that pass by and also cause surges in tide.**

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 02/06/2012

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Jeff Warren Representing: Marina Resident

Mailing address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail address: jeffiz@comcast.net

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The FHWA is seeking your input in this process. As this project gets underway it is important that we establish a conversation with people interested in this project. By agreeing to this interview, you will be helping the project team identify and understand your interests, issues, and concerns regarding current conditions and the proposed new access location for the River S Unit. Our intention is to use your input to help define and locate access options that best meet the needs of the community, the stakeholders, and meets the goals of objectives of the Refuge's Comprehensive Plan.

1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge? **Yes. He tends to pass under the bridge in a boat more than he drives over it. He tends to visit in the spring. He understands there is a discussion about connecting the marina to the River S Unit. He heard that BNSF would fund elimination of some at-grade crossings so the trains do not have to slow down or so the trains do not have to block busier intersections. He is curious if USFWS is waiting to see if the Port of Ridgefield receives funding for the rail overpass project before USFWS decides whether or not to support it. If the rail overpass project does not happen, then he would encourage upgrading the current bridge. He believes the road should be left where it is and upgrade the overpass so that BNSF does not have to stop. The costs of building a new bridge versus retrofitting the old bridge should be examined. If the Port builds the rail overpass, then the access could be built further down near the waterfront development at the Port.**
2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance? **It is the only access point to the area but it is a one lane road with a lot of switchbacks and needs to be widened. There are a lot of hunters that go to the area but he has no safety issues with the hunters. However,**

he is concerned about the stability of the existing access and believes pedestrian access should be explored. He finds the 30 minute drive pleasant.

3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit? **From the bottom, the bridge does not inspire people to drive across it. He does not have any other safety issues, but noted there are two tides and debris including logs in the water. He is curious about the impact of trains going by and rattling the bridge over time. What will this do to the bridge stability over time? He noted the spot to get boats under the existing bridge is very narrow.**

4. Do you have ideas for improvement? **He believes the current access has pedestrian access but he is not sure of bicycle access and it is slow going over the railroad tracks. Near the overlook, people get out of vehicles to look around which could be a safety issue. Trains currently block the road for about 10 to 15 minutes but sometimes up to 45 minutes. If the trains are blocking the road, it is very difficult to get BNSF to move or separate the box cars if there is an emergency.**

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why? **Bring the benefit to the City by going through town but leaving the access where it currently is located will do less damage to the Refuge. He believes it would be nice to have a trailhead at the Refuge headquarters for interpretive purposes.**
 - a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance? **It may make sense to hook the new River S Unit access to the rail overpass project at Pioneer Street. If not at Pioneer Street, then perhaps look at Division Street.**

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access? **The pros and cons should be weighed. Division may be more beneficial because it would bring more people through town. Creating and tying into the boardwalk and retail will enhance the area to bring more visitation to the town and people to the Refuge. Currently, it is difficult to find the way to the River S Unit access without better signage.**

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access? **There is a potential to increase retail and help people discover Ridgefield and the Refuge.**

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone? **Email is best.**

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings? **Yes.**

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings? **He would suggest holding the meetings after work hours during the week or during the weekends.**

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview? **BNSF, Mark McCuddy, the Port of Ridgefield, the City of Ridgefield, and Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.**

12. Any other comments? **May be a good idea to provide the questions in advance to people in order to allow time to prepare a response for public meetings.**

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River 'S' Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 02/06/12

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Larry and Penny Rasmussen and
April Coss

Representing: Marina Residents

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Phone:

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1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge?

The Rasmussens live at the end of B-Dock and moved there in 2010. April Coss & Jeff Warren live on C-Dock. Yes, occasionally the Rasmussens access the River S Unit but they mostly visit the Carty Unit for walking and the wildlife experience is more enjoyable there. They believe they see more birds on their deck than they do on the Refuge. April visits the River S Unit one or two times a year. She visits the Plankhouse and participates in Birdfest. She and her husband usually take their boat to another marina.

2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance?

The Rasmussens would like to see the existing access stay where it is and avoid any long term impacts. They understand the desire to bring more people through town and trying to capture tourist revenue but they would rather see a museum built in town. They are interested in any studies that have determined how much money is actually spent in town by tourists coming to the Refuge. April would also like to see the existing access be revamped and more investment in town as well. Interest is in keeping the access where it is to have less of an impact on the character of the town, eliminate planning conflicts, not incur additional traffic and visual impacts and not to subsidize access to the refuge. They

have some concern that if the access is improved it will increase the number of cars visiting as well as increasing the pollution. They already see pollution from the marina and the Refuge is supposed to be a “refuge” for the birds. They would prefer to see more activities in town that are bird related for the tourists to do and have less impact to the refuge. Perhaps the USFWS could partner with concessionaires to provide rentals and other items related to touring the Refuge. They suggested providing a ferry boat across Lake River and then use a small fleet of electric vehicles to tour the Refuge. This would minimize pollution and decrease the cost of access improvement because a new bridge would not be needed. Perhaps look at expanding the bridge or renovating it in the future.

3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge’s River S Unit?

Improvements could be made to the existing such as adding a signal light to make sure traffic flows better on the bridge. Concerns are that the idyllic setting of the existing location would be impacted by a new access. People are coming to a Refuge and the experience of getting there should be consistent with that. If the bridge is a flat concrete structure, they feel the appearance would detract from the Refuge experience. There is some concern that funding to pay for the design work will not be spent on local firms but rather firms that are not local. April suggested renovating the current access into a covered bridge to add to the charm of the Refuge experience and to be part of regional covered bridge tours. Regardless of the bridge design, it needs to be tall enough to get boats under it.

4. Do you have ideas for improvement?

Use or improve existing location. Consider a public transit option, ferry, or electric bus or vehicles to transport people to the refuge. Consider splitting the funding between improving the existing bridge and building a center for the refuge in town to draw people to the town, whatever gets people out of their cars. Consider a covered bridge not a standard unattractive concrete bridge but something that has character and fits the setting, not a freeway into the refuge.

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why?

No.

- a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance?

They are willing to look at options, however they would prefer not to have the new access come across the marina, over the floating homes, or the port. They are concerned it would be a visual eyesore if designed poorly. If a new bridge has to be constructed somewhere else, it should not be between Cook or South of Pioneer. A new location should be as close to the existing location as possible.

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access?

They are willing to look at other options, however they are concerned about potential impacts. For example, they are very concerned about the increased traffic in the city if the bridge is moved to a more central location which could present a problem with conflicting uses. They are concerned about visual impacts to the marina viewshed. They are also concerned the Ridgefield setting, the character of the town, could be impacted by building new big infrastructure. In addition, they have concerns that the project is not economically viable and that the reason for funding a new bridge is not obvious. They would prefer to see improvements to the existing tour loop such as creating additional pullouts with binoculars for viewing the Refuge, renovating the entrance to the marina, and improving the visual look and pollution control measures of the marina itself.

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access?

They have no concerns with the existing location, however if it is moved then they are concerned about congestion and induced growth without proper planning. The existing location seems to represent the least negative impacts, conflicting uses, and unintended consequences. They are unsure of the port’s ideas or plans. They find the drive to the Refuge along the existing access to be an adventure and

tranquil. They believe moving the access may take away from the point of driving out to the Refuge to get away and be in a different setting. They would like to see improvements to the marina. They believe it gives the impression that people do not care about the Refuge when there is trash and pollutants from the marina obscuring the view. The Rasmussens would like to encourage those involved in planning to remember the original purpose of the Refuge and protect it. They question the assumption that a new bridge must be constructed and wonder if the project will be awarded funding or will the project need to borrow money in order to pay for it. If a branch off of the Pioneer Street overpass is used to access the Refuge, they suggested looking at the Sauvie Island area where there are houseboats under the new bridge and see what the residents feel about it.

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone?

E-mail

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings?

Yes

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings?

Hold the meetings in the evening but not on weekends and after 4:30pm would be best.

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview?

They suggested contacting the City of Ridgefield, Port of Ridgefield, small businesses along Pioneer Street and Main Avenue, and Mark McCuddy. The general public cannot access the marina by driving however pedestrians can access it. They also suggested contacting USFWS regarding obtaining data on the number of visitors and their plans for the Refuge.

12. Any other comments?

There is a concern about the fatalities on the railroad and safety issues with the at-grade crossings on the tracks. The Port's Pioneer Overpass project could be funded by this project as that is seen as a higher priority to the people living day to day in Ridgefield. They are a little skeptical of growth and progress for fear of losing the "small town" feel that makes Ridgefield attractive in the first place.

Consider a long term cohesive vision that integrates the visitors coming to the refuge into the town so everyone benefits. Reference the book, "Reflections of Ridgefield" to get a different perspective. They advise talking with the "oldtimers" at the coffee shop on Sunday mornings around 7:00am. They believe many of the oldtimers are dissatisfied by the changes brought by the influx of "Yuppies" who have moved to Ridgefield and built large homes on the hills but never spend their money in town to support the town and the schools need to be remodeled. There is also concern that improvement to infrastructure could make it difficult for people to continue to afford to live in Ridgefield if the costs to maintain or build new infrastructure keep driving the costs up.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 03/01/2012

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Gail Alexander, Mark Shaff, and
Charlotte Clevidence

Representing: McCuddy's Marina residents

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1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge? **For the past 8 years, Gail has served on the Friends of the Refuge as a board member. She visits the Carty Unit approximately twice a week and the River S Unit about once a week. She is involved in the Vancouver Clark Parks and Recreation 30 mile long water trail project from the Lewis River to Lake River. She has spoken with USFWS regarding the existing access and is aware of the possibility of moving the access to the Pioneer Street approach. Mark visits the River S Unit virtually every night in the summer months and almost never during the winter months. Charlotte visits the River S Unit about once or twice a month. She also visits the Carty Unit, but it is unstable to walk there but**

likes visiting the plankhouse. She is an avid photographer of the area. There used to be a potato farm on the island where the River S Unit is located.

2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance? **They all live at the marina right next to the River S Unit.**

3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit? **All of them find the existing access difficult because of the steep slope and rough gravel. They are concerned about the safety of the single lane bridge, the number of cars and people that cross the railroad tracks, and the instability of the cliff. They all want to support the Refuge's need for a new access. There is concern that if the access is improved it will bring more and more traffic.**

4. Do you have ideas for improvement? **They are unsure if buses can make it over the bridge. They understand the desire by some people to grow Ridgefield economically and their belief that it will happen if visitors come through the downtown area rather than through the existing access at Hillhurst. After the two at-grade crossings are closed, there will be only one entrance to the Port of Ridgefield and marina.**

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why? **The existing road is eroding and the trees are being impacted by wind. It was not clear to them why the existing location of the access is being considered. It would require lessening the steep slope, closing the at-grade railroad crossing and building a new bridge that boats can clear going under it. There was also a concern about the soils being unable to support improvement at this location. The existing entrance would be easier to deal with but would not bring much benefit for the downtown area. Is it possible to tie it to the Carty Unit to make a giant loop and be able to access both units through one point?**
 - a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance? **Wherever the access is located, it should be planned for what is needed for the next 20 years. Focus on the big picture. Also, it will need to have boats be able to pass under it even at high tide. Sometimes boats can only pass at low tide. If the current access is closed, is it possible to put the bridge at the Carty Unit and connect the two units? Mark believes it makes sense to put the access bridge over the marina, but it should try not to be directly over people's homes. There is some concern about the increase in traffic though. Do not make it like the Sauvie Island Bridge where people live under a freeway and endure noise impacts. Gail stated that the marina residents are very diverse and range in age from infants to 80 year olds. The residents are already impacted by the dust from the dirt "pyramids" at the Port of Ridgefield. Some of the dust creates respiratory problems and covers the homes and docks in soil. Division Street might be another alternative to look at but with the grade separation, the bridge may impact homes due**

to the height needed at the ramp to get over the railroad. They are not sure of the Port of Ridgefield's plans for its property. Mill Street might be another option to review too.

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access? **Regardless of where the access is located, they have habitat concerns. The Refuge is an asset and a "refuge", so it should be protected as such. If the access is moved to Pioneer Street, it could bring people downtown and over to view the Refuge. USFWS told Gail they do not wish to disrupt residents with a bridge over them. Last weekend, there were some soil samples taken in the marina. Mark stated that the cost of fixing the existing access at the current location is wasted unless it can get people to come to the downtown and get to the Refuge easier.**

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access? **They anticipate traffic, environmental, and wildlife impacts. There could also be archeological impacts too. With increased people and traffic, there could be more pollution, litter, etc. and inadequate parking could be an issue. The downtown integrated plan requests downward facing lighting, non-reflective glass in windows, etc. to prevent impacts to birds and wildlife at the Refuge. They want the system to be able to function, make traffic flow in a way that benefits the local businesses, keep it clean and able to grow, provide access, and get rid of the railroad crossing. The Sauvie Island Bridge was functional, but cheap. Take the marina residents, fishermen, and Refuge tourists into consideration when looking for a solution. The Birdfest & Bluegrass Festival has shuttle buses to accommodate the number of visitors for the event. Hunting is only a short season, but there are lots of hunters. The auto-tour is a 4.5 mile loop and it would be good to have more pullouts than more roads. BNSF may not want people to be able to drive over their tracks since it is believed that BNSF would like to have more trains come through and be able to go faster through the area.**

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone? **Email and phone.**

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings? **They all plan to attend the meetings as the timing allows.**

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings? **Evenings work best for people and the first week of April will be spring break for the Ridgefield School District.**

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview? **The downtown business district, Friends of the Refuge, downtown residents, and other marina residents. They were**

disappointed in the turn out and suggested that holding the meeting during nicer weather may have helped to get a greater turnout. They suggested going door to door to talk to the marina residents and sending pamphlets to distribute to the marina residents. They also suggested holding a meeting and providing pizza using the “if you feed them, they will come” model.

12. Any other comments? **They believe Mark McCuddy wants more floating homes and boats in the marina. There used to be another marina at the Port of Ridgefield. The City code is still in place to allow for another marina again someday. There is a lot of planned activity on the water and possibly restaurant too. Several of the marina residents are not full time residents and there are about 42 full time residents at the marina. How will the Pioneer Street option affect parking in the downtown area?**

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 02/09/2012

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Mark McCuddy Representing: McCuddy's Marina

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1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge? **No. He does not drive over the current bridge, but has been under it in a boat.**
2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance? **The current access does not impede sightlines of the marina. He believes many of the people who live on the floating homes at the marina like to view nature. He prefers to have the access in a location that does not impede the views and allows access for the sailboats.**
3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit? **No, the current access is too far around the bend of the river to be seen from the marina.**

4. Do you have ideas for improvement? **He does not believe he can be much of a resource in this area since he has never used the current access and bridge. He is also not familiar with the US Fish and Wildlife long term plans for the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. As a result, he does not believe he can comment on ideas for improvement. McCuddy's Marina owns land to the base of the bank, the railroad has an easement and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) leases some of the land.**

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why? **Leaving the access at the current location would be ideal. With the current situation, sailboats can get in without having to drop their masts. The ability to get to Felida Marina is already impeded.**
 - a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance? **He is open to evaluating other options, but the current access is ideal. If the access is moved to port property, the bridge would need to be tall enough to allow for vessels and sailboats.**

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access? **Depending on the height and size of the access, if the access is moved to Pioneer Street and the bridge goes over the marina to the River S Unit, then he anticipates impacts to the marina, the view, and could potentially sell some of the property to the State. He would consider the bridge going over the C Dock as an option. Land would need to be leased from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and the moorage. It may be possible to lease land if funding is available to upgrade roads and local access. He sees a need for more boat moorage and would like to leave the floating homes. If the floating home residents cannot get sailboats under the new access at Pioneer Street, then accommodations can be made if necessary.**

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access? **He believes most of the impacts will occur upland. If the access is over the marina, it could limit sailboat access and could be an eye sore if it is designed poorly. Also, the bridge could potentially drip water on the people or residents below which could be an issue. He sees multiple alignment options including leaving the existing access, building a bridge over the C Dock, continuing access over Division Street. Of these potential alignments, the least desirable is across the marina property, however he is willing to look at the alternatives and evaluate financial options for improvements to the marina and local access. McCuddy's Marina has owned the marina in Ridgefield since 1996. He is trying to upgrade the facilities. Potential impacts to parking, storage, and utility lines to address in the process if the access is moved to create a bridge over the marina to the River S Unit.**

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone? **Phone and email are best.**

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings? **He will likely be unable to attend the meetings but will follow the news of the meetings and outcomes of discussion.**

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings? **Wednesdays at 3:00pm would work best for him to avoid traffic on the Interstate-5 Bridge.**

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview? **Gail Alexander and the marina homeowners and renters would be good to touch bases with regarding the perspective of marina residents.**

12. Any other comments? **The waterfront of Ridgefield is underdeveloped and underutilized. Ridgefield has unique amenities but not much water access for boaters and sailboats. It would be good for Ridgefield to be able to take advantage of this and realize its potential.**

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 02/29/12

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Art Edgerly and Todd Horenstein Representing: Ridgefield School District and
Vancouver School District

Mailing address: 2724 S Hillhurst Road, Ridgefield, WA 98642
PO Box 8937, Vancouver, WA 98668

Phone: 360-619-1300 E-mail address: art.edgerly@ridge.k12.wa.us
360-313-1040 thorenst@vansd.org

In 2009 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published their Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); that study was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River S Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River S Unit in their final CCP, meaning a new access point for River S was desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

The USFWS has now requested FHWA's, Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver WA to lead the River S Unit Access Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). By building upon past planning efforts, the FHWA will produce an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location and identify specific alternative locations to the River S Unit. With this new effort, FHWA is planning on engaging in a public scoping process under NEPA to develop the purpose and need and a full range of alternatives to address access related problems to the River S unit.

The FHWA is seeking your input in this process. As this project gets underway it is important that we establish a conversation with people interested in this project. By agreeing to this interview, you will be helping the project team identify and understand your interests, issues, and concerns regarding current conditions and the proposed new access location for the River S Unit. Our intention is to use your input to help define and locate access options that best meet the needs of the community, the stakeholders, and meets the goals of objectives of the Refuge's Comprehensive Plan.

1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge? **The Ridgefield School District tends to use the Carty Unit, especially the plankhouse, more than the River S Unit of the Refuge. The Carty Unit has better parking for bigger vehicles like school buses. The Ridgefield School District's primary focus is to build educational opportunity partnerships. The Vancouver School District's use of the River S Unit is infrequent and the school district itself has less funding available to do field trips and educational programming at the Refuge. Most of the Vancouver School District's environmental science programming is done at Columbia Springs Environmental Center in Vancouver. However, teachers can do field trips to the Refuge with their students on their own.**

2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance? **Safe bus access is critical. Keep school bus access in mind when designing a new access for the River S Unit. The Vancouver School District tends to use the Carty Unit. If there is an increased use of the Refuge and the parking lots are full of more tourist vehicles, then school buses may have difficulty accessing the Refuge for educational purposes. The Vancouver School District no longer does overnight trips so they concentrate on local trips and could do more if the access were improved. The Ridgefield School District has students accessing Lake River to do water sampling and canoe trips.**

3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit? **The Hillhurst access road is not good for school buses. It is narrow and there is better parking at the Carty Unit. The road should be widened but they are not sure Hillhurst is the best access. The BNSF railroad crossing is a factor to consider when bus drivers decide where to go. The Vancouver School District transportation safety managers and bus drivers figure out routes and staging and try to avoid situations in which buses are required to back up.**

4. Do you have ideas for improvement? **The Ridgefield School District would like to see the access road widened. If the access remains at Hillhurst, it could be challenging especially given the impact to housing units and potential conflicts with developer plans for the area. The Ridgefield School District does not have any policies that require them to review roads in advance but the bus drivers and transportation safety managers determine the routes and where buses can and cannot go. Bus drivers have not expressed concerns with the River S Unit access, but again, the district tends to use the Carty Unit instead. The Vancouver School District an internal transportation work group and the safety managers could assist with identifying access safety issues and perhaps improvement suggestions as well.**

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why? **The Ridgefield School District understands the Port and other businesses would like to see the access moved to downtown Ridgefield for economic development purposes.**
 - a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance? **For the Ridgefield School District, locating the access at Pioneer Street would be easy since it is connected to SR-501 and right off the I-5 freeway. It may be easier for people to find than using Hillhurst. If the access remains at Hillhurst, the developers and residents may not want lots of school buses coming through their neighborhood. The Vancouver School District is not as concerned with the location of the access to the River S Unit as it is with the safety and ease of use of the access. It would be easier to use if it was off Pioneer and connected directly to the River S Unit from the highway, but safety is the number one priority.**

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access? **No, other than if more people are attracted to the area and the access is improved then it could mean more traffic and limit access for school buses to parking at the Refuge and limit use by school groups or environmental science classes.**

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access? **The Ridgefield School District is only concerned with the educational opportunities of improving the access. The district does not just do field trips to the Refuge. There are daily learning activities, field trips, and other learning opportunities. The district is interested in creating more partnerships with the Refuge, Discovery Corridor, Clark College, the hospital, industrial businesses, fisheries and biology firms, etc. to build learning opportunities. The 5th graders participate in Cispus and continue to access the Refuge. Vancouver School District realizes the value of being located so close to the Refuge and all the educational opportunities it can offer to students. The district is interested in making the access easier so that it can increase programs with science emphasis and environmental science is important to the Pacific Northwest. Given the right circumstances the district could see providing an introduction at the elementary level and increasing research and science project opportunities through middle and high school grades. There is a large range of opportunities given the emphasis on STEM programs and with partnerships between WSU-Vancouver and Clark College. The district is interested in linking high school students with college students to do joint research projects and in some kind of local laboratory setting.**

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone? **Ridgefield School District finds it easier if regular mail is sent to the school district address. Vancouver School District prefers email.**

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings? **Ridgefield School District is short staffed and cannot commit to public meetings, but if information is sent to the district, they will distribute it in the hopes a representative can come to meetings.**

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings? **For Ridgefield School District, it would be good to avoid overlapping with City of Ridgefield and Port of Ridgefield meetings as well as School Board meetings. For the Vancouver School District, avoid Tuesdays because of School Board meetings.**

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview? **The Ridgefield School District suggested meeting with developers, businesses, the Port of Ridgefield, City of Ridgefield, and residents in the Hillhurst area. The Ridgefield School District has worked with the Port of Ridgefield regarding safe crossing for children. The City of Ridgefield is trying to get Safe Routes to Schools grant funding. The Vancouver School District suggested meeting with Clark**

College, WSU-Vancouver, and the Woodland, Battle Ground, and Evergreen school districts. Those districts may come to the Refuge more if the access were improved. If an environmental laboratory is built at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, then more school districts will want to come to use it for the educational opportunities available. The districts work closely to coordinate programs jointly and share resources like the Clark County Skills Center for example. More infrastructure at the Refuge will make it easier to get to the Refuge and take advantage of the educational opportunities.

- 12. Any other comments? If the access is located at Pioneer Street, there is a need to think through the logistics for semi-trucks and buses to get through Pioneer Street. If the road is widened, it will help. The roundabout is big in order to accommodate trucks and buses. Regardless of where the access is located, the school districts' main priority is safety of the access for the buses and students. Access is secondary to educational opportunities and partnerships as well. A new high school will be built in Ridgefield across from the old high school. The old high school will become a middle school and the old middle school will become a new elementary school. The school districts were interested in the timing for moving this project forward and how soon funding could be available to construct a new access for the River S Unit. The Ridgefield School District has written letters of support for the Refuge and will continue to be an active partner.**

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 02/07/2012

Stakeholder Information:

Name: Terry Nelson, Jeffrey Evans, David DeFreitas, Ginna DeFreitas, Maury Wilson, Linda Wilson, Tom Carroll, and Sue Carroll

Representing:

Taverner Ridge Residents and Homeowner's Association

Mailing address: _____

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In 2009 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published their Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); that study was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River S Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River S Unit in their final CCP, meaning a new access point for River S was desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

The USFWS has now requested FHWA's, Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver WA to lead the River S Unit Access Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). By building upon past planning efforts, the FHWA will produce an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location and identify specific alternative locations to the River S Unit. With this new effort, FHWA is planning on engaging in a public scoping process under NEPA to develop the purpose and need and a full range of alternatives to address access related problems to the River S unit.

The FHWA is seeking your input in this process. As this project gets underway it is important that we establish a conversation with people interested in this project. By agreeing to this interview, you will be helping the project team identify and understand your interests, issues, and concerns regarding current conditions and the proposed new access location for the River S Unit. Our intention is to use your input to help define and locate access options that best meet the needs of the community, the stakeholders, and meets the goals of objectives of the Refuge's Comprehensive Plan.

1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge? **Yes. Many of the Taverner Ridge residents access the River S Unit given the close proximity of the access road and bridge to the housing development. Some of the residents walk to the River S Unit for exercise on a weekly basis while some only walk there in the warmer weather months. Some access it by driving and do the driving tour throughout the year. If driving, most of the residents drive and visit the Refuge one to three times a year.**

2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance? **The Taverner Ridge residents would prefer to keep the existing River S Unit access. However, they would prefer it be closed to vehicle traffic and only accessible to bicyclists and pedestrians. They view the access as an attraction and benefit of living in the Taverner Ridge Development and would like to enhance the linkages to trails.**

3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit? **There is concern about releasing the Taverner Ridge Home Owners Association from any liability for public access on the River S Unit access road through the Taverner Ridge Development. Some of the residents have heard the River S Unit access is already scheduled for closure to vehicle traffic but would like it to remain open to pedestrians and bicyclists. They understand the Refuge staff will need to have vehicle access for maintenance and work purposes. The FHWA and USFWS should be able to work with the community to build something that works for most.**

4. Do you have ideas for improvement? **Some of the Taverner Ridge residents believe it would be a positive economic development and recreation benefit to establish a trail along the perimeter of the dike and be less invasive to the Refuge than some of the existing trails. If the current access to the River S Unit is closed to vehicles and remains a pedestrian and bicyclist access, then they do not see a need for much improvement since it was recently repaired. They would consider establishing an access to the River S Unit via the Pioneer Street/Overlook Park area as long as the existing River S Unit access is left open to pedestrians and bicyclists. One suggested leaving a payment box mounted at the current River S Unit property entrance to collect donations. If the current access location is closed, then some of the residents believe the Taverner Ridge developer will need to revise marketing materials to delete "easy access to the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge" as a selling point to encourage buyers within the housing development because that would no longer apply.**

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why? **It is the understanding of the Taverner Ridge residents that the merchants, port, and others want the access moved down near Pioneer Street and Overlook Park. They believe it makes sense to move the vehicle traffic there to decrease the "dead end" affect and maximize opportunities to frequent local businesses on the way to the Refuge. One person stated that Coeur d'Alene, Idaho has points on the lake that are only accessible by water and this could be explored to increase water tourism traffic in the Ridgefield area too. Some of the Taverner Ridge residents believe that improvements to the existing access road and bridge will be more expensive due to the steep slope of the hill, the bluff, cutting into the hill, coming down to the railroad track level, and widening the road whereas Pioneer Street is flat and would cost less.**
 - a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance? **Again, they are open to moving vehicle access to Pioneer Street but want to maintain the existing access for pedestrians and bicyclists. This would also be advantageous if the City of Ridgefield**

plans to purchase property on both sides of the Taverner Ridge entrance on Hillhurst to build a city park.

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access? **If the new access is moved to Pioneer Street, then it provides easier access to people coming from I-5. The new access at Pioneer Street would also be less narrow, curvy, steep, and dusty in the summer and less muddy in the winter. Most of the Taverner Ridge residents believe the USFWS and other regulator agencies cover the environmental impacts during the planning phases of these types of projects. They would like to enhance the trail aspects of both the Taverner Ridge development and the Refuge.**

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access? **It is anticipated that moving the new access to Pioneer Street would mean less vehicle traffic, noise, and dust through the Taverner Ridge development to the Refuge. However, a new park on Hillhurst would bring new traffic and noise to the area. If the new access is on Pioneer Street, the merchants expect it will bring more people through downtown Ridgefield and into their businesses.**

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone? **Email is best.**

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings? **Yes. Meeting announcements should be directed to Terry Nelson and he will ensure the Taverner Ridge Homeowners Association is informed.**

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings? **In order to meet with younger people who work and have children, it would be better to hold meetings in the evening on Mondays, Tuesdays, or perhaps Thursdays. Not much happens on Mondays and Tuesdays. Best time would be 7:00pm and the meetings could be held at the Community Center or the Coast Management Group (CMG) office depending on the size of the meeting.**

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview? **Paul DeBoni (Taverner Ridge developer), Osprey Point Homeowners Association, Hillhurst Neighborhood Association, City of Ridgefield, and downtown businesses.**

12. Any other comments? **Be sure to really explore the long range vision. The area will be more populated someday. It will be important to be able to access wildlands for hiking, walking, etc. One Taverner Ridge resident was concerned that an improved access to the River S Unit could lead to an increase in the number of hunters and does not wish to see an increase in the number of hunters on the Refuge. Another Taverner Ridge resident pointed out that licensing and access for hunters is already controlled. One Taverner Ridge resident suggested asking Scott Hughes about ownership of the land at the marina to ensure that property owners are included in the process. One Taverner Ridge resident joked that he would like the final design and plan for the new access to the River S Unit to rest solely with the Taverner Ridge Homeowners Association.**

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project Project Questionnaire

Date of interview: 3/7/12

Stakeholder Information:

Name: **Guy Barrett
James DeMay
Craig Rankine**

Representing: **Washington State Department Of
Ecology**

Mailing address: **2108 Grand Boulevard, Vancouver, WA 98661-4622**

Phone: **(360) 690-7171**

E-mail address: **cran461@ECY.WA.GOV**

In 2009 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published their Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); that study was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River S Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River S Unit in their final CCP, meaning a new access point for River S was desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

The USFWS has now requested FHWA's Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver WA to lead the River S Unit Access Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). By building upon past planning efforts, the FHWA will produce an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location and identify specific alternative locations to the River S Unit. With this new effort, FHWA is planning on engaging in a public scoping process under NEPA to develop the purpose and need and a full range of alternatives to address access related problems to the River S unit.

The FHWA is seeking your input in this process. As this project gets underway it is important that we establish a conversation with people interested in this project. By agreeing to this interview, you will be helping the project team identify and understand your interests, issues, and concerns regarding current conditions and the proposed new access location for the River S Unit. Our intention is to use your input to help define and locate access options that best meet the needs of the community, the stakeholders, and meets the goals of objectives of the Refuge's Comprehensive Plan.

1. Do you access the River S Unit, or visit the Refuge?

No, but *may* need to drill well holes on the Refuge property someday.

2. What is your interest in the access to the River S Unit Refuge entrance?

Not applicable. Ecology's interest is only if there is an easement or pilings on contaminated property.

3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge's River S Unit?

No concerns with current access. Ecology's shorelines staff may have a different opinion however.

4. Do you have ideas for improvement?

No opinion.

5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why?

No opinion.

- a. Where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance?

No opinion.

6. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to residents and businesses in the area from a new access?

Want to ensure that there is a good working relationship between Ecology, FHWA, and the Refuge regarding the issues for which Ecology is responsible. Ensure that Ecology's water quality department is involved. Excavation along the shorelines will likely involve the tribes.

7. What potential development impacts do you see associated with a new refuge access?

Not applicable.

8. What is the best way to keep you informed? Email? U.S. Mail? Phone?

E-mail, mail, and phone.

9. Do you plan to attend public meetings?

Yes. Ecology expects to have institutional controls recorded for the contaminated properties (such as soil management and capping plans and groundwater deed restrictions), so it is important that they attend.

10. What is your preference for days and times of public meetings?

No preference.

11. Is there anyone you think it is important for us to interview?

No opinion.

12. Any other comments?

Western Wood Products Site

Contamination still exists at this site, and the plan is to limit exposure. The site will be capped, a covenant will be implemented, and continued monitoring will occur. The site is nearing a point where it could be redeveloped. Cell #3 has been capped, and #2 is scheduled for summer 2012. The caps only prevent exposure to underlying contamination. Anything that would disturb the cap would need to be coordinated with Ecology. Ecology can supply FHWA with the boring logs, though the remedial investigation report will contain that information. Bridge footings could penetrate the cap, though Ecology would need to be part of the process to ensure the cap is situated around the footings correctly.

The site's contamination is not very deep. The groundwater contamination has migrated into Carty Lake and it is assumed that it doesn't cross Lake River into the Refuge property. Sediment is contaminated to a depth of approximately four feet at the shoreline, and a depth of one foot at the center of the river. The river is contaminated with dioxin and only spans the extent of the site's northern and southern boundaries.

Ecology has loaned the Port Of Ridgefield a substantial amount of money for cleanup of the site, and it is deciding what the Port is responsible for before moving forward. Ecology has no current plans be loaning the Port any additional funding for cleanup.

Area Rivers

Both Carty Lake and Lake River have been contaminated with dioxins.

Right Of Way

Ecology is tied to any right of way decisions for the former Western Wood Products site. Other sites, such as Carty Lake and Lake River shorelines, could also be a factor.

Millers Landing

Ecology is aware of the planned development, but it has not coordinated with the Port.

Overpass Project

Ecology has not coordinated with the Port, and this project may require some soil testing.

RJ Frank Property (aka- McCuddy's Marina)

This site is ranked high due to its proximity to Lake River, though Ecology is unsure of the property's contamination extent or whether the site has had previous remediation. Ecology is aware of the site's above-ground storage tanks however.

Excavated Materials Transportation

Solid waste disposal for sediments would be required. There are no landfills in Clark County, so alternative sites in Pacific Northwest will need to be considered.

Refuge Property

Aside from Carty Lake, no other contamination is assumed at the Refuge. The Carty Lake contamination remediation will likely consist of a combination of excavation and capping.

Additional Coordination

Ecology would be available for an agency alternatives workshop, and their water quality staff should be included.

No permit actions would be required for construction in Ecology's cleanup sites as long as FHWA is within the site's institutional controls.

Attachment C: Mass-distribution E-mails

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RIVER 'S' UNIT ACCESS PROJECT

At the request of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Western Federal Lands Division is leading the process to develop access improvements to the River 'S' Unit at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.

By building on past planning efforts, the FHWA will produce an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location and identify specific alternative locations to the River 'S' Unit. As part of this new effort, FHWA will engage in a public scoping process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to develop the Purpose and Need and a full range of alternatives.

- **A project website** has been developed to keep the community and project stakeholders up to date on the project: <http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/wa/>
- **The first project newsletter** is available for download on the website. It includes a project history, draft statement of Purpose and Need, information on public involvement opportunities and next steps, and a study area map.

For more information

Michael Traffalis, FHWA Project Manager | 610 E. 5th Street | Vancouver, WA 98661

RiverSUnit_AccessProject@dot.gov



RIDGEFIELD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE — RIVER 'S' UNIT ACCESS PROJECT

In 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River 'S' Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River 'S' Unit in its final CCP, meaning a new access point for River 'S' is desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

The USFWS and FHWA's Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver, Washington, have been developing a comprehensive understanding of land uses, ownerships, rights of way, and environmental issues by gathering agency input, interviewing interest groups in the area, and soliciting general public comment about River 'S' access.

You're Invited Get Involved. Stay Involved.

The FHWA is continuing to seek your input in this process.

Public Meeting

Thursday

January 31, 2013

4-6 p.m.

Ridgefield Community Center

210 North Main Avenue
Ridgefield, Washington

LEARN MORE: <http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/wa/ridgefield-wildlife-refuge/>



Attachment D: Project Newsletters

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RIDGEFIELD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE — RIVER ‘S’ UNIT ACCESS PROJECT

Project History

DECEMBER 2011

In 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); that study was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River ‘S’ Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River ‘S’ Unit in their final CCP, meaning a new access point for River ‘S’ was desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

The USFWS has now requested FHWA’s Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver, Washington, to lead the River ‘S’ Unit Access Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). By building upon past planning efforts, the FHWA will produce an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location and identify specific alternative locations to the River ‘S’ Unit. With this new effort, FHWA is planning on engaging in a public scoping process under NEPA to develop the Purpose and Need and a full range of alternatives to address access related problems to the River ‘S’ Unit.

What’s Next?

In January 2012, the project team will be directly interviewing 10 groups of stakeholders. Questions will include:

1. Do you access the River ‘S’ Unit or visit the Refuge?
2. What is your interest in the access to the River ‘S’ Unit Refuge entrance?
3. Do you have any concerns with the current access to the Refuge’s River ‘S’ Unit?
4. Do you have ideas for improving the access?
5. Do you feel the entrance should move from its current location? If so, why? If not, why?
6. If you think the entrance should move, where do you think an appropriate location is for a new entrance?
7. Are you concerned about any particular environmental impacts, or impacts to local residents or businesses from a new access point?
8. Do you perceive any potential development impacts from an improved or relocated access to the River ‘S’ Unit?

After the stakeholder interviews and evaluating comments provided through our web site or other outreach efforts, the project team will use the information gained to further refine the Purpose and Need (page 2). The FHWA team will then develop a range of alternatives.

Next spring, there will be public meetings so the community can review and comment on the Purpose and Need statement, and the range of alternatives identified through the public involvement process. A second newsletter will announce the meeting and provide more information on the alternatives.



Get Involved

The FHWA is seeking your input in this process. As this project gets underway it is important that we establish a conversation with people interested in this project. You will be helping the project team identify and understand your interests, issues, and concerns regarding current conditions and the proposed new access location for the River ‘S’ Unit.

Our intention is to use your input to help define and locate access options that best meet the needs of the Refuge and its management goals while listening and accommodating, where possible, the needs of the community.

The FHWA has developed a project questionnaire and a draft Purpose and Need statement for the River ‘S’ Unit Access project. Review the Purpose and Need on page 2 of this newsletter and look for the questionnaire on our project website the week of December 12 at <http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/wa/ridgefield-wildlife-refuge/>

Contact

Michael Traffalis
FHWA Project Manager
610 E. 5th Street | Vancouver, WA 98661

Email: RiverSUnit_AccessProject@dot.gov

Web: <http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/wa/ridgefield-wildlife-refuge/>

Draft Statement of Purpose and Need

The project team is developing the project's Purpose and Need under NEPA. The following is the first draft for the public to consider. Please review and forward comments on your perceptions, what you think may be missing, or what we should consider refining further. You can submit comments at <http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/wa/ridgefield-wildlife-refuge/> or send an email to the project email address: RiverSUnit_AccessProject@dot.gov.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the proposed action is to enhance mobility and provide for long-term access to the River 'S' Unit of the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge by addressing present and future visitor demand and mobility needs. Visitors currently access the River 'S' Unit from Hillhurst Road via a single-lane gravel road through private property and an at-grade rail crossing of the BNSF Railway. Visitors must then

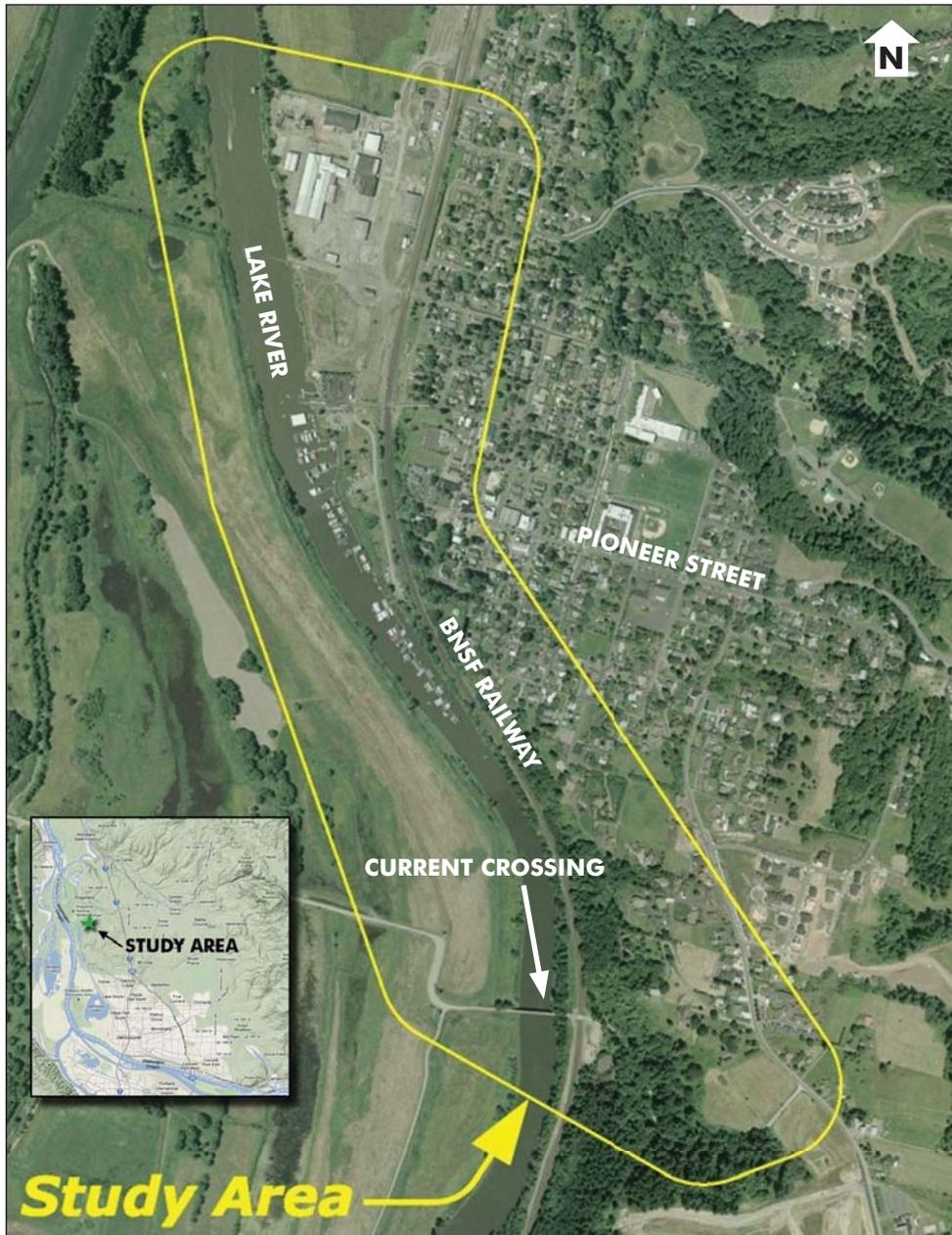
cross Lake River on a 330-foot long, single-lane, wooden bridge to access the Refuge facilities and the Auto Tour Route.

When compared to the No-build Alternative, the proposed action is intended to achieve the following objectives: a) improve the reliability of public access to and from the River 'S' Unit and b) improve Refuge and visitor connectivity between the Carty and River 'S' Units.

Project Need

The specific needs to be addressed by the proposed action include:

- **Reliability of Access:** The existing road is very steep and has sharp turns which substantially decrease the sight distance available to drivers. The road and bridge are narrow and passage can be difficult for the types of vehicles and volumes of traffic accessing the River 'S' Unit. Vehicles often need to stop or pull over to avoid oncoming traffic. Access to the River 'S' Unit has been closed several times to conduct major repairs to the road and bridge. Because the road and bridge are single lane, access has also been closed to reduce conflicts between Refuge operations and the traveling public.
- **Growing Visitor Demand:** The Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge draws over 100,000 visitors per year (CCP, 2009). During summer months the River 'S' Unit sees over 120 trips per day (FWS, 2011). There are two major units to the Refuge providing year round public access; the Carty Unit and the River 'S' Unit. These entrances are located approximately two miles apart. Visitors wanting to access both units must travel through residential areas, and travel time between the two units often prevents visitors from accessing more of the Refuge. As visitation is forecasted to increase there is a growing need to centralize year-round public access to the Refuge.





RIDGEFIELD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE — RIVER ‘S’ UNIT ACCESS PROJECT

Project Update

JUNE 2012

In 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River ‘S’ Unit. The USFWS selected a new access to the River ‘S’ Unit in its final CCP, meaning a new access point for River ‘S’ is desired. A specific location for this access was not selected in the CCP.

The USFWS and FHWA’s Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver, Washington, have been developing a comprehensive understanding of land uses, ownerships, rights of way, and environmental issues by gathering agency input, interviewing interest groups in the area, and soliciting general public comment about River ‘S’ access. Through these efforts FHWA has compiled eight common questions with responses that provide a common understanding to the framework the team will work under in developing a range of alternatives. See *Top 8 Q&A on the project website*.

What’s Next?

Spring 2012 through the Fall 2012

FHWA will produce an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location and identify specific alternative locations to the River ‘S’ Unit. With this new effort, FHWA will continue to engage the public through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to further define the Purpose and Need and obtain input on the full range of alternatives to address access-related problems to the River ‘S’ Unit.

	Task	Timeline
On-Going Activities	Newsletter Update	Summer 2012
	Traffic Impact Assessments	Summer/Fall 2012
	River Navigation Assessment	Summer/Fall 2012
	Existing Access Railroad Crossing Assessment	Summer/Fall 2012
	Develop Range of Alternatives	Fall 2012
	Public Meeting on Range of Alternatives	Fall 2012
	Screening of Alternatives	Fall 2012
Completed Activities	Baseline Conditions Assessment	Summer 2012
	Stakeholder Interviews w/ Summary	Summer 2012
	Update Purpose and Need Statement	Summer 2012
	Top 8 Questions & Answers from Outreach Efforts	Summer 2012
	Existing Access Technical Memo	Summer 2012



Get Involved/Stay Involved

The FHWA is continuing to seek your input in this process. As this project continues to develop and evolve it is important that we maintain a conversation with people interested in the process and outcome. You will be helping the project team identify and understand your interests, issues, and concerns regarding current conditions and the proposed new access location for the River ‘S’ Unit.

Our intentions is to continue to use your input to help define and locate access options that best meet the needs of the Refuge and its management goals while listening and accommodating, where possible, the needs of the community.



Contact

Michael Traffalis
 FHWA Project Manager
 610 E. 5th Street | Vancouver, WA 98661

Email: RiverSUnit_AccessProject@dot.gov

Web: <http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/wa/ridgefield-wildlife-refuge/>

Updated (May 2012) Draft Statement of Purpose & Need

The proposed action is to replace the bridge over Lake River and improve access to the River 'S' Unit. The purpose of this action is to provide for long-term access that addresses visitor demand and meets the operational and management needs of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Complex)*. When compared to the no-build alternative, the proposed action is intended to achieve the following objectives: 1) improve the reliability and mobility of public access to and from the River 'S' Unit, 2) improve the USFWS's ability to efficiently carry out operations consistent with its management goals within the Ridgefield Refuge Complex, and 3) provide for a transportation solution that is sustainable for the resources on the Refuge and in the community of Ridgefield.

Project Need

The specific needs to be addressed by the proposed action include:

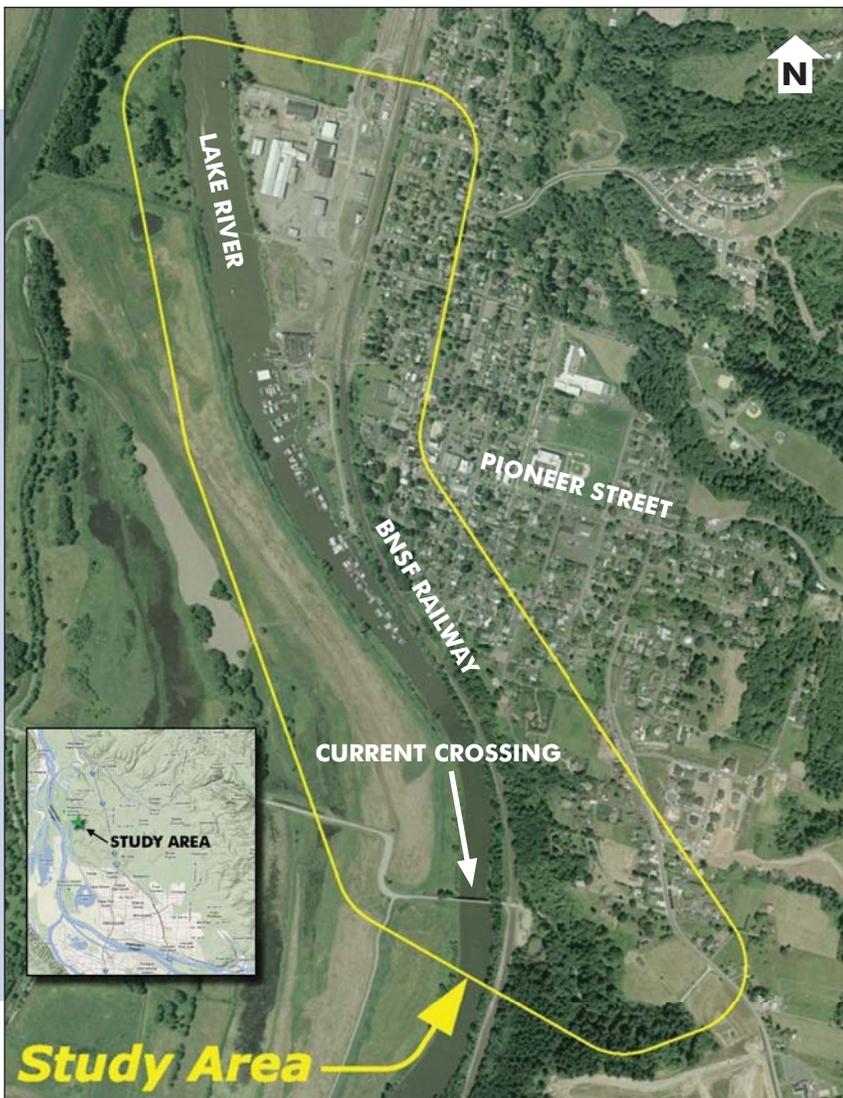
Reliability of Long-Term Public Access to River 'S' Unit: The existing road and bridge were constructed sometime in the 1950's. The single-lane road and bridge are narrow and passage can be difficult for the passenger vehicles and Refuge's heavy equipment accessing the River 'S' Unit. Access to the River 'S' Unit has been closed several times to conduct major repairs to the road and bridge and to allow heavier equipment to pass without conflicting with passenger vehicles. When constructed, the existing timber bridge had an anticipated life span of about 40 years. The bridge now requires routine maintenance, and major reconstruction in the short term will be necessary to keep the bridge open to the public. These routine repairs can have undesirable environmental impacts and impede the ability of the public to access the Refuge. To maximize the federal transportation funds available, long-

term solutions to access the River 'S' Unit should be examined.

Continuity and Efficiency in Refuge Operations: The USFWS maintains over 7,000 acres in the Complex. The USFWS is mandated by law to manage Refuge lands. These lands require routine maintenance operations to provide the highest quality wildlife habitat possible. These operations include grazing, mowing, invasive species removal, tree planting, flooding and draining wetlands, and regulating visitor and hunter use. All the heavy equipment (farm tractors and implements and trucks with trailer equipment) used to conduct these operations is stored on the Bachelor Island Unit, accessible only by the River 'S' Unit bridge and road. On peak-use days up to 200 vehicles enter the River 'S' Unit. Due to the single-lane bridge, this amount of traffic on the River 'S' Unit can be in conflict with the USFWS's ability to efficiently carry out its operations.

Sustainable Transportation Solution: The Refuge draws over 120,000 visitors per year (CCP, 2009). While visitation is expected to increase, the USFWS has identified goals and objectives in its CCP to ensure the quality of the experience on the Refuge and the habitat itself can be preserved. These goals include reducing congestion on the Auto Tour route at peak times and providing pedestrian access to Refuge walking trails from Ridgefield. For many, the Refuge is considered the 'heart' of the community. Yet access to the River 'S' unit is separated from the Refuge headquarters by local streets (often without sidewalks), a busy railway, and Lake River. The single-lane bridge and road provide for a challenging pedestrian experience. Recognizing the importance and significance the Refuge has for the community highlights the need to improve the access connection between the two.

* The Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex is made up of several other refuges including: Steigerwald Lake, Pierce, and Franz Lake refuges further east on the Columbia River. Farming and maintenance equipment for all four refuges is stored on the River 'S' unit. An important function of the River 'S' access is to serve as the access road for the equipment used on the complex of refuges in Southwest Washington.



Study Area

Purpose and Need Statement

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide for long-term access to the River 'S' Unit that addresses visitor demand and meets the operational and management needs of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex*. The proposed project is intended to achieve the following objectives: a) improve the reliability and mobility of public access to and from the River 'S' Unit, b) improve the US-FWS's ability to efficiently carry out their operations consistent with their management goals within the Ridgefield Refuge Complex, and c) provide for a transportation solution that is sustainable for the resources on the refuge and the community of Ridgefield.

The specific needs to be addressed by the proposed project include:

Reliability of Long Term Public Access to River 'S' Unit: The existing road and bridge were constructed sometime in the late 1960's. The single lane road and

bridge are narrow and passage can be difficult for the passenger vehicles and buses accessing the River 'S' Unit. Access to the River 'S' Unit has been closed several times to conduct major repairs to the road and bridge and to allow heavier equipment to pass without conflicting with passenger vehicles. When constructed, the existing timber bridge had an anticipated life span of about 40 years. The bridge now requires routine maintenance and major reconstruction in the short term will be necessary to keep the bridge open to the public. These routine repairs can have undesirable environmental impacts and impede the ability of the public to access the refuge. In order to maximize the federal transportation funds available, long term solutions to access the River 'S' Unit should be examined.

Continuity and Efficiency in Refuge Operations: The USFWS maintains over 7,000 acres in the Ridgefield

National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The USFWS is mandated by law to manage refuge lands. These lands require routine maintenance operations in order to provide the highest quality of wildlife habitat possible. These operations include, grazing, mowing, invasive species removal, tree planting, flooding and draining wetlands, delivery of goods and materials, and regulating visitor and hunter use. All of the heavy equipment (farm tractors and implements and trucks with trailer equipment) used to conduct these operations is stored on the Bachelor Island Unit, accessible only by the River 'S' Unit bridge and road. Due to the single lane bridge, public traffic on the River 'S' Unit can be in conflict with the USFWS's ability to efficiently carry out their operations.

Sustainable Transportation Solution: The Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge draws over 120,000 visitors per year (CCP, 2009). In 2012, there were approximately 73,000 visitors to the River 'S' Unit with 75,000 anticipated in 2013. While visitation is expected to increase, the USFWS has identified goals and objectives to ensure the quality of the experience on the refuge and the habitat itself can be preserved. A transportation facility that is both economically and environmentally sustainable is needed for the refuge to provide safe, accessible, and high quality wildlife-dependent recreation over the long term. Key elements of a sustainable transportation solution for the Refuge include reducing operations and maintenance expenses associated with the existing bridge, accommodating the projected increase in visitation and vehicle traffic, and encouraging non-vehicular access by enhancing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between the River 'S' Unit and the community.

* The Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex is made up of several other refuges including: Steigerwald Lake, Pierce, and Franz Lake refuges further east on the Columbia River. Farming and maintenance equipment for all four refuges is stored on the River 'S' unit. An important function of the River 'S' access is to serve as the access road for the equipment used on the complex of refuges in Southwest Washington.



RIDGEFIELD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE — RIVER 'S' UNIT ACCESS PROJECT

Project Update

JANUARY 2013

In 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvement to the River 'S' Unit. The FHWA and USFWS have completed preliminary development and screening of alternatives. A public open house will be held on January 31, 2013, to obtain comments on the range of alternatives and the screening process. The alternatives are on the second and third pages of this newsletter. The alternatives and screening criteria will be posted on the project website ahead of the open house so you may comment at the meeting or through the website.

What's Happened.

The USFWS and FHWA's Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver, Washington, have been developing a comprehensive understanding of land used, ownerships, rights of way, and environmental issues by gathering agency input, interviewing area interest groups, and soliciting public comment.

Since our last newsletter, FHWA produced an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location, Traffic Impact Assessment of potential new River S access locations, Railroad Crossing Study, Existing Bridge Evaluation, Lake River Navigation Study. Additionally, we identified, developed, and performed initial screening on a range of alternatives locations. Since June 2012, FHWA considered 23 alternatives.

At the January 31 open house, the community will have an opportunity to review the alternatives and criteria and weigh in on whether there are additional alternatives or criteria that should be considered.

What's Next.

FHWA will refine the remaining alternatives that passed the initial screening and are being carried forward.

	Task	Timeline
On-Going Activities	Newsletter Update	January 2013
	Public Meeting on Range of Alternatives	January 2013
	Screening of Alternatives	Winter 2013
Completed Activities	Traffic Impact Assessments	Summer/Fall 2012
	River Navigation Assessment	Summer/Fall 2012
	Existing Access Railroad Crossing Assessment	Summer/Fall 2012
	Develop Range of Alternatives	Fall 2012
	Baseline Conditions Assessment	Summer 2012
	Stakeholder Interviews w/ Summary	Summer 2012
	Update Purpose and Need Statement	Summer 2012
	Top 8 Q&A from Outreach Efforts	Summer 2012
Existing Access Technical Memo	Summer 2012	

You're Invited: Get Involved. Stay Involved.

The FHWA is continuing to seek your input in this process.

Public Meeting

Thursday
January 31
4-6 p.m.

A brief overview presentation will be provided at 4:30 and 5:30 p.m.

Ridgefield Community Center

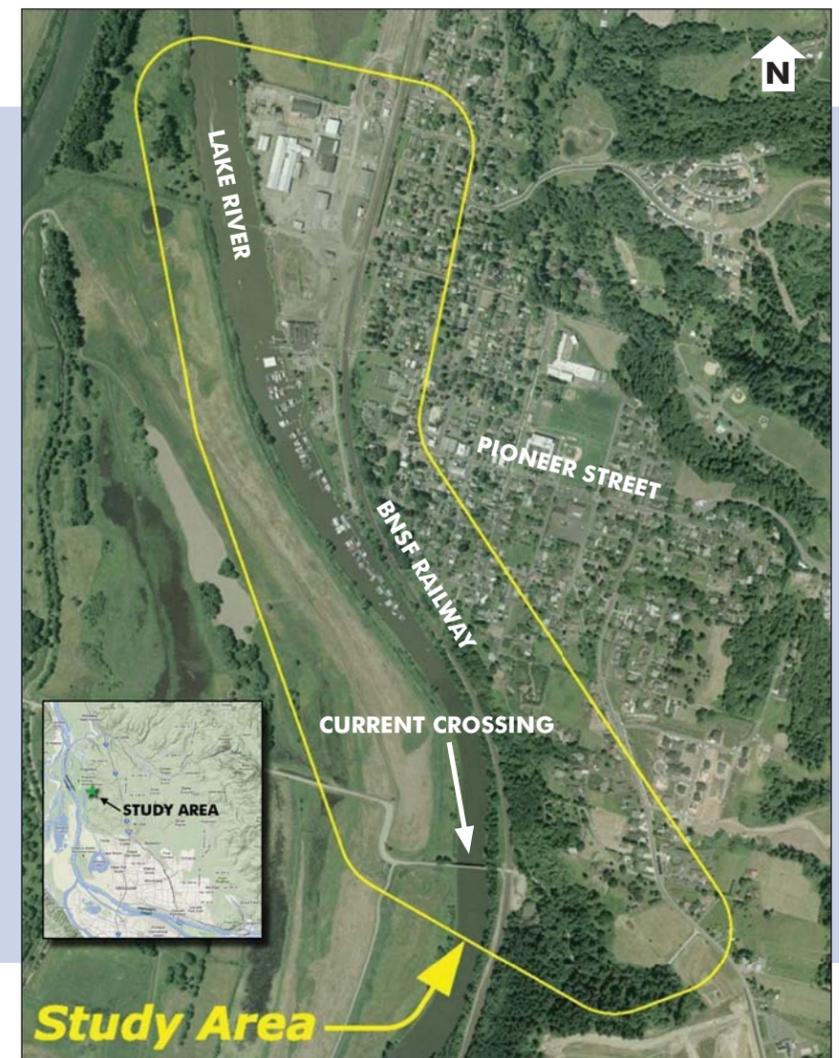
210 North Main Avenue
Ridgefield, Washington



Contact

Michael Traffalis
FHWA Project Manager
610 E. 5th Street | Vancouver, WA 98661

Email: RiverSUnit_AccessProject@dot.gov
Web: <http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/wa/ridgefield-wildlife-refuge/>



LEVEL 1 ALTERNATIVES SCREENING

Alternative Description	Would this alternative provide safe and reliable, long-term public access to the River S Unit?	Would this alternative provide safe and reliable, long-term, year-round access for Refuge operations and maintenance?	Would this alternative reduce conflicts between passenger vehicles, buses and refuge heavy equipment?	Would this alternative improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and connectivity for the public to the River S Unit?	Is this alternative economically feasible?	Is this alternative technically feasible?	Does this alternative involve any known major environmental issues?	Does this alternative minimize or avoid use of private ROW?	Would long-term O&M be feasible for this alternative?	Does this alternative maintain existing navigation uses?	Screen Out	Carry Forward
Existing Access Options												
A. No build.	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○		✓
B. No improvement to the existintg access road, install new RR crossing for 3 track system, and replace bridge.	○	○	◐	◐	○	○	○	○	○	○		✓
C. Improve existing gravel access road to a consistent 18 foot width, install new RR crossing for 3 track system, and replace bridge.	○	○	○	◐	○	○	○	○	○	○		✓
D. Improve existing gravel access road to a consistent 18 foot width, grade separate road and RR, and replace bridge.	○	○	○	◐	○	○	○	○	○	○		✓
Main Street Option												
A. Utilize WSDOT ROW (Viewshed Park) to extend Main Street over RR and Lake River with a new bridge and improve city streets to accommodate refuge traffic.	○	○	○	○	●	○	●	●	○	○	✓	
B. Utilize WSDOT ROW (Viewshed Park) to extend Main Street (tangent) over RR and Lake River with a new bridge and improve city streets to accommodate refuge traffic.	○	○	○	○	●	○	●	○	○	○	✓	
Sargent Street Option												
A. Extend Sargent Street west over the RR and Lake River with a new bridge and improve city streets to accommodate refuge traffic.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	○	✓	
Mill Street Options												
A. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the south end of marina property and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	◐	○	○	●	○	○	✓	
B. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the south end of marina property and cross Lake River with a new moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	✓	
C. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the mid section of the marina property and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	○	✓	
D. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the mid section of the marina property and cross Lake River with a new movable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	✓	
E. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the north side of the existing boat ramp parking area and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	✓	
F. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the north side of the existing boat ramp parking area and cross Lake River with a new moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	✓	
Pioneer Street Options												
A. Utilize Port Access project with revised span layout to accommodate an intersection on the bridge to safely separate port and refuge traffic, extend refuge access over Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	◐	○	◐	●	○	○	✓	
B. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the north side of the existing boat ramp parking area and cross Lake River with a new moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	✓	
C. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the north side of the existing boat ramp parking area and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	●	◐	○	○	●	○	○	✓	
D. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the south end of marina property and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	◐	○	○	●	○	○	✓	
E. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the south end of marina property and cross Lake River with a new moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	✓	
F. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the mid section of the marina property and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	●	◐	○	◐	●	○	○	✓	
G. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the mid section of the marina property and cross Lake River with a new moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	✓	
Division Street Options												
A. Develop new bridge alignment and profile along Division Street and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	✓	
B. Develop new bridge alignment and profile along Division Street and cross Lake River with a moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	✓	
Cook Street Option												
A. Develop grade separated option at Cook Street that spans the RR, sewer plant, and then returns to grade before spanning Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	●	●	○	●	●	○	○	✓	

Evaluation Key: ○ Fully satisfies purpose or specified criteria, or rates relatively low for impact. ◐ Partially satisfies purpose or specified criteria, or rates moderate for impact. ● Does not satisfy purpose or specified criteria, or rates relatively high for impact.

Attachment E: Project Website

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Location: [Home](#) > [Projects](#) > [Washington](#) > [Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge](#)

ABOUT

PROGRAMS

PROJECTS

CONTRACTING

RESOURCES

EMPLOYMENT

Projects

[Alaska](#)
[Idaho](#)
[Montana](#)
[Oregon](#)
[Washington](#)
[Wyoming](#)

Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge River 'S' Unit Access Project

January 2013 Project Updates

The Federal Highway Administration and the Fish and Wildlife Service have completed preliminary development and screening of alternatives. Over the next few weeks, we will be posting updated information and sending out a new newsletter. A public open house will be held on January 31, 2013 to obtain comments on the range of alternatives and the screening process. The alternatives and screening criteria will be posted in the newsletter ahead of the open house so you may comment at the meeting or through this web site.

New Information:

- [January 2013 Newsletter](#)
- [Project Purpose and Need \(updated November, 2012\)](#)
- [Navigation Assessment](#)
- [Railroad Assessment](#)



View a [larger interactive map](#) of the project area.

Project Details

Project # WA RRP RIDG 100(2)
Project Name Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge River 'S' Unit Access Project
Location Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, WA
Status In Development

Project Overview

In 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access Study completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); that study was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvements to the River 'S' Unit.

The USFWS has now requested FHWA's Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver, Washington, to lead the River 'S' Unit Access Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). By building upon past planning efforts, the FHWA will produce an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location and identify specific alternative locations to the River 'S' Unit. With this new effort, FHWA is planning on engaging in a public scoping process under NEPA to develop the Purpose and Need and a full range of alternatives to

Project Schedule

	Task	Timeline
On-Going Activities	Newsletter Update	January 2013
	Public Meeting on Range of Alternatives	January 2013
	Screening of Alternatives	Winter 2013
Completed Activities	Traffic Impact Assessments	Summer/Fall 2012
	River Navigation Assessment	Summer/Fall 2012
	Existing Access Railroad Crossing Assessment	Summer/Fall 2012
	Develop Range of Alternatives	Fall 2012
	Baseline Conditions Assessment	Summer 2012
	Stakeholder Interviews w/ Summary	Summer 2012
	Update Purpose and Need Statement	Summer 2012
	Top 8 Q&A from Outreach Efforts	Summer 2012
Existing Access Technical Memo	Summer 2012	

[View the full-size version of the Project Schedule](#) (Acrobat, 410 KB)

Contact Information

Project Email Address:
RiverSUnit_AccessProject@dot.gov

Michael Traffalis, Project Manager

Federal Highway Administration

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Attachment F: Open House Meeting Summary

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Open House Summary

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge River 'S' Unit Access Project
Thursday, January 31, 2013
4–6 p.m.

ATTENDEES

Gail Alexander
Eric Anderson
Ed Blodgett
Dick Carlson
Sandra Day
Brent Grening
Jeff Holm
Scott Hughes
Jeff Lightburn
Nancy McQuillan
Phil Messina

Ron Onslow
Randall Overton
Sydney Reisbeck
Tim Shell
David Taylor
Beth Tomas
Jane Traffalis
Vern Veysey
Bruce Wiseman
Allene Wodaeye

PROJECT TEAM AND ADDITIONAL STAFF

Kyle Brown, Normandeau Associates (NAI)
Karen Ciocia, NAI
Kirk Loftsgaarden, FHWA
Brian Minor, FHWA

Don Owings, HDR
Michael Traffalis, FHWA
Hannah Visser, FHWA

EVENT OVERVIEW

An open house for the FHWA Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge River 'S' Unit Access Project was held from 4-6 p.m. on Thursday, January 31, 2013, at the Ridgefield Community Center, 210 North Main Avenue, in Ridgefield, Washington. Twenty-one attendees signed in (see Appendix A—Sign-in Forms) and viewed the project exhibits (see Appendix B—Open House Exhibits). The open house was promoted via an email to 448 recipients in the project mailing list which included regional media contacts, including: *The Oregonian*, *The Portland Business Journal*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Columbian*, *Vancouver Business Journal*, and *The Battle Ground Reflector*.

The purpose of the open house was to obtain comments on the range of alternatives and the screening process. Project staff members were available to present information, answer questions, and gather input from attendees regarding the project's purpose and need and screening criteria.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. The CCP included a Transportation Access study completed by the FHWA that was a preliminary review of alternatives providing access improvement to the River 'S' Unit. The FHWA and USFWS have completed preliminary development and screening of alternatives.

The USFWS and FHWA's Western Federal Lands Division office in Vancouver, Washington, have been developing a comprehensive understanding of land used, ownerships, rights of way, and environmental issues by gathering agency input, interviewing area interest groups, and soliciting public comment.

The FHWA has produced an in-depth transportation analysis to assess the current access location, Traffic Impact Assessment of potential new River 'S' access locations, Railroad Crossing Study, Existing Bridge Evaluation, and Lake River Navigation Study.

Based on input received during and following the open house, the FHWA will refine the remaining alternatives that passed the initial screening and will carry them forward for further analysis.

OPEN HOUSE COMMENTS

No formal comments were received.

Appendix A—Sign-in Forms

FHWA Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project

Open House

January 31, 2013 • 4-6 PM • Ridgefield, Washington

Name	Mailing Address Include City and Zip Code	Telephone	E-mail Address
Dick Carlson	2958 S 23 rd way ^{Ridgefield} 98642	360 8871520	CARL.Fish.0523@AOL.Com
Randall Overtun	915 2 nd Ave (#B510) Ridgefield 98174	2062207282	Randall.D.Overtun@USCG.mil
BETH JOMAS	1301 1ST AVE SEATTLE WA 98101 ^{Ridgefield WA 98642}	(305) 481 687	bethrca_20@yahoo.com
Vern Veysey	4816 NE 25 th ST	360-921-2323	VeyseyVV@MSM.COM
PHIL MESSINA	PO Box 608 RFD	360 857-5020	phil.messina@ci.ridgefield.wa.us
Eric Anderson	POB 457 ^{Ridgefield} WA 98642	360 887 4106	eric-anderson@us.gov
SANDRA DAY	1114 S 6TH WAY ^{RIDGEFIELD}	360 887-0881	daypl@comcast.net
Tim Skell	951 S. Oak Rd. (^{Ridgefield})		t.skell@comcast.net
Sydney Reschke	PO Box 339 ⁹⁸⁶⁴²	887-7880	reisbicks@comcast.net
David Taylor	P.O. Box 1537	887-2200	d.taylor@CI.Ridgefield.wa.us



FHWA Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project

Open House

January 31, 2013 • 4-6 PM • Ridgefield, Washington

Name	Mailing Address Include City and Zip Code	Telephone	E-mail Address
JEFF HOLM	911 NE 11th Ave Portland, OR 97232		jeff-holm@fws.gov
Bruce Wiseman			brucewiseman@msn.com
Scott Hughes			SCOTT+HUGHES665@comcast.net
Ron Omslow			
Steve Greening			
Allene Wodaeger	PO Box 264 - RDG 98642		
Jane Trattalis	26401 NE 5th St		
GAIL ALEXANDER			2109111111kayak@comcast.net
Nancy McQuillan	P.O. Box 131		nancy.mcquillan@gmail.com

FHWA Ridgefield River S Unit Access Project

Open House

January 31, 2013 • 4-6 PM • Ridgefield, Washington

Name	Mailing Address Include City and Zip Code	Telephone	E-mail Address
JEFF LIGHTBURN	PO Box 1623 Ridgefield		jclightburn@comcast.net
ED BLODGETT		503 624-3274	edward.blodgett@jacobs.com

Appendix B—Open House Exhibits



**RIDGEFIELD RIVER "S" UNIT ACCESS PROJECT
LEVEL 1 ALTERNATIVE SCREENING
OPTIONS CONSIDERED MAP**

Cook Street
Option A

Existing Access
Options B-D

LAKE RIVER
100' WIDE NAVIGATIONAL CHANNEL

Division Street
Options A&B

Mill Street
Options E&F

Pioneer Street
Options B&C

Mill Street
Option D

Pioneer Street
Options A,F&G

Sargent Street
Option A

Pioneer Street
Options D&E

Mill Street
Options A&B

Main Street
Option B

Main Street
Option A

Port Access
Project

PORT OF
RIDGEFIELD

CITY OF
RIDGEFIELD

PORT OF
RIDGEFIELD

MCCUDDY'S
MARINA

USFWS

USFWS

Scale in feet
100 50 0 100 200 300





RIDGEFIELD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE — RIVER 'S' UNIT ACCESS PROJECT

LEVEL 1 ALTERNATIVES SCREENING

Alternatives Description	Would this alternative provide safe and reliable, long-term public access to the River S Unit?	Would this alternative provide safe and reliable, long-term, year-round access for Refuge operations and maintenance?	Would this alternative reduce conflicts between passenger vehicles, buses and refuge heavy equipment?	Would this alternative improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and connectivity for the public to the River S Unit?	Is this alternative economically feasible?	Is this alternative technically feasible?	Does this alternative involve any known major environmental issues?	Does this alternative minimize or avoid use of private ROW?	Would long-term O&M be feasible for this alternative?	Does this alternative maintain existing navigation uses?	Screen Out	Carry Forward
Existing Access Options												
A. No build	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○		✓
B. No improvement to the existintg access road, install new RR crossing for 3 track system, and replace bridge.	○	○	◐	◐	○	○	○	○	○	○		✓
C. Improve existing gravel access road to a consistnt 18 foot width, install new RR crossing for 3 track system, and replace bridge.	○	○	○	◐	○	○	○	○	○	○		✓
D. Improve existing gravel access road to a consistnt 18 foot width, grade separate road and RR, and replace bridge.	○	○	○	◐	○	○	○	○	○	○		✓
Main Street Option												
A. Utilize WSDOT ROW (Viewshed Park) to extend Main Street over RR and Lake River with a new bridge and improve city streets to accommodate refuge traffic.	○	○	○	○	●	○	●	●	○	○	✓	
B. Utilize WSDOT ROW (Viewshed Park) to extend Main Street (tangent) over RR and Lake River with a new bridge and improve city streets to accommodate refuge traffic.	○	○	○	○	●	○	●	○	○	○	✓	
Sargent Street Option												
A. Extend Sargent Street west over the RR and Lake River with a new bridge and improve city streets to accommodate refuge traffic.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	○	✓	
Mill Street Options												
A. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the south end of marina property and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	◐	○	○	●	○	○	✓	
B. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the south end of marina property and cross Lake River with a new moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	✓	
C. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the mid section of the marina property and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	○	✓	
D. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the mid section of the marina property and cross Lake River with a new movable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	✓	
E. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the north side of the existing boat ramp parking area and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	✓	
F. Develop new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the north side of the existing boat ramp parking area and cross Lake River with a new moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	✓	

Evaluation Key: ○ Fully satisfies purpose or standard, or rates relatively low for impact. ◐ Partially satisfies purpose or standard, or rates moderate for impact. ● Does not satisfy purpose or standard, or rates relatively high for impact.



LEVEL 1 ALTERNATIVES SCREENING

Alternatives Description	Would this alternative provide safe and reliable, long-term public access to the River S Unit?	Would this alternative provide safe and reliable, long-term, year-round access for Refuge operations and maintenance?	Would this alternative reduce conflicts between passenger vehicles, buses and refuge heavy equipment?	Would this alternative improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and connectivity for the public to the River S Unit?	Is this alternative economically feasible?	Is this alternative technically feasible?	Does this alternative involve any known major environmental issues?	Does this alternative minimize or avoid use of private ROW?	Would long-term O&M be feasible for this alternative?	Does this alternative maintain existing navigation uses?	Screen Out	Carry Forward
Pioneer Street Options												
A. Utilize Port Access project with revised span layout to accommodate an intersection on the bridge to safely separate port and refuge traffic, extend refuge access over Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	◐	○	◐	●	○	○	✓	
B. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the north side of the existing boat ramp parking area and cross Lake River with a new moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	✓	
C. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the north side of the existing boat ramp parking area and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	●	◐	○	○	●	○	○	✓	
D. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the south end of marina property and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	◐	○	○	●	○	○	✓	
E. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the south end of marina property and cross Lake River with a new moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	✓	
F. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the mid section of the marina property and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	●	◐	○	◐	●	○	○	✓	
G. Utilize Port Access project with a new road 18 foot paved from Mill Street to the mid section of the marina property and cross Lake River with a new moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	✓	
Division Street Options												
A. Develop new bridge alignment and profile along Division Street and cross Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	✓	
B. Develop new bridge alignment and profile along Division Street and cross Lake River with a moveable bridge.	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	✓	
Cook Street Option												
A. Develop grade separated option at Cook Street that spans the RR, sewer plant, and then returns to grade before spanning Lake River with a new bridge.	○	○	○	●	●	○	●	●	○	○	✓	

Evaluation Key: ○ Fully satisfies purpose or standard, or rates relatively low for impact. ◐ Partially satisfies purpose or standard, or rates moderate for impact. ● Does not satisfy purpose or standard, or rates relatively high for impact.