

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

TO:
Ed Greer

FROM:
Jim Barnes

COMPANY:

DATE:
6/16/2015

RE:
Tax Parcel 209047-000, 209062-000, 86027188,
& 986027-189

CC:

URGENT

FOR REVIEW

PLEASE COMMENT

PLEASE REPLY

PLEASE RECYCLE

This purpose of this technical memorandum is to provide clarification to comments in the City of La Center pre-application conference report provided to Ed Greer dated January 8, 2015. The report raised questions regarding a ditch identified by Cascadia Ecological Services, Inc. (CES) in a October 2014 preliminary wetland assessment report and a possible stream in the northeast portion of the project area.

In the pre-application conference report, it was stated that more information was needed to make the case that the "ditch" along the south portion of Tax Parcel 986027189 does not meet the criteria of a seasonal stream according to the definitions given in the City of La Center Municipal Code. In addition, a Washington DNR FPARS Map was provided in the report which shows a possible Class N stream in the north east corner of Tax Parcel 98027-179.

CES came to the conclusion in the October preliminary wetland assessment report that, based on observations of the upland soils, lack of hydrophytic vegetation, and hydrology indicators, the property does not contain any City of La Center regulated wetlands or other critical areas. An additional site visit was completed on June 16, 2015 to revisit the two potential stream areas identified by the city in the pre-application conference report.

The City of La Center Municipal Code section addressing critical areas is based on the definitions given in the Washington Administrative Code. According to WAC 220-660-030, a "Watercourse," "river" or "stream" means any portion of a stream or river channel, bed, bank, or bottom waterward of the ordinary high water line of waters of the state. Watercourse also means areas in which fish may spawn, reside, or pass, and tributary waters with defined bed or banks that influence the quality of habitat downstream. Watercourse also means waters that flow intermittently or that fluctuate in level during

the year, and the term applies to the entire bed of such waters whether or not the water is at peak level. A watercourse includes all surface-water-connected wetlands that provide or maintain habitat that supports fish life. This definition does not include irrigation ditches, canals, storm water treatment and conveyance systems, or other entirely artificial watercourses, except where they exist in a natural watercourse that has been altered by humans.

As mentioned in the October preliminary wetland assessment report, an east-west oriented man-made conveyance ditch is located along the south boundary of Tax Parcel 986027189. The ditch is at its widest and deepest point near the southeast corner of the parcel adjacent to NE 24th Avenue and gradually becomes narrower and less deep as it approaches the southwest corner. At that location the ditch merges into an open field north of a Christmas tree farm. The ditch is dominated by black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*) trees and Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) thickets along its edges. Although the ditch is in excess of six feet deep in places, the ground surface was dry and there were no indicators of wetland hydrology present. No scour marks or defined channel within the flat ditch bottom was observed. Most of the ground surface at the bottom of the ditch is either bare soil or mosses. According to historical aerial imagery, this ditch did not exist prior to 2005. It appears to have been constructed in 2005 as shown in Figure 1.

The City of La Center Municipal Code defines riparian habitat areas as areas adjacent to aquatic systems with flowing water (e.g., rivers, perennial or intermittent streams, seeps, springs) that contain elements of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems which mutually influence each other.

Because the ditch meets the definition of an artificial watercourse and does not provide any aquatic habitat, it would not be regulated by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Steve West, personal communication, June 16, 2015) nor would it be regulated as a riparian habitat area by the City of La Center.



Figure 1. Aerial photography of south boundary of Tax Parcel 986027189 (Source: Google Earth)

The northeast portion of the Tax Parcel 98027-179 in the location of the possible Class N stream consists of upland pasture. No wetlands or stream exists in this location (Figure 2). Directly north of the property and south of NE 339th Street is a road ditch and a culvert was located at the intersection of NE 339th Street and NE 24th Avenue. The culvert crosses underneath NE 339th Street and outlets into a forested swale that continues to the northwest. This is likely the drainage that is mapped by the WDNR FPARS website as the Class N stream. Because it is located off-site and is functionally isolated by NE 339th Street, any buffers to protect riparian habitat functions would not extend onto the project area.

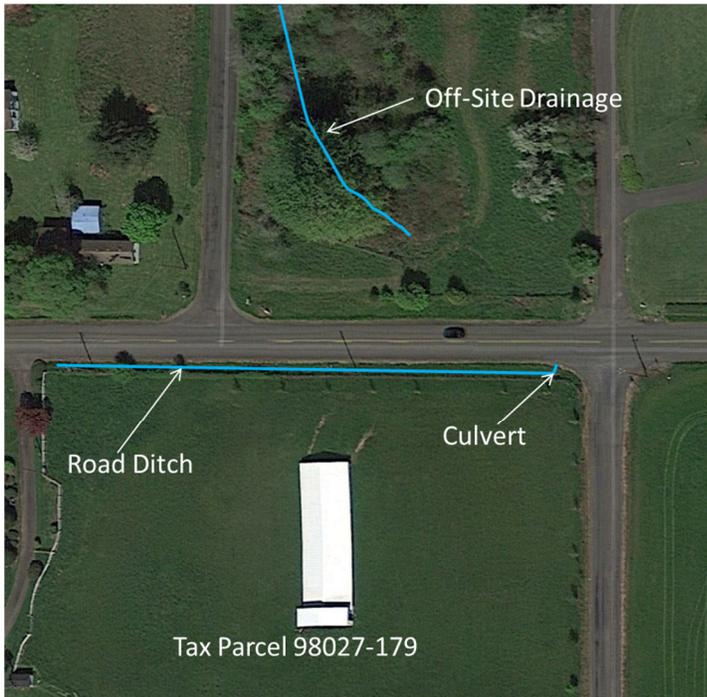


Figure 2. NE portion of Tax Parcel 98027-179

This report documents the investigation, best professional judgment and conclusions of Cascadia Ecological Services, Inc. It should be used at your own risk unless it has been reviewed and approved in writing by the City of La Center under their jurisdictional standards.

References

La Center Municipal Code Chapter 18.300. 2012. Critical Areas. La Center, Washington.

West, Steve. (6/15/15). Interview by J.S. Barnes [Phone]. Vancouver, WA.

Washington Administrative Code 220-660-030.