

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

CP.445. Background Summary.

Fish and wildlife habitat in Astoria and the surrounding area is quite diverse. Major habitat types include the Columbia River estuary and its tributaries, Youngs Bay, the Lewis and Clark River, the forested uplands of the Astoria peninsula, and Tongue Point.

During Astoria's long history, a great deal of alteration has taken place. Astoria is located on filled areas of the Columbia River. Many of the marshes and tideflats south of the City have been diked and drained for farming. Intensive logging has taken place in the uplands area; the heavily developed western portion of the peninsula was once a forest; clear cutting is carried out on the remaining forest lands to the east and south. The productivity of the Columbia River has been reduced over the years as a result of dam construction and logging practices.

Despite these losses, the environmental quality of Astoria is high. Fish and wildlife habitats can be described in terms of two general areas:

1. The Columbia River and its estuarine wetlands and tideflats.
2. Forested uplands.

The first two areas are described in the CREST inventory. Significant natural areas have been identified as the tideflats west of the Port Docks, other shallow wetlands above the extreme low water line, and the Lewis and Clark wildlife refuge east of Tongue Point and the tip of Tongue Point, a large number of marine and estuarine organisms, fish species, birds and other animals are found in these areas. Wetlands are well-documented breeding areas which support the aquatic food chain. The most highly-sought food species, salmon, uses these areas during several stages of its life.

The forested uplands area of Astoria is populated by large numbers of reptiles and amphibians, mammals, and birds. There are no water bodies (lakes or streams) which support aquatic life, other than the lower portion of Mill Creek, and a very limited freshwater wetlands in the Williamsport area. Northern Bald Eagle nests have been identified on the tip of Tongue Point and at the mouth of Mill Creek. Great Blue Heron are frequently spotted on the tideflats of Youngs Bay.

CP.450. Conclusions and Problems.

1. There has been a long standing dispute between local officials and State and Federal agencies concerning the use of the estuary; Port officials feel there is a valid need to increase the land area for their operations; resource agencies have

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refused to issue fill permits because of the biological productivity of the area proposed for fill.

2. The CREST program, in which most local, State, and Federal officials have participated, has been a forum for the resolution of conflicts. However, several problems remain to be resolved.
3. Astorians enjoy a high quality of life based in large part on the condition of the natural environment. Many people are drawn to the area in order to take advantage of the closeness to fish and wildlife habitat.
4. The local economy is highly dependent on the natural resources of the area. Commercial fishing, fish processing, sports fishing and tourism, logging and wood processing, and shipping all depend on the environment. Conflicts inevitably arise between various users of the land or water, and between users and managers.
5. Wildlife habitat in the forested uplands area has been reduced or eliminated by many activities, including logging, the City landfill, and residential development. The "Land Reserve" is the only area in which the City is capable of growing. Some of the impact of urbanization on wildlife habitat can be mitigated by the use of techniques such as cluster development, retention of trees and natural drainages, buffers, and so forth.

CP.455. Overall Goal.

The City of Astoria will, through its Plan and ordinances, protect the natural values that make the City a desirable place to live and work.

CP.460. Policies.

1. The Plan land and water use designations will protect those areas that have high natural value, and direct intensive development into those areas that can best support it.
2. The biological productivity of the Columbia River estuary will continue to be an important consideration because of its contribution to the City's economy and quality of life.
3. The City recognizes the importance of "trade offs" that must occur in the planning process. Although certain estuary areas have been designated for intensive development, other areas will be left in their natural condition in order to balance environmental and economic concerns.

4. The City's "Land Reserve" area has been designated as such in order to protect forest lands for forest uses, and to allow for limited, well planned residential development in certain areas. It is intended that forest uses include wildlife habitat, stream or drainage protection, windbreaks, recreation and scenic buffers. By requiring and encouraging techniques such as planned or cluster development, buffering, geologic site investigations, and similar measures, natural values will be protected.