

**Alverson, Ed. "Assessment of Proposed Wetland Mitigation Areas in West Eugene." Prepared by The Nature Conservancy for the Lane Council of Governments. Eugene, Oregon: February 1993. (Reviewed by Susan Mershon)**

This document was created, under an EPA grant, by Ed Alverson of The Nature Conservancy, for the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG). LCOG is the creator of the West Eugene Wetlands Plan. The report states that it is a refinement of knowledge, in order to prepare for a new cycle of investigations. This report has a sister: "Mitigation Options for Eight Sites in West Eugene," also under LCOG. That report deals more with soils and hydrology, whereas this one deals with land use over time affecting biological communities.

Alverson studied several of LCOG's proposed mitigation sites under the West Eugene Wetlands Plan. The important area owned by The Nature Conservancy is just one of the sites studied.

With each of the mitigation sites, Alverson goes through a list: heritage value, floodwater control, water quality improvement, wildlife habitat, recreation, research and education, ecological values of adjacent uplands, and buffer values (between the mitigation areas and adjacent land uses). For each item he ranks the potential as high, moderate, or low. Finally he lays out several scenarios of action, and recommends one for each site.

Alverson identifies two different restoration goals. The first is to return, as much as possible, to the pre-European condition. The closer you come to this impossible goal, the better. The second approach is "returning important ecosystem functions to a landscape from which they have been eliminated." (102) This is restoring wetland functions such as flood control, without so much regard to what was there on that specific site. Alverson recommends an approach that takes a little from both. The wetlands that still exist must be intensively and functionally used, but with native species as a main goal.

Alverson's process is clear. His 1992 field data sheets are photocopied in the back of the report. His inventories of species are included. He represents the wetlands by their plant communities.

Alverson gives a history of the area. The West Eugene streams had features that were "very different from our society's typical concept of what a stream should be." (102) They had huge winter flows and dried out in the summer, and their riparian corridors were sprawling, not clearly defined. Alverson says this, historically, lead to confusion about how the land worked.

There are some maps and diagrams.

## **Critique**

It is helpful to know the context of this report. Eugene has a good website about the West Eugene Wetlands, [www.wewetlands.org](http://www.wewetlands.org). Eugene struggled for years to deal with its ecologically sensitive

wetlands and its desire to expand economically. Eventually, a plan balanced ecology, flood control, and business through "wetland mitigation." Eugene has extensively documented its process as a model for communities dealing with similar issues. The most important document is the West Eugene Wetlands Plan, adopted in 1992 by the City of Eugene and Lane County, and in 1994 by the State of Oregon.

This document, published in 1993, lies between those two times. Its purpose is, thus, not to affect the Plan but to increase understanding of the specific sites in West Eugene, and affect the implementation of the plan. In 1993 it was not clear how it would all work out, so this document doesn't take a self-satisfied stance as an example. It is a good source, and very specific to Eugene. However, other Willamette Valley communities probably have similar wetlands issues.

It would be especially interesting to compare the recommendations made a decade ago, with each of the sites today. What worked out and what didn't? Also, I could further investigate the relationship between native species, biological diversity, and wetland functions. This report graded the wetlands by their ecology, but can that wholly measure wetland function?

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