

Baseline Environment

This chapter of the example presents the status of those components identified by the scoping process of the Columbia Gateway SEPA EIS as important to all stakeholders.

15.1 Vegetation and Wildlife

With the exception of Parcel 2, most of the current use of the Columbia Gateway site is agriculture: annual row crops and livestock grazing pastures. Wetlands were being created on Parcel 2 at the beginning of the last century. Upland areas and some wetlands on Parcels 3–5 are used for agriculture by four farms. Two farms have single-family dwellings on them. Overall, approximately 28 acres of the site are impervious surfaces created by buildings and paved roads, excluding Lower River Road, which divides Parcel 5. The jurisdictional shorelines of the site contain no significant development and are dominated by riparian vegetation.

Surrounding areas are used for recreation, wildlife habitat enhancement, and industrial purposes. Frenchman's Bar Park, a county recreational facility, is located along the shoreline of the Columbia River northwest of Parcel 5. The Shillapoo Wildlife Area, managed by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), is north of Parcels 4 and 5. Vancouver Lake Park, east of Parcel 4, is a recreational facility frequented by fishermen, swimmers, and wind-surfers. Industrial facilities near the project area include Vanalco, a large aluminum-

manufacturing plant located 0.25 miles (400 meters) south of Parcel 3, and a private recycling facility immediately south and west of Parcel 3.

15.1.1 Vegetation Cover Types

Vegetation categories are based on hydrology and dominant plant cover species. (Table 15.1). Seven upland vegetation types and four

Table 15.1. Areal extent (in acres) of each vegetation cover type identified on the Columbia

Gateway site.

Type	Parcel				Total
	2	3	4	5	
Riparian forest	2.5	30.4	00.	6.1	39.0
Forested wetland	0.0	1.1	0.0	1.1	2.2
Upland scrub-shrub	1.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	4.0
Scrub-shrub wetland	17.0	62.0	0.0	1.1	80.1
Upland pasture	14.5	142.1	4.5	257.9	419.0
Emergent wetland	0.0	190.2	76.5	134.8	401.5
Row crop	0.0	42.6	28.0	16.0	85.6
Seasonal slough	0.0	14.1	0.0	0.0	14.1
Developed land	0.0	9.3	0.0	14.0	23.3
Paved road	0.0	7.3	0.0	0.0	7.3
Sand	0.0	17.9	0.0	0.0	17.9
Totals	35.0	517.0	112.0	430.0	1094.0

wetland types are typical of river floodplains in the Pacific Northwest.

Row crop areas are nonwoody vegetation on hydric¹ and nonhydric soils. Farmed wetlands are included in the row crop category because of the similarity in vegetative structure. Annual row crops are grown on 386 acres within Parcels 3–5. The principal crops are corn, oats and barley. Alfalfa had been grown in earlier decades under different tenant farmers. A few areas on the site were not planted for the

¹ Wetland-type soils that are saturated within 30 centimeters of the surface for at least 2 weeks during the growing season.