



Working with you to protect the environment in the Berkshires and beyond

2009 City of Pittsfield “Amendment” to the Wahconah Park Permit

An Amendment is for relatively minor changes resulting in same or less impact to the wetland resource areas.

This Request for Amendment is, in fact, an entirely different proposal for this site. BEAT hopes the Pittsfield Conservation Commission will require a new Notice of Intent be filed. (A Notice of Intent or NOI is an application for a Wetlands Protection Act permit.)

Differences between the Request for Amendment and the Original Notice of Intent

The Request for an Amendment dated November 25, 2008 states that “The work of the original project was never started due to financial reasons.” The new work proposed to limit work to the concession area and to pave the existing footprint of the main parking lot, stating on page 2 of 3 that this will “*improve* the quality of the runoff into the adjacent Resource Areas (over present conditions) by reducing the sediment load that is caused by the gravel surface.”

The “scope of work under this Amendment will still include the wetland restoration work along the westerly side of the parking lot.”

However, in verbally describing the restoration work, I believe Mr. Scalise stated that no soils were to be removed, just wetland plants would be added.

On January 26, 2009, SK Design Group submitted revised plans incorporating additional drainage control measures. “Specifically, we have added a “bio-swale” along the downgradient side of the main parking lot. This will result in additional improvements over existing conditions.” “No other changes have been made to the plans.” This last statement is not completely accurate. The name on all the plans was changed from Wahconah Park, Inc. to City of Pittsfield Parks and Recreation Department.

This is in contrast to –

The Original Notice of Intent. In the Original Notice the applicant proposed parking lot changes – Stripping of gravel, replacing with crushed stone. According to SK Design Group in the Original Notice of Intent (NOI) Appendix B, Drainage Study May 2004, page 2-3, Stormwater Management Narrative – in regard to stripping the gravel and replacing it with crushed stone –

“In doing this the runoff from the parking lot will be slowed down due to the rough surface.

Gravel is generally considered almost as impervious and therefore has a high runoff rate, similar to pavement. The crushed stone has a lower runoff rate than pavement or gravel.”

And on page 5 of the same section –

“Replacing the gravel with crushed stone will slow runoff due to the irregularities in the surface and the voids in between the stone.”

On page 6 further treatment is described –

“The parking lot runoff will be collected into a water quality swale, which provides 70% TSS removal. Prior to the water quality swale, the runoff will pass through a grass biofilter strip.”

The Original Notice of Intent also included:

- Additional seating which had almost no wetland impacts according to the Original Notice of Intent
- Bordering Vegetated Wetland Replacement area – 2,500 square feet
- Bordering Vegetated Wetland Restoration area 21, 500 square feet – removing soil to be replaced for greater permeability and growing of wetland plants – plan with cross-section of wetland soil profile to be submitted (not yet in file)
- Replacement of restrooms
- Removal of Locker Room additions
- Existing booth removal and replacement with floodable structures
- Existing grandstand to have louvers installed to improve hydraulic connection for flood waters.
- Berm to be lowered in two locations to allow flood waters to flow.
- Two Riverfront restoration areas – one on-site with 23,000 square feet of restoration, and one off-site with 13,300 square feet of restoration
- 7,000 square feet Riverfront restoration by invasive species removal
- added 6,871 cf of flood storage capacity

Amendment

- How much flood storage capacity is added?
- How much Riverfront area will be disturbed? How much restored?
- What floodable improvements are included?
- Why is it that the NOI had many increments of BLSF and the amendment only has 3?

In summary – The Request for Amendment proposal states that there will be fewer square feet of Resource Area alteration. The Original Notice of Intent compensated for all alterations and resulted in a net GAIN of resource area.

The Request for Amendment does not make an effort to ensure that as much stormwater is slowed down and infiltrated as possible, the way the crushed stone parking lot in the Original Notice of Intent did.

The Request for Amendment does not include the removal of the locker room additions, nor the removal of the existing booth to be replaced by floodable structures. There is no proposal in the Request for Amendment to ensure that all structures are “floodable” as was proposed in the Original Notice.

The Request for Amendment does not include 36,300 square feet of Riverfront restoration, plus 7,000 sf of invasive species removal.

The Request for Amendment does not make clear the extent or method of BVW restoration, but verbally SK Design said they will not remove the existing inappropriate soil - the removal of which was included in the Original Notice of Intent.

	Alteration in the Original NOI	Replacement Area in the Original NOI	Net GAIN of Resource Area	Alteration in the “Amendment”	Replacement Area in the “Amendment”	Net LOSS of Resource Area
BVW (sf)	1,967	2,500	533	0	0	0
BLSF (sf)	348,370	348,370	0	157,800	0	157,800
cubic feet storage	9,781	16,652	6,871	?	?	?

	Alteration in the Original NOI	Restoration Area in the Original NOI	Net GAIN of Resource Area	Alteration in the “Amendment”	Restoration Area in the “Amendment”	Net LOSS of Resource Area
BVW (sf)	1,967	21,500	19,533	0	0*	0
Riverfront Area (sf)	18,000	16,000 on-site 13,300 off-site 7,000 invasive species removal and tree planting	11,300	5,900 and undocumented >20,000 of impact from the compensation area in Riverfront Area.	0	5,900

* SK Design said there would be some wetland planting in the previous restoration area, but no soil and gravel removal would take place. No real restoration.

The Request for Amendment is, in fact, an entirely different proposal for this site, and it certainly doesn’t result in the same or reduced environmental impact. We hope the Commission will require a new Notice of Intent be filed.