

Outfall Relocation Project

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Some frequently asked questions about this project are summarized below with City responses.

1. What is the project?

Answer: The City has been working with the community for several years to develop a solution to the temperature compliance issues required at the WWTP. The City of Ashland is proposing to relocate the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) outfall from Ashland Creek to Bear Creek to comply with new water quality regulations. The outfall is a pipe that is used to release treated wastewater into the Creek.

2. Why is the City doing this project?

Answer: To comply with new water quality regulations. Bear Creek has higher water flows than Ashland Creek which will allow treated wastewater to mix and disperse quickly resulting in fewer impacts to water quality and improved habitat for fish and other animals that live near the creek.

3. What is the planned schedule?

Answer: As of October 2018, Jacobs Engineering has completed the preliminary design, which is at about 30 percent of the total project design. The next step is to submit permit applications to various local, state, and federal agencies, then go to final design. Given the time needed for coordinated permitting, the project construction is scheduled for the summer of 2020.

Trees that need to be cleared within the construction corridor are planned be removed between January and March of 2020. The pipeline contractor should begin work in May 2020 and complete work in December 2020.

4. How long will the trail to Ashland Pond be closed?

Answer: It's anticipated that construction activities will start in May 2020 and will continue through December 2020. During this period, the trail will be closed most of the time for public safety. Updates to trail status will be posted on the City website for the project as conditions change.

5. Why is construction happening in May? Why not earlier in the year?

Answer: There are a few things driving the construction schedule. Foremost is the preparatory work that goes into getting a job started: it takes an enormous amount of effort to develop a final design, obtain all the necessary permits, and bid the project according to Oregon's public solicitation laws. Beginning construction prior to completing any of these steps would not be feasible. The second thing driving schedule is the in-water work period. In this region of Oregon, work may only occur in jurisdictional waters between June 15 and September 15. Starting too early could result in a temporary (but very expensive) shutdown of the project until June 15 rolls around. The final thing that puts pressure on this construction schedule is weather. Performing earthwork during the rainy months of March and April should be avoided if possible. It creates a huge mess and causes a lot of avoidable disturbance.

6. Why does Ashland Pond need to be drained during project construction?

Answer: The outfall pipeline will be installed within the embankment of Ashland Pond. For safety during construction, the water levels in the pond need to be drawn down to below the elevation of the pipeline excavations. The pond will be refilled using the diversion from Ashland Creek following construction.

7. Why are we using Ashland Creek to refill the pond after construction?

Answer: Ashland Creek is where the water right to fill the pond is located. The pond will be filled from its legal point of diversion.

8. What considerations have been taken for the wildlife in the pond?

Answer: The City and community value the unique wildlife habitat provided by Ashland Pond. The pond is used by many native animals including herons, migratory birds, otters, and frogs. The pond has unfortunately also become home to some invasive non-native animals. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has identified exotic species living in the pond including bullfrogs, gambusia, goldfish, bluegill, and ringed crayfish. Bullfrogs are known to prey on many native animals such as native frogs, small fish, and even small birds. When these exotic species escape into the adjacent Ashland and Bear Creek, they also have the potential to prey on or compete with native salmon and steelhead. ODFW has requested that Ashland Pond be completely drained during construction to aid in the control of these exotic species. The native species that utilize Ashland Pond have other nearby habitat that can be utilized while the pond is drained and Ashland Pond will be returned to better conditions than before the project in terms of water quality and habitat.

9. How long will Ashland Pond be drained?

Answer: It's anticipated that the City will begin lowering the water levels in Ashland Pond starting in April 2020. The pond should be completely drained by sometime in June or July of 2020 and will begin to be refilled by December of 2020. The time to refill the pond will be limited by water availability in Ashland Creek and the allowed diversion rate from Ashland Creek. It's estimated that it will take one to two months to completely refill the pond when diverting up to the water right permitted rate.

10. How is the City coordinating this project with the on-going restoration and tree planting efforts underway around Ashland Pond?

Answer: The City will be coordinating with local groups involved in replanting to let them know about the planned project and potential temporary impacts to planting areas. The project is also being designed to minimize impacts to sensitive vegetation and will include restoration of the unavoidable impacts to vegetation resulting from the construction activities.

11. What is the long-term plan for public access to Ashland Pond?

Answer: The City has been coordinating with landowners that own a portion of the access road to Ashland Pond to secure long-term access for the community. These negotiations are still in process.

12. What is the cost to do this project?

Answer: It is too early to identify cost at this time. A cost estimate will be provided as the engineer nears the end of the final project design.

13. Have you reached out to the community for comments?

Answer: For the outfall relocation project component, focused input has been solicited from the community since the beginning of the planning phase in 2014. More recently, input has been solicited through one-on-one conversations, a project website, public notices, and through a project open house held in October 2018.

14. Where can I find more information?

Answer: The project fact sheet and informational poster boards shared at the open house are available on the City website for the project (www.ashland.or.us/healthycreeks) and provide an overview of the project purpose and plans.