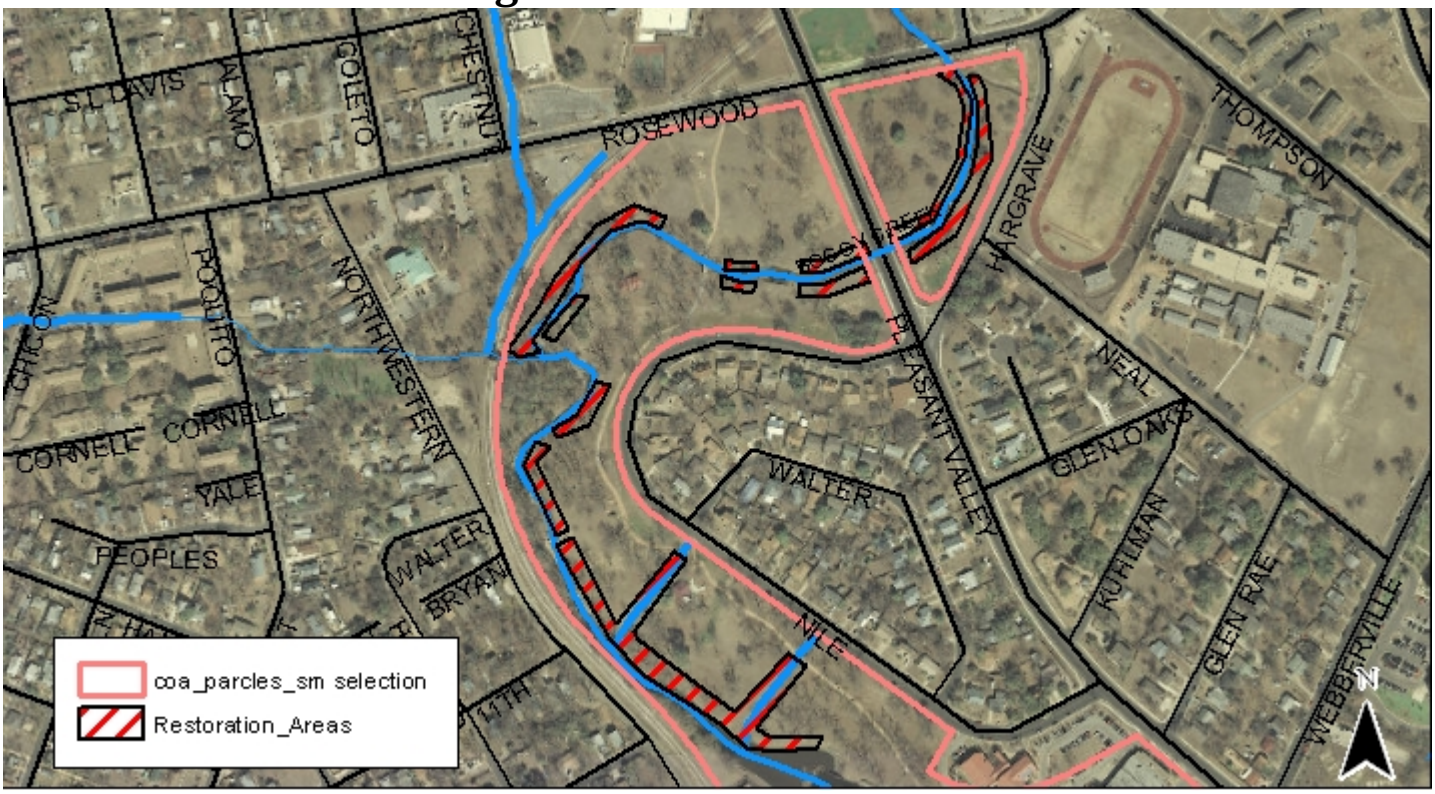
Riparian Restoration: Boggy Creek Greenbelt

Establishing No Mow Natural Creek Buffers



Introduction: This area has a Capitol Improvement Project that will remove the abandoned wastewater lines from the center of the creek, shore up some eroding banks, install drop down structures within the creek, and establish native vegetation along the upper bank of the stream.

Long-term goal
Establish a sustainable riparian forest buffer with diverse vegetation and a dense tree canopy.

Healthy Riparian Buffers Provide

- Filtering of storm runoff, removing pollutants before they reach the creek
- Prevention of stream bank erosion
- Slowing of flow, reducing downstream flooding
- Providing a “sponge” that will absorb water, providing baseflow for the creek
- Shade, reducing water temperatures.
- Providing habitat and food for a diverse group of animals, both on land and in the water
- Reduction City’s carbon footprint via both sequestration and reduced emissions.
- Reduced mowing and maintenance by City staff.
- A greenbelt forest and stream amenity with diverse tree and plant communities for walkers, hikers and wildlife observers.

Example of no mow success on the Willowbrook reach of Boggy Creek.

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Mowed Condition (**1997**)

Restored condition (**2012**)

Management Approach:

- Move the primary trail away from the top edge of the creek in order to allow vegetation to become established in the most critical areas.
- Native plantings of trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers.
- Allow for passive plant growth in entire buffer area, with additional active plantings where necessary, (native grass, wildflowers, and woody species) following site assessments. Planting activities will be coordinated by WPD, but will rely on stakeholder interest and involvement.
- Periodic trash clean-up, triggered by an agreed upon trash threshold, measured using the WPD Trash index score sheet and implemented by WPD (Field Operations-Easter Seals).
- Periodic "weed/invasive management" to address nuisance problems that may arise, based on stakeholder input and WPD site assessment, implemented by WPD.
- Educational and demarcation signage where appropriate

What should park users expect?

- As the plant community recovers from the mowing disturbance, some areas may have taller, much less manicured vegetation. It can take between 5 and 10 years to develop a diverse vegetation community, so patience is important! The irrigation system will be in place for two years and then removed. Please be cautious of the above ground components.

When will this start?

- We would like to initiate this during the 2010 growing season. Expect this to be an ongoing process that will entail four or more years.

Who will track progress and/or Success?

- WPD will evaluate changes over the next 3-5 years, as the vegetation transitions into more mature communities and implement a range of adaptive riparian restoration practices as needed.
- Volunteer monitoring is encouraged, particularly changes in bird or plant communities, and any other ecological measures of interest.

Questions: Please contact Staryn Wagner, WPD, 974-2956, staryn.wagner@austintexas.gov
Website: http://www.cityofaustin.org/watershed/creekside.htm