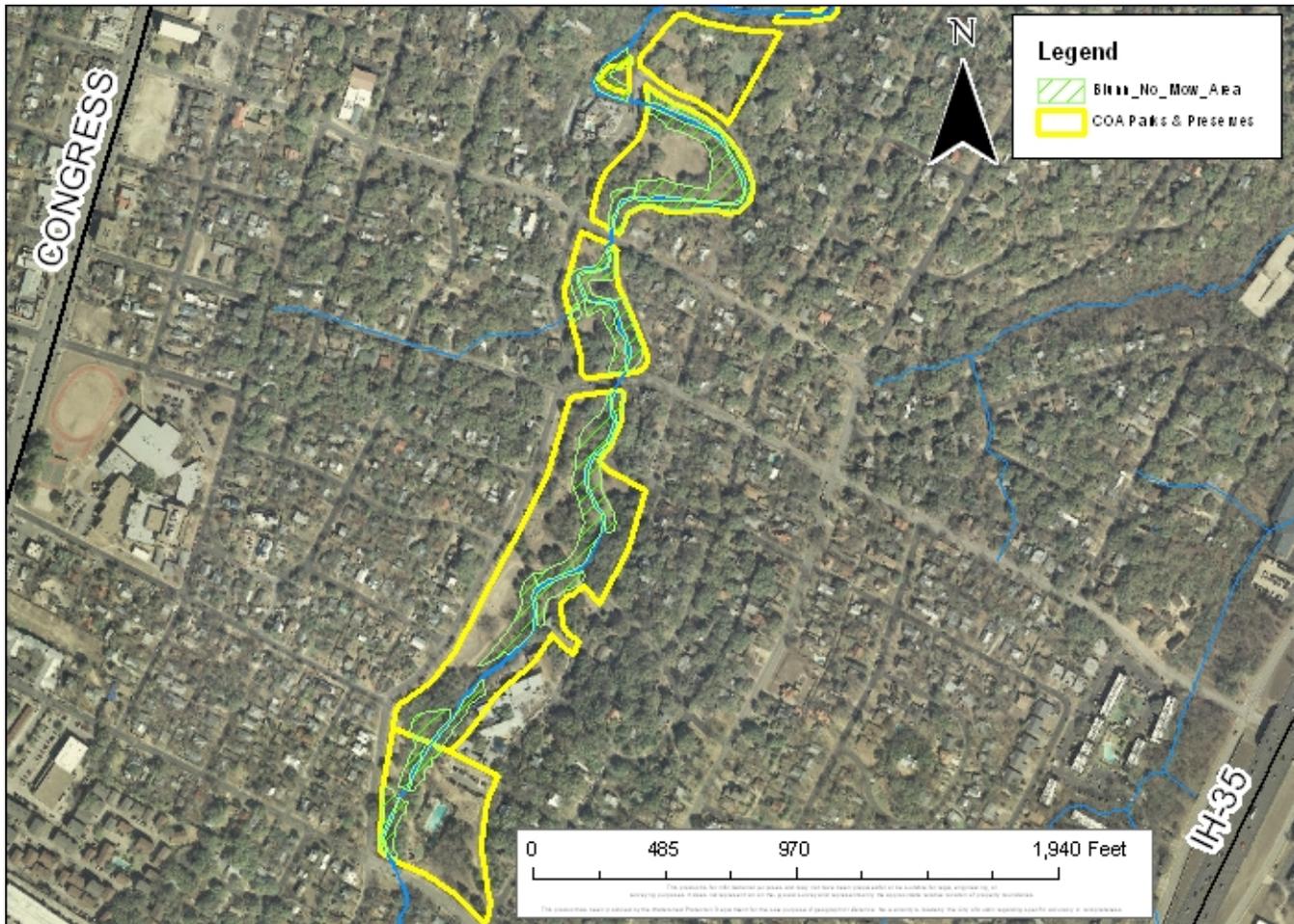


Location: Blunn Creek Greenbelt



Background: A direct tributary of the Colorado River (entering into the river at Lady Bird Lake) with fairly perennial baseflow runs through this neighborhood greenbelt. Routine mowing occurs close to the creek in some locations, but many areas are in a natural state, with stands of mature sycamore and live oak trees. Through a joint effort between Parks and Recreation (PARD) and Watershed Protection (WPD), the Blunn Creek greenbelt has been selected as one of several creeks that are in need of riparian (streamside) restoration. Increasing the vegetation cover by establishing a healthy riparian buffer, with a mix of grasses, forbs/wildflowers, shrubs and trees, will provide a long list of water quality, erosion and flood benefits.

Management: The following management strategies will be adopted to reestablish healthy, riparian vegetation in the Blunn Creek Greenbelt:

- Establish no mowing zones in the stream channel and along the banks with a 20-100 ft riparian buffer, where feasible, including access areas to cross and/or access the creek.
- Allow for passive plant growth in entire restored area, with additional active plantings (native grass, wildflowers, and woody species) following site assessment in degraded areas where necessary.
- Periodic trash clean-up (collaboration between PARD, WPD and stakeholder groups).
- Periodic “weed/invasive management” to address nuisance problems that may arise.
- Educational and demarcation signage where appropriate and/or requested.

City of Austin Riparian Restoration



Current mowed status



Improved condition (Shipe)

How: This will primarily be a passive approach, with certain levels of necessary maintenance over the next 5 years (see management above). The goal is to establish a woody canopy with a more open understory within the corridor, with a diverse and dense ground cover (providing an open view corridor between 3' and 7'). However, this condition will require approximately 5 years, possibly 10, to develop. There will be a transition period during which the vegetation will be taller and less managed than before.

When: We would like to initiate this process on It's My Park Day, the beginning of the 2012 growing season, with a park clean up, and outreach through education and creek walks, depending on stakeholder resources and interest. Signage will be posted as soon as vegetation is established to educate the public and direct any inquires to the appropriate personnel.

Monitoring: Following the establishment of no mow zones, WPD will continue to monitor and implement a range of adaptive riparian restoration practices in these parks over the next 3-5 years as they transition into more mature communities. Routine monitoring will consist of a Riparian Functional Assessment (RFA) designed by WPD. The RFA evaluates water quality, soil health, bank stability, and vegetation composition and structure in order to quantify improvements in ecological function over time. Contact WPD for more detailed information regarding the RFA methodology. In addition to these riparian measures, we would love to integrate volunteer-led monitoring of bird and plant communities and any other ecological measures stakeholders are interested in.

Questions: Please contact Todd Jackson, WPD, 974-2206, todd.jackson@austintexas.gov

Website: <http://www.cityofaustin.org/watershed/creekside.htm>

Additional Resources:

- COA Riparian Website <http://www.cityofaustin.org/watershed/creekside.htm>
- Texas Riparian Association <http://www.texasriparian.org/>
- Improving Urban Streams <http://www.msdlouky.org/insidemsd/wqstreams.htm>
- SR-12-01 Functional approach to riparian restoration (City of Austin short report)
- SR-11-13 Riparian Reference Condition (City of Austin short report)