1792A
EA-01-18
Yurt Construction
Danebo Demo Area

June 12, 2001

Concerned Citizen,

The West Eugene Wetlands of the Eugene District Bureau of Land Management has completed the Environmental Assessment for a proposal to construct a yurt on the grounds of the Danebo Demonstration Area located at 751 S. Danebo in Eugene. The yurt would serve as a field classroom that would shelter educational sessions on site at the wetlands.

You have expressed an interest in receiving copies of Environmental Assessments for district projects. Enclosed is a copy of the Environmental Assessment for your review and any comments. Public notice of this action will be published in the Eugene Register Guard on June 13, 2001. The public comment period will end on June 28, 2001. If you have any questions concerning this proposal, please feel free to call Jean Battle at (541)683-6993.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the district office, 2890 Chad Drive, Eugene, Oregon during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the EA or other related documents. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Sincerely,

Joe Williams, Acting
Coast Range Field Manager

Enclosure

1792A
EA-01-18

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE

YURT CONSTRUCTION AT THE WEST EUGENE WETLANDS
DANEBO DEMONSTRATION AREA

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT No. 1792A-EA-01-18

I. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The West Eugene Wetlands (WEW) Project is a cooperative venture by the Eugene District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), to protect and restore historic wetland ecosystems in the southern Willamette Valley of Oregon. This unique project involves federal, state, and local agencies and organizations in partnership to manage lands and resources in an urban area for multiple public benefits. Major partners in the WEW Project include the BLM, the City of Eugene, The Nature Conservancy, The Oregon Youth Conservation Corps, and The Army Corps of Engineers. The BLM became an active partner in 1993 when they adopted the WEW Plan (WEWP) (City of Eugene,1992). The BLM has been involved with its partners in land acquisition, restoration, enhancement, and maintenance of approximately 2,200 acres in the west Eugene area.

A variety of management activities for the WEW project area are recommended in the WEWP. In 1994, the BLM began limited management actions on various properties that included planning, research on special status species, prescribed burning, environmental education, trash removal, and noxious weed control. Public use of federal land within the WEW Project is currently allowed under the Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR 8365.1-6).

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the environmental education component of the WEWP (1992). The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of a temporary structure that would be constructed within the Danebo Demonstration Area, located in Township 17S., Range 4W., Section 33 (Appendix A.)

Interest in the WEW Project from schools and special user groups has grown along with the project itself. Cooperative programs with the Rachel Carson School of Churchill High School, as well as regular environmental education programs by elementary schools in Bethel and the 4-J School Districts, continue to expand yearly. The Wetlands field office, located at 751 S. Danebo, is not capable of accommodating these groups due to its limited size and its use by the on-site full-time staff during business hours. Often these programs are held during inclement weather, and there is a need to provide shelter from the elements so that

the lecture portion of the program can be held without interruption or discomfort of the groups. The structure would serve as a field classroom that would shelter school groups and others during educational sessions on site at the wetlands, until a permanent environmental education facility is constructed. This permanent structure would receive a full environmental review, including a public comment period, at a future date during its planning stage. The utility of this yurt is not dependent upon later construction of the environmental education center.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action (Alternative A)

The Proposed Action is the construction of a yurt (a circular structure with a domed roof) on the grounds of the South Danebo Demonstration Area (Appendix B.) The yurt is a 30' enclosed canvas structure, with ten windows, two doors, and a skylight. It would rest on a 30' circular wooden support platform placed on cement pier blocks, approximately 2' above the ground's surface; minor earthmoving or filling would occur only to place the pier blocks (Appendix C,D.) There would be a front and back deck, each measuring approximately 5'x5', accessible by two wooden steps, and a ramp measuring approximately 15'x3' that conforms to standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The yurt would have no plumbing or electrical hookups; all class and group activities are expected to be held during daylight hours, and natural light would be sufficient. 1-2 handicap-accessible portable toilets would be installed in the existing BLM Wetlands field office parking lot to serve users of this facility.

The yurt would be located 100' east of the existing barn, and approximately 50' north of an existing access trail in a disturbed upland area. A small gravel spur trail leading to the yurt would be constructed in the upland and measure approximately 50'x6'. Construction would occur between July-November of 2001, and would last a total of approximately two weeks.

B. No Action Alternative (Alternative B)

Under this alternative, no temporary structure would be constructed. School groups and special educational tours would continue to occur in the wetlands, but pre- and post- tour presentations and lectures would continue to be affected by inclement weather.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Existing Conditions

The three-acre site consists of the BLM Wetlands field office, a gravel parking area, a fruit orchard and an equipment barn, and the adjacent grounds. The grounds are dominated by mowed and unmowed grassy areas, and a variety of large trees and shrubs, both native and introduced. This site is proposed as the eventual location of an environmental education center. Historically the site was used for agricultural purposes, and as a residence. Both the upland and wetland portions of the site are disturbed as a result of prior uses. The wetland on the site was previously impacted by the channelization of Amazon Creek, and was later restored in

1997. A wetland delineation was conducted in 1996 (Salix and Associates), and existing conditions for the mitigated wetland area at this site are described in detail in the West Eugene Wetland 1998 Annual Report. One plant species of interest at the site is the annual, Howell's montia (*Montia howellii),* which grows in the gravel parking lot of the field office. Between 150 and 200 plants were located in a 1997 survey. This species has no state or federal protected status.

The proposed construction site is currently part of the unmowed upland acreage southeast of the equipment barn. The site is dominated by two non-native grasses, shortawn foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis)*, and a non-native fescue (*Festuca arundinaceae*), and has not been a part of the restoration efforts described in Environmental Assessment ORO90-95-13. South of the construction site is the Fern Ridge Bicycle Path, wetland prairie restoration areas, and the Amazon Channel. West of the site is the Danebo wetland prairie restoration area.

B. Impacts of the Proposed Action

Critical Elements: The following resources are either not present or would not be affected by any of the alternatives: regional or local air quality, water quality (ground and surface water), prime or unique farmlands, cultural resources, floodplains, areas of critical environmental concern, environmental justice, native American religious concerns, threatened or endangered species, invasive nonnative species, hazardous or solid waste, wild and scenic rivers or wilderness.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Resources: There are no irreversible or irretrievable resources affected by the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Effects: This proposal is not expected to result in negative cumulative effects. There may be some minor compaction of soils and disturbance in the area surrounding the yurt by the users, but this is in an already disturbed area, and most activity would be restricted to foot paths and inside the yurt itself.

Vegetation: The vegetation underneath the structure and immediately adjacent to it would be impacted during construction and as a result of use of the structure under the Proposed Action Alternative. The vegetation present at the site is a mixture of aggressive non-native grass species that are considered undesirable for restoration efforts. Reducing the area in which these species are present may provide a minor benefit to the nearby restored areas by reducing the non-native seed source. Eventually, however, some shade-tolerant species would likely replace these species under the yurt. It is anticipated that these would be ruderal species (species which colonize disturbed sites.) The nearest restored area is a minimum of 50' east of the project area. Vegetation in the nearby restored areas is not expected to be impacted because groups would be supervised and required to stay on boardwalks and paths, except under limited conditions, as they currently are now.

Wildlife: The site is currently occupied by terrestrial vertebrates and invertebrates common in grassland areas near an urban/rural interface. Some of the vertebrates in the area include the common garter snake, and small mammals such as voles, shrews, skunks, raccoons, and opossums. Bird species in the immediate area include resident species such as gray jays, towhees, starlings, robins. The Proposed Action would cause minor

impacts during construction of the structure and its use. Noise from construction (hammering, sawing, etc.) may temporarily disrupt some diurnal species and cause them to seek cover. Use of the yurt may disrupt any individuals that nest or feed in the area immediately surrounding the yurt. This disruption would be minor (voices of children) and temporary (mainly during ingress and egress of the yurt.) Activity would be restricted mostly to paths and the yurt itself. No trees or other woody structure would be removed during construction. The yurt itself may actually provide some shelter and cover, especially for invertebrates, reptiles, and small mammals, as it would have a 1-2' clearance from the ground. Species currently present in the project area may temporarily relocate during construction, but are expected to return to the site once the construction is complete.

Soils: The Proposed Action would cause some minor compaction during construction and use of the yurt. There would be no major grading or earthmoving, only minor soils disturbance for placement of the pier blocks (done with hand tools), and only minor gravel fill for the construction of spur trail leading to the yurt. This area has historically been plowed and farmed, resulting in historical disturbance of the soil. No erosion is expected to occur.

Wetlands: The Proposed Action would not impact wetlands. The site is an upland area.

Hydrology: The Proposed Action would not impact hydrology. The site is not adjacent to any water body. The nearest water body is the Amazon Channel, which is approximately 250' to the south of the project area. Runoff quantities or quality from the site should not change, as the structure would rest above the ground, allowing for surface movement of water during storm events to continue unaffected. The spur trail would be constructed of gravel, which would allow for percolation of rain water, and should not increase runoff rates.

Water Quality: The Proposed Action would not impact water quality. The structure would not have plumbing. 1-2 portable toilets would be located in the existing parking lot of the Wetlands office, and not near any surface water bodies. These structures would be serviced regularly under a private contract.

Hazardous Materials: The materials used for the Proposed Action would be delivered to the parking lot of the BLM Wetlands field office by truck, and there is a minor chance that diesel fuel or gasoline could accidentally spill during delivery. The materials would be moved by hand or small tractor from the parking lot to the construction site. Construction would not require heavy equipment. Neither the parking lot nor the site is adjacent to any water body or storm drain, and any spill could be contained in the uplands. Spill containment kits would be available in the event of a spill, and removal, transport, and disposal would be done in accordance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality laws and regulations.

Aesthetics: The structure would be tan-colored, and located near the existing equipment barn and office. It may cause a minor negative or positive impact on visual aesthetics, depending on personal preference.

C. Impacts of Alternative B (No Action Alternative).

No impacts to current conditions are expected.

IV. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Specialists contacted for review, consultation and coordination included:

Mark Stephen	BLM Forest Ecologist (NEPA Review)
Pat Johnston	BLM Wetlands Program Project Manager
Melanie Marshall	BLM Botanist
Jean Battle	BLM Natural Resource Specialist (Wildlife and Wetlands)
Karin Baitis	BLM Soil Scientist
Graham Armstrong	BLM Hydrologist
Gary Hoppe	BLM Planning & Environmental Coordination

Attachments:

Appendix A- Vicinity Map

Appendix B- Site Map

Appendix C- Diagram of Yurt Platform

Appendix D- Typical Side View of Yurt and Support Platform

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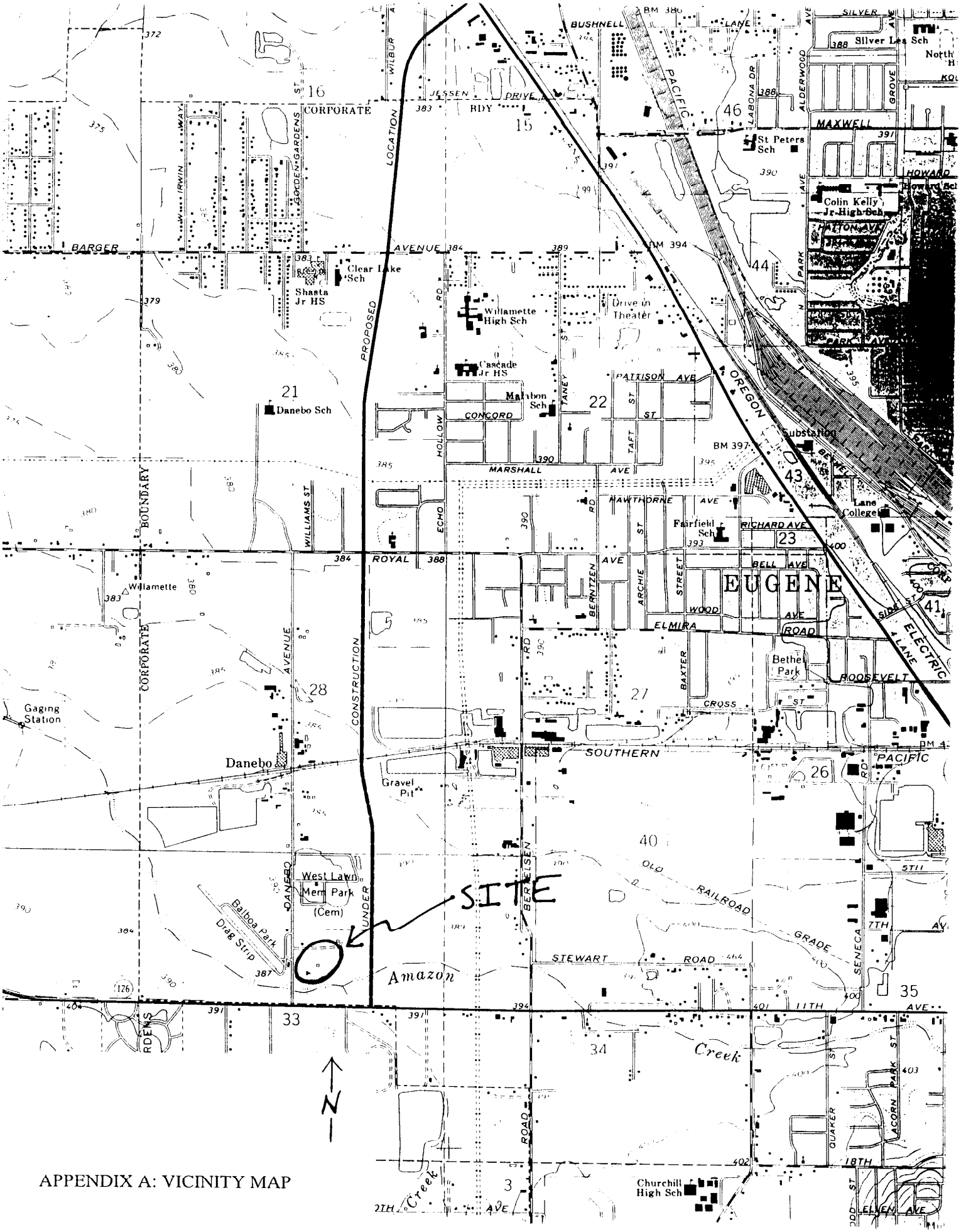
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE

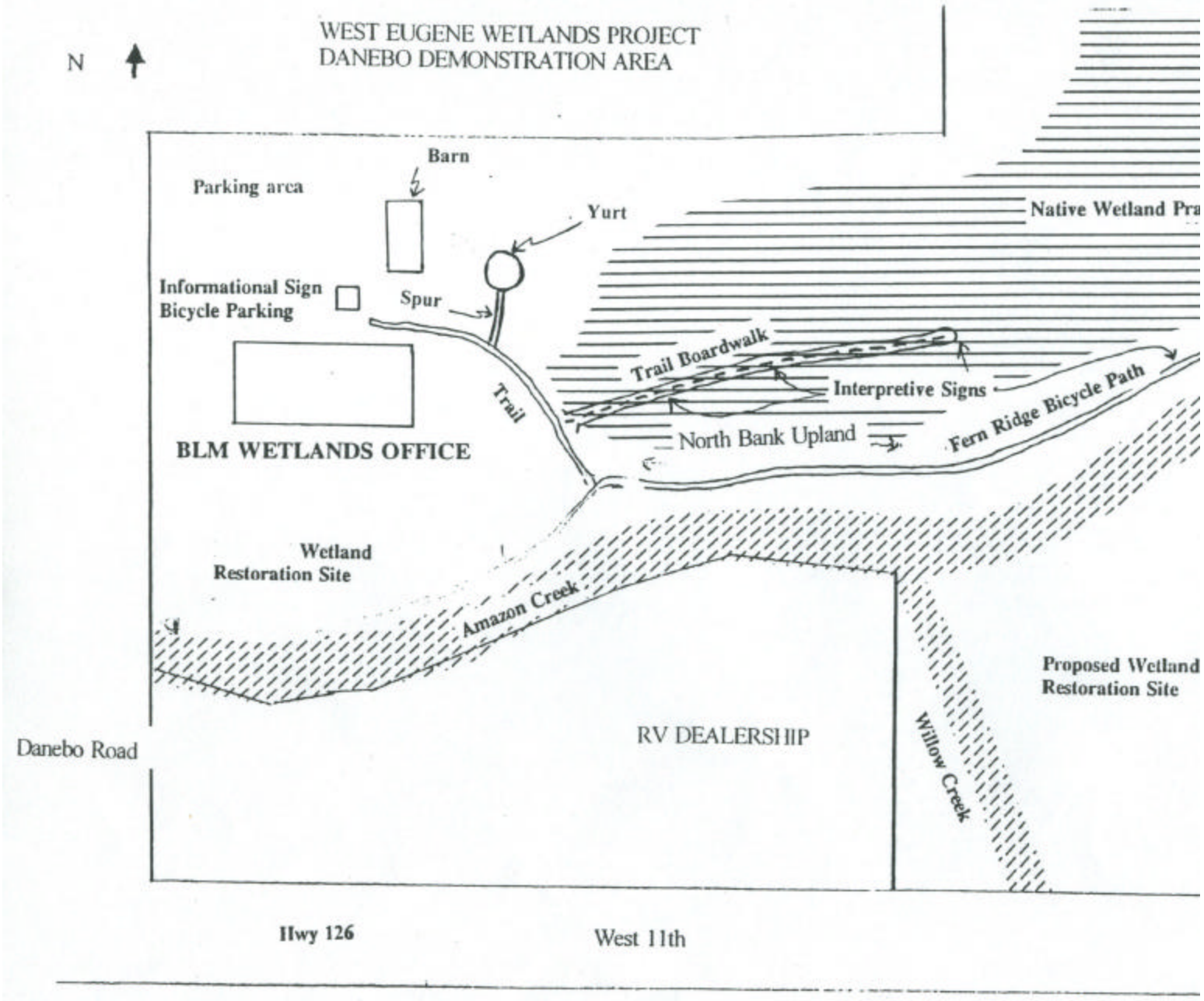
Preliminary
Finding of No Significant Impact
for
Yurt Construction at the West Eugene Wetlands Danebo Demonstration Area

Determination:

On the basis of the information contained in the Environmental Assessment, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that implementation of the proposed action or alternatives will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the *Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan, June 1995 (Eugene District ROD/RMP)* and is consistent with the West Eugene Wetlands Plan, City of Eugene, 1992 with which this EA is in conformance, and does not, in and of itself, constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.



APPENDIX A: VICINITY MAP


WEST EUGENE WETLANDS PROJECT
DANEBO DEMONSTRATION AREA
N
Barn
Parking area
Yurt
Native Wetland Pra
Informational Sign
Bicycle Parking
Spur
Trail Boardwalk
Interpretive Signs
Fern Ridge Bicycle Path
Trail
North Bank Upland
BLM WETLANDS OFFICE
Wetland
Restoration Site
Amazon Creek
Proposed Wetland
Restoration Site
Danebo Road
RV DEALERSHIP
Willow Creek
Hwy 126
West 11th

AP

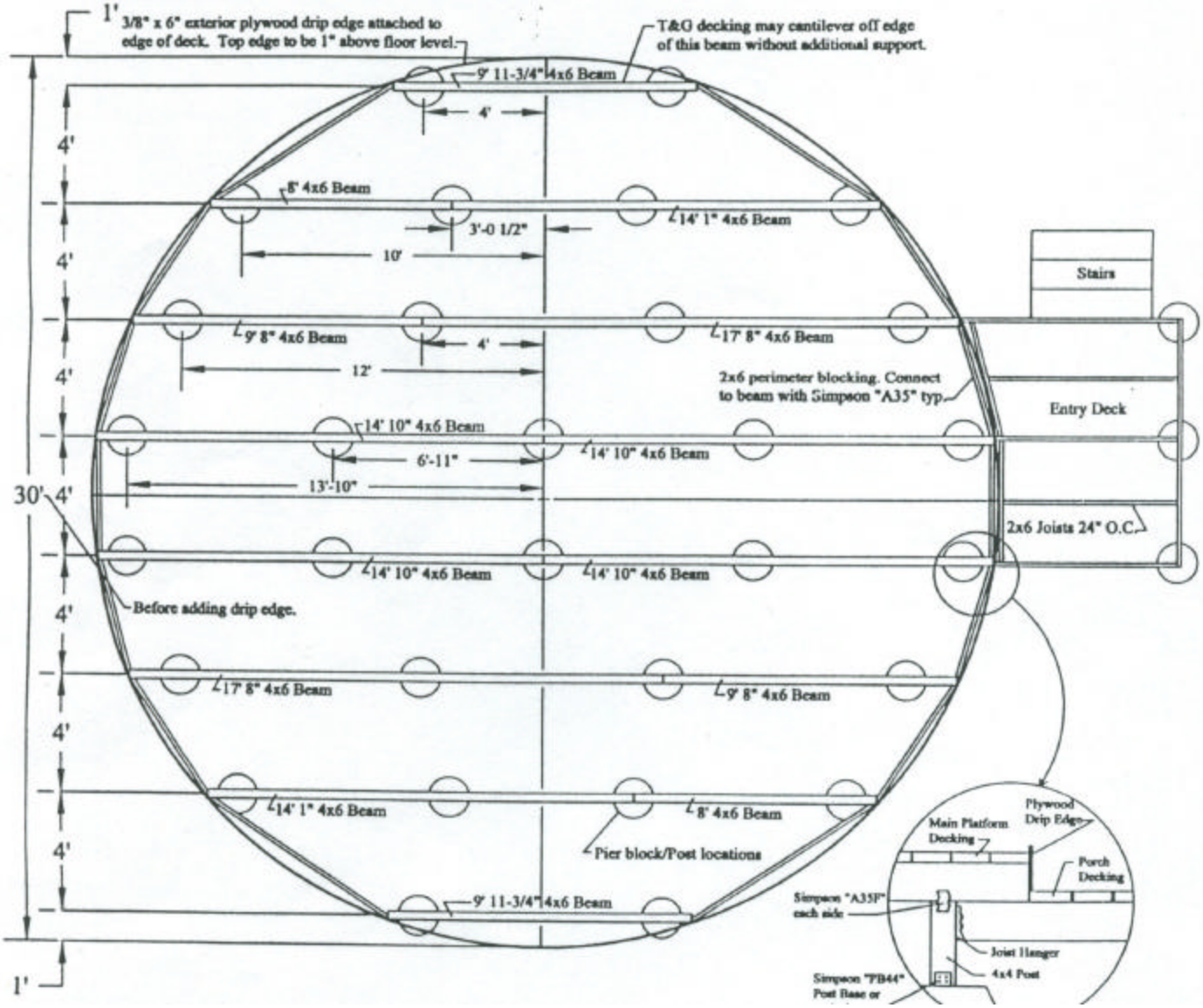
(N

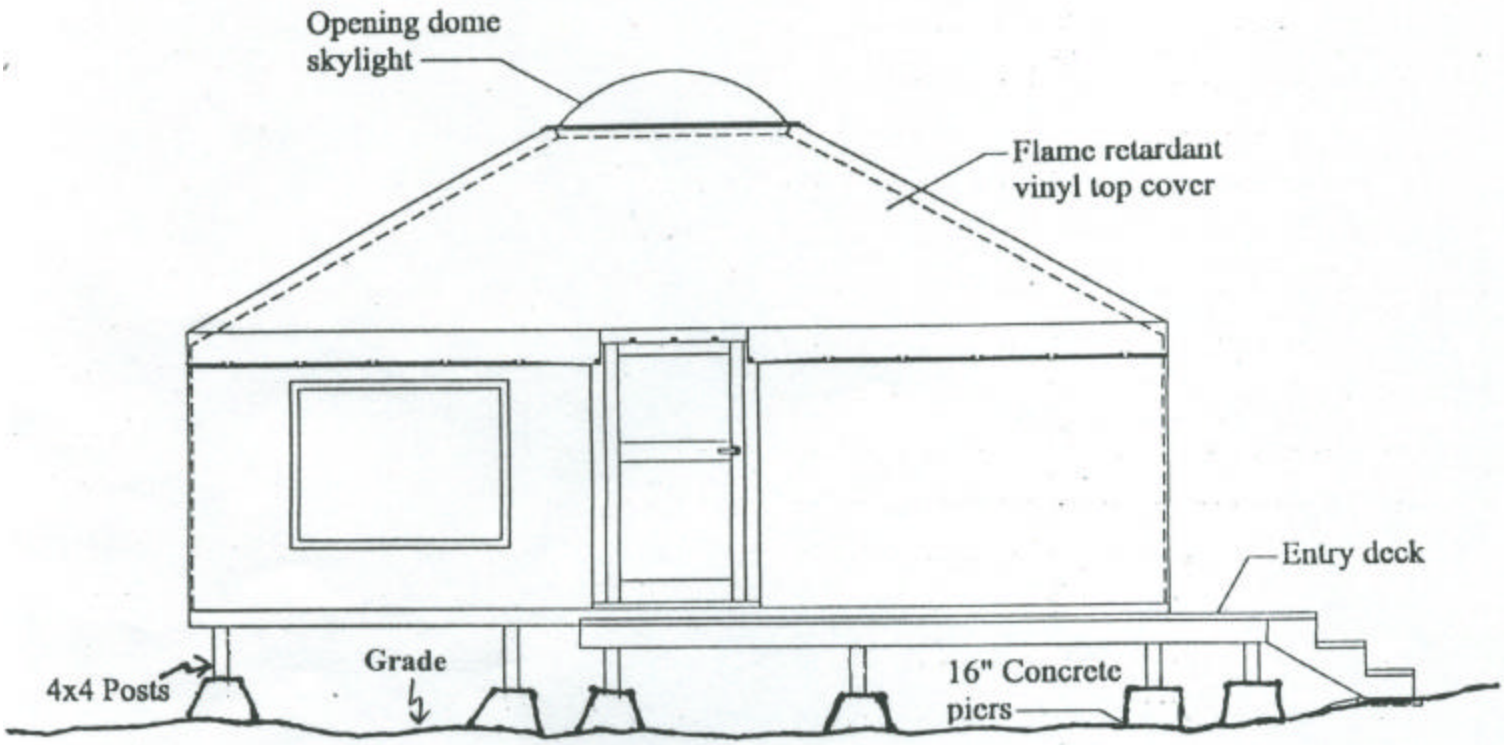
pacific yurts Inc.

Recreational Living Structures

(541) 942-9435

By adding 2' to each 4x6 beam dimension the beam ends can be cut after the deck material is cut in a circle. This will allow a better connection for the drip edge sections which ideally should meet over the beam ends. **The deck diameter dimension shown on the diagram does not include the plywood drip edge.**




Opening dome
skylight
Flame retardant
vinyl top cover
Entry deck
4x4 Posts
Grade
16" Concrete
piers