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S. JATE COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: 3/25/92

FURTHER: Finance

DATE TURNED INTO OFFICE: May 6, 1992

Resources Committee considered CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 508 (FINANCE)

"An Act relating to the establishment of the Business Park Wetlands Special Management Area; and providing for an effective date."

and recommends:

[] replace with _____ CS _____ ()

or [] adopt previous _____ CS _____ ()

[] attaches amendment(s)

[] same title
[] new title
[] technical title change (HB only)

[] adopts _____ Letter of Intent

[] further referral to the _____

[] do pass

[] do not pass

[] no recommendation

[X] individual recommendations

NEW FISCAL NOTES: Dept/Date

[] zero fiscal notes _____

[] fiscal notes _____

[] appropriation--no fiscal note

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTES: Dept/Date

[X] zero fiscal notes ADF+6 2/25/92

DNR 2/26/92

[] fiscal notes _____

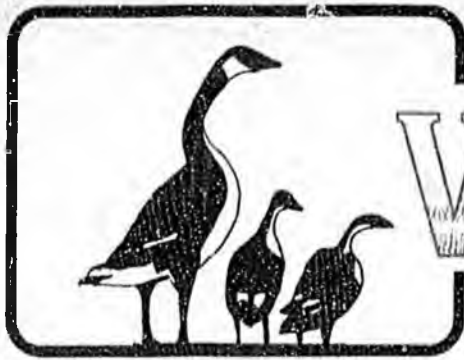
DO PASS:

[Handwritten signatures]

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

[Handwritten signature: Fred V. Shustoff Do Not Pass]

[Handwritten signature: Floyd Jones] (A. K. A.) Do Not Pass
Chair, Signature and Recommendation



Business Park Wetlands Coalition

The Business Park Wetlands is a 28-acre open space area in Anchorage's highly-developed south midtown. Though located in close proximity to several major thoroughfares, it provides a quiet and surprisingly remote oasis for eating lunch, viewing the abundant waterbird population, or just watching the change of seasons. On many a nice day, area residents or workers can be found walking, jogging, or sitting along the wetlands' perimeter. Greater Anchorage area residents also use the area, especially for viewing wildlife.

THE BUSINESS PARK WETLANDS: AN IMPORTANT NEIGHBORHOOD RESOURCE

What is unusual about the Business Park Wetlands?

It is extremely high in wildlife activity for its relatively small size. In late spring 1989, upwards of 20 pairs of Canada Geese nested in the Business Park Wetlands. The large number of nests is three to four times higher per unit area than other comparable Anchorage Wetlands. In early spring, it is common to see more than 100 ducks and geese at a time on the meltwater ponds. The area is also home to one of four significant Mew Gull colonies remaining in the Anchorage Bowl, as well as many Mallards, Northern Shovelers, American Wigeons, Plovers, Dowitchers, and other birds. Over thirty avian species have been observed in the wetlands during the summer months. Although it is not a developed or even designated park area, the Business Park Wetlands provides an important and well-used open space for neighborhood residents and those working in the adjacent business and industrial areas. Greater Anchorage area residents bring their families to observe the geese and young goslings. On every summer day, many people walk or drive to the west end of West 48th Avenue to eat lunch. Others jog or fitness walk past the wetlands, using the convenient one-mile loop of adjacent public roads. This makes for an interesting outing, as it may involve dodging the harassment of concerned mother gulls and other protective birds.



Photo: Elise Huggins

Anchorage Residents and Area Workers Protect the Business Park Wetlands

intrusive uses and users
out of the wetlands.

Nearly fifty stray cats and
dogs were live-trapped over a

three-year period and sent to the shelter
where they could find caring owners.
"Stray" humans whose actions seem out of
character with the more recreational and
educational atmosphere that surrounds the
wetlands are quickly asked to go elsewhere
by the nearby business workers and resi-
dents. Because of this overwhelming and
active concern for the Business Park Wet-
lands, a petition drive was mounted six
years ago to purchase the area for a park.



Photo: Marideth Sandler

The Business Park Wetlands is owned by four separate private owners. It is largely zoned for high-density residential use and, because the Municipality of Anchorage classified it as developable wetlands in 1982, it can be filled and destroyed with no public input and little regulatory agency review. Despite the threat to its continued existence, the Business Park Wetlands has been adopted by the public. For years, adjacent residents and businesses have kept

Although the drive stopped short of success at that time, the effort has been revived. In 1988, businesses, area residents, environmental and neighborhood groups, and governmental agencies joined together as the BUSINESS PARK WETLANDS COALITION. The Coalition is supported by nearly 1000 Anchorage residents, as evidenced by the success of a recent petition drive. When, in early spring 1989, one of the property owners began filling a portion of the wetlands, the immediate vocal support for this publicly cherished resource resulted in a short-term halt of fill activity.

The goal of the Business Park Wetlands Coalition is to purchase this important area of shrinking open space so that it is retained, enhanced, and managed for recreational, educational, and environmental purposes. The value of this effort is two-fold: the Business Park Wetlands already serves as an important open space and recreational neighborhood improvement for residents and workers alike. Creative design could easily multiply its present benefits. Because of its currently high productivity as a wetlands habitat, the Business Park Wetlands also holds exciting potential for increased wildlife use, if enhanced and managed properly.



Photo: Cami Dalton

The Coalition has made strong progress toward meeting

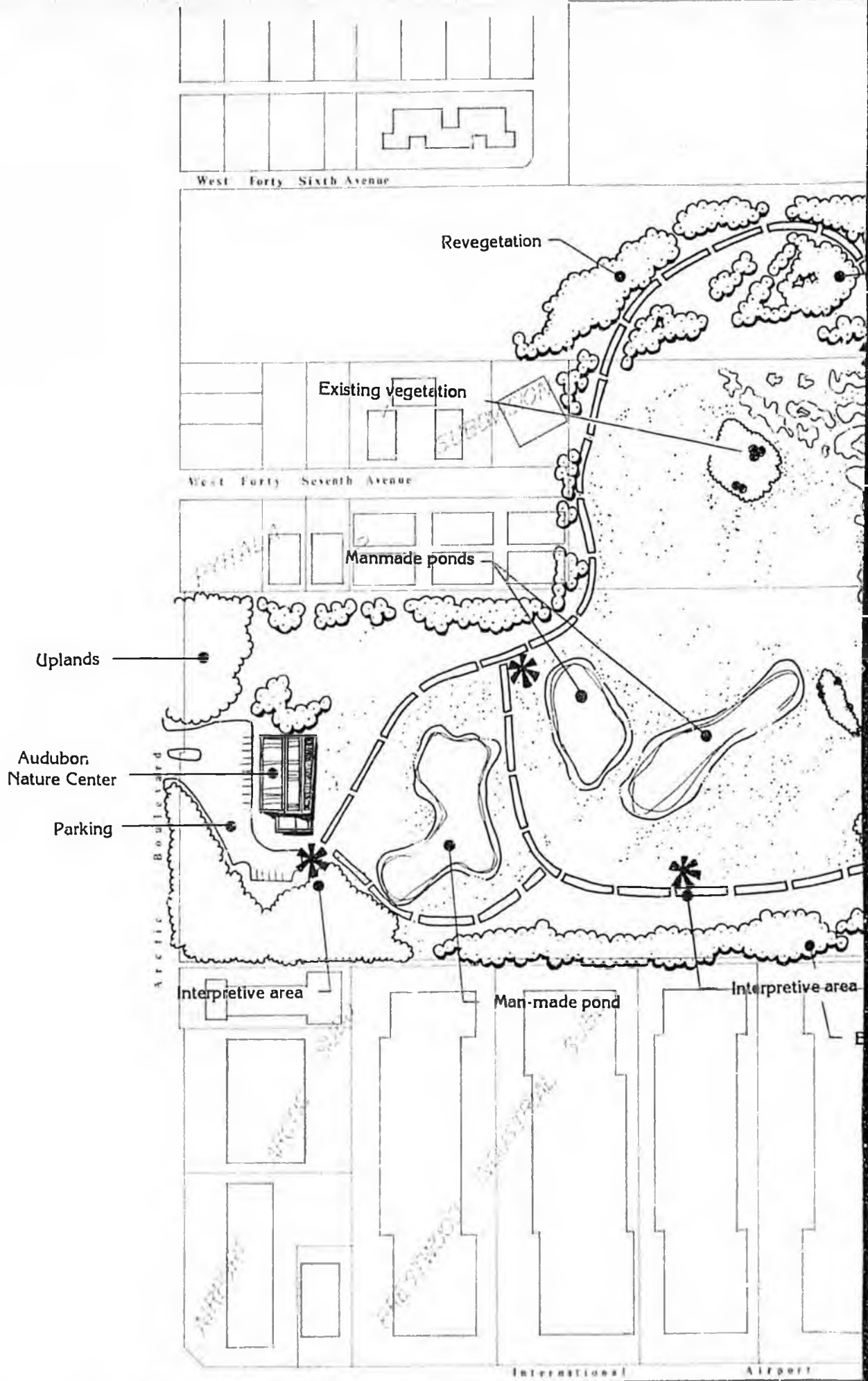
its goal. The wildlife and other wetlands resources of the area have been, and are continuing to be, documented and photographed. The actions of neighboring residents and businesses to manage these resources, both in the past and at present, are also being recorded. Discussions with area property owners have been underway for several months to ascertain purchase and trade options. Two of these options are in active negotiation with the respective parties. One involves a land trade for a significant portion of the wetlands and the second would result in acquisition of an immediately adjacent area. Together, these transactions will result in preservation of nearly half of the Business Park Wetlands. Fundraising for the project has begun, with a substantial amount already raised from private contributions. The Coalition has an overall fundraising strategy and has developed a concept plan for the area. This includes enhancement of the area to create more open ponds for waterbird rearing and to filter the drainage water entering the wet-

The Future Looks Bright for the Business Park Wetlands

lands from adjacent uses. Other improvements

would facilitate use of the Business Park Wetlands for continued wildlife viewing, as well as jogging and fitness walking.

New and exciting activities could also find a home in the Business Park Wetlands. The uplands portion of the open space area lends itself well as the site for an Audubon-sponsored Urban Nature Center, that would house displays on wetlands habitat and wildlife. Because of the unique oasis feeling of this easily accessible setting, the nature center could be widely used by school and college classes (in addition to other youth and adult groups) to learn about natural wetlands habitat still remaining within Anchorage's urban scene. The planned trail and boardwalk loops are designed with areas for wildlife viewing, fitness stations, outdoor educational displays, and benches. Location of a Nature Center on-site would provide a rare opportunity to combine and bring into focus the Business Park Wetlands' environmental, recreational, educational, and open space potentials.





Business Park
Wetlands
Coalition

Conceptual Plan

Revegetation

Interpretive area

Existing open water

Parking

Interpretive/viewing deck

West Forty Eighth Avenue

Existing vegetation

Combination boardwalk and trail

ation

potential activities

- *Jogging, Running, Walking*
1/4 mile & 3/4 mile loop trail
- *Interpretive Areas (*)*
- *Audubon Nature Center*
- *Wildlife Viewing*
- *Relaxing/Lunch Stop*
- *Habitat Enhancement*



Plan designed by Earthscape

Business Park Wetlands A Threatened Natural Area

This isolated, partially disturbed bog is a remnant piece of what was, until the late-1970s, a vast section of interwoven ponds and wetlands habitats known as patterned ground that stretched from near Potter Drive north to the old Fish Creek basin near West 36th Avenue. The original wetlands area contained numerous large ponds and a highly diverse and productive mix of habitats. This area was arguably the most extensive and complex patterned ground bog in the Anchorage Bowl.



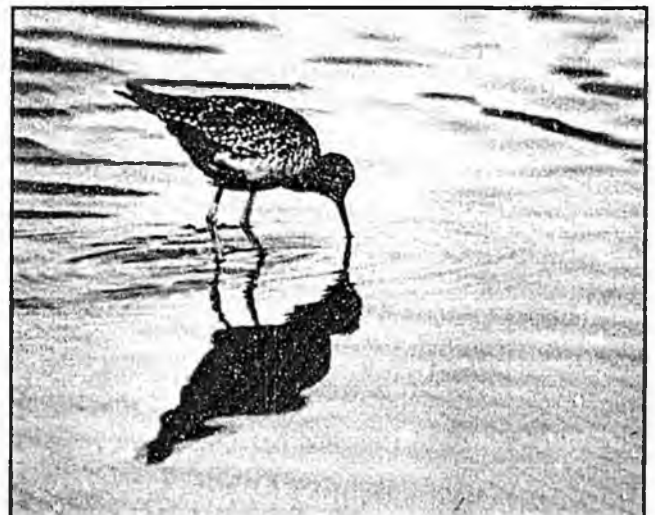
The area supports three wetlands plant communities and numerous ponds that contain open water all summer. A small section of mixed birch and cottonwood forest



stands at the area's southwest corner. Most of the wetlands plant communities contain ericaceous species like sweetgale, dwarf birch, leatherleaf, and Labrador tea. Sedges, grasses, rushes, and various mosses are common understory species here. Several wetlands dependent plants survive in the Business Park Wetlands, many of which have become rare or threatened in the Anchorage area from continued wetlands filling.



Of major concern and influence to this site is the local hydrology, which has been altered by adjacent development. Groundwater input to this system is necessary to maintain the wetlands' habitats and open water in critical dry periods. Any additional change or loss of the area's groundwater will further degrade the wetlands' functions and viability.



Photos provided by John Hyde and Dan Rosenberg, ADF&G

**SUPPORTERS OF
THE BUSINESS PARK WETLANDS
include:**

**Anchorage Audubon Society
Alaska Center for the Environment
Spenard Community Council
Anchorage Waterways Council
Nature Conservancy
American Society of Landscape Architects - Anchorage Chapter
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Municipality Of Anchorage
- Urban Design Commission
- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Department of Economic Development and Planning
TRF Management
Ott Engineering, Inc.
The Virginia Computer Company
Jim Thiele, Certified Financial Planner
Ashburn and Mason
Earthscape
TimeFrame
AT Publishing
Moore Business Forms**

Project Aerial Photos contributed by Aero Map, U.S.

Nearly one thousand people agree with the many actively-involved businesses, organizations, agencies, and neighborhood residents that the Business Park Wetlands must be preserved now. Join us in our efforts! Use the enclosed envelope to help us acquire as many square feet of wetlands as you wish. Or, you're invited to "purchase" a goose nest to insure that this year's newborn Canada Geese will have a home to which they can return next spring. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law because of the Coalition's affiliation with the Anchorage Audubon Society, a local non-profit organization. If you'd also like to become more involved, there's space for you to let us know that too. Thank you for your support!

For more information, contact:

**Marideth Sandler (562-2514-days or 346-2535-evenings)
or Robert Senner (258-4054-days or 345-5891-evenings.)**

BIRDS YOU ARE LIKELY TO SEE IN THE BUSINESS PARK WETLANDS

Canada Goose*
Mallard*
Green-winged Teal
American Wigeon*
Northern Pintail
Northern Shoveler*
Greater Scaup
Semipalmated Plover
Killdeer
Lesser Golden-Plover
Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs*
Spotted Sandpiper
Short-billed Dowitcher*
Common Snipe
Least Sandpiper*

Ring-billed Gull
Mew Gull*
Herring Gull*
Glaucous-winged Gull
Bald Eagle
Tree Swallow
Violet-green Swallow
Common Raven
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
American Robin*
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Savannah Sparrow*
White-crowned Sparrow*
Lincoln's Sparrow
Pine Siskin
Common Redpoll

* Known or probable breeder.

List provided by the Anchorage Audubon Society



Business Park
Wetlands
Coalition

4446 Business Park Boulevard Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage

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Anchorage, Alaska
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