

Soundview and NorthPoint Turn Environmental Challenges into Industrial Opportunity

CHALLENGE

NorthPoint Development aimed to develop a 350-acre site with over 10 acres of wetlands and streams. Complex geometry, multiple landowners, and degraded habitats led NorthPoint to proactively collaborate with local tribes and navigate a variety of regulatory requirements.

SOLUTION

Soundview diligently assessed the property and worked with local stakeholders and regulatory bodies to develop a comprehensive strategy to restore Edgecomb Creek, relocating wetlands and streams while ensuring industrial development approval.

RESULT

Soundview secured environmental permits in record time, fostered enduring relationships with local Native American tribes and state and federal stakeholders, restored two miles of stream habitat, and enabled the construction of nine industrial buildings.

NorthPoint Development, a Missouri-based real estate development company known for tackling large-scale industrial and multi-family projects across the U.S., set its sights on a unique 350-acre site in the greater Seattle area for the construction of an industrial distribution and manufacturing park. This particular property had significant development potential due to its location and size, but after over a century of agricultural use, the land and aquatic resources were left heavily damaged.

Multiple developers had tried and failed to transform the site, including with proposals for a NASCAR track, but had been unable to overcome the environmental obstacles. Undeterred by the site's history and complex conditions, the leaders at NorthPoint turned to Soundview Consultants, a Trinity Consultants team, to help them navigate the complex web of environmental concerns, permitting requirements, and stakeholder negotiations, all while steadily driving progress toward the company's ambitious industrial development goals.

CHALLENGE

NorthPoint Development set out to develop a 350-acre area that included over 40 wetlands, multiple streams, and a high regional water table. The property had been used for agricultural purposes for over a century and included many separately owned parcels and a BNSF rail line along one side. Its proximity to Arlington Airport also meant strict FAA regulations near the flight path, further complicating development.

The land had been heavily altered over the years, with water sources like Edgecomb Creek drained and ditched for irrigation, creating poor water quality and highly degraded habitats across the site. The sheer scope of the project, combined with the need for extensive collaboration with the local Tulalip and Stillaguamish tribes and various local, state, and federal regulatory agencies, meant NorthPoint would need a partner with deep expertise in both environmental science and regulatory navigation to help bring this project to fruition.

SOLUTION

NorthPoint quickly sought the guidance of Soundview Consultants, a Trinity Consultants team. NorthPoint had previously worked with Soundview on other regional projects and trusted the company to efficiently balance industrial development with environmental restoration.

Soundview dove right in, spending significant time in field assessing the site's environmental features, including wetlands, streams, associated buffers, and protected species. The team's initial reconnaissance provided NorthPoint with critical information about the scope of the project and the potential costs, allowing the company's leaders to move forward with confidence as they pursued the various land acquisitions.

Soundview's clear communication and persistent, respectful approach to stakeholder engagement allowed the team to keep the permitting process on track, even as they navigated complex regulatory processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Soundview facilitated open communication with the Tulalip and Stillaguamish tribes and attended a tribal-hosted meeting between NorthPoint and Tulalip tribal council leaders, who spoke about the importance of salmon to their community and ultimately granted their support for the project. Soundview also coordinated with the FAA, bringing in its own FAA-certified drone pilot to assist in the design of the restricted area near the Arlington Airport.

Even before permits were in hand, Soundview's team began the formal wetland and stream delineation work. The team devised a plan to relocate Edgecomb Creek and designed a 300-foot-wide mitigation corridor, complete with meandering stream channels, dendritic side channels, and new habitat for fish and wildlife. Soundview uncovered maps from the 1890s, revealing the property's original alluvial fan and stream and wetland complex. These insights were pivotal in informing the restoration design and aligning it with historical conditions to help gain regulatory buy-in.

RESULT

Thanks to Soundview's thorough research, planning, and extensive fieldwork, the project quickly achieved major milestones. The firm's collaborative approach helped secure critical permits, including a Clean Water Act Section 404 individual permit in less than 12 months—a significant achievement given the intricacy and regulatory requirements of the site and nearly half the usual time. The approval allowed for the fill and relocation of 38 wetlands and the entire onsite length of Edgecomb Creek.

In total, Soundview restored two miles of salmonid habitat, constructing 17 acres of riparian wetlands. The intricate plan added over 78,000 new plants and recovered and relocated over 21,000 fish into the restored stream channel, including coho salmon and cutthroat trout. Several fish passage barriers, including undersized culverts beneath the BNSF rail line, will be replaced with 30-foot-long bridges, which could lead to the return of salmon species like chinook and chum.

Leaders at the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife reached out to the Soundview team for feedback and advice when updating the permitting processes for the Washington Administrative Code, demonstrating the project's wide-reaching impact and Soundview's influence as a trusted leader in environmental consulting and regulatory compliance.

Alongside the environmental wins, NorthPoint was able to construct nine industrial buildings with over four million square feet designated for use as distribution, warehousing, and manufacturing. The company secured Tesla and Pepsi/Frito Lay as its first tenants, with many more in the works.