



TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

Cultural Resources Survey for the Oregon Department of Transportation's
Schmeer Road Reconnection and Denver Avenue Restriping Project
Multnomah County, Oregon
ODOT Key No. 15190

Todd Ogle, M.A., R.P.A.

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Introduction

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) proposes modifications to the intersections of Denver Avenue, Schmeer Road, and Victory Boulevard within the city of Portland, Multnomah County. The project area is within Township 1 North, Range 1 East, Sections 4 and 9 (Figure 1). The project consists of improvements to the OR99W (Denver Avenue) viaduct and Columbia Slough bridge; realigning the western end of N. Schmeer Road and installing a new at-grade intersection with N. Denver Avenue; installing multi-use (bicycle and pedestrian) paths, and altering the Victory Boulevard to Denver Avenue south ramp (Figure 2). While most of the proposed improvements will be within the existing right-of-ways (ROWs), ODOT would acquire small areas of new ROW on the north side of Schmeer Road east of Denver Avenue and west of the current Victory Boulevard to Denver Avenue ramp.

ODOT has contracted with HDR to address engineering and design for this project, as well as associated environmental and cultural resource issues. HDR has in turn contracted with Willamette Cultural Resources Associates, Ltd. (WillametteCRA), to conduct archaeological investigations for this project. These investigation included background research and a pedestrian survey of most of the project area. Since these investigations do not address the built environment, we did not examine portions of the project where improvements will be limited to within the current road prism (along portions of Denver Avenue) or on the viaduct and bridge across and south of Columbia Slough.

WillametteCRA archaeologist, Todd Ogle, M.A., reviewed records on file at the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to identify nearby areas previously subject to archaeological studies and known archaeological sites that may be impacted by the proposed project. Mr. Ogle also reviewed historic maps to identify areas of potential historic archaeological resources or areas deemed likely for prehistoric occupation. On May 10 2013, Mr. Ogle and Michael Daniels surveyed the proposed construction locations, examining any exposed ground surfaces for evidence of potential archaeological deposits. While we did not identify any evidence of archaeological deposits during the pedestrian survey, we did identify two areas that have the potential to contain buried cultural resources.

According to the Programmatic Agreement Regarding Implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for the Federal-Aid Highway Program in Oregon executed in 2011, the proposed project does not require formal SHPO review on a project level, but will be reviewed by SHPO with the Programmatic Agreement's annual report. WillametteCRA staff, who meet the requirements of 36 CFR Part 61, Appendix A in the field of archaeology reviewed the project using the standards set forth in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC 470f).

Results of Background Research

WillametteCRA reviewed records on file with the Oregon SHPO to determine if previous archaeological studies or archaeological sites occur in the project vicinity. One of these previous studies, for the Victory Boulevard-Lombard (Delta Park) Project, contained most of the current project area (Bland and Connolly 2006). This 2006 study followed an earlier study of project alternatives that identified no archaeological resources but recommended subsurface investigations (Durio 2005). The 2006 subsurface investigations included (in addition to many other probes in the vicinity) two probes between the exiting Victory Boulevard-Denver Avenue ramps, four probes on the north side of Schmeer Road east of Denver Avenue and within the Container Care parcel to the north, three probes on the west side of the Denver Avenue to Schmeer Road loop west of Denver, and four probes south of Schmeer Road and west of I-5. None of these probes identified any evidence of archaeological deposits despite being excavated to a depth of 2 meters in some cases.

In addition to the 2006 study that examined most of the project area, earlier surveys included shovel probes north of the Columbia Slough dike on the west side of Denver Avenue (Musil et al. 1995) and a pedestrian survey of the Columbia Slough bank between Denver Avenue and I-5 and the small peninsula west of Denver Avenue (Martin 1987). While neither of these studies identified archaeological deposits, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Martin also describes the Columbia Slough shoreline as being composed almost entirely of fill material, postulating that the pre-levee ground surface was at or near the current water level.

Other surveys in the vicinity either did not identify archaeological resources near the project area (Musil et al. 1994; Smits and Chapman 2008) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We reviewed copies of historic maps in an effort to reconstruct the project environment prior to the extensive modifications brought on by drainage projects, road construction, and industrial development. The 1852 General Land Office map, 1904 U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey map, and 1922 map of Columbia Slough (City of Portland 1921) indicate that the portion of the project area examined during the current study (north of Columbia Slough) would have been within a mosaic of floodplain lakes, sloughs, and marshy areas (Figures 3 and 4). The Schmeer Road-Denver Avenue intersection is located on what would have been a small peninsula between Columbia Slough and a large floodplain lake (Mud Lake), whose mouth appears to be relatively intact on the west side of Denver Avenue (see Figure 2). [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The city of Vanport, constructed as part of the World War II ship building efforts, housed more than 40,000 people at its peak and was the site of a disastrous flood in 1948. The flood destroyed the city and it was not subsequently rebuilt. Today, the former Vanport location is west of Denver Avenue, much of it occupied by the Portland International Raceway (PIR). The former entrance to the city was located at the intersection of Victory Boulevard and Denver Avenue, the

north end of the current project area. While the entrance to Vanport was within or near the current project, structures and archaeological deposits associated with the city would have been outside the project boundaries (Maben 1987).

Results of Field Investigations

On May 10, 2013, WillametteCRA staff examined the project area north of Columbia Slough, examining any exposed ground surfaces for evidence of potential archaeological deposits. Schmeer Road is entirely built on the levee north of Columbia Slough, which slopes down north of the road to the Container Care property (Figure 5). The portion of the project area within this private parcel may contain intact areas of native soil, but there was no exposed ground surface visible. The intersection of Schmeer Road and Denver Avenue slopes up to the Denver Avenue grade, again following a levee (Figure 6). This levee/elevated road grade continues north to the intersection with Victory Boulevard. The existing intersection ramps at this northern end of the project area are similarly constructed on road fill and elevated above the surrounding (natural) ground surface within the PIR to the west, undeveloped land to the east, and between the existing roadways in the project area (Figure 7).

[REDACTED]

Conclusions

WillametteCRA has completed background research and a pedestrian archaeological survey for the proposed ODOT Schmeer Road Reconnection and Denver Avenue Restriping Project. The background research included a review of records on file with Oregon SHPO and a review of historic maps and literature. This research identified multiple previous investigations that examined portions of the current project area, including subsurface investigations within the Container Care parcel immediately north of Schmeer Road and between the Victory Boulevard-Denver Avenue ramps (Bland and Connolly 2006). None of these previous investigations identified any evidence of archaeological deposits, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Our field investigations indicate that extensive landscape modifications for levee and road construction have likely destroyed or significantly impacted virtually all of the project area and did not identify any evidence of archaeological deposits. In addition, the previous investigations in the project area have already included subsurface probes that failed to identify any evidence of archaeological deposits within the areas most likely to contain such deposits based on our historic map review. As a result, WillametteCRA also recommends no further archaeological investigations within the current project area.

These recommendations apply to the current proposed improvements. Should the proposed work change or extend outside of the existing ROWs, additional fieldwork may be necessary. In the event that unanticipated archaeological or historical resources are encountered during project construction, all ground-disturbing activity in the immediate vicinity should be halted and an Oregon SHPO archaeologist and ODOT archaeologist should be notified immediately.

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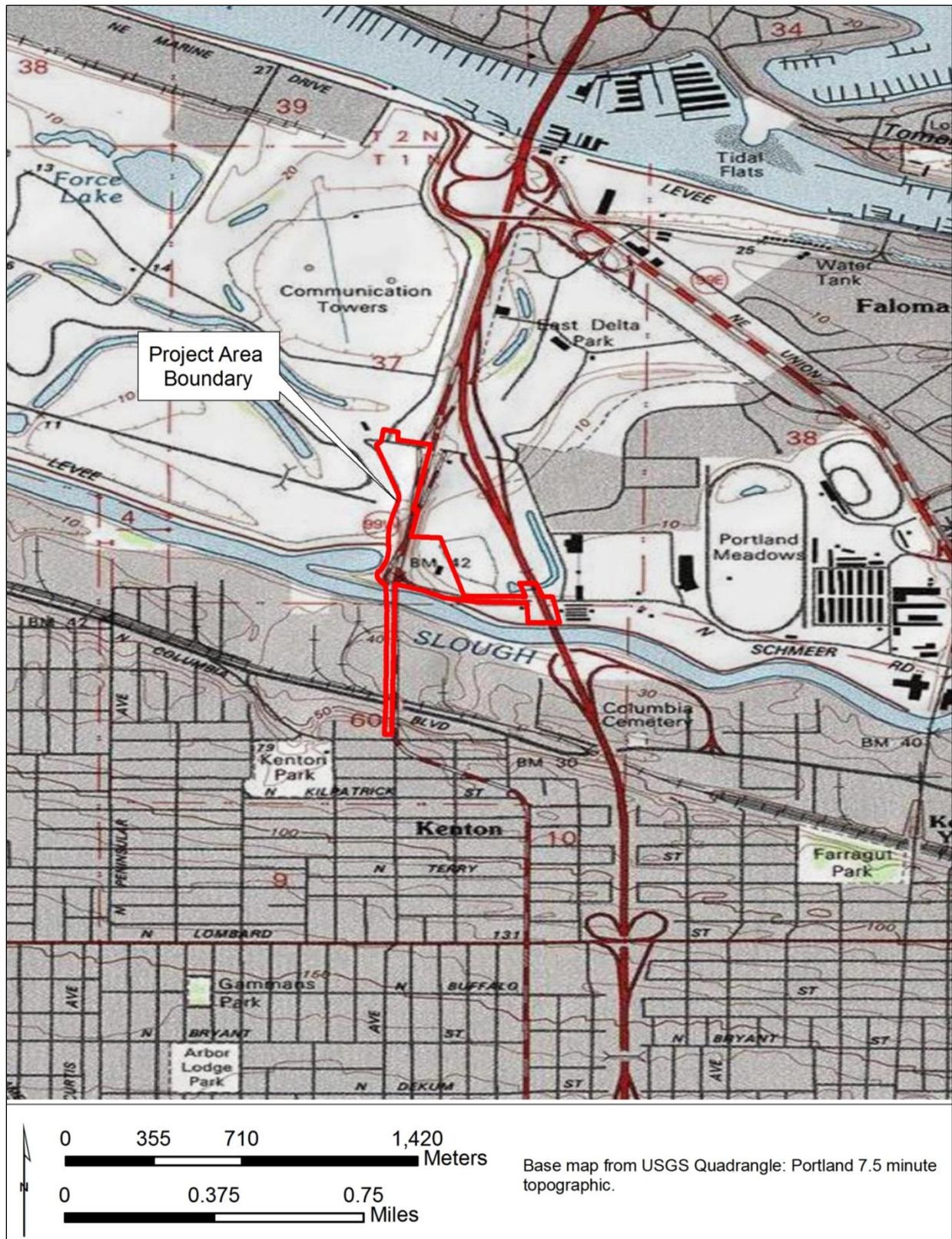


Figure 1. Project location map.

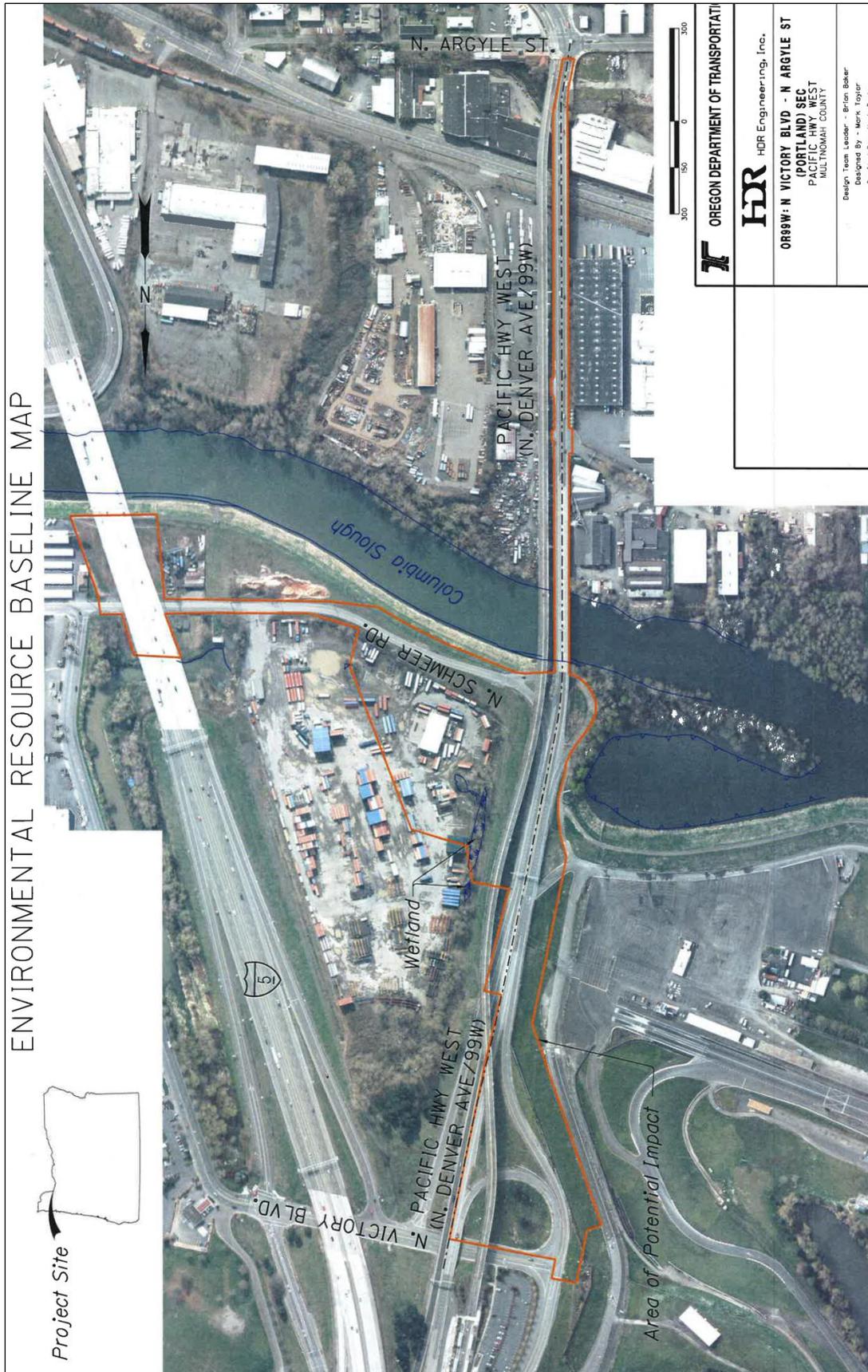


Figure 2. Aerial photograph showing the project boundaries.

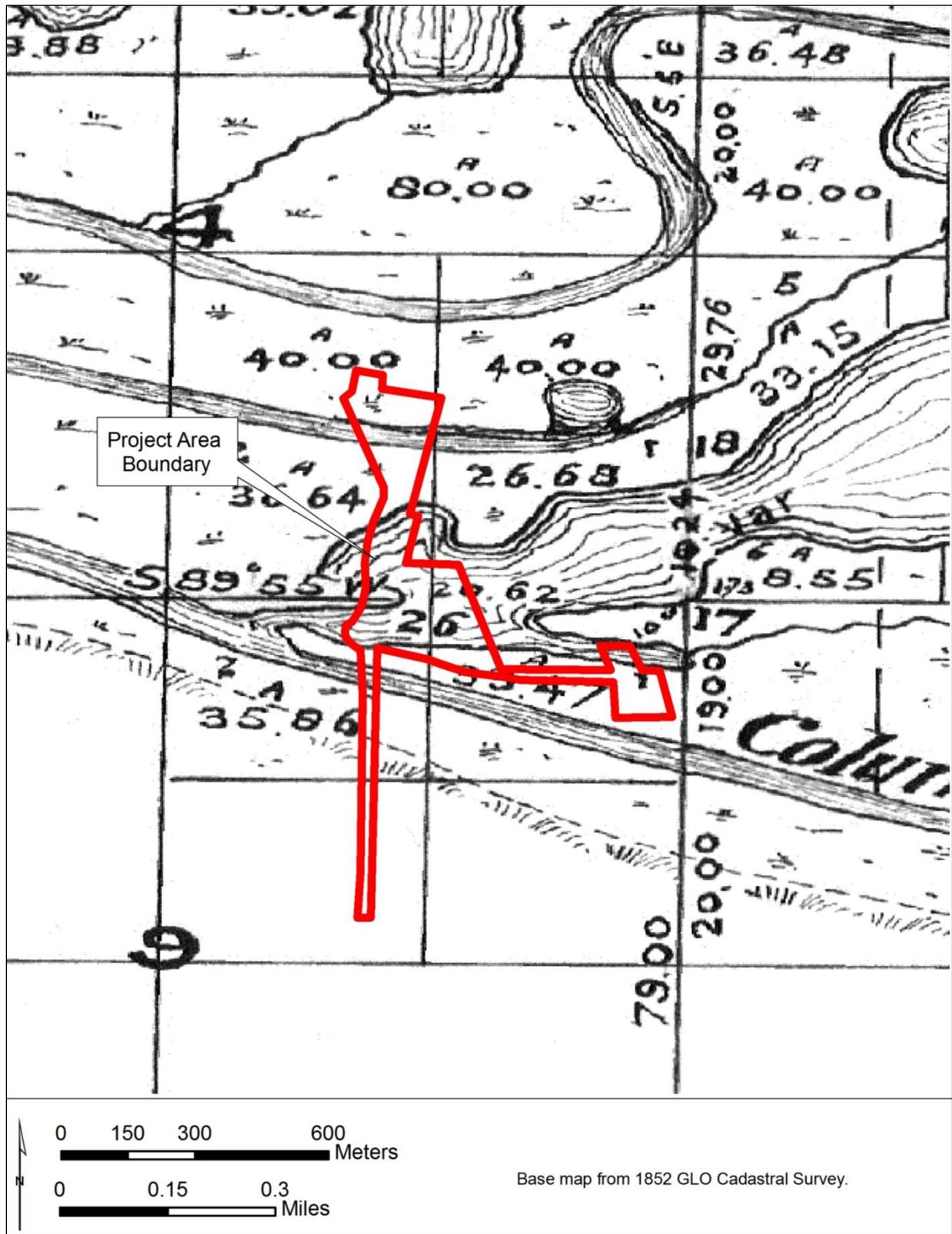


Figure 3. Project boundaries shown on the 1852 General Land Office map.

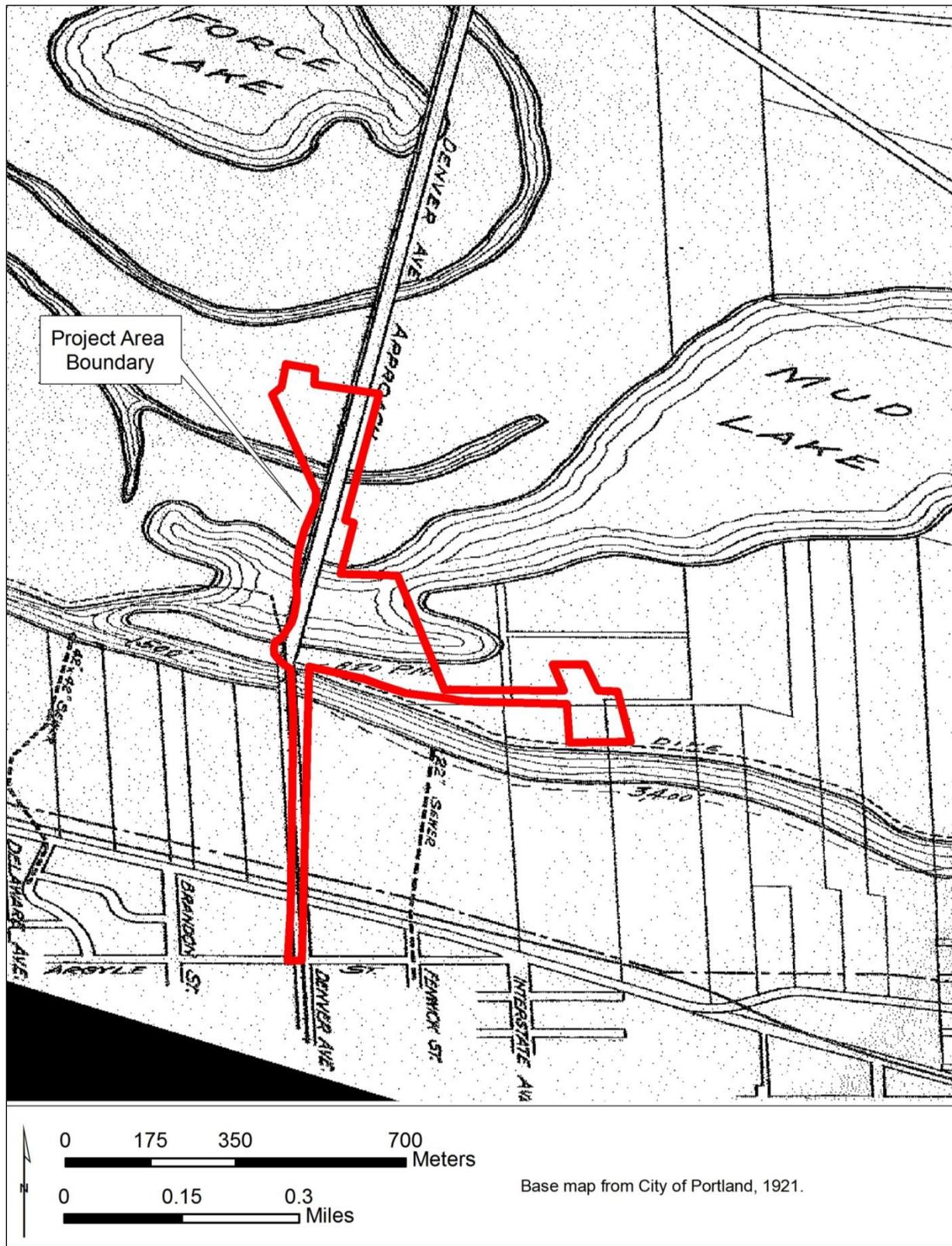


Figure 4. Project boundaries shown on a 1922 map of Columbia Slough (City of Portland 1921)



Figure 5. View to the northwest of the Schmeer Road-Denver Avenue intersection showing the Container Care parcel to the right.



Figure 6. Overview to the north of Denver Avenue with Portland International Raceway to the left.



Figure 7. View to the northwest of the Victory Boulevard-Denver Avenue ramps showing the lower ground between ramps.