

III. Land Bridge

Perspective sketch of proposed Fort Vancouver land bridge.
Courtesy of Jones & Jones Landscape Architects



Land Bridge and Interpretive Trail Project

The Land Bridge and Interpretive Trail at Fort Vancouver is a unique land bridge designed by Native American architect Johnpaul Jones in collaboration with artist Maya Lin. Development of the land bridge implements a section of the General Management Plan for Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, re-creating a physical link between the historic fort site and the Columbia River. The land bridge is the largest of seven art installations that comprise the Confluence Project. The design of the land bridge and its interpretive elements is a result of involvement of the local community, Native American groups, and collaborative efforts between Jones & Jones Architects and Landscape Architects, Ltd., Maya Lin Studio, Confluence Project, the National Park Service (NPS), the City of Vancouver, and the Washington Department of Transportation. The City of Vancouver acted as project manager, while the NPS was responsible for environmental compliance and assisted in developing the educational components of the project.

Confluence Project

The Confluence Project, a 501(c)(3) organization led by Executive Director Jane Jacobsen, was developed by a group of Pacific Northwest Native American tribes and civic leaders from Washington and Oregon. This group asked Maya Lin, the artist who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D. C., to participate in a project commemorating the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-6. These disparate parties came together to envision a new way to commemorate the Corps of Discovery's journey. Out of this collaboration came the idea to create a series of seven art installations along the Columbia River to evoke the history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the tremendous changes in the Pacific Northwest since their time.

Interpretive Elements

The land bridge spans State Route 14, restoring the ancient crossroads of the Klickitat Trail and the Columbia River. The project features a pedestrian trail more than one half mile long that winds over a 40-foot-wide earthen bridge reconnecting the Columbia River with the Fort Vancouver village. The educational components of the Land Bridge and Interpretive Trail invite multiple levels of rich historical, cultural and environmental interpretation.

There are six major interpretive elements:

- Overlooks interpreting the People, the Land, and the River
- The Language Walk, featuring indigenous words for people, land, and river
- A Timeline Path reflecting changes in land use across time
- Ethnobotanical panels illustrating indigenous use of plants historically found on the site
- A Welcome Gate and sculptural elements
- Water sustainability system and rain harvesting artwork

People, Land, and River Overlooks

The People Overlook shares the story of the dynamic multicultural Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) village. This was the home of the community that ran the diverse operations of the HBC in the Northwest. The village was populated by Metis, a culture of mixed European and native heritage, as well as numerous Native American tribes, native Hawaiians, and several other Euro-American groups.

The Land Overlook provides a view of the Fort and a glimpse of the landscape and native plant communities as they would have been prior to European and American contact. It explores the relationship between open spaces and forest land and provides historic context of the forest/prairie ecosystem managed by native people.

The River Overlook represents the connection of the Lewis and Clark Trail and the Native American Klickitat Trail. This interpretive feature encompasses the confluence of historic transportation systems, food gathering traditions and trading networks of interior mountain tribes (Yakama, Klickitat) and river tribes (Chinook, Salish) as well as the region's breathtaking geologic landmarks including Mount Adams, Mount Hood, and Mount St. Helens.

Language Walk

The Language Walk will juxtapose various native words for people, land, and river with their corresponding overlooks. The words are drawn from correspondence, conversations, and direct input from numerous Northwest tribes including the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Yakama, Warm Springs, Cowlitz and Chinook. The words are intended to provide the viewer a sense of the amazing number of languages that would have been heard at any given time at this site and along the lower Columbia River.

Timeline Path

The Timeline Path compliments the One Place Across Time theme of the Historic Reserve through the use of oversized murals whose images reflect changes in the area over the historic period. The Timeline Path is located between Old AppleTree Park and the River Overlook.

The images represent the following periods:

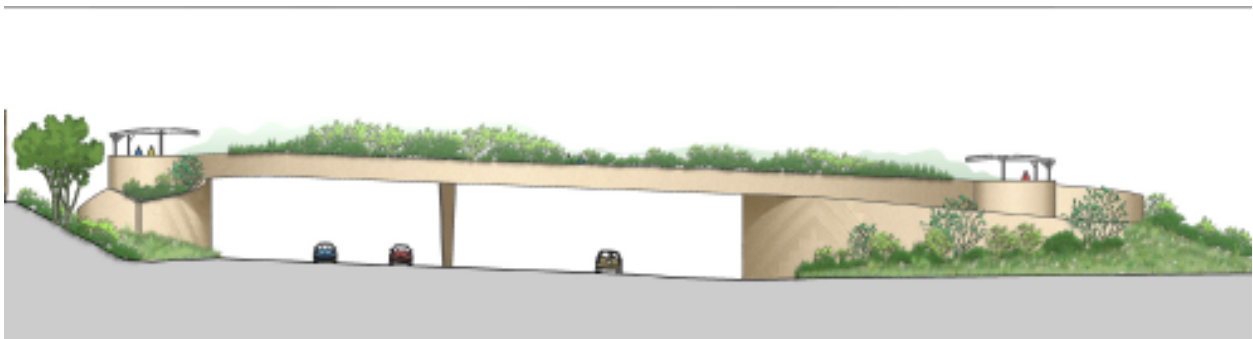
- Chinook Traveling Lodge, circa 1800
- Hudson's Bay Company and U.S. Military, circa 1853
- Officers' Row, circa 1860
- WWI Spruce Production Plant, circa 1917
- WWII Ship Launch Down the Ways, circa 1943
- Hudson's Bay Company and U.S. Military

Ethnobotanical Interpretation

The land bridge recreates the undulating landforms and indigenous vegetation of the historic Columbia River floodplain. Terraces of native plants draw the prairie up and over the highway. Signs along the trail will tell of the botanical observations of Lewis and Clark, and 19th century naturalists David Douglas and Thomas Nuttall. The signs will discuss the changes in land use and corresponding impacts on



Plan view of land bridge landscape plan.



Elevation of land bridge design.

plant communities over the historic period. Native plant species documented by the early botanical explorers are included in the planting plan. Many of these species (such as wapato and camas) have ethnobotanical uses, and were intensively used by the Native Americans throughout the region. Panels will also illustrate the stream side landscape and the indigenous cultural uses of various native plants.

Welcome Gate and Sculptural Elements

The Welcome Gate will be derived from a traditional Native American tool, the canoe paddle. The gate will be constructed with two abstract canoe paddles. The gate, designed by artist Lillian Pitt, serves as the entry portal at Old Apple Tree Park. The Three Mountain design, a traditional basket weave pattern, is an integral part of the land bridge and represents the three mountains visible from here: Mount Hood, Mount Adams, and Mount St. Helens.

Sustainable Irrigation System

Sustainability is a major component of National Park Service planning and design, and the rainharvesting element of the land bridge demonstrates a sustainable form of irrigation. The system combines art with functionality to capture the abundant winter rain and direct it to cisterns so it can be used to irrigate the native landscape on the land bridge during dry periods. The artwork powerfully and visually celebrates water and the water cycle. It presents opportunities to learn about and preserve the riverside landscape so important to the people of the river.