

Illustrated ‘Beach Bill’ sign to be unveiled on Earth Day

Plywood panel honors Oregon’s public beaches

By **ERICK BENDEL**
EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — Without the benefit of Oregon’s public beaches, Matt Love, of Astoria, would not have become the writer and person that he is today, he said.

“This is the most important thing in my life, is being able to go to the beach for free,” Love said. “It means everything to me.”

And without the Beach Bill of 1967, which granted the public recreational access to the state’s coastline from the ocean to the vegetation line, Oregon’s beaches would not be public. Instead, they may have become the private playground of a privileged few.

“Oregon is unique in the fact that our beaches belong to the people,” said Barb Knop, chairwoman of the both the city’s Parks and Community Services Committee and its subcommittee that organizes the Twelve Days of Earth Day.

“That is major,” added Ed Johnson, an Earth Day committee member.

To honor the historic piece of Oregon legislation, Love collaborated with Cannon Beach’s Twelve Days of Earth Day committee to create a “Beach Bill” interpretive sign.

Soon to be mounted on the railing platform where Second Street overlooks the beach, the sign — titled “The Great Birthright: Oregon’s Ocean Beaches” — will be unveiled at its permanent location 4 p.m. April 22 (Earth Day). The ceremony will serve as the proud climax — the “big finish” — to the city’s Earth Day marathon, said Susan Boac, the Earth Day committee’s publicity manager.

As far as Chris Havel, the public relations director with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, knows, it is the only sign along the 363-mile stretch of Oregon’s coastline created solely to recognize the Beach Bill.

“We’re delighted anytime a city is so proud of the ocean



The original artwork for the city’s Beach Bill sign currently sits on the desk of the artist, Sally Lackaff, who rendered the images in pencil and watercolor, and, in ink, hand wrote the text written by Matt Love, a writer living in Astoria.

shore that they want to shout that out for the whole world to see,” Havel said.

The Lackaff touch
Once again, the committee turned to Astoria-based artist Sally Lackaff to illustrate the project.

Like the signs she designed for sites along the Cannon Beach Nature Trail and unveiled during last year’s Twelve Days of Earth Day celebration, the Beach Bill sign will consist of a laminated plywood panel teeming with well-researched, carefully chosen images rendered in Lackaff’s unmistakable pencil-and-watercolor style.

Within the frame, Lackaff blends full-color beach scenes set against the horizon, with hand-drawn replicas of famous photographs of former Oregon Govs. Oswald West (in sepia) and Tom McCall (in black-and-white).

West, in 1913, classified the state’s tidelands as a public highway, and McCall, in 1967, signed the Beach Bill itself, which Love considers a monumental moment in Oregon’s history. Lackaff incorporated replicas of both the 1913 and 1967 bills into the artwork.

“I just sort of came up with these ideas,” she said.

Finally, the sign features, in Lackaff’s inked handwriting, a terse testament — composed by Love — to both beach bills that explains their origins, purpose and importance.

Love is not credited on the sign, “and I wanted it that way,” he said. “It’s a bigger issue than one writer.” “I wanted to write it in a voice for all Oregonians, so it didn’t need a byline,” he continued. “I thought that would be intrusive. I wrote it, and that’s all I need to know.”

The Beach Bill sign is meant to “draw attention to how lucky we are as Oregonians, and people who visit Oregon, to have public beaches,” Lackaff said.

Both Love and Lackaff are expected to attend the unveiling, Boac said.

‘Conservation-minded ethic’

The idea for the sign came about rather spontaneously.

Last November, Love delivered the inaugural lecture — titled “The Oregon Coast: One Writer’s Muse” — of the World of Haystack Rock lecture series (sponsored by the Friends of Haystack Rock) at

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the Cannon Beach Community Hall.

In his remarks, Love opened up about how Oregon’s public beaches “enabled me to become a writer



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Sally Lackaff, who created the artwork for Cannon Beach’s soon-to-be-unveiled Beach Bill sign, works on the illustrations for a children’s book in her Astoria studio.

18 years ago,” he said. The lecture was “really well attended,” he added.

During the Q-and-A portion, a consensus began to form between Love and the audience that the city of Cannon Beach should do something to commemorate Oregon’s public beaches, not least because, generally, “when people go to the beach, they don’t know why access is free,” he said.

With the audience basically pitching the idea right there, Love volunteered to write the copy for the sign. However, “I never expected

to hear anything back,” he said. In his experience, “people get excited and they just don’t follow up.” But he was wrong about the people of Cannon Beach.

The city contacted him immediately, he discharged his “writerly” duty and now, five months later, the sign is almost ready for public display.

“I just love the way it happened so fast,” Love said, adding that the sign is a testament to Cannon Beach’s “conservation-minded ethic.”

“It’s a huge, wonderful thing for Cannon Beach,” Boac said.

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