

Beyond: Public education of beaches needed

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The Beach Bill established public recreational use of beaches, but Maine said more work was needed to raise awareness of dynamic ecological processes that occur on the Oregon Coast.

A former science teacher, Maine has spent years “blowing our minds about things we already thought we knew about,” said Lisa Habecker, Haystack Rock Awareness Program education and volunteer coordinator.

The fight for beaches

Oregon beaches were considered public use by Native Americans for centuries. An

1851 treaty the United States signed with the Clatsop Tribe made provisions for beach access.

Though the treaty was never ratified, it could be thought of as “the first Beach Bill,” Maine said.

In 1913, Gov. Oswald West passed a bill that declared all Oregon beaches between high and low tides to be a public highway, which set the stage for the Beach Bill, Maine said.

Though the state sold land on the beach to private owners, the public could still use the beach.

In 1966, Bill Hay, owner of the Surfsand Motel in Cannon Beach, sectioned off part of the beach for hotel guests only. Since West’s bill only protected wet sands, the Beach Bill was introduced to make dry sands publicly accessible.

The bill almost never made it out of committee.

“It didn’t have a lot of political clout because it was going



Jeff Ter Har/For The Daily Astorian

On the only day of the year when cars can be parked on the beach in Cannon Beach, this year’s Sandcastle Contest drew an estimated 500 cars. They all left before high tide.

to be confiscation of property,” Maine said.

However, citizens formed an organization that campaigned to bring the Beach Bill back to life. The movement promoted the idea of the beach as a place for families, and kids campaigned on Portland streets to “Save the beaches.”

Gov. Tom McCall and State Treasurer Bob Straub were strong supporters of the Beach Bill, garnering media attention. Maine displayed the famous photo of McCall by the Surfsand Motel and its “private beach” barrier.

In 1967, the Beach Bill passed, declaring all wet sand within 16 vertical feet of the low tide line to be state property.

However, landowners’ anger persisted, Maine said. Straub proposed compensating landowners for property taken from them, which would be paid for by a gas tax. However, a campaign funded by oil companies warned of the bill’s “tricks” and Straub’s plan was unsuccessful.

Maine said to keep in mind that the shoreline and beach are transitory, and the Beach Bill was “a political

event” with no mention of ecological processes.

Public education needed

Maine challenged the audience to think beyond the Beach Bill, exploring possible methods of public involvement on Oregon beaches for the next 50 years.

“These are living, dynamic systems,” Maine said. “They’re just not as conspicuous as some systems like fish in the stream or elk coming across the meadow.”

Maine said he hopes to help recast Oregon beaches as an ecosystem and “reconnect the beaches to the landscape.” He suggested citizen-level efforts to expand the discussion on beaches.

Maine discussed previous attempts to help the public better understand beaches. Washington state created a document on ecosystem services, which put dollar values on shoreline ecosystems or water purification systems in forests.

The problem is “these grand ideas have been stacking up for the last decade with no implementation or public education,” Maine said.

He has mapped the patterns and trails of creatures from Cannon Beach to Astoria.

“It’s a carpet of living phenomenon that we’re kind of walking around on, but because of the way we live our lives, we don’t see very much of it,” Maine said.

People may be unaware of the other “hidden” ecological processes, such as baby razor clams swimming offshore for months before returning to the beach.

“So much of this is so unbelievable,” Maine said.

One question the public could consider is, “how many things here locally are functioning on a global level?” Maine said. Creatures like red knots are found on the Oregon Coast but “cover the globe,” he said. The shorebirds migrate from the Arctic to South America.

The emphasis should not be to recruit new environmentalists, he said, but rather to “raise the quality of life.”

“Just think about how rich it would be for everyone if going to the beach for the picnic included the wonder and awe of the living ecological system of the beach,” Maine said.

Life Flight: Fields around the tarmac are littered with old foundations

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either location would solve Life Flight’s immediate concerns, the committee’s proposal would extend utilities and give Life Flight and other potential customers direct access to the tarmac from Airport Lane.

“That’s going to open up areas that aren’t currently open to development at the airport,” Balensifer said last week. “And as you know, there’s a large business park there at the airport that is for the most part undeveloped.”

Balensifer said every city in the county has expressed support for the project, along with regional hospitals on the North Coast and Washington’s Long Beach Peninsula. While the Port should not expect any checks from cities to help pay for the project, he said, cities are interested in partnerships if the Port commits to the development.

“I think it’s important for the Port to think in terms of, ‘How do we make the airport have more tenants, and have a diversified economic engine,’” Balensifer said.

Bearing the cost

Airport Manager Gary Kobes said the Port’s preliminary estimate is \$1.2 million to extend Flightline Drive south to meet Airport Lane, installing utilities and creating a new access lane from Airport Lane to Life Flight’s new hangar. That’s in addition to the cost of constructing the hangar, which would be paid for by Life Flight and the state grant.

“It’s something we really

want to do,” he said of the Port’s interest. “We just have to figure out how to get it done.”

Kobes said extending Flightline Drive would increase access and open more business-oriented opportunities at the airport. The fields around the tarmac are littered with the foundations of old buildings from when the airport was a military base, helping supply vehicle carriers built in World War II-era shipyards at Vanport, a former city at Delta Park in Portland. To help Lektro expand in the 2000s, the Port borrowed more than \$3 million to expand the company’s hangars, improve firefighting capabilities and upgrade utilities.

What will Life Flight pay?

Port commissioners questioned Dalstra at last week’s meeting over what the nonprofit was willing to bear to make the project happen. Commissioner James Campbell specifically asked if Life Flight was open to a revenue bond, which uses future rent to repay financing for a project.

Dalstra said nothing is off the table, but that the nonprofit is already on a timeline, having told the state the new hangar would be complete by the end of April.

“After talking to Connecting Oregon, I do believe we’ll be extended some extensions ... but I don’t know how many extensions we can go back to,” he said. “And then I think the second and more pressing issue would be, it affects our operation.”

The Roses: Couple aims to make building more inviting

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The couple purchased an 1880s Victorian house built by a former Norwegian fisherman, and William has been occupied with its renovation since moving north.

“If that wasn’t enough, we buy this building, and now I’m working on the building, too,” he said, standing Friday in the Hobson Building. “I’ll get back to my art.”

Hobson Building

The Hobson Building, wedged in between the Caruthers and Associated buildings, was built in 1923. The structure houses jewelry and art store Adagio and photo studio and hair salon A Shop for Guys and Dolls. Upstairs are artist studios and Astoria Visual Arts offices. The Roses are trying to find a tenant for the 1,600 square feet formerly occupied by The Curious Caterpillar, which left last month.

“It was kind of daunting when I got the building report and found out what was wrong,” William said. “It was kind of like ‘how am I going to get this fixed?’”

But the Roses said they have been aided by a variety of happenstance encounters since moving to Asto-

ria, including fellow building owners, contractors and members of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association.

“We’re focusing on the basement and shoring up the building and making sure it’s in good shape,” Miriam said.

The couple said they want to make the Hobson Building more inviting, painting the stairwell shared with the Associated Building to the west and opening the artist studios to public tours.

Miriam said the Hobson is larger than her old building in downtown San Francisco, which the couple sold to the

tenant, an engineering firm. She said the couple purchased the building when the neighborhood wasn’t as nice. By the time they sold, she added, Twitter and Dolby Laboratories were neighbors on the same block.

Joining the community

Miriam said she had never been to Oregon before moving to Astoria. During the couple’s first week in town, staying at a bed and breakfast, is when she said she first heard Astoria called Little San Francisco.

When not working on

their house or the Hobson Building, the couple can be seen walking their 3-year-old Irish wolfhound, Ena, or volunteering with the downtown association and Liberty Theater.

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