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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's local leaders want to relocate Willapa National Wildlife Refuge headquarters from its current site on the east side of Willapa Bay in Washington, shown here, to a new location more accessible to the population center of the Long Beach Peninsula.

'The Beast': Kids helped come up with name

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Not looking for any style of truck in particular, Wicklander found the new one at a scrapyards in Portland five weeks ago. Although he was searching for a smaller truck, this one cost \$4,200 and had only been driven about 6,000 miles.

Wicklander has been working for about a month to give the truck — which was coated in fading blue paint — a face-lift.

"It was pretty cruddy looking, so we touched it all up," Wicklander said.

The truck is now a dark green color with Fort Stevens logos on the doors.

Padded seats in the bed of the truck will seat up to 26 people. A camouflage tarp drapes over the top for weather protection.

The hour-long tours feature 20 stops at historical sites around the fort. Four drivers will be on hand throughout the summer, and a recorded narration will provide background information for visitors during the tours.

When Wicklander drove the truck soon after its purchase, children on the side of the road yelled, "That thing is a beast!" From that day forward, Wicklander christened the vehicle "The Beast," even painting it above the wheel well on the driver's side.

When visitors complete their tour, shirts with the phrase, "I survived The Beast," will be available.

Refuge: 'We're trying to be part of the community'

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Refuge Manager Jackie Ferrier said she wanted to include the public in deciding where to build the Natural Resource Center and designing it, although the project has yet to be funded.

If federal dollars don't come through, Ferrier said, she'll work with the refuge nonprofit to try to raise the money.

The cost of the center will depend on what's included in its design. Refuge officials in 2011 estimated a cost of about \$6 million in its long-term plans.

"We'll be paring it down, at

least the government portion," Ferrier said.

New public face

She wants the new center to have space for the refuge headquarters, a visitor center, education programs, events and public meetings.

Ferrier has long wanted to move the headquarters closer to Long Beach from its location at 3888 U.S. Highway 101, now about a 15-minute drive from downtown.

"We're trying to be part of the community," she said.

Two sites are being considered for the center. It could be built at the east end of 67th

Place, a tsunami-evacuation route. The refuge could then help Pacific County house emergency supplies and provide a public meeting space during an evacuation, Ferrier said.

"I think it makes a lot of sense," she said.

The refuge was slated to receive \$2 million in federal grants to help Pacific County repave and improve 67th Place during the next few years but getting the money depends on the federal highways budget.

95th Street work

The other site being considered is in the flood plain

near 95th Street and Sandridge Road. The refuge got a \$60,000 grant from the state and county to put in parking spaces, a viewing area and a safer trail access point on 95th Street. The refuge is working on a federal grant to pay for connecting its South Bay Trail across the peninsula to the Discovery Trail, but again, those dollars depend on the federal budget, Ferrier said.

Either of the two sites being considered for the center would make it easier for

tourists and locals to access the refuge, she said. It boasts scenic beaches, coastal dunes, old-growth forests, estuaries, salt marshes, muddy tideflats and ample wildlife watching opportunities.

Ferrier has set two more public meetings from 5 to 7 p.m. on May 17 and June 14 at the Cranberry Museum.

"We're really looking forward to having a lot of input to help us design a space that works for everybody," Ferrier said.

Symbols: Dogs rescued from shelters also proposed as state's favorite pup

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The Kiger Mustang, for example, is native to southeastern Oregon and named after the Kiger Gorge there. According to the Bureau of Land Management website, the horses are "one of the best remaining examples of the Spanish Mustang" and highly sought after in BLM auctions. A Kiger Mustang with the breed's characteristic gold coloring and dark mane was used as the model for the title character of the animated movie "Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron."

"They're beautiful animals, sturdy and hardy," Hansell said.

State dog

Hansell also sponsored a bill naming the border collie as Oregon's state dog, at the request of Ron Folck of Unity. He felt a working dog like the border collie was a good representation of Oregon, but Rep. David Gombert, D-Central Coast, had a different idea and is sponsoring a bill to name dogs rescued from a shelter as the state dog.

Hansell said the reason Oregon has never named a state dog before may be because there isn't a particular breed of dog that stands out for its ties to Oregon. And while dog's are "humankind's best friend,"

people's favorite breed of dog varies greatly.

"All my kids and I, we love the corgi, because that was our family's first dog," he said.

This session there are also proposals to name a state tartan to honor the contributions of Oregonians with Scottish ancestry, a proposal to replace the western meadowlark with the osprey as Oregon's state bird, and a proposal to name marionberry pie as the state's official pie in recognition of the fact that the marionberry was developed at Oregon State University and was named after Marion County.

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