



Bumble Art Studio

Bumble Art Studio is one of two providers interested in partnering with the city on child care.

Child care options emerge

Two providers step forward

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

With Sprouts Learning Center expected to close by summer, two preschool providers have approached the city with proposals to partner on child care.

The city announced plans to close Sprouts — one of the larger child care facilities in Clatsop County — in February after reaching a critical staffing shortage and operating at an unsustainable loss.

The city made an attempt to make operations more sustainable by requesting proposals from parties interested in forming a public-private partnership. But after no luck, city councilors unanimously supported transitioning out of providing the service by the end of the fiscal year in June.

Sprouts Learning Center provides care for 21 children up to 5 years old.

Since announcing the decision to close, Bumble Art Studio and Astoria Head Start have approached the city with proposals. City councilors will review the details during a work session next Friday and decide whether to move forward with one.

Jonah Dart-McLean, the city's parks director, said that after the city announced plans to close Sprouts, staff redoubled efforts to find a potential partner.

"(We) reached out to some of our community partners, like the members of the child care advisory group that I'm part of, to reemphasize that there was this interest in trying to find a provider that may be interested in using the space," he said.

Looking to expand

Amy Atkinson, the co-owner of Bumble Art Studio, said she and her business partner looked over the city's request for public-private partnerships last fall, but determined it wasn't the

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A recent study used eDNA to measure populations of Pacific hake, or whiting.

GENETIC TRACES PAINT A PICTURE FOR FISHERIES

Dropping a bucket into the ocean

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
KMUN

As fish swim around in the ocean, they leave pieces of themselves behind.

"At sort of the least technical level: It's slime. It's skin. It's poop," said Andrew "Ole" Shelton, a researcher with the Northwest Fisheries Science Center in Seattle. "It's, you know, all the things you don't really want to think about being in the water."

These fragments of genetic material — environmental DNA, or eDNA — collected in bucketfuls of ocean water and analyzed in a lab, cast a sort of shadow about what was in the area hours before. It's enough to give researchers information about the abundance and distribution of a species without needing the fish to actually be present at the time a sample is collected.

Shelton is the lead author of a recent study by a team that hopes to use eDNA on a large scale for fisheries management and conservation work.

They covered a large area off the West Coast, sampling at various points, and used eDNA to measure populations of Pacific hake, or whiting.

Pacific hake is a major commercial fishery, one of the West Coast's largest in terms of pounds landed and money generated. Population and distribution assessments are key when it comes to running and working in the fishery.

Until the research done by Shelton and his team, eDNA had mostly been used on a smaller scale — to assess the presence of certain species in lakes, rivers and coastal waters, for instance.

Last year, scientists used eDNA to show a beluga whale that made an appearance in Puget Sound was likely from a population of beluga whales in Arctic waters.

Traditional fishery survey methods use trawl nets or sonar. Researchers catch or see what they can at a particular time in a particular place. For eDNA, the fish could

have been there and gone several hours ago.

The water samples collected can be stored and studied again and again. Researchers can even look for the presence of different species using the same water samples.

The archive of water samples needs to grow and data collected must accumulate over time before eDNA surveys of species like hake will be as useful to fishery managers as the more traditional surveys. Hake trawl surveys have a long time series attached to them with information that can be compared over years of surveying. Environmental DNA does not have this history — not yet.

There are also limits to what eDNA can reveal. It can't tell researchers about the age, sex or size of the individual fish. But after the success at surveying for hake, Shelton sees opportunities to put the eDNA approach to work.

It can be a more cost-effective way to sample, he noted, saving researchers expensive ship time. At its most basic, you're dropping a bucket into the ocean and pulling it up filled with water.

Collection of eDNA could also prove especially useful for tracking the distribution and populations of fish and marine mammal species that are difficult to find or difficult to survey.

For example, on the West Coast, there are rockfish species that were historically overfished. Environmental DNA could be a way to help fishermen avoid them.

"That's a big question," Shelton said. "How do you mitigate bycatch of these species that you're concerned about? And how do you better target your fisheries management to deal with these species that it's just hard to figure out where they are?"

This is a gap — a bucket, if you will — that Shelton believes eDNA could fill.

This story is part of a collaboration between The Astorian and Coast Community Radio.

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GEARHART

Bike ban on Ridge Path loses tread

City Council instead looks to add signs

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

GEARHART — In March, the City Council voted 4 to 1 to consider a ban on bicycles on the Ridge Path.

But on Wednesday, the council took a step back, indicating that rather than a ban, the city could add warning signs and pedestrian crossings.

"Where I personally would choose not to ride bikes on the Ridge Path and have not actually myself, I understand the need for parents to have their kids be able to ride safely to town," Mayor Paulina Cockrum said. "I also understand that there can be some safety hazards for walkers if the bicycles don't take care in passing. I hope that we

can find a solution that will balance these key issues — perhaps without an ordinance."

The former Native American trail runs between privately owned residential properties within the blocks between Cottage Avenue and Neacoxie Creek, extending from F Street on the south to 10th Street on the north. The first 11 blocks were established by the original plat of Gearhart Park, as laid out and recorded by M.J. Kinney in 1890.

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The Ridge Path in Gearhart.



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