

Parks from 1A

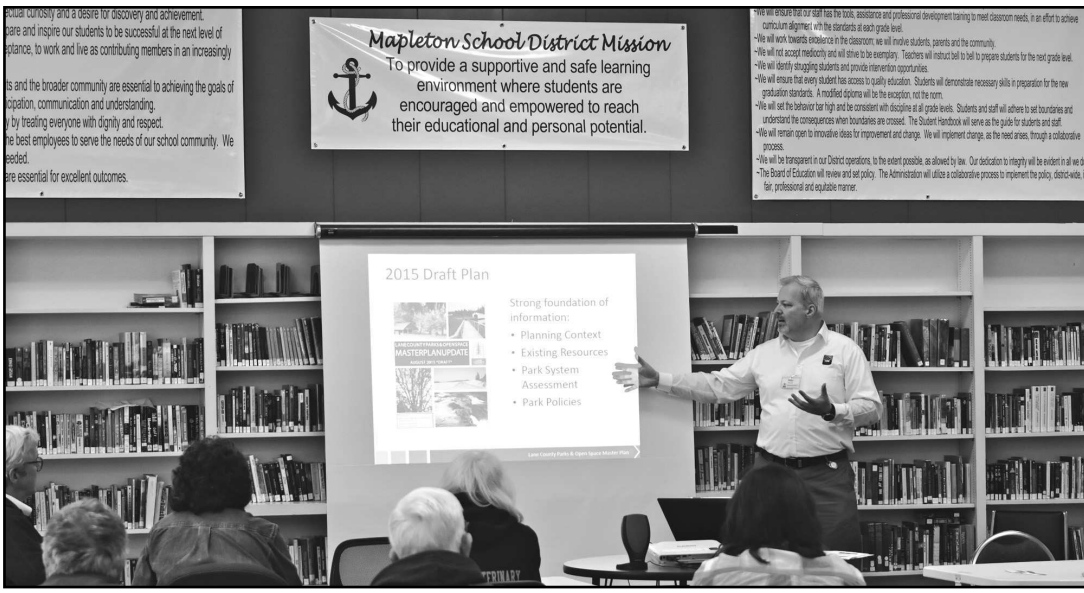
Russell told the attentive audience his department had a draft proposal ready for the public to approve a couple of years ago. However, after receiving comments from the community, department managers decided their original plan was ill suited to the needs of county residents.

"In 2015 there was a release of a draft plan. We had several meetings like these around the county, and from the public feedback we learned that the draft plan did not necessarily reflect the values of our community," Russell said. "We are basically in a reset mode. We are rewriting the plan and we are starting over."

Russell then made a point of highlighting three basic concepts to consider when discussing the recommendations for the Master Plan: an Accessible Water Based System, a Nature Based Recreation System and a Connected Trail Based System.

Russell added that these three types of parks could be thought of as stand alones or they can be grouped so that connecting trails, paths or roadways can access parks with different features.

He also pointed out that



Mike Russell, a manager at the Department of Public Works, led the public forum that solicited ideas for the creation of a new plan for utilization of area parks

water is one of the main draws to county parks. He emphasized the desire of residents to spend time on or near the water.

"A big focus of Lane County Parks is access to water. And you will see that we have boat ramps, docks, five campgrounds with 250 campsites and we have marinas at three different locations that provide over 300 marina slips," he said.

After setting the stage for the evening's discussions, Russell asked those in attendance to join in a group activity.

Parks staff attached posters to the wall that had the three

different types of parks delineated. Then the public took colored dots prepared by staff and stuck them to the poster that reflected their ideas of a desired park. They also included dots for types of parks they would like to see in their area and any ideas they had for alternate park usage.

This activity was followed by the formation of discussion groups and recommendations from those groups.

Lane County Parks staff has created a survey that was handed out to the group. These surveys can also be filled out on line at the Lane County Parks

website.

The recommendations from the public forums and from the survey will constitute a large part of the data the department will use to determine the shape of the final plan.

Russell also said during the evening that the task of maintaining and upgrading the system is daunting.

The county's park system, as it is presently constituted, has 71 parks that encompass approximately 4,300 acres. These parks are situated in a variety of settings from mountains to seaside.

Moreover, because there is such a large area that is served by these parks, the department will be conducting public meeting in each of six regions over the next few weeks to receive as much public input as possible on the new Master Plan.

One of these public meetings is scheduled to take place in Florence on Thursday, May 4, from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue Main Station, 2625 Highway 101.

For more information on Lane County's Master Park Public Meetings, the survey and the department's eventual recommendations, visit LaneCounty.org/ParksPlan.

Dunes from 1A

"Our special dune ecosystem has been severely impacted by invasive species such as Scotch broom. Other plant species like European beachgrass has also slowed the progression of sand and, essentially, frozen much of our dunes in place," Marohl stated. "This can have a great impact on our local economy which is heavily reliant on recreation and tourism."

The work the students and teachers are doing on local dunes is part of a larger endeavor overseen by the Oregon Dunes Restoration Collaborative, a group comprised of state agencies, educators and private citizens.

According to Lisa Romano, public affairs staff officer for the Siuslaw National Forest, the protection of the dunes is paramount and the time for action is now.

"The need is overwhelming, expensive and complex. Identifying where and how

we can make the best impact will assure success today and into the future," Romano said. "Developing the dunes restoration strategy was an important first step in what will be a long process of on-the-ground restoration."

Marohl points out that restoring the dunes to their natural state is a long-term process that will require attention and labor for years to come.

Marohl and others, particularly STEP member Jim Grano, have been working on this for years. They believe that the students that participate in the removal will continue to care about the dunes and local ecosystems as they grow into adulthood.

"We hope to have this tradition for our school continue for many years to come. As the program moves forward, we will continue to focus on salmon, watersheds, restorations and education. Our students will learn about these topics both in the classroom and through hands-on field trips," Marohl said.



Middle schoolers dig up Scotch broom in the dunes Friday. Siuslaw Middle School Principal Andy Marohl said students will continue to learn about species, ecosystems, restoration and more in class and through field trips.

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