

# K-9 program 'a great tool' for local law enforcement

K-9 from Page 1A

when its handler moved to Bend, said Paul Williams, chief deputy at the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office.

"They are a wonderful tool that allows us to utilize their inherent traits to help us complete our mission" — in this case, finding illicit drugs, he said.

Gunner likely will work with other law enforcement agencies, perhaps even in Tillamook County, Schermerhorn said.

Although Gunner's training in Cannon Beach and Washington County will be ongoing, he is expected to be certified and in service by March. Gunner, whose radio call sign is 709, is considered the department's "ninth officer." He lives with Gregory and his family.

"He's a really good dog.

He's got a great temperament. He's smart. He's doing really good with the trainer so far," Gregory said.

## 'Leaps and bounds'

Gunner doesn't exactly have a tough act to follow.

The department's previous would-be K-9 officer, "Cash," never made it through the training with the Washington County Sheriff's Office. Though he initially showed much promise when the Cannon Beach Police Department acquired him in August, Cash turned out to be rather jumpy, afraid of heights and, when he detected drugs, was inclined to bark aggressively rather than lead Gregory straight to them. Cash was returned to Schultz, his original owner, in early October.

"We really liked Cash," Schermerhorn said. But Gunner is already "leaps and

bounds" ahead of his predecessor, "very hard working" and "more able to concentrate on the job at hand."

"It seems like an easier partnership for Josh," the chief added.

Gregory doesn't foresee running into any Cash-esque difficulties with Gunner, who is a "totally different dog," he said. "I feel really confident with him."

Since Gregory is entering Gunner's training process midstream, the handler is learning how to read the dog's body language and work off of his tells, Schermerhorn said.

"We're getting into that rhythm together," Gregory said.

## Top Dog, top dollar

Last year, the department raised \$29,417 for the K-9 officer program, and money

is still trickling in, Schermerhorn said.

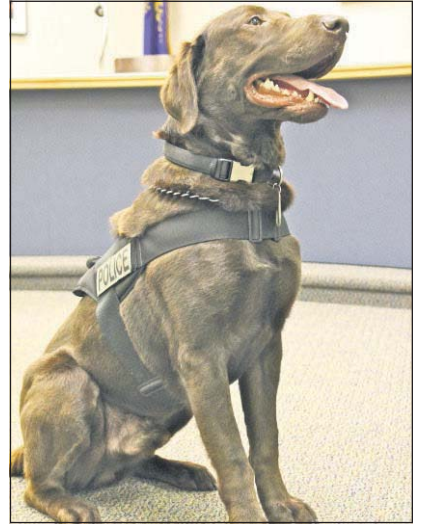
"In fact, we've had people ask if they can continue to make donations," he said. The department is trying to set up an account that allows people to automatically donate a portion of their paychecks to the program monthly.

But whereas Schultz donated Cash, the department paid \$6,200 for Gunner, who was purchased from Top Dog Police K-9 Training and Consulting, a company in Modesto, Calif. That amount also paid for a one-year warranty on Gunner's health that will include a total refund or replacement if Gunner's constitution isn't fit for the job.

Still in place are the community donations from Dogs Allowed Cannon Beach, which has pledged to provide free dog food for the life of

**"Gunner" stands at attention in Cannon Beach City Hall during his first graveyard shift with his handler, Officer Josh Gregory. In addition to his training in narcotics detection, the 2-year-old chocolate Labrador will be trained in search and rescue.**

ERICK BENDEL PHOTO



the program, and Dr. Robert Remensnyder, a veterinarian at the Seaside Pet Clinic who will administer Gunner's routine check-ups free of charge.

Gregory said he is sorry it's taking so long to make the K-9 officer program work, but "everything happens for a

reason," he said. "Sometimes these things take time."

"We're looking forward to it. It's another great tool for local law enforcement," Williams said. The sheriff's department appreciates Cannon Beach starting the program, he added.

# Reason for the sea star disease outbreak is still unknown

Wasting from Page 1A

out millions of sea stars at several sites along the West Coast, from Alaska to Southern California.

Wasting events have happened before, but "we've never seen the disease arrive at the levels that we've seen over the past year, year and a half," said Melissa Miner, a research associate at the University of California, Santa Cruz, who works with MARINE.

The disease begins as lesions on a sea star's body that degrade its tissue, shrivel up its rays and finally dissolve the invertebrate into a pale goo. It usually kills the organism within a few days to a couple of weeks, though some sea stars may slough off infected rays before the lesions reach their vital organs and later regenerate them.

Ferber first noticed the disease at Haystack Rock last March. By the end of July, most of the sea stars in the rock's intertidal zone had died.

"Sea stars were falling apart," she said. "We could see that sea stars were dying right in front of us."

However, "that's not happening anymore," she said. "In general, we're not seeing category 4 anymore. We're seeing mostly category 1 or 2."

## Comebacks

Right now, HRAP and MARINE are focusing on the number of new sea stars in a given sea star population and what species are thriving in the aftermath of the wasting.

In recent months, six-rayed sea stars have proliferated at the Needles near Haystack Rock, despite that very few were recorded during HRAP's July survey.

"I've never seen so many six-rayed sea stars in my life," Ferber said, adding that "none of the six-rayed that we have found had any signs of disease."

Because most of the larger sea stars that eat the smaller six-rayed species died of wasting disease, Ferber suspects that six-rayed sea stars don't have many natural predators. "That's just a hypothesis," she said.

When HRAP conducts its sea star survey this month, she will be interested to see



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAYSTACK ROCK AWARENESS PROGRAM

**This photo of a dying sea star, taken in May at Haystack Rock, shows the organism at roughly Stage 3 as it disintegrates into a white mush. By July, more than 90 percent of the sea stars at the rock had succumbed to the wasting disease.**

whether the six-rayed sea stars have continued to multiply.

Miner noted that at several coastal sites in Whatcom County, Wash., species of ochres and evasterias seem to be making a comeback.

"There are a lot of juveniles at nearly all of our sites, way more than we've ever seen before," she said.

## Unknowns

Last summer, marine scientists may have identified the virus responsible for the sea stars' dramatic die back. A disease-causing



SUSAN GLARUM PHOTO

**Becca Cudmore, a Brooklyn-based science writer, who is wearing a black jacket, takes notes during HRAP's October sea star survey. Nadine Nordquist, center, an HRAP staff interpreter, and Alix Lee, the program's 2014 intern, gather information to send to the Multi-Agency Rocky Intertidal Network.**

"densovirus" associated with sea stars that is "in greater abundance in diseased than in healthy sea stars" is "the most promising candidate disease agent" responsible for the mass

mortality of sea stars, according to a study published in November in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

However, that answer isn't definitive. There are

many unknowns, including the reason juvenile sea stars are less likely to contract and die from the wasting disease. Is it that larger sea stars carry a greater viral load of the densovirus (which naturally occurs in sea star populations)? Or is it just easier for younger sea stars to fight off illness?

"Because scientists don't know what causes the densovirus to kill the sea stars — and what caused this outbreak to happen — it's kind of hard to say for sure why the smaller individuals aren't affected as much," Ferber said.

And, since the virus was already present, the question remains: Why is the disease suddenly erupting on a much larger scale now than at any time in the past?

"We just don't know at this point," Miner said, adding that some environmental factors may have exacerbated the widespread wasting. "There's still a lot to learn."

# Dune grading is 'a continuing job that's been done before'

Dunes from Page 1A

Both methods carry the sand out to sea. In some places, at least 25 feet of sand needs to be excavated, said Tom Horning, a geologist working with the homeowners association.

Without permitting delays, the project would happen in two phases, the first this March and April, the second in February and March 2016.

"This is a continuing job that's been done before. We've done this in cooperation with the city of Cannon Beach," Francis said.

Breakers Point has done seven dune grading projects, removing 4,000 to 10,000 cubic yards per project, since 2000. This latest request calls for "a substantial increase over what you've approved in the past," City Planner Mark Barnes told the planning commission.

But "if you keep making a bigger pile, you are subjecting it to more wind movement," Francis said. "You're going to shift more sand onto adjacent properties and onto the Breakers Point complex."

"We love Cannon Beach," said Ed Stone, a Breakers Point homeowner since the early 1980s. "We don't want anything more than just to have our view back as best we can have (it)."

## Those opposed

Most opponents did not

dispute the main facts of the request, agreeing that the dunes had grown to a level that may inconvenience homeowners.

Instead, they pointed out that, while Breakers Point is required to submit semi-annual reports regarding the three-year effects of each dune grading project, only two such reports exist in the public record.

"We've been told in years past, when dune grading projects were allowed, that there

**'We love Cannon Beach. We don't want anything more than just to have our view back as best we can have (it)'**

Ed Stone, Breakers Point homeowner

would be monitoring done thereafter on a regular basis and reports submitted to the city of Cannon Beach ... in order to ascertain the effects of the dune grading," said Jan Siebert-Wahrmund, a Cannon Beach resident. "Where are these (by now numerous) monitoring reports?"

She also asked why the planning commission was even considering the Breakers Point request "before these many promised and required reports were turned in."

Fraser said the city, by not demanding these monitoring reports, "did not hold up on their end of the bargain."

proposal, she said.

Mike Manzulli, chairman of the Ecola Creek Watershed Council, argued that the city's comprehensive plan does not permit the dumping of sand into the Ecola Creek Estuary solely to enhance property owners' views.

Furthermore, many communities that have recently experienced natural disasters — including the Indonesian tsunami of 2004, the Japanese tsunami of 2011, hurricanes Katrina (2005) and Sandy (2012), etc. — are "rebuilding dunes right now ... to protect the community" when they can afford to do so,

he said. "I think we really need to think about this."

Some opponents said that nature ought to be allowed to take its course.

"I have no doubt that some of your views are gone. I think that's probably very true," resident Carol Bennett said. "I also think they built some condos in the '70s on an active sand dune — what were they thinking? (Breakers Point homeowners) bought condos on an active sand dune — what were they thinking might happen? Were they thinking the view was going to stay just the same? It's not possible."

"Those dunes are there for a reason. We may not understand it, even if we're — no offense — even if we're geologists," resident Tommy Huntington said. "Nature does this stuff for a reason, and to just destroy it for our view or something like that is irresponsible."



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