



Breakers Point may use riprap to stabilize condo



ERICK BENGEL PHOTO

Erosion along the Ecola Creek Estuary is encroaching on Breakers Point Building 45. In lieu of packing down sand harvested from dune grading to shore it up, the homeowners association may use riprap, consisting of a 30-foot line of boulders stacked 7 feet high.

Erosion bringing Ecola Creek bank within feet of building

By Erick Bengel
Cannon Beach Gazette

Unless the Breakers Point Homeowners Association gets City Council permission to deposit several thousand cubic yards of sand onto the embankment of the Ecola Creek Estuary, thereby shoring up a nearby condominium whose foundation is being compromised by erosion, emergency riprap may have to be placed there instead.

Inch by inch, the steep northern slope of the estuary is sloughing away, edging steadily closer to Building No. 45 at the south end of Larch Street. Without intervention, the two-story wood-frame building and the gas main beneath it will become endangered, according to an engineering report from January 2014.

“The erosion has taken place pretty severely,” said Bruce Francis, property manager of the Breakers Point

condos. “It’s moved in quite a ways.”

A year ago, the estuary bank was about 30 feet away from the building; now it is less than 20 feet, Francis said. In 1989, it was about 100 feet away, the report says.

“If we see another couple of feet disappear, what will happen is the gas line will be exposed, and I think that it would be very prudent for us to take action,” he said.

Taking action will involve hiring contractors to lay down riprap — large boulders stacked on a gravel base — in the bank below the building. The pile of boulders would stretch 30 feet long, stand 7 feet tall and cut 5 feet deep into the bank, he said.

Emergency clause

Last month, the planning commission denied the association’s proposal to grade nearly 74,000 cubic yards of sand dunes west and south of Breakers Point, a proposal that originally included shifting 7,000 cubic yards of the graded sand onto the estuary bank to stabilize Building No. 45.

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UP A TREE

Plans call for cutting 70 highway trees by spring

By Erick Bengel
Cannon Beach Gazette

Before March 15, the Oregon Department of Transportation plans to cut down the first 70 of about 200 dead and dying alder trees along U.S. Highway 101, between Cannon Beach’s north entrance and Sunset Boulevard.

The operation is the first phase of a three-phase tree-thinning project, said Bill Jablonski, manager of ODOT District 1.

Last spring, ODOT flagged about 200 of the roughly 5,000 trees near that stretch of highway for removal, marking them with a light blue dot. The trees may pose a threat to drivers, especially the trees with branches that lean precariously over the road, he said. Once ODOT identified them as a safety hazard, the department became legally liable for any accidents that may occur as a result of their continued presence in the highway corridor.

Because the trees are in a state highway right of way, ODOT can legally eliminate them without obtaining a permit first, despite a city’s or county’s ordinance that might require a permit — a fact that ODOT confirmed with the state Department of Justice last fall.

“I was verifying that the law does exist,” he said. “ODOT has the right to take out danger trees in the right of way.”

Another 70 trees are slated for removal in 2016, and the remainder of the 200 targeted trees for 2017. The final number of trees removed may be less than 200 but will not exceed 200, he said.

“We certainly have an obligation to the people who are motorists that we remove the danger trees,” Jablonski said, adding that the department doesn’t yet know whether it will contract out the labor.

Moving forward

ODOT approached the City Council in mid-2014 to



ERICK BENGEL PHOTO

About a mile-long corridor along U.S. Highway 101 between Cannon Beach’s north entrance and Sunset Boulevard may be thinned out by the Oregon Department of Transportation. Highway officials plan to remove 200 dead and dying trees. An estimated 5,000 trees line the corridor.

let the city know of its plans, as a “way for us to be transparent with the community,” Jablonski said.

Initially, the city asked its arborist, Will Caplinger, to independently review the problematic trees. But, because ODOT and the city didn’t follow up with each other, that review never happened, Public Works Director Dan Grassick said.

“ODOT did not pursue the project, and so the decision was made not to spend the resources unnecessarily,” he said.

But now ODOT is moving forward, Jablonski said. The department intends to renew its conversation with Grassick and City Manager Brant Kucera.

ODOT is open to feedback from the city and its residents, Jablonski said. If people want ODOT to offset the loss by planting new trees, the department could very well do that, he said.

“I think (ODOT) should be required to replace whatever they take out,” said former Mayor Mike Morgan, who works as Astoria’s interim city planner.



ERICK BENGEL PHOTO

A blue dot is displayed on twin alder trees on the west side of U.S. Highway 101 near the Sunset Boulevard entrance. The Oregon Department of Transportation has marked about 200 trees for possible removal from along the highway; the removal will be done in three phases, beginning before March 15 and ending in 2017.

However, since the project involves a mile-long stretch of trees that ODOT believes could collapse onto the highway, there isn’t likely to be much negotiation before ODOT goes to work, Jablonski said.

“We recognize that there is a sensitivity (to) the trees’

removal, but we also have an obligation to the motorist public to remove those trees,” he said. “If anything, we’re doing a courtesy to the city to let them know what our plan is.”

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City brings new emergency consultant on board

Stacy Burr to cover gamut of potential catastrophes

By Erick Bengel
Cannon Beach Gazette

The city of Cannon Beach has hired its new emergency preparedness consultant.

Stacy Burr, a Eugene resident and the owner of Stacy M. Burr, Consulting, officially took over the consulting position Jan. 29, filling the role left by Bill Vanderberg, who stepped down in fall 2013.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STACY BURR
Stacy Burr, of Eugene, is the new emergency preparedness coordinator for Cannon Beach.

She will advise city managers, the emergency preparedness committee and the predeployment container committee

— which manages the tsunami storage container program — on how to strengthen and expand their efforts to protect Cannon Beach’s residents and visitors during emergencies, especially natural disasters.

Her duties will include updating the city’s “incident action plan,” a playbook for handling emergencies; conducting on-site Incident Command System training; developing Cannon Beach’s Community Emergency Response Team (CERT); and pursuing federal Department of Homeland Security grants for projects like upgrading critical infrastructure, City Manager Brant Kucera said.

Burr will “help us build our emergency systems up to the best of our ability in a small town, to build up the places where we are weak and to reinforce the places where we are currently strong,” said Paula Vetter, a member of the emergency preparedness committee. “We’re really excited to have her on board.”

Cascadia

Though Burr will cover the gamut of potential catastrophes, the long-anticipated Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami is her top priority.

“That’s the biggest emergency we could have to face,” said Bob Mushen, vice chair-

man of the emergency preparedness committee. “And we have no idea, of course, when that’s going to happen.”

When it does happen, the city will need to create shelters, distribute food and water, set up sanitation, provide medical care, do crowd control — all requiring well-trained volunteers. Burr will help the emergency preparedness committee attract more people to serve during an emergency, Mushen said.

At minimum, Burr is required to attend the monthly emergency preparedness committee meetings and twice-monthly container committee meetings, beginning

this month. She plans to commute from Eugene, she said.

Kucera estimates that Burr will put in between 12 and 25 hours per month, or “whatever it takes to get the job done,” he said.

She will be paid \$15,000 for her work this fiscal year, which ends June 30; however, her salary may change when it is re-budgeted for next year, beginning July 1, Kucera said.

A ‘go-getter’

Burr has worked in public safety and disaster management for the past 15 years, developing emergency response

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Major crimes rose in Cannon Beach last year

Motor vehicle thefts, accidents decreased in 2014 annual report says

By Erick Bengel
Cannon Beach Gazette

Cannon Beach experienced a 35 percent hike last year in Part I offenses — considered to be major crimes — but a decrease in Part II or lesser crimes, according to an annual report distributed by Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn.

Heading the list of major crimes in 2014 was the murder of a 2-year-old child, the first homicide in Cannon Beach in decades. The child’s mother, Jessica

Smith, has been charged with aggravated murder in the child’s death and attempted aggravated murder for injuries suffered by Smith’s 13-year-old daughter. Smith is awaiting trial in 2016.

Increases also occurred in robberies, assaults, burglaries and thefts last year.

Meanwhile, decreases occurred in motor vehicle thefts, domestic disturbance responses, fraud, vandalism, sex offenses, drug/marijuana cases and others.

However, the department provided more than twice the number of citizen assists than last year. Overnight camping warnings also increased significantly. The department has eight police officers in addition to Schermerhorn.



Jessica Smith is awaiting trial on charges that she murdered her 2-year-old daughter last year. The murder is the first in Cannon Beach for decades.

“Our traffic tickets and warnings were down, but also, along with that, the accidents were down as well,” Schermerhorn said. “That was good to see.”

Overall, the department had a good year, he said.

“I think the department

is getting much more educated on different things and a lot more experienced working with the community,” he said.

The city’s first National Night Out was held at City Park last year, in partnership with the Cannon

Beach Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club of Seaside and Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District. Schermerhorn said he will continue the event.

The department also sponsored and participated in the eighth annual South County Citizens Academy, which Schermerhorn started when he worked for the Seaside Police Department. The academy takes citizens interested in law enforcement “behind the scenes” and trains them in various aspects of local law enforcement activities. Also participating in the academy were Seaside and Gearhart police departments, Clatsop County Sheriff’s Office and the Clatsop

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