

Views from the Rock

After the Big One—then what?

A little after the sixth anniversary of March 11, 2011, the date of the Japanese tsunami that devastated an entire region and knocked out the Fukushima nuclear plant. What is life like now? How did government respond?

In subsequent years, author Richard J. Samuels said in “3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan,” cities wrestled with issues as existential as: “Do we rebuild or not?”

In the city of Minami Sanriku, only the steel frame of the crisis management center survived the tsunami.

Residents found themselves in many cases homeless and alone, their cities and villages destroyed. Local governments came together to form a “federation” and “counterpart support,” and relied less on national government and more on their neighbors.

In the Hyogo Prefecture, recovery called for “rebuilding the affected areas ‘efficiently and effectively,’” Samuels wrote. “Localities seized the relief initiative after the central government failed to act decisively.”

First steps included a master plan creating a comprehensive regionwide collection of appropriate regulations, tax breaks, financial support and administrative measures to facilitate investment. Central and local governments divided responsibilities from a general headquarters.

“Virtually every prefecture and city started to enhance its programs for disaster prevention and response,” Samuels wrote.

While it is impossible to compare a potential disaster here with a nuclear incident overseas, the response and rate of return among residents is worth noting.

Today in Japan the radiation evacuation area in Fukushima Prefecture will shrink to 30 percent of its initial size, the Japan Times reported. While the radiation component obviously alters the equation, close to 20,000 registered residents in the five municipalities are now allowed to return home, but only 13.5 percent have opted to do so. A lack of medical services, commercial facilities and ongoing safety concerns over nuclear radiation have kept return rates low, despite efforts by central and local governments to lure back former and new residents through facility and infrastructure construction.

The city prepares

Since we know a tsunami will come to the North Coast, will Cannon Beach want to rebuild? And where? And how?

With the city’s infrastructure in harm’s way from northern tip to Tolovana, ignore hypothetical scenarios at your own risk.

These are grim but realistic considerations, especially as the city anticipates a \$3.5 million replacement cost for city offices and multimillion dollar water storage retrofits.

“Recent research has confirmed that the Oregon Coast is subject to a significant risk of large earthquakes associated with what is known as the Cascadia Subduction Zone,” the Cannon Beach website states. “Such an earthquake will cause extensive damage. These earthquakes can generate tsunamis that will inundate low-lying areas requiring evacuation to higher ground. The earthquake and subsequent tsunami that occurred in Japan in 2011 was caused by a subduction zone earthquake similar to one that might occur off the Oregon Coast.”

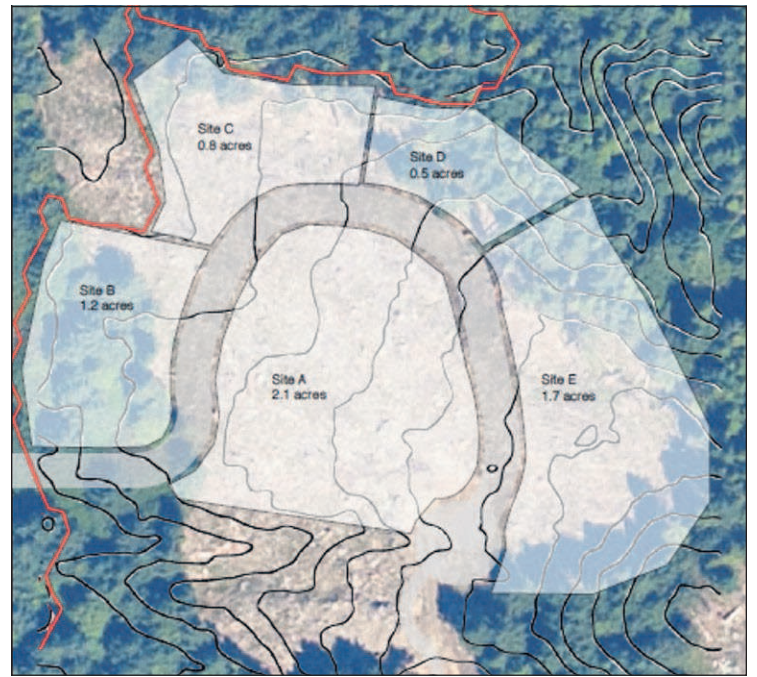
By even daring to utter the “T” word — tsunami — Cannon Beach is ahead of some of its neighbors.

The city’s container project seeks to provide reliable emergency supplies for long-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Proposed South Wind site could house city services in the event of a tsunami and quake.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A 2014 master plan shows potential development on 55 acres east of the highway.

CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX



term storage, and is described as “resident involved, proactive planning.”

You can find shopping lists for go-bags and instructions for pup, lean-to and bivy tents, useful for prolonged outdoor living.

Even the hospitality industry recognizes the urgency. Cannon Beach Vacation Rentals, for example, posts tsunami and earthquake warnings in their rooms, with detailed information of how and where to go in an evacuation.

The Cannon Beach 2016-17 budget includes line items for emergency shelter and long-term recovery, but the line items are both zero. While emergency preparedness consulting receives \$50,000, CERT — which relies on volunteers — receives \$1,000. Cache site supplies receive \$7,500. The city allotted the sum of \$30,000 to emergency signage.

South Wind

The city’s South Wind site represents 58.3 acres for critical and essential facilities and services. The land, east of Highway 101 and south of the Haystack Heights neighborhood, was chosen because the property is largely above the reach of the largest predicted tsunami. The police station, fire station, day care facilities, medical clinic are all within the tsunami inundation zone at their current locations.

According to the 2014 South Wind Master Plan, the city could relocate essential services to the new South Wind site. Current highway access is a logging road.

Preliminary engineering work would cost an additional \$400,000, staff members said at a January work session.

South Wind is vacant except for a water tank and a building used for emergency supply storage.

The site was annexed into city limits but is outside the urban growth boundary. Urban development cannot be approved and urban services cannot be extended to the site unless the boundary is amended.

The City Council will decide in coming months whether to include this amount in the budget next fiscal year. The city has



R.J. MARX

Meg Reed of the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development, after a work session with the Cannon Beach Planning Commission.

\$500,000 in the general reserve fund that could be used for an engineering study, City Manager Brant Kucera said at the work session.

With City Hall facing the need for multimillion dollar upgrades and repairs, costs for bridge repairs and other safety measures, resiliency funds could be spent in a heartbeat.

Planning for safety

Meg Reed, coastal field representative of the Oregon Coast Management Program, a state agency for the protection of coastal resources, came to Cannon Beach for a work session with the Planning Commission in March.

Reed asked commissioners to consider planning measures to implement safety and evacuation goals. Every action, she said, should be seen through the lens of safety.

“I think they’re a very progressive city in terms of its resilience, but there’s always more you can do,” Reed said after the meeting.

Her goal is to “improve evacuation planning in a more comprehensive way and also try to think through land-use measures to limit certain uses or to improve evacuation through new development, to reduce both life-safety and property risk due to tsunami.”

The Fukushima Daichii Nuclear Power Plant, arguably created the greatest long-term hazard in Japan with three nuclear meltdowns, contaminating soil and water supplies for generations.

While we don’t face the risk of a crippled reactor, we could expect the same level 9.0 earthquake experienced in Japan, Reed said.



R.J. MARX

Meg Reed meets with members of the Cannon Beach Planning Commission to discuss tsunami resiliency.

What could new state planning recommendations bring?

“Potentially less development, or it could mean the same amount of development but having mitigation measures be part of it,” Reed said. “We’re trying to get ourselves more prepared so we can be able to recover more quickly after the event.”

In Cannon Beach, the lesson learned from the 2011 quake was not to look back, but to look ahead and plan for what’s next.

Will it be development of the 58-acre South Wind site east of Highway 101 as an “urban reserve”? More funds to make downtown structures more resilient or even taller to enable vertical evacuation? Retrofits to city bridges? Or a tsunami overlay zone with limits to downtown growth?

“Education and outreach, individual and family preparedness, along with planning for emergency services, evacuation, economic recovery are all critical components of community efforts to prepare,” authors write in the 2014 “Preparing for a Cascadia Subduction Zone Tsunami: A Land Use Guide for Oregon Coastal Communities.”

In the long term, communities should undertake a comprehensive risk-based approach to reducing exposure and vulnerability to all natural hazards that potentially affect the community, authors write. “Although this type of effort will provide some high risk communities with the land-use tools necessary to comprehensively address resilience to a local tsunami event, it will likely include controversy and community debate.”

In the time of crisis after the Japanese 2011 tsunami, author Samuels pointed out, “Rarely has local government mattered so deeply to so many Japanese at the same time.”

We can expect the same to hold true here.

Appreciation of those who give their time

Library friends, we of the Cannon Beach Library Board were very honored this past Wednesday, April 5 to host our annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon at the Chamber Hall. There were games, prizes and a delicious array of fresh food to thank our much-appreciated volunteers.

As most Cannon Beach residents know, our library is operated almost entirely by a team of hardy volunteers, who perform desk duties, keep our shelves well-stocked and organized, help to put on various community events and fundraisers, among many other crucial tasks. We are beyond grateful for our team of hard workers! Without you, we couldn’t keep our doors open!

On Saturday, April 8, author Warren Easley will be speaking at the library at 2 p.m. Once a research scientist and international business executive, Easley now lives in Portland, where he spends his time writing fiction and tutoring GED students. His Cal Claxton Mystery Series began with “Matter

AT THE LIBRARY

CARLA O'REILLY



of Doubt,” then “Dead Float” and now continues with “Never Look Down,” which was recently published. Attendance at recent author talks has been quite heavy, so anyone wishing to get a seat should arrive well before the start of the lecture.

The World of Haystack Rock lecture series will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 12, when Tom Horning of Horning Geosciences will be giving a talk on the geology of Haystack Rock. Of course, we can see the rock on a daily basis (except when the weather is unusually foggy) but how much do we actually know about how the rock and surrounding rocks were formed centuries ago. Anybody who lives on the North Coast, or even many of our visitors, will find this a very interesting presentation.

A special treat is in store for participants in Cannon Beach Reads, our own reading discussion group. Longtime Cannon Beach resident Peter Lindsey has done a rewrite of “Comin’ in Over the Rock” and this local book will be the focus of the regular group meeting, which will be at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 19. New members are always welcome, but anyone who has read Peter’s first version of the book, or knows him personally, should find this a very interesting historical discussion indeed.

As we progress toward the important celebration being held in October 2017 — namely our 90th birthday as a library — we have several wonderful future events in late spring and early summer scheduled.

In conclusion, we would once again like to heartily thank the wonderful volunteers who — over the years and especially the past year — have graciously volunteered their time to keeping the Cannon Beach Library the cozy and well-run establishment it continues to be!

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Tuesday, April 11

Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Tuesday, April 18

Cannon Beach Public Works Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Thursday, April 20

Cannon Beach Parks and Community Services Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Cannon Beach Design Review Board, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Thursday, April 27

Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St. Friday, April 28

Friday, April 28

Cannon Beach Emergency Preparedness Committee, 10 a.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Tuesday, May 2

Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Tuesday, May 9

Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Publisher
David F. Pero

Editor
R.J. Marx

Sales/Advertising Manager
Betty Smith

Production Manager
John D. Bruijn

Classified Sales
Jamie Ramsdell

Advertising Sales
Holly Larkins
Brandy Stewart

Staff writer
Brenna Visser

Contributing writers
Rebecca Herren
Katherine Lacaze
Eve Marx
Nancy McCarthy

CANNON BEACH GAZETTE
The Cannon Beach Gazette is published every other week by EO Media Group.
1555 N. Roosevelt, Seaside, Oregon 97138
503-738-5561 • Fax 503-738-9285
www.cannonbeachgazette.com • email: editor@cannonbeachgazette.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
Annually: \$40.50 in county, \$58.00 in and out of county.
Postage Paid at: Cannon Beach, OR 97110

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to Cannon Beach Gazette, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103

Copyright 2017 © Cannon Beach Gazette. Nothing can be reprinted or copied without consent of the owners.

THE NATIONAL AWARD-WINNING

CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

