

New public works director chosen for Cannon Beach

Arndt brings 40 years of public works experience

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette



Jim Arndt will be the new public works director starting May 22.

Longtime Cannon Beach resident Jim Arndt is the new director of public works starting Monday.

Arndt replaces Dan Grassick, who retired at the beginning of May. Arndt has been

Colorado and California for more than 40 years. He retired from his most recent post in Manhattan Beach, California, in 2013, but decided to come out of retirement to serve a community he has come to call home.

"I was actually having coffee with my wife when we saw the article in the Cannon Beach Gazette about Dan retiring," Arndt said. "I found that I missed engineering and this was a unique opportunity."

Arndt and his wife have

had a house in Cannon Beach on and off since 1988, he said.

City Manager Brant Kucera said Arndt stood out as a candidate because of his familiarity with the area, as well as his decades of experience in public works.

"I think he's going to be a great fit," Kucera said.

Arndt said he liked the fact the city has adopted a parks master plan and drafted water and wastewater master plans.

"I think the city has been doing a good job looking forward with regards to plan-

ning," Arndt said. "Not every city gets that far."

Arndt said he has long-standing passion for utility and infrastructure work, and enjoys the challenge of communicating why that work is needed in the community.

Arndt will be taking the lead as the city considers water and wastewater master plans many have deemed controversial after a rate study proposed a 40 percent increase in water rates to implement it.

For the next fiscal year, the city has proposed a 3 percent increase to cover operational costs, but the debate over whether or not rates need to be increased in the future is not over, Kucera said.

"The community is very active and passionate, and I hope to work with the council and the citizens to come to a mutual agreement that works for the town," Arndt said. "I've worked with councils and the community for a long time now, and I hope that experience helps."

SLIP SLIDIN' AWAY

Erosion, winter storms cause slides at Ecola State Park

By Katie Frankowicz
EO Media Group

Erosion, winter storms and landslides have shut down Ecola State Park multiple times and cut a popular trail in two in the past year and a half.

Now, more than 40 years after a 1975 park master plan highlighted these same problem areas, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is examining some of the same solutions proposed back then.

"The problems at the park date back decades," said Chris Havel, associate director for the parks department, "and the solutions are really rather difficult if we're going to stick with the current entrance. And that's where things get sticky."

To reroute the washed-out trail between Ecola Point and Indian Beach is one thing. It will be labor intensive and require funds the park hadn't budgeted for, but at least with trail-building park management is on familiar territory. A long-term fix for the road leading into the park is another dilemma entirely. Since 2015, the department has spent over \$30,000 on various sections of Ecola Park Road.

"Anything that we do there," said Park Manager Ben Cox, "well, nothing that we do there is going to hold back Mother Nature."

Long-term solutions

The 1975 master plan proposed changing road access to the park, noting the existing Ecola Park Road's sharp turns, steep grades, narrow width and vulnerability to landslide damage.

Planners at the time proposed two different access routes: One that used the current road but branched off to intersect with an undeveloped access road, Radar Road, that enters the park from its eastern end near Tillamook Head. The other option abandoned the original road and suggested direct access from U.S. Highway 101 via Radar Road.

"Both access alternatives would require acquisition of private property," the plan noted. Today, planners would also have to consider the dozens of homes that cluster in the hills below the park's boundaries.

Park management has yet to outline a plan or come up with a new suite of possible solutions but they say any long-term proposals would require extensive scoping, meetings and conversations.

The park is looking at the areas where the land is, and historically has been, stable.

"Maybe these are areas where we'd like to relocate or plan a road," said Cliff Serres, manager of the parks department's engineering section.

"We're exploring options

that include an alternate route into the park," Cox said.

Residents farther down Ecola Park Road are concerned about the road's integrity as its condition worsened since last year. Alternative routes are virtually nonexistent, or require four-wheel drive. One resident, Les Wierson, recently presented a petition to the City Council, urging councilors to take a more active role in maintaining the stretch of road between city limits and the park's entrance.

Meanwhile, Ecola State Park reopened after contractors tore out cracked and sliding asphalt along a portion of the road near the pay booth and replaced it with gravel. Later this year, contractors plan to replace a culvert under a section of road right before the Indian Beach parking lot.

Rangers are preparing for summer crowds — an estimated 313,808 people visit the park each year — and the seasonal increase in vehicle traffic, cars that will idle in long lines on the newly graveled road, bottlenecking at the pay booth.

The recent repairs should get them through the summer.

"We're crossing our fingers," Cox said.

Historic problems

Park rangers find themselves saying variations of "Hopefully this will get us through the summer" and "Hopefully this will get us through the winter" often. And for a while there it felt like they were constantly, jokingly, asking each other, "What's the disaster of the day?"

After all, portions of this popular park have been sliding into the ocean for as long as anyone can remember.

"Nothing's new here under the sun," said Serres. "These are the same issues we've been dealing with at the park since we became stewards of the park."

A viewpoint that once wrapped around the side of a cliff at Ecola Point crumbled into the ocean several years ago. Every few years, park managers have to make repairs



PTARMIGAN PTRAILS

Ed Kessler, principal owner of Ptarmigan Ptrails, the company hired by Oregon State Parks to scout new hiking trail routes around the slide area at Ecola State Park, stands on an enormous spruce tree that succumbed to the slide.

to Ecola Park Road as well as the road that dips off toward Indian Beach.

In 1961, a landslide at Ecola Point damaged 125 acres of the 1,023-acre park.

"I'd go up and visit it periodically," said Wierson. "You could stand where the pay booth is now and you couldn't see (the slide) move, but you could hear the trees snap."

The scars of this massive movement of earth and trees and undergrowth were visible for a long time.

The 1975 plan identified three major landslides in Ecola State Park. Ecola Park Road bisects one of these slides. As recorded in 1975 and continuing through today, the slide continues to damage the road.

Slides have impacted the park's ability to get water and electricity to its ranger and visitor facilities, snapping underground wires and pipes. Today, power lines are strung along poles in the slide area right before the pay booth, and water comes in through a flexible, above-ground pipeline.

The Ecola slides are slow moving. While they are dramatic in scope, they rarely present major threats to the health and safety of visitors. They do, however, threaten accessibility to the park.

Recent landslide

The most recent landslide that washed out the trail between Ecola Point and Indian Beach last year is less a slide

ter that stretches for almost an acre.

The slide area is shaped a bit like the letter "U," "like the cirque or bowl of an alpine mountain," Kessler said. The arms of the "U" are the cliffs on either side, relatively solid points marching down toward the ocean. The curved base of the "U" is the ridgeline, a sort of crown of higher, solid ground that arcs between Ecola Point's parking lot and Indian Beach. The trees that grow up there are older and taller than those below; they have withstood numerous slides over the decades. The empty space between the arms and the base of the "U" is where the ground has thundered away, sliding and bulging into the ocean. Deep fissures opened up in these hillsides, 20 feet deep in some places and 10 to 15 feet wide.

Farther down, where the trail used to be, is a river of brown mud and clay. The slide uprooted trees, sent some sliding down toward the water and slammed into others near the cliff edge, causing them to slant backward toward the ridge. It rolled undergrowth into muddy tangles and washed a small bridge dozens of feet down from its original placement on a trail segment that no longer exists. There's an ocean view

that wasn't there before.

New trail

It is the nature of this landscape to change, says Park Ranger Bo Ensign.

As he looked over the slide area at the end of April, he had a hard time remembering what this particular portion of the trail had even looked like.

"Even what had been here is different from what it was before," he said. Now: "It just looks like a bomb went off."

Though park management has yet to finalize a plan, they will likely abandon this entire middle section, opting to bypass the slide zone entirely and reroute up to the ridgeline. They may decide to provide a few in-and-out trails down to familiar viewpoints to preserve some of the characteristics of the original trail. The reroute is expected to cost between \$20,000 and \$50,000.

The route proposed by Ptarmigan Ptrails would travel from high point to high point — from the surviving end of the trail at Ecola Point, up to the solid ridgeline above the slide, and then back down to meet the piece of untouched trail that comes up from Indian Beach. Cox and the rangers say they are excited to show hikers something new.

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