

School district gets first look at strategic plan

Board receives public input for district’s future

By R.J. Marx
Cannon Beach Gazette

As Seaside schools embark on a plan to move endangered schools out of the tsunami zone, school district officials, business and community leaders and others launched the first step in the development of a multiyear strategic plan.

Under the direction of Colonna, principal of Colonna Strategic Planning Services, based in Bend, the district approved the \$15,000 cost for the plan in December, to be paid out of existing areas of the budget, including the district’s professional training budget, Superintendent Sheila Roley said.



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL
Educator and consultant Jerome Colonna.

“The board members met as a group with Jerry Colonna and he took us through his process of developing the strategic plan for the district,” Seaside School District Superintendent Sheila Roley said at the Tuesday, March 20, meeting of the district’s board of directors. “He took us through the first phase of

the process. Our first ask was to have teachers, principals and community members generate questions for members of the community.”

The district held open forums and focus groups districtwide.

“We were just listeners,” Roley said. “It was really wonderful. We had everywhere from two to 20 in the groups.”

One-hundred-eighty people responded overall, she said.

The March report is a summary of those sessions, she said, intended to present the core beliefs of the community and our school community — “what can they look forward to from our district,” Roley said. “Some themes emerged: People really value the things we do well.”

She said respondents offered “lots of compliments

on the quality of our staff and our board, and in general the operations and personnel.”

The district looks at students as individuals, she added. “It’s not one-size-fits-all. People also recognize the importance of our extracurricular activities like athletics, arts, and other activities.”

Focus group participants showed concerns about raising graduation rates absenteeism, standardized testing and developing “real-world skills,” from balancing a checkbook to buying car insurance.

Improvements also sought stronger guidance programs, more focus on academics and safety and security improvements.

Main indicators of success as described by respondents included up-to-date technology, an understanding of how education is tied to future success and sharing schools.

“Interestingly, most of those comments are not about academics,” Roley said. “You know kids are successful if they love fifth-grade loving school and wanting to come back, or knowing how to advocate for themselves. ... People see our role as being very holistic in the community and are not an organization that lives in isolation.”

The goal of the strategic plan is to take the district “to the next level of effectiveness,” she added.

Since approval by the school board, students, teachers and others have registered input in focus groups

and online. “The focus group comments will help form district core values and beliefs,” Colonna wrote in his report. “The core values and beliefs will create a foundation for the plan’s mission, vision, goals and performance indicators.”

Mark Truax, a member of the planning committee, said the process is “going well.”

“It’s really interesting,” Truax said. “It’s kind of a slow pace, but it’s what needs to be done. It’s the kind of project that needs to be step by step and kept on task.”

Completion of the strategic plan is expected by November.

THE MARBLED MURRELET

The small seabird’s survival depends on deep forests, ocean prey

By Nancy McCarthy
For Cannon Beach Gazette

When they are nesting, marbled murrelets stay silent and well hidden. In fact, the coastal seabirds remained a mystery from the time they were discovered in the 1700s by Capt. Cook until 1974, when the first nest was discovered in California.

“There was nothing known about the bird at the time, or at least white man thought,” said S. Kim Nelson, a research biologist with Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.

Nelson spoke at a “Listening to the Land” lecture sponsored by the Necanicum Watershed Council in Seaside March 21.

“The native Americans knew about the marbled murrelets, they knew where they nested,” Nelson said. “They knew about the beautiful dance they do in courtship where they put their bills up in the air and swim across the water and they dive under the water and come up together.”

But nobody thought to ask the Native Americans about the bird that nests deep in forests and forages for prey at the



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
The marbled murrelet.

ocean’s edge.

“The Tlingit tribe revered the marbled murrelet. They wouldn’t eat the murrelet because they thought they were so special and mysterious,” Nelson said.

In the early 1900s, ornithologists still wondered where the murrelets nested. In the 1970s, the National Audubon Society offered \$100 to the first person to find a marbled murrelet nest. That occurred in 1974 when a tree climber found a nest in a Douglas fir tree in California’s Big Basin Redwoods State Park.

It wasn’t until 1990 that the first nest in Oregon was discovered. There are about 70 known murrelet nests in Oregon, Nelson said.

Formerly listed as a “threatened” species, marbled murrelets recently were relisted as “endangered” in Washington, Oregon and California.

Although they can live for 15 to 20 years, they have a low reproductive rate, Nelson said. They don’t breed until they are 2 or 3 years old, and they don’t breed every year. When they do breed, they lay

only one egg between April and July, and if that egg fails, they won’t always re-nest. They often return to the same forest stand during breeding season every year.

The birds, which fly between two ecosystems — forest, where they lay their eggs on large tree limbs, and marine environments, where they feed in shallow water — are experiencing a decline in the habitat they depend on for survival because the old-growth buffer they need is disappearing, Nelson said. As a result, 70 percent of nests fail annually, she added, and chicks aren’t surviving the fledgling from the nests. If they do fledge, they aren’t surviving at sea until they’re old enough to breed.

One potential method of reversing the decline of failed nests could be preserving a larger buffer of trees between clear cuts and older forests where the birds nest, Nelson said. The larger buffer may prevent predator birds, such as stellar jays, American crows and common ravens from reaching the nests, she said.

Because murrelets are



S. Kim Nelson, research biologist with Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.

finding less suitable food in the ocean due to predators, over-fishing and warmer temperatures, Oregon’s five marine reserves will be “great” for the birds, she said. They will find prey in the reserves, which are either closed to fishing or allow only limited fishing. The reserves will be “nurseries for the fish,” she added.

“What murrelets need is dependable, abundant prey, right where their nest sites are,” Nelson said. “So they don’t have to fly up and down the coast; they can fly straight out from their nests and find their prey.”

The Cape Falcon Marine Reserve, near Oswald State Park, will support a known murrelet nest in the park, Nelson said.

“As the (marine reserves) are there longer and longer, we can look at the impact, and from what it’s shown so far, it can only be beneficial for the murrelets,” Nelson said.

Writer’s Series presents PoetryFest 2018

Manzanita PoetryFest 2018, to be held April 14, features workshops conducted by Wendy Willis from 9 a.m. to noon and 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. After a reading by Willis, an open mic for workshop participants follows at 7 p.m.

Willis’ “Blood Sisters of the Republic” was released by Press 53 in 2012. Her second book of poems, “A Long Late Pledge,” won the Dorothy Brunsman Poetry Prize

and was released by Bear Star Press in 2017. Willis has published poems and essays in the New England Review, Oregon Humanities, Poetry Northwest, The Rumpus, Zócalo Public Square and

ZYZZYVA. She is a faculty member in poetry at the Attic Institute in Portland. She has her M.F.A. in poetry from the Rainier Writing Workshop at Pacific Lutheran University.

Willis splits her time be-

tween her roles as mother, poet and advocate for democracy.

She lives in Portland with her husband, the poet David Biespiel, his son Lucas and her two daughters, Ruby and Violet.

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