

# 'The Galapagos island of Oregon'

By Brenna Visser  
Cannon Beach Gazette

About \$1 million has been raised through private donations and grants to transform forested land behind Arch Cape into a rainforest preserve and protected watershed.

After committing in November 2016 to purchase 3,500 acres of rainforest above Oswald West State Park for conservation, the \$1 million mark sets the North Coast Land Conservancy on track in a five-year fundraising campaign to raise \$10 million to buy the land from Ecotrust Forest Management, which is managing the property until that goal is met.

Arch Cape also hopes to turn another 2,100 acres of this land into a community forest, a project born out of the desire to protect the town's watershed.

Dozens of people representing the forestry industry, parks service, U.S. Forest Service and environmental advocacy groups toured this terrain last week as a part of the regional Community Forest Forum. The tour is one of many to come as the land trust works to drum up public interest to raise funds.

The goal is to protect what is considered a culturally and ecologically unique environment for generations, said Katie Voelke, the conservancy's executive director. Because of the way the land was formed millions of years ago, there are some species of wildlife that are unique to just a few peaks along this coastal range.

"In a way it's like the Galapagos island of Oregon," Voelke said.

It will also be the first place in Oregon, and one of few places in the world, where an entire coastal watershed is permanently conserved, from the headwaters to the ocean. The land trust hopes to have \$3 million more in donations and



BRENNA VISSER/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

**Katie Voelke, executive director of the North Coast Land Conservancy, gives a presentation about the Rainforest Reserve with Amrita Vatsal, managing director of Ecotrust Forest Management.**

pledges by year's end.

"When this is successful, it will make a model for other small communities to protect their water. It sounds impossible — raise \$10 million, buy the land, manage the land," Voelke said. "But we know it's possible because anyone we tell this story to always talks about how much they want it to happen."

Discussion of creating the Arch Cape community forest intensified about three years ago after coastal communities with industrial timber operations in their watershed areas started to notice water quality issues, Oregon Coast Alliance President Mike Manzulli said in November.

In Arch Cape, the water district is working with the conservancy and the environmental group Sustainable Northwest to raise enough money to buy their portion of the land, with a fundraising goal that fluctuates with timber prices.

The idea behind a community-owned forest is that

residents can make different management decisions, like require larger buffers that would prevent stream contamination, ban pesticides and select-cut trees for revenue that goes straight to the community.

But acquiring a community forest has been a slow, methodical process. Arch Cape Water District is still in the running for a \$4.5 million grant from the U.S. Forest Service to purchase the land, and recently secured about \$33,000 from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to finance an outreach coordinator to organize public outreach for the project.

But one of the biggest roadblocks to transitioning the community forest concept from an idea into reality is finding enough donations to close the gap between public grant dollars and the matches they usually require, said Ben Dair, senior manager of conservation finance at Sustainable Northwest. Getting community donations is critical to help fund associated costs with projects like these, including

writing forest management plans, legal fees and hiring forestry crews to do timber inventories.

Community forest models are common in other parts of the country, but fairly uncommon in the Pacific Northwest. A strategic plan outlining a larger financing strategy will be released later this summer.

"This is a long tradition in the Northeast, and we're just starting to have a movement on the West Coast," Dair said. "We're really eager to share lessons learned."

Tours are an important tool to help the community feel engaged with the project firsthand, Dair said.

"Often when we're down below we don't see (this unique geology), and it really helps develop the story of this place and helps people develop a personal relationship with the land," Dair said. "We may be neighbors, but until you walk around the watershed with the trees up close, it's abstract. So we're trying to make it real for people."

# Site permits await as school district prepares for a June groundbreaking

School from Page 1A

with an access road, parking, drop-off and track field.

Henry said school district representatives were still working with the city's public works director Dale McDowell and city planner Kevin Cupples in understanding utilities, managing the reservoir, interagency agreements and bid packages coming up.

Some costs, such as road upgrades, pump station and water tank, are yet unfunded, with the water tank estimated at a \$6 million cost.

The sum is included in the Seaside City 2018-19 budget, but City Manager Mark Winstanley said he expects the school district will pay some of the costs. "Here is where we start the conversation," Winstanley said in April.



COLIN MURPHEY/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

**Seaside School Board members recently toured the school construction site that is still in the process of being logged.**

Other site permits await.

Wetlands approval from the Department of State Lands and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is expected July 1, Henry said. The corps will deter-

mine the type and amount of mitigation necessary to offset environmental losses from the proposed project.

The district also anticipates notification from the

Department of Environmental Quality. "We're hoping to have a groundbreaking in June," Henry said.

## Meet the contractor

Local contractors are invited by Hoffman Construction Co. to a "meet the contractor" event. Hosted by Hoffman, with the Clatsop Economic Development Resources and the Seaside Chamber of Commerce, the event will provide local subcontractors and businesses specifics about the project, timetables, and subcontractor and bidding opportunities. The event takes place at the Clatsop Community College South Campus Tuesday, 1455 N. Roosevelt Drive, on June 5, from 6 to 8 p.m. To attend, contact cary-bubenik@hoffmancorp.com or call 503-329-1002.

## Community welcome to annual picnic at Circle Creek Center

Pack a picnic and join supporters of North Coast Land Conservancy at Circle Creek Conservation Center in Seaside on Saturday, June 16, for the third annual Summer Picnic at the Barn. It's an opportunity to spend time with friends, take a guided tour of the trails, and enjoy this large conserved property at the foot of Tillamook Head a few days

before the summer solstice. No admission fee; all are welcome.

Guided walks on the trails at Circle Creek will take place from 3 to 7 p.m.

Circle Creek Conservation Center is at the end of Rippet Road in Seaside on the west side of U.S. Highway 101. More details are posted at NCLCtrust.org.

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