

North Coast Tourism Studio outlines goals, projects

By **BRENNA VISSER**
Cannon Beach Gazette

Establishing a beach and trail ambassador program, improving signs and starting a new message campaign about protecting natural resources are some of the ideas tourism leaders are proposing to make the tourism industry more sustainable.

For the past year and half, business owners, government, tourism and non-profit leaders from Clatsop and Tillamook counties have been participating in a North Coast Tourism Studio, a program coordinated by Travel Oregon.

At the program’s final event Wednesday, Jan. 16, participants designed teams to carry out projects related to solving congestion issues, overcrowding at popular destinations and visitor education over several years.

In addition to a \$25,000 grant from Travel Oregon, business leaders from Clatsop and Tillamook counties are pooling together about \$45,000 to help fund these initiatives as a region.

“The biggest benefit from this is that we ended working in silos,” said Nan Devlin, of Visit Tillamook Coast. “It’s not about just supporting one town, one county ... it’s about supporting the North Coast.”



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Haystack Rock is a draw for visitors to the Oregon Coast.

Encouraging stewardship

Many of the projects are centered around protecting trails, parks and beaches from misuse and overpopulation.

One team is set to create and share more photos of less-visited places to reduce pressure on popular destinations like Écola and Fort

Stevens state parks.

Another will invest more in communication about good stewardship, starting with an inventory of what is happening already.

“If we’re going to encourage people to recycle, we have to make sure there’s enough recycling containers,” said Claudine Rehn, of the Tillamook Estuary

Partnership.

One team, led by Teri Wing, of Oregon State Parks, plans to create a Beach Trail Ambassador program that will help educate visitors about proper trail etiquette and safety.

“If someone is going up Falcon Cove and they have flip-flops on, they’ll turn them around and say, ‘It’s

not good to wear flip-flops on this trail,’” Wing said. “The idea is to get them good info to make them safe as well as give them information about the area.”

Transportation was also a focus, with some aiming to educate hotel staff on public and alternative transportation options so more visitors are aware of how to

get around without a car. The group, headed by Ken Shonkwiler, of the Oregon Department of Transportation, also plans to develop better wayfinding signs so people know where to park and get around once they get here.

The right message

Participants also decided it was important to educate and impress upon local residents how important tourism is to the region’s economy.

Pamela Wev, a Clatsop County commissioner and leader of the group charged with championing the value of tourism, said it’s important to address the distaste some residents have about the industry.

“Lots of people don’t see tourism as a part of our local economy,” she said.

With tourism spending at almost \$2 billion on the Oregon Coast alone, Wev said it will take everyone embracing the industry to make sure it grows and is managed in the right way.

“That’s money spent by people from outside,” she said. “As an economic development person, I can tell you there’s nothing better for a community than people spending money that was earned somewhere else, because it really enhances your economic base. We need to help our citizens understand this reality.”

Water: Falcon Cove water concerns drive discussion

Continued from Page A1

Exploring alternatives

Water shortages in Falcon Cove can mainly be attributed to record low flows from the area’s main spring and increased development, according to a water district memo. The last long-term plan, done in 2004, projected the water district would be fully built out at 147 homes. Now, the district expects 220 homes.

The dramatic growth in homes being used as vacation rentals is also contributing to the problem. Vacation rentals have brought a significant increase in demand during the time of year with the least amount of water.

An engineering study in September showed the system would not be sustainable if the area was fully built out, said Charles Dice, the secretary and system operator for the water district’s board.

The water district is exploring different ways to offer alternatives to people interested in building during the moratorium. One option is trucking in water and storing it in holding tanks.

“I wanted to come up here and kind of lobby for our lot owners,” Dice told county commissioners. “As a water board, we feel really badly we can’t give them the water connection they need.”

Long-term approach

The county has reservations about approving alternative systems during the moratorium, particularly because there is no requirement for property owners to connect to the water district’s system once it is lifted.

“It’s just better planning practice,” Gail Henrik-



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Construction workers build a home in the Falcon Cove area south of Cannon Beach.

son, the county’s community development director, said in reference to having homes all be part of one water system.

Another concern is the water district’s proposal to use holding tanks and trucked-in water. The county already has a number of water alternatives on the books, Henrikson said.

But before any building permits can be approved, the county and water district will have to come to a new agreement.

Currently, the county requests a letter from the water district guaranteeing enough water for a new development. In order for alternatives to work, this checks-and-balances method needs to be more

flexible, Henrikson said, so that homeowners seeking to use alternative systems like rain catchment or a well can prove to the county their system meets county code.

As of now, there is no way to verify through the county or the water district whether the holding tank system would comply with county code.

“What we’re looking for is something that documents they can meet our code of 250 gallons a day,” Henrikson said.

Dice argues that holding tanks and rain catchment systems are similar, but that the tanks offer more reliability.

“As an engineer, I don’t see a big difference between this and a rainwater system,

especially in these drought years the last three years,” Dice continued. “I would much rather call someone up and have someone deliver my water rather than sit around and pray to the rain Gods and hope that it rains.”

In the meantime, the water district has passed a water conservation ordinance and commissioned a well feasibility study to identify new sources.

But water availability needs to stay on the commission’s to-do list, Commissioner Pamela Wev said.

“This is an issue I bet isn’t going to go away,” she said. “And it’d be really terrific if we could begin to do some thinking on the long term.”

Manzanita: New year brings new challenges

Continued from Page A1

of Manzanita as an assistant to then City Manager Jerry Taylor, who was beginning to eye retirement or at least semi-retirement. Twenty-two months later, in October 2018, Alamillo was named city manager taking over for Taylor, who had held the position for 22 years. Taylor assumed the role of project manager, a two-day-a-week position created by the city council, to help and continue to mentor the new city manager. His duties now include the development of a personnel handbook, updating council rules and procedures along with Manzanita’s nuisance ordinance and emergency preparedness plan.

With no guarantee that she would be named city manager, Alamillo had gone through the hiring process all over again for Taylor’s position. She was ecstatic and honored when she was offered the job. Things continued to fall into place.

“Manzanita has been so welcoming and everyone

has been so supportive. I continue to feel good about moving here,” she said.

With the new year come new challenges as Alamillo continues to settle in and tackle her day-to-day civic duties. First up on the council agenda is revisiting its goals for 2019, most of which are carryovers from previous years and ones that Alamillo has become well acquainted with in her short tenure. At the top of the list, she said, is completing a plan to relocate Manzanita’s city hall.

To that end a five-member committee, in existence since 2017, will deliver its findings this spring to include a space assessment for current and future needs, a cost analysis, and financing options. While no official decisions have yet been made this much is certain, the new structure will be seismic resistant and located outside the tsunami inundation zone. It will house not only city hall and police offices but a emergency preparedness facility as well, according to Alamillo.

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