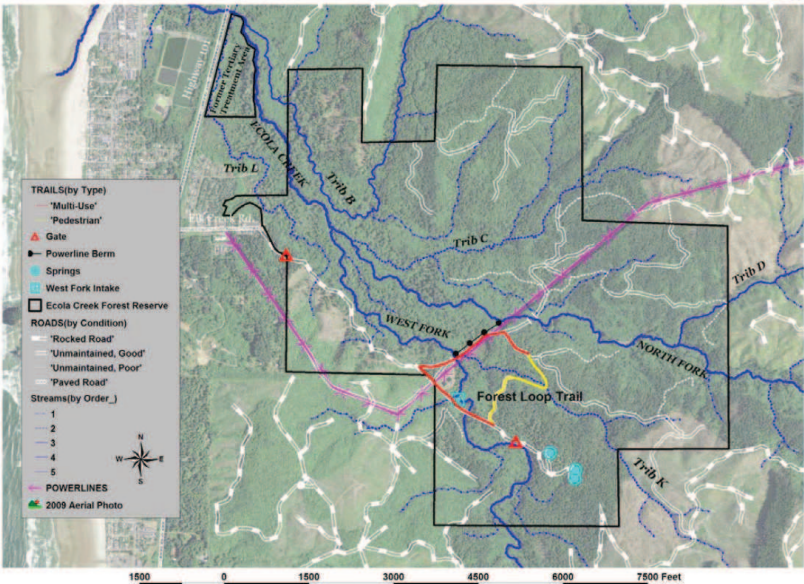


# Keeping the Ecola Creek Forest Reserve healthy

Ecola Creek Forest Reserve - Phase 1 Trail System



City of Cannon Beach

By CARA MICO  
Cannon Beach

The health and future of the Ecola Creek Forest Reserve was on the agenda as the Cannon Beach Parks Committee at the Feb. 28 work session.

Depending on future input, recommendations could include a temporary moratorium on recreational fishing and limits on logging within the 1,040-acre property.

The Ecola Creek Forest Reserve plan, updated every five years by the the Parks Committee, highlighted almost two-dozen priorities.

While the primary objective is to lay the groundwork for the plan update, potential projects surfaced.

Along with fish habitat monitoring and a possible moratorium on recreational fishing in the reserve to better understand its impact on salmon populations, the plan could provide guidance on road maintenance, tree thinning, invasive species removal and better signage.

Committee members said road maintenance impacts every aspect of the plan, including logging, fire prevention and public access.

More roads mean more people which can mean more trash and a greater fire risk.

“If we recommend improving roads, that increases access,” committee vice chair Jillayne Sorenson said in reference to the increased fire hazard when people enter forested areas.

While tree thinning may be necessary in some areas of the reserve either for ecological reasons or for safety, preparing the roads so that the trees can be removed might be too expensive.

The committee was in general agreement that the cost of improving the roads for the purpose of timber removal alone likely exceeded the resale value of the trees.

Rules and signage about fishing are unclear, committee members said, and more information is needed on aquatic habitat.

Sorenson suggested a temporary fishing moratorium in order to collect more information.

The committee will hold another work session on March 14 in preparation for the regular meeting March 21.

## Clatsop County commissioners concerned about opt-out charges for smart meters

By BRENNNA VISSER  
The Daily Astorian

County commissioners are concerned about how opt-out fees for smart meters could financially impact Pacific Power customers.

Over the past several weeks, dozens of people have approached the county commission and cities on the North Coast with complaints about the new meters, which are digital and track power usage through a secure wireless mesh network.

Some customers want to opt out of getting one, but feel the monthly \$36 fee makes that prohibitive.

“For a lot of constituents, that’s burdensome,” Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan said.

The project, which will upgrade 24,000 meters across Clatsop County, is part of the company’s statewide effort to build a more resilient power grid better suited to adapt to renewable energy, said Alisa Dunlap, a regional business manager with Pacific Power, during a presentation to the county commission on Wednesday, Feb. 27.

More than two-thirds of Oregon homes and businesses have already made the switch.

But some people object to the technology due to possible health risks associated with radio frequencies emitted from the digital electric meters. Others have privacy concerns, fearing their personal power usage information could be hacked over a wireless system.

These fears are largely unwarranted, Dunlap said. The wireless system is encrypted, making it difficult to hack. The radio frequencies are negligible compared to what is emitted from smartphones and other Wi-Fi-enabled devices.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Alisa Dunlap, with Pacific Power, speaks about the company’s new smart meters.

**‘A 15-MINUTE PHONE CALL HAS MORE (RADIO FREQUENCY) THAN SITTING OUTSIDE YOUR SMART METER FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR.’**

Alisa Dunlap, a regional business manager with Pacific Power

“A 15-minute phone call has more (radio frequency) than sitting outside your smart meter for an entire year,” she said.

Pacific Power decided to let customers opt out of the program for a fee of \$36 a month. The fee was set to cover the cost for an employee to take a special trip to read a standard meter, Dunlap said.

But some residents, like Christopher Paddon, said the fee is excessive and prohibits many customers from exercising their choice.

After hearing complaints from several friends about the issue, Paddon circulated a petition that gar-

nered about 100 signatures. The petition asks the county commission to issue a moratorium against Pacific Power levying any kind of opt-out fee until the matter can be re-evaluated by the state Public Utility Commission, which regulates the power company.

“I was appalled when I learned what they were charging,” Paddon said.

In a letter shared with the county commission, state Rep. Tiffany Mitchell, D-Astoria, also echoed these concerns, writing that she found the program overall to be a benefit but noted the loss of local jobs and the cost burden.

The concern over opt-out fees is not unique to the North Coast. In October, Josephine County commissioners adopted an ordinance prohibiting utilities from charging opt-out fees for customers. The Public Utility Commission sued the county, saying it does not have the authority to set rates.

Pacific Power has submitted an alternative opt-out plan to the Public Utility Commission, where customers would pay \$9 a month for less-frequent meter reads.

It is not within Clatsop County’s power to stop the rollout of smart meters or change the rates, according to county counsel. But commissioners felt it was important to communicate constituent concerns to the Public Utility Commission.

“The pricing makes it really unavailable, so that’s my concern,” Commissioner Lianne Thompson said. “I think it’s an upgrade. I’m going to have one at my house ... I respect that other people have a different idea, and I don’t want to price people out of a choice.”

Commissioner Mark Kujala disagreed, and said while he appreciated the community input, smart meters are a benefit to the county — especially for major public works operations in Warrenton, a city he represents.

“I feel strongly that we do not intervene in this,” Kujala said.

The county commission will consider sending a letter to the Public Utility Commission.

“I know a lot of people that are very fine with smart meters,” Thompson said. “But in respect to people who are not, I want to raise their concerns with the body that has the authority to deal with them. And that’s not us.”

## Lessons from Cannon Beach, for Gearhart

By R.J. MARX  
Cannon Beach Gazette

Should Gearhart take greater control of the city’s commercial development?

Cannon Beach Community Development Director Jeff Adams came to Gearhart’s Planning Commission on Feb. 14 at the invitation of commission member David Smith.

Adams was asked to lead a discussion of design review, a topic he has studied throughout the country. “I came from coastal Georgia, worked in Illinois, Kansas, resort areas, dealing with a lot of these same issues everywhere I go,” Adams said.

Adams, who arrived in Cannon Beach late last year, described the planning process as one of “making better decisions.”

Design review may consider corridor planning, signage, size and scale, historic districts and landscaping, he said. Cities may regulate parking, or types of



Google Maps

View of Gearhart along U.S. Highway 101.

stores to prohibit arcades, food carts or other drive-in facilities.

General development policies in the Cannon Beach code discourage “commercial uses which detract from the unique character of downtown, or are detrimental to the small town atmosphere of Cannon Beach shall be prohibited.”

That includes no “formula food” — restaurants defined as businesses required by contractual or

other arrangements to offer standardized menus, ingredients, food preparation, interior or exterior design, or uniforms.

In Cannon Beach, modifications to commercial or multifamily structures are subject to design review, a process currently not in place in Gearhart.

Gearhart’s plan features three levels of commercial zones, with the goal of achieving a compact town center in the vicinity of

Pacific Way and Cottage Avenue. The city will establish zoning ordinance standards to protect residential areas from adjacent commercial development.

Adams stressed a regional approach to many of the concerns here, starting with each city’s comprehensive plan.

“We need to work not just within our jurisdiction,” he said, particularly with transportation, housing and corridor planning.

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