

Seaside ready to take a fresh look at grading dunes

City partners with CREST to create new guidelines

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

Seaside is receiving some help from a local task force to keep its dunes healthy and safe.

The City Council approved an agreement with the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce to update the city's foredune management plan last month. The Astoria-based task force is a community organization that specializes in environmental and coastal planning.

The update could lead to more trees, plantings and dune-grading activities. Many of these are prohibited on Seaside beaches because of state guidelines.

To conform with state rules, the city needs to update its plan and seek an exception to the statewide planning goal dealing with dunes and beaches, known as Goal 18. The exception — which allowed property owners in different areas along the beach to grade their sections below goal limits — expired several years ago, according to Planning Director Kevin Cupples.

The task force will provide its services for approximately \$12,100, or a rate of \$60 per hour. Additionally, the city plans to contract with an expert in coastal geology to provide technical oversight.

The need for updates

The city is considering amendments to provide for dune grading in selected areas to depths between the

base flood elevation and four feet above base flood elevation. Currently, any dune grading below four feet above the base flood elevation requires the city to obtain an exception to Goal 18, according to Cupples.

In the past, the city had an exception to Goal 18 to grade the dunes from Broadway to north of 12th Avenue. At that time, a group of property owners along the Prom from about Third to 10th avenues received approval to grade the dunes near their homes and businesses. They continued to do maintenance grading after the initial project.

"Now we're to a point where trying to continue maintenance grading is violating the goal, so we've got to reauthorize the exception or you can't grade down to the levels that you were allowed to before," Cupples explained.

The Land Conservation and Development Commission will have to approve the exception. The statewide planning goal set the level at four feet above the base flood elevation as "a safety measure," Cupples said. "It's a matter of protecting the inland areas from potential flooding."

In order to get an exception approved, the city needs to justify allowing grading below that level and demonstrate that it won't have a negative affect on safety in those areas.

What Cupples believes will help is that portions of the Seaside beach are underlain by cobblestone, which is added protection.



R.J. MARX/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

A foredune grading plan is being developed in Seaside. Here, the dunes just north of 12th Avenue.

"Even if you eroded part of your sand away, you still have cobble beach protection, which tends to break up waves pretty well," Cupples said.

Changes in the future

The city wants the management plan amendments to make grading elevations "dynamic," so they respond to future changes in the base flood elevation. For instance, if the base flood elevation is lowered in the future, the city's allowed

grading elevation would lower automatically to allow for enhanced grading activities, Cupples said. Likewise, if the base flood elevation is heightened, the allowed grading elevations also would heighten, ensuring "the allowed grading elevations would not compromise flood hazard protection," according to a memorandum presented at the City Council meeting.

Rather than including specific grading depths in the plan and exception based on the current levels, Cupples

said, "You want to be able to say, 'No, if that level goes down, then the grading level will go down along with it.'"

Managing vegetation

The city plans to clarify what vegetation management options are allowed in different beach areas. Some vegetation management occurs in the southern region of the beach, but the plan did not anticipate the amount of tree growth in that area. The plan needs to specify that the city is "not trying to

create an urban forest down there," Cupples said. "It's supposed to have kind of a semi-open look."

With so many trees growing in the area, the dense vegetation offers an opportunity for people to camp overnight, which is against city ordinance and creates a potential fire risk.

Right now, the city allows certain actions.

"When there is an unhealthy spacing of trees, we've allowed it to be taken out, but it's not well explained in the plan that you should be doing that," Cupples said. "That's what we want to be clarified."

CREST to provide scope, goal-setting

Kevin Cupples said the city's Planning Department does not have the staff and resources needed to focus on the process of updating the foredune management plan, at this time. CREST is a council of local governments, of which Seaside is a part, that helps communities with land-use planning, Director Denise Lofman said.

She said it is important to work with the state during the process "to make sure whatever we are creating for Seaside can be approved at the state level, she said. "The state is really interested in making sure properties are protected in addition to dunes being able to be managed."

Public hearings on the amendments will be June to August. Seaside City Council must approve the amendments before the updated plans and justifications are sent to the Land Conservation and Development Commission.

Commission mulls growth boundary options

Growth from Page 1A

satisfy the city's projected population in 20 years, an analysis showed about 208 acres.

"We can back our 20-year demand down to where it would be a 14-year demand and go with that," City Planner Kevin Cupples said.

This would show the state that the city is considering public input and testimony, he said. "And then we can re-evaluate that seven years down the line, or 10 years down the line."

Dispersing the impact

Since the commission started considering the expansion, members focused on the Southeast Hills site, to the south and east of Spruce Drive and Wahanna Road. They determined that area alone could provide enough developable land to meet the city's 20-year land supply needs.

Landowners in that area, which currently is part of unincorporated Clatsop County, have questioned the expansion and how it would impact property tax evaluations, traffic patterns, infrastructure and lifestyles.

Two other sites, earlier deemed less desirable than the Southeast Hills site, are back on the table and could help disperse the impact of an Urban Growth Boundary expansion. The first option is the Lewis and Clark Hills site, north of Lewis and Clark Road, which could provide about 23 acres of developable land. Second is the North Hills site, east of North Wahanna Road with potential access from Shore Terrace and Ocean Avenue, which could provide about 34 acres of developable land.

Hanson suggested the city take a two-step approach, first submitting a primary application to satisfy the 14-year land-needs analysis, and keeping the other options "on the books" to make another expansion request at a later date, if necessary.

Commissioners supported the more conservative approach but suggested, rather than taking the initial 141 acres entirely from the Southeast Hills site, combining the Lewis and

Clark Hills site, the North Hills site and a portion of the Southeast Hills site, to more evenly distribute the impact.

"I want to bring in those other two sites and cut back on the amount we bring in from the Southeast site, because that's where all the opposition is," Commissioner Richard Ridout said. "Whether we develop lowland or highland, that is the next thing to be decided."

Meeting state planning goals

The city started looking at a potential Urban Growth Boundary expansion in order to address state guidelines regarding long-term planning for population growth and urbanization. Those guidelines currently ask municipalities to demonstrate a 20-year supply of developable land. The state is revamping and updating those guidelines to suggest a 14-year time frame instead to help streamline the process and make it simpler for smaller municipalities, Hanson said. Taking a conservative approach to the potential expansion would actually align Seaside with the changes the state is considering, and also address the concern of citizens in the proposed boundary expansion area who suggested the city "overshot what our need is," Cupples added.

The Portland State University's Population Research Center is scheduled to issue a new population forecast for Seaside in June 2017.

The commission has received differing opinions on how much developable land is needed to meet the city's projected population growth, with statistics supporting both sides, Com-

The Portland State University's Population Research Center is scheduled to issue a new population forecast for Seaside in June 2017.

missioner Chris Hoth said. With the future uncertain, he favors planning for a shorter time frame.

"Having maybe just a trifle less uncertainty makes more sense to me," he said. "If we're going way out, we could be way over, we could be way under. We can always revisit it. We always have an option to do that."

Cleaning up the boundaries

At the request of Seaside resident John Dunzer, the city and consultants analyzed another site, near the Cove in southwest Seaside, to see what it could offer in terms of developable land.

Because the area is functionally "a long dead-end road," with very limited access, Hanson said he does not believe the site is optimal for inclusion into the Urban Growth Boundary expansion request. It would

only provide about 4 acres suitable for development.

However, in looking at the area, the city realized its current zoning maps do not match Clatsop County's maps in terms of where Seaside's existing boundary sits. The county's map recognizing Seaside's Urban Growth Boundary includes a few areas not shown on the city's map, and vice versa. If nothing else, Cupples said, the city should use this opportunity to clarify the actual southwest boundary.

"When this is all said and done, even if you don't change anything down in that area, what I would like to do is match what the county has," he said. "Then, if there are lands the county is saying are not in, I want to make sure those lands do get in, because they have historically been in the Urban Growth Boundary the city recognized."

Remember the new Deposit Friendly ATM in Warrenton!
651 SE Marlin Ave.
503.861.6525

Bank of the Pacific
FDIC

CONCEAL CARRY PERMIT CLASS
Oregon - Utah Valid 35 States
December 12th 1PM or 6PM
Best Western: 555 Hamburg Ave, Astoria
OR/Utah—valid in WA \$80 or Oregon only \$45
www.FirearmTrainingNW.com | FirearmTrainingNW@gmail.com
360-921-2071

102.3 fm

KC.RX

the Classic Rock Station

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

FLOORING

Randall Lee's 2/3 of Showroom ALWAYS ON SALE!
FlooringAmerica

Window Treatments, Fabric, Wallpaper, Flooring and Interior Design

2311 N. Roosevelt Dr., Seaside, OR 97138 • 503-738-5729
rlfflooring@yahoo.com • www.RandallLeesFlooring.com

Randall Lee's Flooring Outlet • 3579 Hwy 101 Gearhart • 503-738-6756
Warehouse pricing • Open to the Public • Hundreds of instock rolls & remnants • In House Binding

LANDSCAPING

Laurelwood Compost • Mulch • Planting MacMix
Soil Amendments

YARD DEBRIS DROP-OFF
(no Scotch Broom)
503-717-1454
34154 HIGHWAY 26
SEASIDE, OR

Laurelwood Farm

CONSTRUCTION

BOB MCEWAN CONSTRUCTION, INC.

EXCAVATION • UNDERGROUND UTILITIES
ROAD WORK • FILL MATERIAL
SITE PREPARATION • ROCK

OWNED AND OPERATED BY MIKE AND CELINE MCEWAN

503-738-3569

34154 HWY 26, SEASIDE, OR
P.O. BOX 2845, GEARHART, OR

SERVING THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST SINCE 1956 • CC48302

ADVERTISING

TO PLACE YOUR AD HERE!



Call or Email
Wendy Richardson
503.791.6615
wrichardson@dailyastorian.com

BUSINESS DIRECTORY