

February 24, 2019

Community Development (Planning) Department
City Hall
169 SW Coast Highway
Newport, OR 97365

To the Community Development (Planning) Department:

I have been a volunteer diver at the Oregon Coast Aquarium for 16 years and a volunteer diver with ODFW to survey the marine reserves for 3 years. I have spent quite a bit of time along the South Jetty and have had the opportunity to observe how the jetty is used and enjoyed throughout the year.

Overall, the South Beach State Park Plan has some much needed additions and upgrades. However, I believe the plan missed providing a wildlife viewing and educational opportunity at the First Finger, as it is commonly known, which sits directly across a proposed 32 space parking area.

I noted on page 33 of the Draft Master Plan visitor feedback about what should be improved in the parks included more opportunities for viewing wildlife and more interpretive opportunities and education about nature and history.

The First Finger is rich with wildlife from harbor seals that reliably use the rocks as a haul-out to a wide variety of birds including the brown pelican which is listed as endangered by the State. ODFW states on their website that the Pacific harbor seal is an Oregon Conservation Strategy Species, with limiting human disturbance being one of the conservation actions. I have often smiled hearing visitors exclaim with delight when they spot the harbor seals so close to shore. I have seen many birders at the First Finger, whispering, pointing and photographing birds throughout the year. Yaquina Bay is so important to birders that it is considered an Important Bird Area (IBA) by the National Audubon Society. IBA is a designation that is recognized internationally and is a site that has been selected for its outstanding habitat value and the role it plays in hosting birds. It is also listed as a stop in the Oregon Coast Birding Trail Guide on page 19.

Given that the First Finger offers outstanding wildlife viewing, it is a shame that the Plan proposes to create a large parking lot directly across from this prime wildlife area with easier access to the water thus encouraging more wildlife harassment. I would propose instead that a small wildlife viewing platform be constructed to encourage wildlife viewing. It should provide ADA access as well as interpretive signs about the wildlife there and some history about the

bridge. I propose providing some parking, no more than 10 spaces, and not construct a vault toilet or tideland access. This would help reduce noise for birders and discourage wildlife harassment. The tideland access could be moved further east closer to the public parking lot by the Regatta Condominiums and away from the First Finger.

The shoreline along the east end of the jetty is considered a High Resource Value and a Conservation Priority in the Plan (figure SI-B-CNRV map). This proposal tiers well to the following Values and Goals stated in the Plan that pertain to this area:

- Value 1: Access
 - The Plan acknowledges that in areas with sensitive natural resources it may not be possible or desirable to accommodate all the desired parking.
 - Provide ADA access to beaches and shoreline viewing areas where feasible.
- Value 2: Scenic Beauty
 - Look for opportunities to develop new viewpoints and viewing platforms to highlight scenic views.
- Value 3: Natural Resources
 - Protect areas in parks identified as having high natural resource value.
 - Where possible, avoid locating any facilities in areas identified as sensitive plant or wildlife habitat – measures should be taken to mitigate the impact of recreation use on sensitive habitats.
 - Protect marine mammal haul-outs, rocky intertidal areas, and off-shore rock habitats.
 - Maintain and enhance wildlife habitat throughout the parks.
 - Where appropriate, consider installing interpretive signage aimed at educating visitors about the importance of protecting wildlife habitat.
- Value 5: Discovery
 - Improve existing interpretive programs.
 - Enhance outdoor education opportunities.

Lastly, I would like the Committee to be advised that in 2017 a portion of South Beach was cordoned off to protect nesting snowy plovers. This may impact plans for fat bike riding on South Beach in the future.

Thank-you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Hilaire Bojonell
2750 SW Coho St.
Newport, OR 97365