September 28, 2019

Cannon Beach City Council
City Hall / Foredune
163 E. Gower St.
Cannon Beach, OR 97110

Via Email: dick@ci.cannon-beach.or.us

Re: Foredune Management Plan

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

As you are aware, the city required, through State of Oregon and national guidance based on the science available at the time, to plant European beach grass (EBG) to stabilize the dunes along ocean-front developments to control erosion, blowing sand and to provide additional protection against storm surges.

Although EBG works well to accumulate sand by trapping the sand from the beaches and piling the sand within the foredune system, it is a non-native beach grass that grows much more quickly than native plants, outcompeting them for water and space. This stops the natural sand movement and changes the shape of the dunes, affecting the entire dune ecosystem and destroying habitat for native dune plants, insects and animals. Several sensitive dune plant species and nesting habitat for the Western Snowy Plover, which is listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act, are jeopardized by EBG.

The Oregon Dunes Restoration Collaborative, formed in 2014, is focusing on removing EBG from the Dunes National Recreation Area, where it has spread massively, stabilized the dunes, and threatens the entire famous dunal ecosystem. According to the Oregon State Parks Department (and echoed in the reports by Drs. Allen and Hacker), no one anticipated the long-term problems European beach grass would bring to native species when it was planted. The State of Oregon is now preparing to proactively manage various dune systems across the Oregon coast to provide a more vibrant and diverse environment for our native wildlife (and still providing protection from storm damage and flooding and beauty of our beaches).

The current dune systems along Cannon Beach are effectively a man-made construction and as such, should be maintained just as we maintain our roads, bridges and other urban infrastructure. The City of Cannon Beach is not natural, and we must do our best to maintain balance. After attending many of the public hearings and reading much of the research information and public testimony provided, it appears that the proposed City of Cannon Beach Foredune Management Plan is an effective, flexible and adaptive management plan (as well as a thoughtful compromise among the many dissenting opinions) based on sound knowledge of beach and dune processes. It also provides an appropriate balance as we consider the interrelation between the environment and the impact of urban development.
In addition to replacing European beach grass with American beach grass, approving the proposed City of Cannon Beach Foredune Management Plan will provide responsible monitoring and management of the dune systems that will make great strides in restoring our wide beaches, providing protection against storm damage and flooding, providing a more diverse habitat for birds, animals (including razor clams) and plants, and continuing to support the beauty of our beach.

The goal is not to destroy the dunes, but to manage an artificial environment for the benefit of all and to conserve the natural diversity of coastal environments

Thank you for your consideration,

Robbie Dodd  
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