



**Staff Report**

For City Council Meeting - 04/03/2019

***Subject - Correspondence - Mulch in the dunes***

**Synopsis:** Previously there was a concern about leaving tree mulch in the dunes after trimming and cutting in the beaches and dunes overlay zone. Attached is a simple report by CREST with some information about mulch and its effect. This is for information only, staff will retain this document for future discussions about the dune vegetation ordinance yet to be scheduled.

**Recommended Motion:** None

**Legal Analysis:** None

**Financial Analysis:** None

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Chad", written in a cursive style.

Chad



Chad Sweet <chadsweet@cityofgearhart.com>

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## Question of using arborist mulch in the dunes

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Denise Lofman <DLofman@columbiaestuary.org>

Mon, Mar 25, 2019 at 9:50 AM

To: Chad Sweet <citymgr@ci.gearhart.or.us>

Cc: "Margaret Marino <mymarino@msn.com> (mymarino@msn.com)" <mymarino@msn.com>

Hi Chad,

I'm am sorry for the delay in getting back to you regarding the use of mulch in the dunes. Hannah headed out to North Carolina at the beginning of March, and I wasn't certain when we'd hire a new Coastal Planner. Rather than sending you a scope of work, I had her spend a few hours to do some research and write up a short memo regarding the pros and cons of chipping and leaving mulch from tree maintenance in the dunes. I'd hoped to chat with you before sending this over, but it's been a while and I do not want to leave you without the information.

Hannah utilized research and information provided by both Oregon and Washington State Universities' extension services to gather information on arborist mulch. The attached memo provides details about how mulching can be useful in landscaping and weed suppression. We came to the following conclusion:

"CREST's literature review indicates that leaving arborist mulch in the dunes in isolated locations where landscaping activities take place will can provide some ecological benefit and will not cause harm. CREST staff believe the question of allowing arborist mulch in the dunes is inherently a social and community policy decision rather than an ecological one."

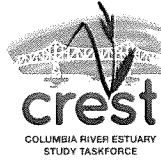
Again, I apologize for the delay in getting back to you. The new Coastal Planner will be starting at April 17, we hired Nancy Ferber, the current City Planner at Astoria. If you have questions or if you want us to do some more research, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Denise

Denise E. Lofman, Director

Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce (CREST)



**DATE:** MARCH 25, 2019  
**TO:** CHAD SWEET, CITY ADMINISTRATOR AT CITY OF GEARHART  
**FROM:** COLUMBIA RIVER ESTUARY STUDY TASKFORCE  
**SUBJECT:** ARBORIST MULCH IN THE BEACHES AND DUNES OVERLAY ZONE

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## **I. Introduction**

In 2018, the City of Gearhart updated vegetation management standards in their Beaches and Dune (B.A.D) Overlay District. This update included allowing mowing to remove invasive species, removing trees under six inches in diameter, and trimming and thinning of other vegetation. The City does not currently allow spot spraying or other pre-emergent practices in the dunes. The following code section was included in the update:

3.12 (D) (5) Any property owner which engages in any of the vegetation-management activities which are permitted under this section **is required to properly remove from the B.A.D. Overlay District substantially all of the organic debris material** which results from such vegetation-management activities promptly after such activities have taken place. (emphasis added)

The question facing the City now is whether small chipped material (less than 2 inches) from trimmed or thinned vegetation and small trees may be spread in the dunes to discourage growth of invasive species. This type of mulch is called arborist mulch.

CREST staff researched this question and can provide the following input.

## **II. What is Mulch?**

Mulch is any material spread over a soil surface and can influence plant growth and soil characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Mulch is commonly used in landscapes in the Pacific Northwest. Green and brown materials that is turned into woodchips is called arborist mulch and is commonly used throughout the region and is effective at controlling weeds.

## **III. Benefits of Mulch**

There are benefits to adding mulch to a landscaped area. These benefits include:

- Helps reduce loss of soil moisture
- Helps control weed growth
- May help with disease control
- Helps regulate soil temperature.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bell, N. Sullivan, D.M., and Cook, T. (2009). *Mulching Woody Ornamentals with Organic Materials*. Oregon State University Extension EC 1629-E.

<sup>2</sup> Scott, Linda. (2015). *Using Arborist Wood Chips as Landscape Mulch*. Washington State University Extension Fact Sheet FS160E.

The table below describes the benefits and effectiveness of various types of mulches<sup>3</sup>:

<b>Characteristics of mulches</b>							
	<b>Water conservation</b>	<b>Weed control</b>	<b>Nutrient release</b>	<b>Erosion control</b>	<b>Longevity</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Ease of application</b>
<b>Bark dust (medium)</b>	**	***	*	**	**	*	***
<b>Bark nuggets</b>	**	***	*	**	***	**	**
<b>Wood chips</b>	**	***	*	**	**	**	**
<b>Yard waste compost</b>	**	*	***	**	*	**	***
<b>Arborist mulch</b>	***	***	*	***	**	*	*
<b>Tree leaves</b>	**	**	**	**	*	*	*
<b>Mint compost</b>	***	*	**	***	*	*	*
<b>Sawdust</b>	**	*	*	**	**	*	***
<b>Hazelnut shells</b>	**	***	*	**	***	***	***

\* = low; \*\* = medium; \*\*\* = high

#### IV. How to Mulch an Area

To mulch an area with arborist mulch, follow the instructions below<sup>4</sup>:

1. Prune or mow perennial weeds at the root crown.
2. Remove aggressive weeds from the site.
3. Place mulch before annual weeds are established.
4. Place mulch in the desired areas at a depth of 2 to 4 inches.
5. Do not let mulch touch trunks of trees or shrubs. Mulch should be placed approximately a hands-width away from the trunk.
6. Reapply mulch as needed to maintain desired depth.

#### V. Key Notes

When discussing whether to allow mulch in the B.A.D. Overlay, the following notes may be helpful:

1. When utilizing mulch as a method to control weeds, it is important that an adequate amount of mulch (2-4 inches) is applied and stays in place. Anything less will allow weeds to grow in the area.
2. Perennial weeds, such as Scotch Broom, can be difficult to smother and control with mulch. These weeds should be controlled before applying mulch.<sup>5</sup>
3. Coarse textured organic mulches (wood chips) are less likely to combust compared to fine textured mulches (saw dust).<sup>6</sup>
4. In the dunes the mulch will stabilize the sand and hold it in place.
5. Fresh chips may be used, unless there are concerns about disease.

#### VI. Conclusion

<sup>3</sup> Bell, N. Sullivan, D.M., and Cook, T. (2009). *Mulching Woody Ornamentals with Organic Materials*. Oregon State University Extension EC 1629-E.

<sup>4</sup> Scott, Linda. (2015). *Using Arborist Wood Chips as Landscape Mulch*. Washington State University Extension Fact Sheet FS160E.

<sup>5</sup> Bell, N. Sullivan, D.M., and Cook, T. (2009). *Mulching Woody Ornamentals with Organic Materials*. Oregon State University Extension EC 1629-E.

<sup>6</sup> Scott, Linda. (2015). *Using Arborist Wood Chips as Landscape Mulch*. Washington State University Extension Fact Sheet FS160E.

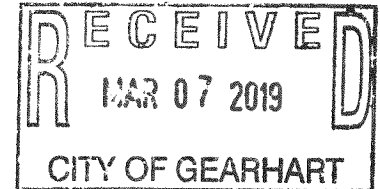
CREST's literature review indicates that leaving arborist mulch in the dunes in isolated locations where landscaping activities take place will can provide some ecological benefit and will not cause harm. CREST staff believe the question of allowing arborist mulch in the dunes is inherently a social and community policy decision rather than an ecological one.

**Communication with Those Charged with Governance at the Conclusion of the Audit**

**DENNIS R. CONNER**  
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT  
CLATSKANIE, OREGON 97016

February 27, 2019

To the Mayor and Council  
City of Gearhart  
Gearhart, Oregon



I have audited the financial statements of the governmental activities, the business-type activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the City of Gearhart (the City) for the year ended June 30, 2018. Professional standards require that I provide you with information about my responsibilities under generally accepted auditing standards as well as certain information related to the planned scope and timing of my audit. I have communicated such information in my letter to you dated July 5, 2018. Professional standards also require that I communicate to you the following information related to my audit.

Significant Audit Findings

*Qualitative Aspects of Accounting Practices*

Management is responsible for the selection and use of appropriate accounting policies. The significant accounting policies used by the City are described in Note 1 to the financial statements. No new accounting policies were adopted and the application of existing policies was not changed during FY 2017-18. I noted no transactions entered into by the City during the year for which there is a lack of authoritative guidance or consensus. All significant transactions have been recognized in the financial statements in the proper period.

Accounting estimates are an integral part of the financial statements prepared by management and are based on management's knowledge and experience about past and current events and assumptions about future events. Certain accounting estimates are particularly sensitive because of their significance to the financial statements and because of the possibility that future events affecting them may differ significantly from those expected. The most sensitive estimates affecting the City's financial statements were:

Management's estimate of the useful lives of depreciable assets, methods of depreciation, and the cost threshold of assets to be capitalized are based on prior years' experience. I evaluated the key factors and assumptions used to develop the aforementioned estimates in determining that they are reasonable in relation to the financial statements taken as a whole.

Certain financial statement disclosures are particularly sensitive because of their significance to financial statement users. The most sensitive disclosure affecting the financial statements was:

The disclosure of GASB Statement #54 in Note 1 to the financial statements details the five ways fund balances are to be disclosed.

The financial statement disclosures are neutral, consistent, and clear.

*Difficulties Encountered in Performing the Audit*

I encountered no significant difficulties in dealing with management in performing and completing my audit.

*Corrected and Uncorrected Misstatements*

Professional standards require me to accumulate all known and likely misstatements identified during the audit, other than those that are clearly trivial, and communicate them to the appropriate level of management. Management has corrected all such misstatements. In addition, none of the misstatements detected as a result of audit procedures and corrected by management were material, either individually or in the aggregate, to each opinion unit's financial statements taken as a whole.

*Disagreements with Management*

For purposes of this letter, a disagreement with management is a financial accounting, reporting, or auditing matter, whether or not resolved to my satisfaction, that could be significant to the financial statements or the auditor's report. I am pleased to report that no such disagreements arose during the course of my audit.

*Management Representations*

I have requested certain representations from management that are included in the management representation letter dated February 14, 2019.

*Management Consultations with Other Independent Accountants*

In some cases, management may decide to consult with other accountants about auditing and accounting matters, similar to obtaining a "second opinion" on certain situations. If a consultation involves application of an accounting principle to the City's financial statements or a determination of the type of auditor's opinion that may be expressed on those statements, my professional standards require the consulting accountant to check with me to determine that the consultant has all the relevant facts. To my knowledge, there were no such consultations with other accountants.

*Other Audit Findings or Issues*

I generally discuss a variety of matters, including the application of accounting principles and auditing standards, with management each year prior to retention as the City's auditor. However, these discussions occurred in the normal course of my professional relationship and my responses were not a condition to my retention.

Other Matters

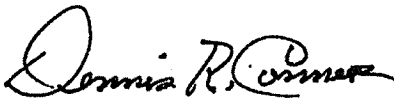
I was engaged to report on the supplementary information which accompanies the financial statements. With respect to this supplementary information, I made certain inquiries of management and evaluated the form, content, and methods of preparing the information to determine that the information complies with the modified cash basis of accounting. The method of preparing it has not changed from the prior period, and the information is appropriate and complete in relation to my audit of the financial statements. I compared and reconciled the supplementary information to the underlying accounting records used to prepare the financial statements or to the financial statements themselves.

I was not engaged to report on the management discussion and analysis, which accompanies the financial statements. Such information has not been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the basic financial statements, and accordingly, I do not express an opinion or provide any assurance on it.

Restriction on Use

This information is intended solely for the information and use of board and management of the City and is not intended to be, and should not be, used by anyone other than these specified parties.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis R. Conner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dennis R. Conner, CPA



Krysti Ficker <krysti@cityofgearhart.com>

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## Form submission from: Contact Us

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**City of Gearhart Oregon via City of Gearhart Oregon** <info@ci.gearhart.or.us>  
Reply-To: City of Gearhart Oregon <info@cityofgearhart.com>  
To: krysti@cityofgearhart.com

Wed, Mar 27, 2019 at 11:36 AM

Submitted on Wednesday, March 27, 2019 - 11:36am  
Submitted by anonymous user: 172.16.64.19  
Submitted values are:

First Name: James

Last Name: Casterline

Email: maureensspotteddog@gmail.com

Question/Comment: I suggest reconsidering the rejection of a Facebook page. I realize it opens the city to some online harassment but it also provides a means for immediate two way communication instead of the less direct Million Friends and Pacific Way groups. I think there would be a benefit to the city.

The results of this submission may be viewed at:  
<https://www.cityofgearhart.com/node/7/submission/11721>