

Dam

Continued from Page 1A

Dam plays role in building the city

The Scotts Mills Dam was built in the 1850s.

It was situated on top of an existing 10-foot rock waterfall along Butte Creek, the current boundary between Marion and Clackamas counties.

It was built by molding a 5-foot tall concrete wall approximately 40 feet wide of Butte Creek. Its main function was to divert water into a 100-foot long side channel so water could drive a mill.

In the early days of statehood, the mill became a substantial economic driver in the city.

The dam was converted to generate electricity in the early 1900s and ownership was transferred to Portland General Electric.

But PGE stopped using the dam for electricity in the 1950s, and the utility gave the dam and 10 acres of land surrounding it to Marion County.

That land, which is in Scotts Mills city limits, was combined with 3 acres from private citizens and turned into Scotts Mills County Park, which opened in 1961.

On warm, sunny summer days, the park will fill with families enjoying a picnic, friends playing pick-up baseball games and people canoeing in the waters above the dam.

When Marion County Commissioner Sam Brentano was a child growing up in Woodburn, his family frequently came to the park.

“Dad would take us there to swim on a Sunday,” Brentano said. “We played on the structure. We were all grossed out. There were eels that worked their way up there.”

At some point after the electricity-generating had ended, the side channel was turned into a fishway for fish to migrate upstream.

But since then, the dam has received little maintenance or attention and it has fallen into disrepair.

When the Spring Break Quake hit in March of 1993, Scotts Mills was at the epicenter of the 5.6 magnitude earthquake.

When flooding hit in 1996, a 3-foot wide section of the rim of the dam broke off, and another portion has fallen off since then.

At one point in the past couple decades, the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District looked at repairing Scotts Mills Dam, but deemed it would be more



Brentano

cost effective to knock it down.

“At this point, the dam no longer functions to cause the flow of the creek in such a way that it is passable for fish,” Rankin said.

Dams being torn down in Oregon

As of 2013, there were 27,800 dams documented in Oregon.

Many of the dams were built for reasons including providing water for irrigation, municipal uses, recreation and flood control.

In some areas, dams were the first man-made structures erected.

“A lot of these are irrigation diversion dams,” said John DeVoe, executive director of WaterWatch of Oregon. “We’re not talking about big hydropower dams.”

Many smaller dams have been poorly maintained.

A Stanford University report said nearly 1,000 dams in the United States have failed since the 1970s, and 34 deaths have been attributed to those failures.

There are four dams in Oregon with unsatisfactory ratings – meaning they are in danger of collapsing – and 18 more are classified as poor.

When the Endangered Species Act became law in 1973, dam operators were required to provide fish passage around the structures so native species could spawn in their native habitat.

Constructing fish ladders can be cost prohibitive and cost millions of dollars, so demolishing them has come into vogue.

Among the dams removed have been the Brownell Dam on the Umatilla River, the Trask River Dam and the Wimer Dam on the Rogue River, and the highest profile was the Marmot Dam on the Sandy River in 2007.

“They literally dynamited it out,” Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife stream restoration biologist Dave Stewart said.

Between 2013 and 2018, 75 dams in Oregon have been removed or fish passages were added.

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board has funded many of the dam removals.

“It can be expensive. It’s not as simple as going in with the backhoe and busting the thing up,” DeVoe said.

Issues include: is the dam in a publicly-owned waterway, who built the dam and the chain of ownership can be hard to prove.

“They just get abandoned,” DeVoe said. “Frequently they’d rather not admit that they own the dam.”

“There are literally thousands of these small dams around the state and at some point, if we want to have salmon in the future and steelhead, they’re going to have to do something about these.”

One of the hang-ups about removing Scotts Mills Dam, however, has been questions over who owns it.

Who owns Scotts Mills Dam?

For years questions have lingered: Is Scotts Mills Dam owned by Marion County, a private landowner on the Clackamas County side of the stream or both.

“It became a kind of contentious part of the discussion,” Rankin said.

Butte Creek originates in the Cascade Mountain Range, about 8 miles north of Gates and flows about 33 miles into the Pudding River and serves as the border between Marion and Clackamas counties.

When Oregon became a state in 1859, it acquired all waterways that ebbed and flowed with the tides, which includes 12 major rivers including the Willamette River.

Butte Creek was not considered navigable at the time of statehood, according to the Department of State Lands, and thus is not owned by the state.

In cases of privately-owned land, such as the Scotts Mills Dam, the landowner owns the ground to the middle of the body of water – though the water is publicly owned – unless it has been excluded on a title transfer.

Rankin said she checked with the Marion County Clerk’s office and the deed transfer to Marion County from PGE didn’t exclude the dam, meaning it is owned by the county and the landowner on the other side.

“If you were doing a full fish passage, it would cost millions of dollars,” Rankin said.

After years of debating the subject, the Marion County Parks Commission, an advisory board, voted at its November meeting to move ahead with the plan to remove the dam.

The matter will now move to the Marion County Commissioners to decide what they will do about it.

“I’ve been opposed to it all along until the most recent parks commission meeting,” Brentano said. “I don’t know if I feel strongly enough to spend county money on it.”

But Brentano said recent support from the Scotts Mills City Council to

move forward with the proposal gave him reason to support it.

Dam on Priority List

The Scotts Mills Dam has been on Oregon’s Statewide Fish Passage Barrier Priority List, but it is significantly further down the list than some like Detroit Reservoir and Foster Reservoir.

The project has been looked at many times over the years, but it didn’t pick up steam until the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife looked at it in 2018.

“I figured if we can get this thing done with very little money to the taxpayer, it might be worth our while,” Stewart said.

Butte Creek is native habitat for Endangered Species Act-listed Spring Chinook, and Winter Steelhead as well as Coho and Cutthroat Trout.

If approved, the dam’s structure would be removed in the low-water time of September 2020.

The concrete removed will be hauled to a rock quarry, with the disposal being donated by K&E Excavating.

Stewart said ODFW would contribute up to 60 percent of the project, and the application to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board seeks \$49,992.

The application asks for no money from Marion County.

“What we’re doing is kind of a phased approach,” Stewart said. “We’re trying to do this without spending a ton of money to start with.”

“Let’s remove the dam and do our best to stabilize that, and then see how it responds. There’s some sediment behind it, so that will probably blow through.”

Stewart said ODFW has seen evidence throughout the northwest that when dams are removed, runs of fish improve dramatically, and he said other work the Pudding River Watershed Council is performing elsewhere on the river will help, too.

He said the department doesn’t have surveys of Butte Creek, but several retired biologists have volunteered their services.

Before the project can begin, however, the landowner agreements must be in place, and the crews will need permission to access the structure from the land, which likely would be at Scotts Mills County Park.

“It’s a great project,” Rankin said. “From a certain point of view, it’s a slam dunk. No brainer. Go remove that small dam. It’s going to be safer. It’s going to be more navigable for fish. Why not?”

bpoehler@StatesmanJournal.com or Twitter.com/bpoehler

Costs

Continued from Page 2A

RV fees increase at 22 Oregon state parks

RV campsites are getting a little more expensive at Oregon’s most popular state parks this summer in a program to encourage people to camp in autumn and fall.

The cost will increase by \$3 at 22 parks from Memorial Day to Labor Day to pay for a special \$7 discount on camping in the fall and spring.

The goal is to encourage people to camp in the “shoulder seasons.”

An increasing number of visitors have often overwhelmed RV sites across the state — leaving many sold out — during the peak of summer, officials said. They’re looking to spread out use across the seasons to lessen the load.

The cost of tent camping is unchanged in 2020 at state parks.

John Day River limited float permits

You’ll need one of a limited number of permits to float the Wild and Scenic sec-

tion of the John Day River this season from May 1 to July 15.

The permit system adds the John Day to a list of rivers with a “limited entry” system, including the Rogue and Deschutes rivers, that regulates the number of people allowed to launch each day.

The permit system, intended to limit damage to a canyon with limited campsites, was approved in 2012. But in 2014, the website controlling the permits crashed and BLM stopped enforcing the limits.

This year, permits will be sold on the website Recreation.Gov for \$20 per group, plus a \$6 processing fee, for a group up to 16 people.

Nine permits will be available each day for trips launching from Clarno, Thirtymile, Muleshoe or Service Creek while 10 will be open for trips from Twickenham, Priest Hole or Lower Burnt Ranch.

Officials said that previously, on peak weekends, some people floating the river were unable to find any campsite and ended up floating through the night.

Zach Urness has been an outdoors reporter, photographer and videographer in Oregon for 12 years. Urness can be reached at zurness@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Twitter at @ZachsORoutdoors.

Phone and Internet Discounts Available to CenturyLink Customers

The Oregon Public Utility Commission designated CenturyLink as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier within its service area for universal service purposes. CenturyLink’s basic local service rates for residential voice lines are \$18.80-\$19.80 per month and business services are \$31.00-\$35.00 per month. Specific rates will be provided upon request.

CenturyLink participates in a government benefit program (Lifeline) to make residential telephone or broadband service more affordable to eligible low-income individuals and families. Eligible customers are those that meet eligibility standards as defined by the FCC and state commissions. Residents who live on federally recognized Tribal Lands may qualify for additional Tribal benefits if they participate in certain additional federal eligibility programs. The Lifeline discount is available for only one telephone or qualifying broadband service per household, which can be either a wireline or wireless service. Broadband speeds must be 20 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload or faster to qualify.

A household is defined for the purposes of the Lifeline program as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses. Lifeline service is not transferable, and only eligible consumers may enroll in the program. Consumers who willfully make false statements in order to obtain Lifeline telephone or broadband service can be punished by fine or imprisonment and can be barred from the program.

If you live in a CenturyLink service area, please call 1-888-833-9522 or visit centurylink.com/lifeline with questions or to request an application for the Lifeline program.

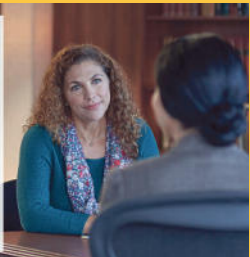


www.edwardjones.com
Member SIPC

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

We Understand Commitment

You can rely on Edward Jones for on-on-one attention, our quality-focused investment philosophy and straight talk about your financial needs. Contact your Edward Jones financial advisor today.



LOCAL ADVISORS

Salem Area

Michael Wooters
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
South | 503-362-5439

Garry Falor CFP®
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
West | 503-588-5426

Caitlin Davis CFP®
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
West | 503-585-1464

Chip Hutchings
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
Lancaster | 503-585-4689

Jeff Davis
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
Mission | 503-363-0445

Tim Sparks
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
Commercial | 503-370-6159

Tyson Wooters
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
South | 503-362-5439

Keizer Area

Mario Montiel
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
Keizer | 503-393-8166

Surrounding Area

Bridgette Justis
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
Sublimity | 503-769-3180

Kelly Denney
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
Dallas | 503-623-2146

Tim Yount
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
Silverton | 503-873-2454

David Eder
FINANCIAL ADVISOR
Stayton | 503-769-4902