

Water testing methods prove to be inaccurate

Scientists have tested two standard methods used to monitor public water supplies and found both of them seriously flawed.

That could mean that people in some parts of the country are drinking water which may not conform with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

The tests were conducted by Oregon State University researchers.

"Most communities have good water treatment systems and no problems, but there are marginal systems in Oregon and other states where the potential for a health hazard exists," said project director Ramon Seidler. "Our study suggests operators may not even know if consumers are getting unsafe water."

Seidler and the other researchers had their two-year study funded as part of a larger project supported by a \$124,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Drinking Water Research.

The two techniques commonly used to monitor disease hazards in public water are the membrane filter and fermentation tube methods, Seidler said.

Both are considered effective by the EPA, the agency charged with enforcing the country's six-year-old Safe Drinking Act. The law requires that the level of bacterial "hazard indicator" organisms, or coliforms, in public water be monitored and not exceed one coliform per 100 milliliters of water as a monthly average.

Approximately 50 percent of the public water treatment plants in the U.S. use the membrane filter system; the other half uses the fermentation tube method. Some plants do their own testing and others have the work done by commercial laboratories.

"These are long-standing, very basic methods of monitoring water quality taught in microbiology courses throughout the world," Seidler said. "We tested them in Oregon and they failed to perform." Coliforms were detected in just 20 percent of contaminated water supplies tested at various western Oregon sites in the OSU experiments.

In using the membrane filter technique, water is passed through a filter to trap coliforms. The organisms are then placed in a dish containing a culture

medium or nutritive growing environment and incubated for 24 hours to allow them to grow into colonies to be identified.

With the fermentation tube technique, water is placed in a test tube containing nutrients and incubated for one to two days. The contents are then tested for gases produced by various coliforms.

The primary problem with both methods is that the culture mediums do not allow some coliforms to grow properly. The OSU study was initiated after reports of disease problems in parts of the country had been traced to areas shown to have been tested safe.

The researchers developed an off the shelf solution and hope to carry their work further. They have identified ingredients for culture mediums which help coliforms grow better. They have also obtained a two-year grant of some \$115,000 from the National Science Foundation which will allow them to use their acquired knowledge of coliforms to devise an effective way of monitoring drinking water, treated sewage water and other public waters.

Coliforms, which are present in the intestines of warm-blooded animals, are transported into surface water by animal feces. They are normally not harmful.

However, if coliforms are in water, organisms which cause typhoid, diarrhea, hepatitis and other illnesses may be able to survive there also. Monitoring coliform levels as a potential hazard indicator is cheaper and easier than monitoring all of the organisms in the water.

The OSU scientists are contacting researchers across the U.S. and arranging for them to test the accuracy of the standard coliform monitoring methods with contaminated water in their areas.

Seidler said that many small communities in the Pacific Northwest use unfiltered surface water which are prone to "false negative" tests, that is, prone to passing the standard monitoring tests but failing when a more effective culture medium is used.

Seidler estimated that five percent of the country's public water supplies are "marginal" in safety and that most water-borne disease problems occur in those areas.



The Don Obrist quarry in Brightwood has been the scene of recent controversy.

Staff photo

For quarry operation license

County approves Obrist application

by TERRI RADER
Post Correspondent

Despite the efforts of several Hoodland residents, Don Obrist has received an operating permit for his Brightwood quarry.

Obrist was awarded the permit after a hearing of the Clackamas County Planning Commission last Thursday.

The permit will allow Obrist to continue his operations as before with one

exception. He received permission to add one more pond to his quarry.

There were a few objections to the Obrist permit. Local resident Bob Decker began the controversy with a letter to The Sandy Post in the March 5 edition. Decker alleged that the operation of the quarry caused "excessive noise levels associated with blasting which involves vibrations that shake your house, increased truck traffic which has parents with children concerned about safety on the roads."

Other concerns were the operation of a rock crusher, pollution of surface-fed spring wells, road deterioration and erosion.

Several other residents then spoke out, both pro and con, about the situation.

A meeting was scheduled for "concerned citizens of Brightwood" to express views on the problems. Not enough support was drummed up, however, to change the mind of the planning commission.

Many people spoke out in favor of Obrist and his quarry operations, countering Decker's charges. Ed Burke stated that the average daily haul was just five to 40 truckloads and that operations are monitored by the Department of Environmental Quality.

The weeks following the original Decker letter have been filled with controversy and debate. But the Clackamas County Planning Commission has ended the debate until the permit renewal comes up again.

Hoodland happenings

Classes begin for Welches Community School spring term

Thursday, April 2

A senior citizens lunch, sponsored by Loaves and Fishes, will be held at the Welches School library beginning at 11:30 a.m. Transportation and further information is available by calling 622-3331.

The Mountain Players will hold a rehearsal at 7:30 p.m. at the Wemme Lions Club.

Friday, April 3

There will be no school today at Welches because of a Teacher Work Day Conference Day.

Saturday, April 4

The Mountain Music Society will present Carol Ann Wheeler, the first woman national fiddling champion, at 8 p.m. in the Hoodland Women's Club. Call Will Frank, 622-3130, for more information.

Monday, April 6

A senior citizens lunch, sponsored by Loaves and Fishes, will be held at the Welches School library beginning at 11:30 a.m. Call 622-3331 for further information or transportation.

Aerobic Dance class will begin at 5:30 p.m. at the Welches School gym. The class is sponsored by Mt. Hood Community College Community Education Classes and led by Becky Hawley. To register, call 622-3397. There is a small fee for the class.

Welches Community School will sponsor a one-time only class called "First Aid for Choking." The free class will be held at 7 p.m. in the Welches School library and concentrate on helping participants learn to remove airway obstructions.

Five consecutive daily sessions, including films, talks and group discussions will highlight the "Five Day Plan to Stop Smoking," presented by the Seventh Day Adventists. Pastor Terry

Vull and Winton Bunnell, M.D., will lead the project which begins tonight at 7:30 p.m. in room 13 of Welches School. A fee will be charged.

Tuesday, April 7

Mt. Hood Community College will hold a day-long workshop devoted to the future planning and development of Welches Community School in cooperation with the college. The workshop will be held at the Red Lion Inn at Bowman's from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Green Tee room. Call Keva Cox, 622-3397, for more information.

The Hoodland Chamber of Commerce will hold its monthly board meeting at 11:30 a.m. at the Red Lion Inn at Bowman's.

The Hoodland Women's Club will hold its April meeting today at noon at the Red Lion Inn at Bowman's. A fashion show and luncheon will be included in the activities. Styles from the Red Lion

Sportique shop will be modeled by Women's Club members. For reservations, call Julie Gross, 622-3916, or Renee Knapp, 622-4671.

The second meeting of the Five Day Plan to Stop Smoking class will be held from 7:30 to 9 p.m. in room 13 of Welches School.

The following classes will begin tonight at Welches Community School: Regulation Basketball, 6 p.m. in the Welches gym; Diet and Exercise, 6 p.m. in the library; Story Telling for children ages 3 to 6, 7 p.m. in the library; Boat Building, 7 p.m. in room 20; Bike Maintenance, 7 p.m. in room 12; and Regulation Volleyball, 7:30 p.m. in the gym. To register, call 622-3397.

The Mountain Players will hold a rehearsal at 7:30 p.m. at the Wemme Lions Club.

Wednesday, April 8

Welches Community School Tiny Tots group will meet from 10 a.m. to noon. The group is designed for mothers with babies or toddlers and allows them to spend a morning with their neighbors while their children develop play skills. Call Louise Hoyt, 622-3752, for information and meeting location.

Welches Community School's Aerobic Dance class will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. in the Welches School gym.

The third meeting of the Five Day Plan to Stop Smoking will be held from 7:30 to 9 p.m. in room 13 of Welches School.

The Mountain Music Society will hold a Contra Dance at the Hoodland Women's Club on Salmon River Road beginning at 8 p.m. Fred Brueing will call the steps at the dance, which is for children and adults. Tickets are available at the door. Call Will Frank, 622-3130, for further information.

The Mt. Hood Lions Club will hold a general meeting at the club building in Wemme at 8 p.m. The Lions Ladies Auxiliary will meet at 8 p.m. in the rear of the building.

Thursday, April 9

A senior citizens lunch, sponsored by Loaves and Fishes, will be held at the Welches School library beginning at 11:30 a.m. Transportation and further information is available by calling 622-3331.

The Mt. Hood Pre-School Co-Op will present an art show and open house at the Hoodland Women's Club from 3:30 to 8 p.m. Artwork from the pre-school will be on display in the main room of the building and refreshments will be served. The open house is free. Registration forms for the 1981-82 pre-school year will be available.

(Continued on Page 4)

Vista House has long and prestigious history

by TOM FLUHARTY
For The Post

It's easy to see how the Vista House was named. Perched on a basalt cliff 725 feet above the Columbia River, the stone structure offers sweeping views of the gorge.

Crown Point seems a natural place to pause on the scenic Columbia River Highway, offering a refreshing break and a chance to drink in the gorge's beauty. So thought Samuel Lancaster, the engineer who designed and built the Columbia River Highway.

Others also found the view breathtaking. "At Crown Point there is to be had a wonderful view down the river," said early-day geologist Ira Williams in the 1928 "History of Columbia River Valley" by Fred Lockley. "The Columbia's proximity is so deceptive that it would seem a stone vigorously tossed would land in its waters."

Lancaster first proposed building the Vista House in 1915 as the highway was nearing completion. He intended the stone structure to serve as a memorial to pioneers, an observation building and a public comfort station.

"One is in a far more favorable position at Crown Point to study the region on both sides of the river than at any other place reached by the highway," Williams wrote.

The same enthusiasm Lancaster put into the highway carried over to the Vista House project. He even furnished plans for the building's interior decoration.

Multnomah County built the three-story structure between 1916 and 1918. A private group called the Vista House Association also contributed money.

The many-sided domed building was located on the top of Crown Point at a loop in the highway where the road circled the point and began its descent to Latourelle Falls.

May 5, 1918, was the date set for the dedication of the Vista House. A crowd of well-wishers and members of

Portland society made the drive out the new highway to take part in the ceremonies.

The principal speech was given by Frank Branch Riley, one of Portland's best-known lecturers.

A strange mix of dignitaries attended the festivities, including H.L. Pittock, president of the Vista House Association and builder of the Pittock Mansion; several survivors of the Whitman massacre; veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic; the 443rd Squadron under Commander Lt. Richard Ageton, and the Royal Rosarians, complete with their white suits.

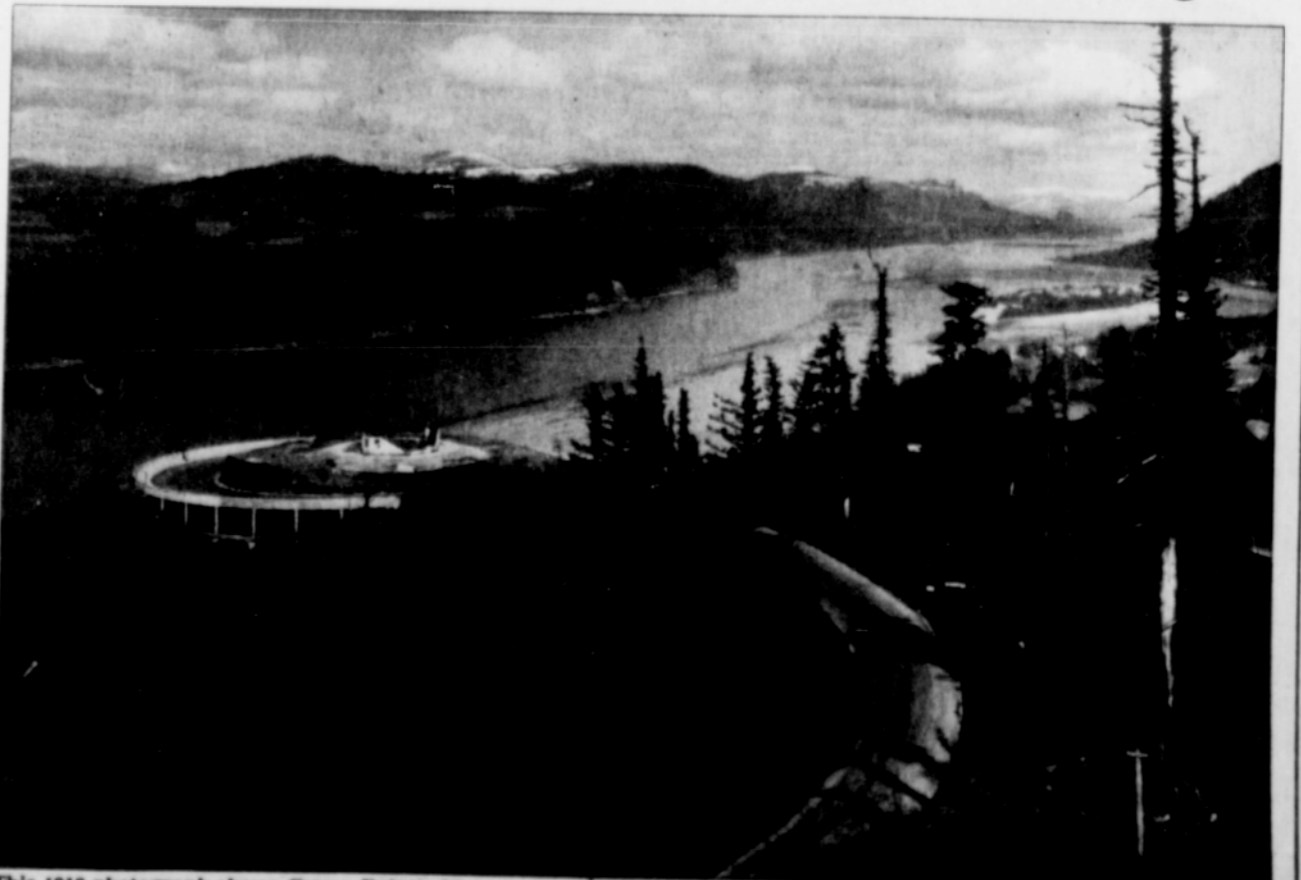
The ceremony concluded with a pageant called "The Wilson Flag."

It capitalized on an earlier dedication at the Vista House site. One of two ceremonies dedicating the Columbia River Highway was held there on the afternoon of June 7, 1916. The usual congratulatory speeches were made, rose petals were spread over the site and loganberry juice was drunk in deference to Prohibition. At 5 p.m. President Woodrow Wilson, sitting in his White House office, touched an electric button which unfurled a flag at Crown Point. Cannons fired a 48-gun salute. That same flag was used in the Vista House dedication almost two years later.

Lancaster had one more vision for the Vista House, one that he never realized. In 1924 he tried, unsuccessfully, to have the "Oregon Pony," the first locomotive in the Northwest, placed next to the Vista House.

Portland and Multnomah County donated the building to the state in 1938 for use as a state park. Until this month, the interior of the structure was leased to a concessionaire for a gift shop.

This summer the U.S. Forest Service, in cooperation with the state parks division, will operate the Vista House as a public information and interpretive center.



This 1918 photograph shows Crown Point's Vista under construction.