

## GLASS BAR ONCE A TOXIC DUMP?

Nothing goes together like nudity and nature, but there's a limited number of places one can enjoy the outdoors *au natural* in Lane County. The recent shutdown of access to Glass Bar Island, one of Lane County's traditionally nude beaches, has some questioning if the closure is targeting an already stigmatized group out of discomfort with the idea of nude gay people, while supporters say the proposed restoration project benefits humans and nature. Previous dumping brings more complications to the issue.

There are a number of entities and properties involved: They include longtime users of Glass Bar Island, including the Glassbar Island Volunteers, a group of nudists who have engaged in a number of clean-ups and restoration projects at the site over the years, have gotten to the state-owned gravel island by crossing Lane County-owned property, called Turtle Flats, near the old BRING Recycling location. Friends of Buford Park (FBP), which has teamed up with The Nature Conservancy to purchase and restore land in the Willamette Confluence area and the Oregon state parks department that owns Glass Bar Island itself.

The 60-or-so-acre county-owned property, originally purchased as a dumpsite, was recently re-fenced and shut down by Lane County. County spokesperson Anne Marie Levis says the fence cost the county \$4,125 and the funding came from the waste enterprise fund. She says, according to Commissioner Jay Bozievich, the shutdown of access to the site is "absolutely not" because of prejudice against the historically gay nudist presence at the site and that it is purely a trespassing issue, adding that FBP needs to have the land closed off to do restoration work.

*'It wouldn't be the place it is now without the volunteers who have been there.'*

- DAVID STRAHAN

David Strahan, a longtime park user says, "it wouldn't be the place it is now without the volunteers who have been there," citing work to remove tires, computers and even gun safes.

Chris Orsinger of FBP says that the group recognizes "the safety challenges posed by the site and respect Lane County's decision as the landowner to close the site." He says that FBP "has collaborated with the Glassbar Island Volunteers group, and we are open to future collaboration."

Orsinger and Dan Bell of The Nature Conservancy stress it's still early in the process. County commissioners voted to endorse a grant proposal for the conservation groups to purchase the property from the county and make it part of their larger Willamette Confluence restoration project. TNC says it has not been involved in discussion or action around the closures of the property.

Bob Emmons of LandWatch Lane County says "in principal the restoration plan is something we support, but what's happened in the process is that some things have been swept under the rug." Emmons says not only should historic stakeholders in the area, such as Strahan and the Glassbar Island Volunteers, have a say in the future management of the site, he has concerns over the silencing of marginalized groups and he's also concerned about the area's past history as a dumping spot.

In a 1986 letter to then-congressman Jim Weaver, Emmons details the dumping of toxic materials "including open herbicide cans containing the compound 2,4-D" in a wetland "directly behind BRING Recycling" and Wildish Construction Company dumping construction wastes in open land and in a nearby pond. An R-G story from the same time period discusses a state highway division cleanup. A 1992 DEQ report shows that abandoned drums of paint were cleaned up from Glass Bar in 1992. Strahan doesn't think the proposals have addressed those historic problems with the site. Levis says that Lane County Waste Management "will remain responsible for any waste or dumping."

Orsinger says, "Cleaning up historic waste (if any exists) is consistent with the goal of enhancing public safety for compatible recreation." And according to Bell, the site is still going through "due diligence" and "a phase 1 environmental assessment will be made, after a decision is made about the funding, towards the latter part of June."

Bell says former gravel pits such as the county site are a unique opportunity for floodplain restoration and with a "minimum level of restoration, these shallow gravel pits can allow for inundation during higher water" and says TNC has found species such as Western pond turtles and red-legged frogs at its nearby restoration site. — *Camilla Mortensen*



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