

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count

The 18th annual Great Backyard Bird Count is taking place Friday through Monday. Anyone can count birds at any location for at least 15 minutes, on one or more days of the count, and enter their sightings at www.BirdCount.org. The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track changes in bird populations on a massive scale. The GBBC is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society with partner Bird Studies Canada.

During the count, visitors to Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, Fort Clatsop, can learn about participating in the count, record bird numbers in the park and make plans to count birds in their own backyards. Binoculars will be available for loan within the park during this event.

Along with the actual bird counting activities, a "pink heron scavenger hunt" will be ongoing using the Netul River Trail along the Lewis and Clark River, and a "Birds of Fort Clatsop" display is in the visitor center lobby.

On Saturday, Mike Patterson will lead a birding walk starting at 9 a.m. in the Fort Clatsop Visitor Center lobby. Although leashed dogs are welcome at most of the park's outdoor programs,



Photo courtesy of Doug Swanson
More than 20,000 European starlings were found in the Columbia River estuary Christmas Bird Count Dec. 15, 2013, along with more than 8,500 in the Wahkiakum (Wash.) count later in the month.

dogs are not allowed at this morning walk. Participants should dress for the weather. The walk is wheelchair ac-

cessible, although nonmotorized users might need assistance for about 200 yards.

On Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, a bird-themed children's crafts, face-painting and education corner will be available in the visitor center.

Josh Saranpaa, a wildlife rehabilitator with the Wildlife Center of the North Coast, will talk about the center's work at 1 p.m. Sunday in the Netul River Room of the Fort Clatsop Visitor Center. This In Their Footsteps program will feature live bird species from the center such as common murre, rhinoceros auklet, northern fulmar and American kestrel.

Park hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Admission is \$3 per adult and free for youths 15 and younger. In honor of Presidents' Day, Monday, the admission fee to all National Park Service sites is free Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.

The weekend's birding events at Fort Clatsop are sponsored by the Lewis & Clark National Park Association and the National Park Service. For information, call the park at 503-861-2471 or go to www.nps.gov/lewi or "Lewis and Clark National Historical Park" on Facebook.

Ilwaco, Chinook ports land additional \$2.4 million for dredging work

By KATIE WILSON
EO Media Group

ILWACO, Wash. — One more year of channel maintenance is in the bag for two Pacific county ports.

According to a work plan released by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Feb. 3, the ports of Ilwaco and Chinook will receive about \$2.4 million for dredging at Baker Bay and between Chinook and Sand Island.

This is great news for Chinook and Ilwaco, said Guy Glenn Jr., port manager at the port of Ilwaco.

"You work hard on it, but you never know and then this kind of news comes and it's a very positive thing for our community," he said Tuesday.

In December, the Corps was allotted \$2.9 billion for operations and maintenance projects. The money came out of a \$1 trillion spending package of which the Corps was funded at \$5.5 billion.

Of the \$2.9 billion for operations and maintenance, lobbying group Pacific Northwest Waterways Association reports \$1.1 billion came from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, a fund that small ports across the country have argued should be utilized to aid



Chinook Observer file photo

Seen through the trees on Robert Gray Drive in Ilwaco, a dredge works its way toward the Port of Ilwaco. The navigation channel requires ongoing maintenance dredging to facilitate navigation by large fishing boats and Coast Guard motor lifeboats.

the Corps' operations at small ports.

Each year, small ports have to fight for a cut of funding. As operations and maintenance earmarks have dried up and disappeared, that funding has been even more difficult to land.

Last year, after aggressive and focused lobbying, the Port of Ilwaco, representing both itself and Chinook, was

able to get \$1.8 million in maintenance dredging. The Corps, which is tasked with maintaining all federal channels, finished up that work last fall.

For these two ports the dredging work in the access channels off the Columbia River is crucial to their continued survival.

The Baker Bay channel has an authorized depth of

around 16 feet, but the Corps only dredged to 14 feet in places which allowed them to stretch the money available that year farther. The channel had been in a bad way, with Coast Guard vessels reporting that they were hitting bottom, and fishing boats forced to edge carefully around each other and shallow spots as they entered and exited the marina.

On the record

DUII arrests

• At 12:24 a.m. Friday, Astoria Police arrested Elle Margaret Wolf, 24, Astoria, for Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants at 21st Street and Marine Drive. An officer initially stopped Wolf for driving with no headlights.

• At 4:04 p.m. Friday, Astoria

Police arrested Heide L. Larson, 31, Seaside, for DUII in the 600 block of 18th Street. Larson's blood alcohol content was measured at 0.29, police reported.

• At 12:42 a.m. Sunday, Astoria Police arrested William M. Mueller, 24, Racine, Wis., for DUII at 12th and Commercial streets. Mueller's blood

alcohol content was measured at 0.15, police reported.

Crash

• At 3:26 a.m. Monday, Oregon State Police responded to a single-vehicle injury crash on U.S. Highway 101 milepost 36. A Chevrolet SUV, driven by Francis G. Shaw, 68, Nehalem, was southbound and swerved to

miss several elk and lost control. The SUV crossed the northbound lane and went off the shoulder, striking several trees. Shaw and passenger Debra Reinhart, 52, Seaside, were transported to Providence Seaside Hospital with minor injuries. Two dogs were transported to the Cannon Beach Police Department's kennel.

AARP Foundation offers free tax help

Beginning in February, the AARP Foundation is again providing free tax assistance and preparation for taxpayers with low to moderate income through the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program, giving special attention the older population. Membership in AARP, or being a retiree, is not required to use this service.

The program is offered at approximately 134 sites in Oregon, including in Astoria and Seaside. Tax assistance is available from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Fridays at the Astoria Senior Center, 1555 W. Marine Drive. Walk-ins are welcome. For information, call 503-325-3231. Assistance is also available from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays, by appointment only, at the Bob

Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A in Seaside. For information call 503-738-7393. Both locations are handicap accessible.

Preparation of tax returns under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) rules requires additional documentation from taxpayers this year. The good news is that for taxpayers on Medicare or Medicare Advantage for the full year, no further information is required. Otherwise, taxpayers need to bring along their family's health insurance coverage

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information, including about Marketplace/Exchange purchases, and health care exemptions.

For details on documentation that is required, go to www.aarp.org/findtaxhelp or call 888-227-7669.

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CLATSOP ANIMAL ASSISTANCE

Seaside's Mill Pond plan presented

Community meeting set to gather comments

By NANCY MCCARTHY
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — A preliminary plan to enhance the experience of visiting the Mill Pond in Seaside will be presented at a community meeting at 6 p.m. March 4 at the Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A.

A local committee that is working on a citywide natural history park, is suggesting that the Mill Pond area, on the south end of Seaside east of U.S. Highway 101, be developed in four phases.

Once the site of a logging operation, the 20-acre area, which contains two ponds, became known as the Mill Pond. It will be included in the natural history park, which is envisioned to stretch from north of Seaside to the south.

Melyssa Graeper, coordinator of the Necanicum Watershed Council, presented the Mill Pond plan to the Seaside Parks Advisory Committee Thursday night.

Graeper said the enhancements were suggested by those attending an open house at the Mill Pond site last August. They filled out a questionnaire that asked what people might want to see at the site.

Although a rudimentary path already meanders through the area, the proposed plan calls for enhancing it all the way around the pond, which lies behind the city's Public Works building. Other suggested improvements include restrooms,

a covered picnic shelter, a parking area, a handicapped-accessible bird blind, as well as a second bird blind across the pond, an observation tower, small playground and a historical interpretation kiosk.

"We want to leave the rest of it natural," Graeper said.

Much of the area is surrounded by trees and blackberry and other bushes. Some of the bushes between the pond and Les Schwab Tires would remain for people to pick blackberries. Several of those answering the questionnaire said they often picked blackberries in the area, and they didn't want to lose that opportunity, Graeper added.

The improvements would be spread out in each of the four phases, with clean-up and path building in the first phase and the possible acquisition of a few adjacent properties to enlarge the area in the fourth phase.

Grants to make the improvements may be available through local watershed councils and the state parks department, said Neal Wallace, Seaside Public Works director.

In addition to the community meeting March 4, the group plans to present the plan to the Seaside Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions clubs, the Seaside Chamber of Commerce and the Seaside Downtown Development Association.

Wallace, who is the city's liaison for the parks advisory committee, called the plan, which has taken a few years to develop, "excellent work."

"I know how hard it is to pull these things together," Wallace said. "It makes me happy to see it after such a long time."

Health fair planned

Columbia Memorial Hospital/Oregon Health and Science University Cardiology Clinic are holding an informative Community Health Fair from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds, 92937 Walluski Loop. There is no cost for this event, which is designed for the whole family, and prizes will be given hourly.

The fair provides basic health screenings, information on local health and fitness programs, and an opportunity to talk to local medical specialists and test one's strength and balance. Nursing mothers

can be fitted for a Bras2Moms nursing bra, and a lactation area will be available.

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