



# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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ONE DOLLAR

## Students quiz Wyden on school costs



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., speaks to students and community members during a town hall at Astoria High School Friday. Wyden answered audience questions during the event.

## Astoria town hall draws crowd back to school

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

“I always thought that the heart of this job has been to be accessible to people,” U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden said Friday, when asked by a student from Astoria High School what his keys to success were.

Wyden, a senator since 1996, fielded questions from students and community members during his 719th town hall, part of a promise of his 19 years ago to hold a town hall in each of Oregon’s 36 counties, each year. Wyden also served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1981 to 1996.

“I’m from Portland,” said Wyden. “I love Portland, but I am not a United States senator from the state of Portland, I represent the entire state.”

At the heart of his job representing the diversity of Oregon and the U.S., Wyden said, is problem-solving. Wyden focused his answers to myriad issues on finding solutions that serve differing interests around the nation and Oregon.

### Natural resources

Community members shared concerns about the impacts of energy production, from liquefied natural gas to wave energy.

Wyden, a member of the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, was asked to give his stance on a proposed liquefied natural gas import/export facility in Warrenton and on the proposed Keystone XL pipeline.

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JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Sen. Ron Wyden answers questions during a Town Hall meeting at Astoria High School.

## Ron Wyden talks LNG, port dispute, life in the minority

### Lawmaker sees chance for ‘principled bipartisanship’

By DERRICK DePLEDGE  
The Daily Astorian

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, threading the politically sensitive question of building LNG terminals in Oregon, said he wanted to ensure that the developers of the Jordan Cove Energy Project at Coos Bay had the chance to make their case as the West Coast exporter of natural gas.

The Oregon Democrat described Oregon LNG, which wants to build an export terminal on the Skapan Peninsula in Warrenton, as “behind Jordan Cove in the queue.”

The U.S. Department of Energy has conditionally authorized the Jordan Cove project and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is reviewing the final environmental impact statement. The export terminal would be fed with natural gas from the Rockies through a new 232-mile pipeline from Malin. The gas would be liquefied at the terminal for export.

Oregon LNG is still navigating a host of state and federal regulatory and legal hurdles for its proposed export terminal in Warrenton and new 87-mile pipeline that would tap natural gas from Western Canada and the Rockies through a connection in Washington state.

Environmentalists, property owners, fishermen

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## ‘Mega Sink’ is a mess

The South Jetty captures more than its share of plastic junk

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Marine plastics researcher and Seaside native Marc Ward estimated that he and more than 50 other volunteers pulled out more than a quarter ton of microplastics Feb. 15 from what he’s termed the “Columbia River South Jetty Mega Sink.” And that, he said, is probably only a third of it.

The Mega Sink is located in a tidal inlet just north of the South Jetty and Parking Lot C in Fort Stevens State Park on Clatsop Spit.

Ward has discovered sinks at Bandon, Manzanita, Rockaway, Oswald West, Cannon Beach and Crescent Beach, but he said the South Jetty is the worst he’s ever seen in 15 years of work on microplastics. He estimates that parts of it contain between 6 and 11 pounds of material per square meter.

“This is the largest environmental crisis that most people don’t know about,” said Ward, the co-founder of Sea Turtles Forever with his wife, Rachel. Ward splits his time between the North Coast, where he works on systems to clean Oregon’s shores of the microplastics and other debris washing up from the Pacific Ocean.

The material in the sink, he said, comes almost entirely from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, which slowly spins in the North Pacific Gyre, a slow-moving, clockwise, circular ocean current that shoots straight at Oregon before turning south, periodically dumping its beaches with debris.

“It’s not tsunami debris,” said Ward. “This is just stuff from the gyre that has been out there for decades.”

Most of the material in the gyre is microplastics, at sea for years, broken down by ultraviolet rays of light and biodegradation.

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Submitted photo

Volunteers Rachel Tillman, left, and Rachel Ward used horses to help pack out more than a quarter ton of debris Feb. 15 from a tidal inlet just north of the South Jetty at Fort Stevens State Park.

## Ken McQuhae makes his quiet voice heard

### Retired engineer gets involved at City Hall

CANNON BEACH — Ken McQuhae may be soft-spoken, but he is outspoken.

In his retirement years, the part-time Cannon Beach resident has championed an assortment of high-profile local causes — even if it means courting controversy at City Hall.

The 74-year-old McQuhae — who now sits on the city’s Affordable Housing Task Force and supports the effort to establish a charter school in town — first became involved with city issues when he led the charge to remove Cannon Beach from the Sunset Em-

pire Park and Recreation District in 2011 and 2012.

He discovered that he belonged to a group of Cannon Beach residents who unwittingly paid for parks twice — to both the city parks budget and to Sunset — because their properties partially stood in territory that had been county property before the city annexed it. This brought portions of Cannon Beach, which had already voted not to join SEPRD, into Sunset’s taxing district, and the city had neglected to take them out of it.

Sunset officials put up a fight, but the City Council eventually voted to remove

the annexed territory from the taxing district. The next year, McQuhae and some of his neighbors saw their property taxes decrease.

“A lot of people who owned these lots who were paying both (city and Sunset taxes) didn’t realize that the rest of the lots in the city weren’t paying,” he said. He added that few people cared about the extra tax, even when they noticed it, because people often assume that “taxes are inevitable.”

### Dune grading

The skirmish with Sunset may have provoked objec-



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tions from certain quarters, but the Cannon Beach citizenry seemed mostly to side with McQuhae, he said.

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ERICK BENGEL — EO Media Group  
Ken McQuhae, a retired engineer, can make out Haystack rock from his Chapman Point home. He worked in the semiconductor industry for 30 years, first in Ottawa, Canada, then in Hillsboro.

