

Dam: Structure was built in early 1960s

Continued from Page 1A

dam — have suggested the project is part of an “anti-development agenda.”

Taking a step back

Last April, the Warrenton City Commission approved an agreement with CREST to remove the dam and construct a bridge. But over the past month, the commission — with Kujala recused because of a conflict of interest — has twice delayed action on amending the agreement to formally add the Water Control District.

A special meeting has been called for April 8 to make a final decision.

“I think one of the reasons why we took a little bit more time — there were citizens who felt like they weren’t heard. And our job is to listen,” Commissioner Tom Dyer said Tuesday night during a discussion on the project. “And we had a problem with our city before where we weren’t as transparent as we should be.”

With \$200,000 already spent on a feasibility study and engineering, and construction planned for this summer, CREST and the Water Control District want the commission to move forward.

Matt Van Ess, a habitat restoration coordinator for CREST, described the project as complicated and expensive, but “for the community, as well as the salmon, entirely worth doing.”

Since the '60s

The Eighth Street Dam was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, one of three water control structures built along the river in the early 1960s. The dam was apparently built to handle a 10-year flood, but, according to the Oregon Water Resources Department after an inspection in 2012, it may have only been useful in a two-year flood event and may no longer be capable of flood control.



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

The Eighth Street Dam was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, part of three water control structures built along the river in the early 1960s. According to the Oregon Water Resources Department after an inspection in 2012, it may no longer be capable of flood control.

A 2013 report for CREST done by Tetra Tech Inc., an engineering firm in Portland, found that it is unlikely that flood conditions would worsen upstream if the dam were removed.

“We own the dam. We don’t need a dam anymore. We want to take it out,” Tessa James Scheller, the chairwoman of the Skipanon Water Control District, told the commission.

CREST and the district already consider the bridge aspect of the project a compromise. At one point, the Water Control District had offered to transfer the dam to the city for a nominal cost, but the city declined. When talk turned toward removing the dam, the city sought to preserve emergency access through a bridge.

But Dyer and other commissioners asked CREST and the Water Control District to continue discussions with property owners over the next few weeks to see whether further compromise on the bridge is possible.

Building a bridge

The project involves a

54-foot span over the river with a single lane that would be about 14-feet wide with guardrails.

Property owners, including Judy Kujala, the mayor’s mother, have told the commission they believe the bridge should be wider.

Paul Kujala, a commercial fisherman and the mayor’s brother, said the project promotes what he believes is the “anti-development agenda” of the Water Control District.

“I really don’t see what the city is getting out of this,” he said.

Jason Palmberg, a fisherman and contractor whose family owns property near the dam, has suggested that a wider bridge or alternative access road would help with the future growth of the city.

“I think everybody can come out ahead and winning in this project if everybody takes a step back, time out, have some conversations with everybody’s issues — or potential issues — if they exist,” he said.

Mark Mead, the owner of Cascade Yacht Works, threatened to sue the city if the bridge is not built wider. He

said some boats under construction at his shop would not clear the proposed bridge because of the guardrails.

“If we can’t get them out of the shop,” Mead said. “It’s a little tough on the business.”

Dyer suggested that perhaps adjustable guardrails could be installed on the bridge as an alternative.

Stephen Fulton, who works on land development and wetland mitigation for Warrenton Fiber and serves as a commissioner for the Port of Astoria, urged the commission to delay the agreement.

Decision coming

Fulton recommended that the dam removal project go through a more arduous U.S. Army Corps of Engineers review — known as a “Section 408” for its federal code — and that the city learn exactly how much salmon recovery is expected.

But Dyer indicated the City Commission would rule at the special meeting. “I do think we owe it to the people who worked so hard on this project to make a decision in two weeks, period,” he said.



Daily Astorian file

Josh Holowatz, a fish biologist with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, prepares to tag a salmon caught using a purse seine net in an experimental fishery on the Columbia River in 2009.

Gillnets: Oregon could test a floating fish wheel this year

Continued from Page 1A

answer questions,” North said. Such numbers are “key components in calculating anything and if one of them is in question, you really don’t know the answer.”

For other fisheries, North said managers have years of harvest rates and other such numbers and calculations to draw from.

“We don’t have that stuff for seines yet,” he said. Last year was the first fishermen used seines in the context of a fishery, albeit a small, highly-managed one with few fishing days.

“We don’t know if we put 10 guys, 20 guys, 30 guys, what’s the power of (that fishery)?” North said.

Pilot project

Last year, Washington and Oregon operated a pilot seine gear fishery on the lower part of the river. Those 10 fishermen, selected by lottery, used “research impacts.” The

fish they caught but could not keep did not count against the other commercial boats.

That policy of not counting seine-caught fish has won the two state Fish and Wildlife commissions few friends among local commercial gillnet fishermen. These fishermen are critical of seine gear, saying the gear is not as selective as the sized mesh of the gillnets and will have a far greater impact on salmon populations.

But the states are working under “adaptive management” and plan to continue testing a variety of gear and tweaking the existing seines. To seines, they have added “pretty much any feasible tool,” North said.

This year Oregon could even possibly test a floating fish wheel — historically, fish wheels were massive structures built on the river side or on barges.

“It was on our list,” North said.

Flag: Transfer was a first in the U.S.

Continued from Page 1A

Over the years, the American soldiers and their families discovered their souvenirs, known as Yosegaki Hinomaru, are actually personal items belonging to Japanese families.

On Monday, five flags were returned to the Astoria-based nonprofit OBON 2015, created by local historian and author Rex Ziak and his wife, Keiko. OBON 2015 will then attempt to locate the families in Japan.

“All the people who cared about that person, all the people who thought about him, were going to war with him,” Rex Ziak told the audience about the flags.

OBON and members of the 41st Infantry Division — National Guard units from the Northwest that served in World War II — hosted the ceremony.

The ceremony was the first official public transfer of the flags in America.



LEFT: Hiroshi Furusawa, Consul General of Japan to Portland, bows to veterans and their families after they returned Yosegaki Hinomarus during the OBON 2015 Returning Ceremony. Japanese soldiers carried these Yosegaki Hinomarus — flags covered in well-wishes from family and friends — into battle during WWII. The flags were common war trophies taken by American soldiers. Now, 70 years later, veterans and their families are trying to make sure these flags return back to Japan.

Photos by JOSHUA BESSEX The Daily Astorian



A Yosegaki Hinomaru is put up on a board during the OBON 2015 Returning Ceremony at the Barbey Center Monday.

Ford site: Dealership move depends on wetland fill permit

Continued from Page 1A

Chevrolet (2004) and Lum’s Auto Center (2008) moved to Warrenton.

Heading to Warrenton

Gouge is trying to relocate Astoria Ford to the North Coast Retail Center at the corner of 19th Street and Ensign Lane, just across from Costco and down the lane from where Walmart is going in.

Late last year, North Coast Retail LLC applied for a wetland fill permit at the site with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is readying for an Endangered Species Act consultation.

Jaimee Davis, the project manager for the Corps on the wetland fill permit, said it’s planning an informal ESA consul-



EDWARD STRATTON — The Daily Astorian

Ray and Ruth Birdwell are selling three lots along Marine Drive for \$3.5 million. They lease the property to Dane Gouge’s Astoria Ford.

tation, which would mean that Astoria Ford is unlikely to have significant impact on species. Davis said the informal consultation would take about 30 days, as opposed to 135 with a formal consultation. The consultation’s status is dependent upon approval from the National Marine Fisheries Service, she said.

North Coast Retail seeks to buy mitigation credits for the project through the Corps-approved Oregon Department of State Lands Lower Columbia In Lieu Fee Program. North Coast Retail must buy mitigation credits to offset the impact of the 1.9 acres it intends to fill for the dealership’s new location.

Visit us online at www.DailyAstorian.com



The March edition available at a newsstand near you

Coast River BUSINESS JOURNAL
crbizjournal.com

Our customers experience some of life’s greatest assists off the court. Trust your local State Farm® agent for help finding the right coverage and savings on your insurance so you can enjoy more of what you love.

CONTACT A LOCAL AGENT TODAY. WE EXIST TO ASSIST.

Rick Berezay, Agent
653 West Marine Drive
Astoria, OR 97103
503-325-5920
www.rickberezay.com

Marcia Harper Ins Agcy Inc
Marcy Harper, Agent
936 E Harbor Drive
Warrenton, OR 97146
503-861-3276
Marcyharper.com

Jeremy Ryan Mills, Agent
815 S Holladay Drive
Seaside, OR 97138
503-738-6100
www.jmillsinsurance.com

State Farm™