



Concrete blocks block the road at the damaged gate along Northeast King Avenue.

JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian



The Astoria Column will be closed through September.

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The Daily Astorian

## Column: Last extensive restoration was in 1995

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Mayor Arline LaMear, who toured the column last week with Brad Johnston, the police chief and assistant city manager, and Angela Cosby, the city's parks director, said she was "really floored by the amount of damage that there is. I just wasn't aware."

"I knew that the paint had kind of faded," she said. "But there really is quite a bit of actual damage to the surface of the column. It looked to me like it was going to take a long, long time to return it to the state that it should be in."

"And I couldn't see how in the world they were going to open it on July 4th or whatever their first intent was."

LaMear said she wants the restoration crew to take the time necessary to do a good job.

"I know it's an inconvenience for the visitors," the mayor said. "But I think they would understand as well, if they saw the condition that it's in now."

The last extensive restoration of the city-owned column was in 1995.

Marie Laibinis, who had worked on the column 20 years ago, is project director for the new repairs. The conservator has likened the restoration to a physical.

Crews are cleaning the sur-

face of the column, removing moss, painting murals and addressing exterior cracks. Due to weather-related damage, the cupola will be waterproofed during the project.

The 125-foot column, built in 1926, is a tribute to the region's place in history.

The restoration project is being privately financed by Friends of the Astoria Column, a nonprofit led by Jordan Schnitzer, a Portland real estate magnate and philanthropist.

The nonprofit has raised \$500,000 for the project and is launching a capital campaign this summer called "Join the Crew" to invite people in Astoria and across Oregon and the nation to donate and help with the preservation.

"With over 400,000 visitors a year to this state icon, it is so important to preserve the rich history of our ancestors and our state," Schnitzer said in a statement. "We are honored to do so."

### HOW TO HELP

Contributions can be made at [www.astoriacolumn.org](http://www.astoriacolumn.org), directly at the Column Gift Shop, or via mail at Friends of Astoria Column, P.O. Box 717, Astoria, OR 97103.

## Bayfront: It's estimated that the June 17 fires cost the port \$3,400

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The fire department has received calls in the past about vehicle fires at Bayfront, including a motorhome fire in which the vehicle had been packed with trash and set ablaze, according to Demers.

The fires on June 17 included a brush fire and a pickup truck fire.

Evert estimates those fires cost the port nearly \$3,400.

Bayfront is also used for four-wheeling and by "a very large population of urban campers," Demers said.

He recalled there have been groups in the past who have helped clean up the area.

"The problem is everybody is not a good steward," Demers said.

Todd Atkins, owner of Spoiled BOYZ Excavating in Warrenton, has helped clean up Bayfront in the past. If the road was not so bad, he said he might have taken his dump truck out there.

"I've ridden there for years," Atkins said. "Now we don't have a place to ride anymore."

Atkins and his children used to ride at Bayfront. Now, he is planning a trip to Sandlake Recreation Area in Tillamook County, almost 80 miles away.

Nevertheless, Atkins, who was born and raised in Warrenton, does not disagree with the decision to close the area.

"I would do the same thing," Atkins said.

Out on the property among the patches of well-worn trails and piles of garbage, the joy of recreation has clashed with the reality of dumping, van-



John Jarboe, with the Warrenton Fire Department, stands at the blockade at Northeast Heron Avenue near the Warrenton Marina while smoke rises in the background near Bay Front Road on June 17. Firefighters were called to the scene when a truck caught fire and burned nearby bushes in three locations.

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Robert Evert finds a Washington state license plate left on the property.

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dalism and liability.

"It's an attractive nuisance,"

Evert said. "Locking it up surely isn't the best way to go about it."

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