



PADDLING DOWN Lewis and Clark's highway

Experience same waters used by early-19th-century explorers

By KYLE SPURR
The Daily Astorian

The Lewis and Clark expedition spent a vast majority of their travel on water, paddling in various watercraft. Traversing by water became especially efficient for the Corps of Discovery once they reached the Lower Columbia River.

What is today the Lewis and Clark River in Astoria was used as a highway for the Corps and for Native Americans two centuries ago.

"They paddled just about everywhere around here," Matt Hensley, a park ranger at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, said.

Hensley and three other park rangers — Esther Steiner, Jan Merling and Susan Rhoads — are leading kayak and canoe tours this summer on the river to give participants the opportunity to float along the same waters as the explorers.

Themes of the three-hour tours include topics about Lewis and Clark and Native Americans, but also about the logging and fishing history of the area. Tours run Thursday through Sunday until Sept. 6. Each tour is led by two rangers and takes about 10 participants.

The tour leaves from Netul Landing and makes five stops along the way.

Tide gate area

The first stop is at a tide gate that helps protect a nearby dairy farm. Rangers have the group pause along the riverbank to talk about how the land was used for logging in the mid-19th century to late-20th century, and how over time was reclaimed and used for pastures and farming. Rangers describe the different types of logging booms, metal covers and general operation of a wet sort yard.

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TOP: Participants make their way upriver during a guided tour of the Lewis and Clark River offered by Lewis and Clark National Historical Park. ABOVE: Participants in canoes hit the waters of Lewis and Clark River from Netul Landing. LEFT: Jan Merling, a park ranger at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, shows people how to paddle their canoes and kayaks before going out on the Lewis and Clark River. Photos by Joshua Bessex
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