



A young girl explores Haystack Rock, stopping before entering a prohibited zone protected by Haystack's Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge status. Dani Palmer/EO Media Group

Rock: It's a protected national wildlife refuge

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They also shield Haystack's visitors, Keyser added. This summer, a "huge rock" fell from the center that could have injured a climber. She noted rock falls occur daily.

The number of climbers intercepted rose from last year, but Keyser noted that the data also reflects increased beach shifts and more volunteers.

There's a clicker at each beach shift site and those who interact with program staff or volunteers are counted. This year, they had more than 17,000 interactions. That doesn't include the thou-

sands who don't stop to talk to Awareness Program members.

Keyser said the majority of people staff and volunteers talk to are interested in doing what they can to protect the rock, as it is a place where "people can experience beauty and animals others are losing."

Some don't get what Haystack Rock Awareness Program is doing or want to climb the rock "because they see it as their own," Keyser added.

Education rather than enforcement is the focus, but program staff have had to call

the police a few times this year because a person became extremely upset. Thankfully, those people are "so few and far between," Keyser added.

Getting information out

Cannon Beach sees people from all over the world, and Portland residents flooded the coast to escape the heat this summer. Haystack Rock is the top Instagrammed location in Oregon.

Program staff and volunteers hand out informational brochures and try to use universal signage at the rock. There are signs posted that

say "Do Not Enter" or "Area Beyond This Sign Closed," but Keyser said they need to consider replacing or cleaning them. Some are covered in barnacles, others get washed out during a storm or king tide.

Signs posted near the rock provide "Keep off" warnings, but do not provide the rationale. However, interpretive signs at beach access points do provide information about the rock's protected status. Keyser said they are examining a variety of options to expand that message next season, as well. Staff are also planning to extend the pro-

gram's season into October, meaning volunteers will be able to monitor visitors for an extra month.

Unfortunately, Keyser noted, even those who live nearby don't always know the importance of the rock as a protected national wildlife issue.

Sam O'Shields, 24, of Astoria, was a visitor, not a climber. Even so, she said she was unaware of the rock's status as a protected national wildlife refuge. "But I can understand why it would be," O'Shields said. "It's a beautiful area. I don't know why people wouldn't want to protect it."

She, like many visitors, enjoys the diversity of animals, such as anemones, sea stars and the puffins nesting there over the summer.

Keyser said she had encountered students at Astoria High School during a fair who hadn't heard of the Haystack Rock Awareness Program or even been to the rock. The Awareness Program is working on projects to raise awareness among students and to get the community more involved, including a Facebook page and Twitter feed.

Getting the word out has become a top priority.



Assistant Fire Chief Frank Swedenborg and Fire Captain Matt Gardner at a holiday volunteer event in December 2014. Swedenborg is now in charge of the Cannon Beach Rural Fire District on an interim basis. Daily Astorian/File Photo

Fire chief: No timeline for hiring replacement

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A response has not yet been delivered, and Balzer has not responded to requests for comment.

At Monday's special meeting, Swedenborg said he is willing to fill in as chief until March.

The owner of The Waves in Cannon Beach has served as Cannon Beach's assistant fire chief for 18 years and as a volunteer firefighter for roughly 35.

"I felt it's important to be a part of the community you live in and the fire department sounded like a good area," Swedenborg said. "It was just a good fit for me."

While Swedenborg said he enjoyed the camaraderie of the department, he is ready to retire and is not looking to fill in permanently for the fire district. He now works three to four hours per day four days a week. Capt. Matt Gardner has also stepped up to help with daily operations.

The Cannon Beach Rural

Fire Protection District provides firefighting and emergency service to the North Coast communities of Cannon Beach, Arch Cape and Falcon Cove.

The fire chief also serves on the Emergency Preparedness Committee. Either Swedenborg or Gardner will take Balzer's place on the committee on a temporary basis.

Swedenborg's top priority is keeping firefighters on task until they get a new chief. After speaking with board members, he suggested the district care for the projects it has now before starting anything new in absence of a full-time leader.

Board member Linda Beck-Sweeney said the most important tasks are sustaining morale and ensuring general duties, such as maintaining important records for the fire district.

"I think that's the big thing at this point is to keep it all moving," she said.

She added that Swedenborg has "good rapport" with the firefighters.

Clyde said if there's anything she can do to help, she's willing to "jump in."

The board is examining how to compensate Gardner and Swedenborg for their work. The district paid Balzer \$36 an hour, roughly \$72,000 a year. Gardner has been working 60-hour-plus weeks for awhile and is up for a contract renewal in March when he could receive a raise, board members said.

The board will likely make a decision on Swedenborg's hourly wage next week, during its regular Monday night meeting. It hopes to meet with a Special Districts Association of Oregon representative then who will assist the district in the search for its next fire chief.

Clyde said they still need to discuss what they want in a leader and existing options. In the meantime, Swedenborg said the department's fire responses will be remain unchanged.

There is no timeline yet for how long it will take to find a replacement.

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