

Site: It was named shortly after Lewis and Clark bicentennial

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Lewis and Clark National Historical Park has not endorsed any theory regarding Dismal Nitch, although the rest area is a part of the park. Superintendent Scott Tucker insists the park is more interested in helping the historians foster the discussion.

When the Washington State Transportation Commission approved changing the rest area's name in 2005, commission Chairman Dan O'Neal expressed the same encouragement for more research.

"The commission recognizes the importance of this site and encourages the further development of interpretive information about the historical and cultural significance of this area," O'Neal said.

The Dismal Nitch Rest Area was named shortly after the Lewis and Clark bicentennial.

Sayce said he always see an effect during an anniversary that he calls the "ennial effect." Essentially, he said, anniversaries increase people's curiosity and efforts for interpretation. Then in off years after the excitement, the focus on historical work slows down.

"We need to learn to take advantage of that quiet period," Sayce said. "That allows us to focus on the story under the story. It allows historians, researchers and writers to take one step back and see what was really happening. That's what I do."

In the years since the bicentennial, Sayce has continued his work on the Dismal Nitch site.

He has camped under the cliffs and walked along the streams to replicate the Corps' experience.

The area around Hungry Harbor, where Sayce believes the Corps camped, matches specific descriptions in the journals. The expedition writes about a high cliff rising 500 feet, which Sayce has identified as a 425-foot-high cliff, historically known as Eagle Cliff.

Near the cliff is a logging road through a canyon, that Sayce said, the Corps called a "small holler," or an intimate canyon. The small holler is where the Corps stored their gear and weighed down their canoes. They also stored belongings on a "rock above the tide," which Sayce may have found among the new rocks lining the highway.

The journals claim two salmon-bearing streams surrounded the small holler. Sayce has found two streams on each side of the canyon that he believes matches the journals.

"There are not many places like this in this area that have a salmon-bearing stream on both sides, a small holler and a rock above the tide," Sayce said.



Google Maps

The three sites that historians think may have been in the Dismal Nitch area.



Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT PHOTO: A high point on the shore along U.S. Highway 101, historically called Eagle Cliff, looms over a portion of land where Jim Sayce believes Lewis and Clark camped during the first few days of the Corps of Discovery's five-day stay in November 1805 at Dismal Nitch.

Jim Sayce crosses a small stream on the western side of Eagle Cliff that he believes is one of the two streams that flanked Dismal Nitch in the Corps of Discovery journals.

Jim Sayce shows a logging road where he believes the "holler" described in the Lewis and Clark journals is located. The sloped areas on each side of the road and adjacent salmon-bearing stream provide clues that brought Sayce to this conclusion.



Jim Sayce walks along the shore of the Columbia River near Dismal Nitch Wednesday.

Review: Transportation is one of Gov. Brown's top priorities

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Tom Fuller, ODOT's communications manager, said staff will work with the transportation commission to select a consultant over the next couple months. "The (Oregon Transportation Commission) is in the driver's seat on this study and will receive regular reports and hold the agency accountable for implementing changes it deems appropriate from the study," Fuller wrote in an email.

Karmen Fore, Brown's sustainable communities and transportation policy adviser, explained the importance of the management review to transportation commissioners and agency administrators in a briefing before the commission meeting.

"It's that when we walk in the (capitol) building with an ask, the first question is, 'Is the agency well run?'" Fore said.

During a break in the meeting, Fore said she could not comment on the record regarding whether it would be a problem for ODOT to be involved in hiring the consultant who will review the agency. Fore referred questions to Brown's communications staff.

Kristen Grainger, Brown's communications director, wrote in an email that this is "the reason Governor Brown asked the Commission to play a lead role in it. The Commission's role and charge include oversight and stewardship of ODOT, so their involvement in the review is critical."

During the meeting, Brown said transportation is one of her top policy priorities, along with education and affordable housing. Brown and a group of eight lawmakers negotiated a deal during the legislative session that would have raised the state gas tax and vehicle registration fees to generate a total of \$202 million annually for state and local roads and repay \$400 million in bonds for specific highway projects listed in the bill. However, the proposal died soon after it was unveiled, when ODOT director Matt Garrett said during a hearing the plan would not reduce carbon emissions by the amount initially promised.

This was a key revelation, because Republicans had refused to vote for an increase in the gas tax unless the state's low-carbon fuel standard was repealed. Democrats were looking for alternatives that would achieve the same carbon reduction.

"Oregon desperately needs a transportation package," Brown said during the commission meeting Thursday. A funding package should pay for seismic upgrades to bridges and other transportation infrastructure, allow the state and local governments to catch up on long overdue road maintenance and reduce traffic congestion, Brown said. Most drivers dealing with congestion live in the Portland metropolitan area, but Brown said other areas of the state are not immune.

"Over the past five years, Harry & David Corporation has been challenged by freight delays to Portland," Brown said. Eighty to 100 trucks depart daily from the company's Medford headquarters during the busy holiday season, but sometimes the company had to divert them to the Port of Oakland due to severe traffic.

"In my mind, this is unacceptable," Brown said.

Brown spoke about the ODOT review while she was delivering her charge to the transportation commission. The governor said she wants the commission to focus on three things: setting transportation policy, oversight of ODOT and engaging the public.

Susan Morgan, a member of the commission who is also a Douglas County Commissioner, said efficiency must be an ongoing effort.

"I totally agree with you

that being able to present a case to the people of Oregon that this is an efficiently run organization, that we make good decisions, that we do it in a good way, is something to nev-

er lose sight of," Morgan said.

Hillary Borrud is a reporter for the EO Media Group/Pamplin Media Group Capital Bureau and Oregon Capital Insider.



I Am Thankful

This is the time of year when we reflect on our lives and our blessings

There are many that list something they are thankful for each day in November on social media.

On Thanksgiving Day, The Daily Astorian will dedicate a full page in our classified section to the community, allowing a time to share something you are thankful for.

There is a 20 word maximum for each submission. This allows more people to participate.

How to participate:
 email your "I am thankful" to- hlarkins@dailyastorian.com
 or mail to- The Daily Astorian, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103,
 Attn: Holly Larkins Deadline: November 20th at 5pm.