

State Democratic leaders call for Energy Department overhaul

By HILLARY BORRUD
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Democratic leaders in the state Legislature announced Wednesday afternoon they will form a committee next year to consider whether to overhaul or eliminate the state Department of Energy.

State Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, and House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, issued a joint statement calling for a “full and open legislative overhaul” of the agency. The lawmakers said they will direct the committee to issue recommendations and legislation for the full Legislature to take up in 2017.

“It’s time for the Legis-

lature to bring the problems at the Department of Energy into full focus and determine how we can fix them once and for all,” Kotek said in a written statement.

Courtney went even further in his written statement Wednesday afternoon.

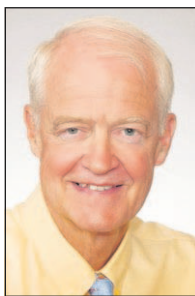
“Session after session we have had to address problems at the Oregon Department of Energy,” Courtney said. “The (business energy tax credit) program has gotten the most attention, but it’s been more than just the BETC. We need to get to the bottom of the is-

suess at ODOE. Is it the structure? Is it the purpose? Is it the personnel? Is it time for the

Department of Energy to go away?”

Michael Kaplan, director of the Oregon Department of Energy, said the agency can improve with help from lawmakers.

“(Department of Energy) staff have been working hard to move this agency forward, and we believe we’ll be more successful with the Legislature’s help,” Kaplan said in a written statement. “We look forward to the opportunity to discuss the future of energy policy, safety, and siting in the state.”



Senate President Peter Courtney



House Speaker Tina Kotek

ney Walter Beglau.

The Department of Energy came under increased scrutiny this year after news reports revealed the agency wrongly awarded millions of dollars in tax credits and allowed people to ignore state regulations on energy tax credits.

Problems go back years

However, problems at the agency go back years, to when staff lowballed the cost of the controversial business energy tax credit under pressure from the administration of then-Gov. Ted Kulongoski.

Tax credits issued to provide incentives for renewable energy and efficiency projects could cost the state \$1 billion in tax revenue it otherwise would have received.

Then there was the state Department of Justice investigation into whether the Department of Energy steered part of a contract to Cylvia Hayes, who at the time was the companion of former Gov. John Kitzhaber. Hayes’ company came in last in the bidding, but she was not accused of wrongdoing.

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

Port of Ilwaco withdraws from CREST

By KATHERYN HOUGHTON
EO Media Group

ILWACO, Wash. — The Port of Ilwaco withdrew from its membership with the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce because they no

longer used their services, according to the port manager.

Manager Guy Glenn notified the Astoria-based agency that the port was removing their membership on Monday.

CREST is a contracting organization that focuses on environmental planning and

habitat restoration. The organization offers expertise in project design, funding, management, implementation and monitoring.

Glenn said since he began working at the Port of Ilwaco in 2012, he can only remember contracting with CREST’s

services once, when the Port held a public outreach meeting about updates to the discovery trail in October.

“There are some good people in their organization and we may use their services at a non-member price in the future,” Glenn said.

No remaining environmental risk from sunken vessel

By CYNTHIA WASHICKO
EO Media Group

about five miles north of Pacific County.

WESTPORT, Wash. — A sunken vessel in Westhaven Marina no longer poses and environmental risk after U.S. Coast Guard personnel removed 500 gallons of oil and water from the vessel’s tanks.

A report of a sinking vessel was received Sunday afternoon, and a vessel from the Grays Harbor Coast Guard station was launched in response, according to a Coast Guard news release. It’s not yet known what caused the 67-foot commercial fishing vessel Persistence to sink, said Coast Guard Petty Officer First Class Levi Read.

Personnel from the Coast Guard National Response Center and the Washington State Department of Ecology responded to the report, the release said. The marina is located just inside Grays Harbor,

The owner of Persistence reported that there were potentially 250 gallons of diesel and 15 gallons of oil on board, according to the release. When they arrived to find the vessel submerged at the pier, responders observed a sheen on the water, and placed a containment boom around Persistence to prevent any oil from spreading.

The fuel tanks on the vessel weren’t punctured, and were emptied to prevent any oil from potentially spreading into the water, Read said.

“Right now our main thought process is the mitigation of any pollution and getting that thing up off the bottom,” he said.

Even with the tanks empty, the Coast Guard will leave the boom around the vessel to prevent any residual oil from spreading, he added.

Congress says, ‘We need your app’

The Daily Astorian

BEAVERTON — U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici invites local high-schoolers to design an award-winning computer app.

Her district, which includes Clatsop County, is again participating in the annual Congressional App Challenge. Established by members of the U.S. House of Representatives, the contest is a nationwide event designed to encourage students to express their creativity while participating in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics education. Students across the country cre-

‘Creativity leads to innovation, which we need to grow our economy...’

— Suzanne Bonamici
U.S. representative

ate and demonstrate an app for a mobile phone, tablet or other computer.

“Participating in the Congressional App Challenge will require creative thinking, so students will be engaging both halves of the brain,” said Bonamici, D-Ore. “Creativity leads to innovation, which we

need to grow our economy. As the co-chair of the Congressional STEAM Caucus, I see this challenge as a great opportunity for students to develop technology while raising awareness about the value of educating innovators and problem solvers.”

Students entering the com-

petition must submit their app’s source code online before Jan. 15, as well as provide a video demonstration explaining their app and what they learned through the competition process. Winners will be announced Feb. 15.

A panel of local experts will review the submissions. Winners from each congressional district will be acknowledged in a district awards ceremony and featured on www.house.gov. There will also be a display in the U.S. Capitol to honor all of the district winners.

Learn more at <http://tinyurl.com/htkcvf9>

Comments invited on statewide trails plan

The Daily Astorian

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is inviting public comment on a draft plan for recreational trails.

Comments will be accepted through Jan. 5.

The plan, Oregon Trails 2015: A Vision For The Future, guides public recreation providers in their management of off-highway vehicle trails, snowmobile trails, trails for walking, hiking, bicycling

and other non-motorized trail recreation and water trail paddling routes.

In addition, the plan establishes a review process for potential additions to the state scenic waterway corridor. The state’s scenic waterways program sets specific rules for selected corridors to balance protection of natural resources, scenic value and recreation.

The plan was developed using public feedback gathered through statistically reliable surveys of trail users

and non-motorized boaters, according to the state.

Staff gathered feedback and opinions from 7,450 randomly selected residents. Workshops were held in 14 locations across the state to gather additional public input on trails issues and funding needs.

States are required to develop a trails plan to be eligible for matching federal grants for trails projects. The trails plan is used to direct grant awards for federal-

ly-funded Recreational Trails Program grants and the state’s All-Terrain Vehicle grants, which is financed by non-refunded gas tax revenue and ATV permit sales.

Comments can be made online at <http://tinyurl.com/o3lvfah>, or emailed to terry.bergerson@oregon.gov. Comments can also be mailed to Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, 725 Summer Street NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301-1271, Attn: Terry Bergerson.

County receives assistance with farms and forests

The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County will receive technical assistance from the Oregon Department of Land Conservation to update farm and forest zoning laws.

Except for a few minor changes, the county’s farm use and forest zones have not been updated since 1993.

The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners approved the agreement Wednesday.

Updating the county’s farm and forest codes will help the

county address increasingly popular agritourism activities such as farm-to-table dinners, farm stands and classes.

“While these activities are valued by the greater community, they impact adjacent property owners and infrastructure,” county staff wrote the Board of Commissioners. “What’s the right balance for Clatsop County?”

The county was selected by the state Department of Land Conservation to participate in the project. The project will create new or amend ex-

isting chapters of the zoning laws so farm and forest uses are consistent with state law and the needs of the county. There is no cost to the county.

As part of the agreement, the county formed a farm and forest advisory committee to review project materials and advise on issues throughout the project.

In other business Wednesday:

- The Board of Commissioners decided on the interview process for county manager finalists. The deadline to apply for the position is Dec. 31. Finalists will be decided by Jan. 13, and invited for a county tour and reception on Jan. 28. Interviews will be held on Jan. 29.

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