



Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Pines on an old Christmas tree are lit by the sun at the drop-off site at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

## Trees: Restoration efforts have been ongoing since 2007

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“This is a place (the salmon) come when they are juveniles to fatten up, and get bigger before heading out into the ocean,” Bell said.

Another benefit is the Christmas trees provide protection for the salmon against predators such as birds and small mammals. The trees also offer shade to help control water temperature.

“The great thing about it is it keeps the trees from going into landfills, and it puts them back into a natural setting,” Bell said.

### Restoration work

Restoration efforts at Colewort Creek have been ongoing since 2007. When the park acquired the land, it was an old pasture cut off from the Lewis and Clark River, and salmon populations.

Over time, more native plants began growing back and more aquatic species and wildlife re-emerged.

“It was totally cut off. The salmon could not access this area at all,” Bell said.

The park has tried not to impact the restoration site and allow nature to take over.

In just the past few years, park staff has seen an abundance of waterfowl and frogs.

“This area has changed significantly in the past three years,” Bell said. “There has been a lot of native plants that have voluntarily come in, and just an abundance of wildlife has increased here.”

### Regional effort

Park staff and volunteers will be hard to miss during the work party from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 16. Many will be wearing Santa hats as they place the trees into a 15-acre portion of the creek.

The drop-off location is on the west side of Fort Clatsop Road between the Visitor Center and Netul Landing. Hot chocolate and gloves will be provided to



Christmas trees are already beginning to show up at the drop-off location. Trees can be dropped off at the park anytime between now and Jan. 16.



Jenny Bell walks along the Colewort Creek restoration site on Monday.



Trees will be placed in the Colewort Creek restoration site during a volunteer work party on Jan. 16.

volunteers, who should prepare to get muddy. All tinsel and ornament must be removed from the trees.

Bell said the best way to place the trees is to wedge a few together and anchor them into the mud using

fresh cut willow stakes. It is important to make sure the trees stay put since the creek is influenced by the tides. The water level is always rising and falling.

The Cocoa and Coho event coincides with other

efforts in the area. Scouts from Boy Scout troop 642 will be collecting trees at Columbia Bank in Cannon Beach and at the Seaside Outlet Mall from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 2 and Jan. 3. The collected trees will be placed in various locations by local groups such as the Necanicum Watershed Council, the Lower Nehalem Watershed Council, North Coast Watershed Association and Trout Unlimited.

“They started the whole thing in this region, so we got inspired by that and we brought it here,” Bell said. “It’s a regional effort.”

## LNG: Acosta’s ruling won’t become final for a few months

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its claims by alleging that the Army Corps had abandoned its interest in the property.

“Oregon LNG basically said, ‘Let’s reframe our arguments to try to get around what the court said,’” Miles Johnson, a clean water attorney for Columbia Riverkeeper, a Hood River-based environmental group opposing the LNG project, said. “They were asking the court for permission to present those new arguments.”

A federal district court judge will have to sign off on Acosta’s decision. Oregon LNG will then have time to appeal. But, even if the company does nothing, Acosta’s ruling won’t become final for a few months.

However, “this more or less ends the litigation unless Oregon LNG comes up with different arguments or decides to appeal,” Johnson said.

### ‘Newly discovered evidence’

Oregon LNG said it was entitled to replead its case because it received “newly discovered evidence” after the briefing was completed on the Army Corps’ motion to dismiss the lawsuit.

What was this “newly discovered evidence”?

Oregon LNG said that the government’s response to a Freedom of Information Act request revealed that, in 2002, “the government removed the Skipanon Peninsula as a dredge disposal site in the Columbia River Estuary Dredged Material Management Plan”; and, as recently as 2014, the Army Corps “omitted the Skipanon Peninsula from dredge-spoil deposit locations on a dredge deposit permit application to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality,” according to the decision.

The company argued that these documents — plus the fact that the Army Corps hasn’t deposited dredging spoils on the easement since 1992 — show the agency intends to abandon the easement, and that the statute of limitations should start anew.

But this evidence is not “new,” Acosta concluded. In fact, Oregon LNG had already located these documents on the Internet and obtained them before the Army Corps moved to dismiss the company’s claims.

### ‘Futile’ amendments

In addition, the company’s amendments to its claims

would prove “futile,” Acosta wrote.

“LNG’s contention that its proposed amendments would cure the deficiencies in its previous complaint rest on the assertion that the Corps permanently abandoned the subject property as a dredge-spoil disposal site,” Acosta wrote. “The Corps argues it did not clearly manifest its intent to abandon its interest in the subject property.”

The standard for showing the federal government abandoned property where it has a property right is “very high,” Acosta said.

Citing a 2008 case, Acosta pointed out that the government “does not abandon its claims to property by inaction.” Rather, “there must be ‘clear evidence that all adverse claims of ownership had been relinquished, as documented by a person with appropriate authority.’”

Oregon LNG’s case does not meet that standard.

“Thus, the court finds the Corps did not abandon its easement on the subject property as a matter of law, and no justification exists for the court to revisit its decision that LNG’s claims should be dismissed,” Acosta wrote. “The court should not reconsider its previous ruling and should not grant LNG leave to amend their complaint.”

### ‘Another blow’

The Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for maintaining the federal navigational channel, which includes dredging the channel to maintain its depth.

“That material has to be placed somewhere, and this particular piece of property is one of those placement sites,” Michelle Helms, an Army Corps public affairs specialist, said.

An Army Corps spokesman recently said that he can’t foresee the agency giving up its easement unless the city of Warrenton proposed an alternative site to deposit dredge spoils.

“This is an area that is important to our navigational mission, and that’s kind of where things still stand,” Helms said.

Brett VandenHeuvel, executive director of Columbia Riverkeeper, said “the court’s decision that Oregon LNG doesn’t have access to the land is another blow against their development plans. The Corps continues to defend its right to use the east Skipanon Peninsula.”

Oregon LNG could not immediately be reached for comment.

## Port: Lone lawsuit has to deal with Riverwalk Inn

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the Special Districts Association of Oregon. As part of Browne’s settlement, she and Foster agreed not to comment to the press on the matter.

Weston recently signed a separation agreement with the Port, which provided him with \$22,500 in severance pay, equal to three months of his salary, and \$14,046 worth of accrued vacation and sick time. Knight also agreed to provide Weston a neutral letter of reference. Weston

agreed not to seek any claims against the Port.

The Port is down to one active lawsuit, regarding the Astoria Riverwalk Inn, in which spurned suitor Param Hotel Group claims the Port didn’t follow through on an agreement

to transfer former operator Brad Smithart’s remaining two years and a five-year extension. The suit claims the Port showed bias toward chosen short-term hotel operators Chester Trabucco and William Orr, whose brother-in-law is Port Commissioner Stephen Fulton.

## Neighbor: He plans to interview native people, fishermen

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visited at least 20 states and 18 countries as “a storytelling warrior,” or “someone that helps businesses to fight business wars using the power of stories,” he said.

He started a different version of his company while in Singapore the first time. When he moved to Nevada for graduate school, he kept the same concept but changed the name to Business Storytelling Academy and the company evolved. Struggling with job prospects in Nevada, he moved back to Singapore, where he became a resident. Even now, about 40 percent

of his company’s operations remain in the Asian country.

He uses coaching, writing and training to help businesses craft engaging and audience-friendly stories for different forms of communication. His goal is to help employers engage employees; help employers engage business prospects, customers and stakeholders; and help employers engage the community for public relations campaigns.

Sometimes he will be a keynote speaker or lead workshops at conferences and business training seminars. He speaks several languages, including his mother tongue,

a Bantu language; French; English; and some Mandarin, Malay and German. He’s also learning Spanish.

### Writing craft

While he is willing to help write stories for others as part of his job, he also enjoys writing for himself. For-muk-wai’s interest in writing was sparked as a young teenager after reading Mark Twain’s “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.”

“That book inspired me so much,” he said. “I felt like Tom was my brother from a different mother.”

In addition to enjoying others’ tales, he decided to

write his own. His first published work was an autobiographical book titled “Facing Adversity with Audacity.” It was published in 2008. In May this year, he published a second book, titled “The Science of Storytelling: How Win the Hearts and Minds of Your Prospects for Profit.”

Since moving to Gearhart to be with his wife, who has lived in Oregon several years, For-muk-wai has felt mixed emotions.

“My first impression was positive, especially the fact that it wasn’t too crowded,” he said. “But I was very uncertain and worried the long rains. The fact that most of the

day is cloudy, would take a toll on me.”

He still feels that way at times, but he tries to not let it bother him and to continue with his meetings and activities as usual.

“I’m liking it now, so I think I will like it even more over time, especially as summer comes,” he said.

He looks forward to kayaking and continuing his hobby of running outdoors along trails. He said there are times he misses Singapore — “especially when it gets too cold” — and he will travel back there every couple of months for work.

He especially is excited to

learn the history of the Pacific Northwest. He loves visiting places like Cape Disappointment and reading about the area’s indigenous people and the early sailors and explorers who visited. He plans to interview area residents, including native people and fishermen, to capture and share stories of the Pacific Northwest.

“This is a new chapter that allows me to interview people that live in this area, find out what they do, and I think that will end up in a book,” he said.

Meanwhile, he will use the stories he gathers here to keep his clients and blog followers aware of what he is doing.