

Storms: County pays for damage costs out-of-pocket

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needs to repair parts of Pier 1 before taking another log ship.

Yet to be determined is the amount of sediment filling in the Port's slips and mooring basin, as the Columbia River turned milky brown with debris from upriver. Evert estimated \$15,000 to remove each inch of sediment from the west end basin.

Crumbling waterfront

The effects of last month's storms are most evident to the public along the Astoria Riverwalk, where next to the Barbey Maritime Center, a row of locust trees was uprooted and fell toward the Columbia River.

Dave Pearson, deputy director of the Columbia River Maritime Museum, said the storm surges topped the rock wall that runs along the river, pulling away the soil under the trees.

Astoria Public Works Director Ken Cook said the city identified 22 areas of erosion along the waterfront during last month's storms. He estimated more than \$120,000 in damages.

Daniel Grassick, the public works director in Cannon Beach, said the city experienced erosion on the beachfront and settling on a couple of streets. He said the city had to dump sand at the end of some streets where storm surges caused erosion and ex-



posed underground utilities.

Assessing damage

The state and FEMA are touring storm damage in the counties covered by Gov. Brown's emergency dec-

laration, trying to help the governor determine whether the storm damage is beyond what the state can handle, and whether federal assistance is needed. The assessments don't guarantee federal assistance.

Clatsop County pays for damage costs out-of-pocket, Tiffany Brown said, and FEMA typically reimburses 75 percent of the costs once a formal declaration has been made. "We track man hours

and try whenever possible to find our 25 percent match in this manner as opposed to coming up with a hard cash match which wasn't budgeted for by a county or city," she said.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian
Last month's storms broke and bent dozens of wooden and metal pilings along the Port's central waterfront, including the West End Mooring Basin.

Policy: Ranchers are hard-pressed to find grazing land

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The resentencing of Harney County ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond to five years in prison is just one of many examples throughout ranching areas of the West in the last several decades of the heavy handedness of federal agencies in acquiring more land and squeezing out ranches to satisfy environmentalists who want a national park from the Yukon to Yellowstone, Kuchenbuch said.

The government agencies deny squeezing ranches.

It's not coincidence that agencies have bought many Okanogan County ranches and that there have been problems between the government and ranchers in Nevada and other Western states, she said.

"We believe they are systematically squeezing us out. They use every means possible. Direct buy-outs, conservation easements, fire, sage grouse and wolves. The Endangered Species Act. Sometimes they pay 10 times the market value and every parcel sold jeopardizes those left," Kuchenbuch said.

"We do not trust that they will leave people alone, as witnessed with the Hammond family," she said.

Burned out by wildfires

A couple of dozen ranches have been burned out by wildfires that burned more than 1 million acres of Okanogan County in the past two summers. State and federal grazing allotments cover 50 to 80 percent of that, Jack Field, executive vice president of the Washington Cattlemen's Association, has said.

Ranchers are hard-pressed to find grazing land. One-third of 600,000 acres burned in the Okanogan, Tunk Block and North Star fires in 2015 was caused by agency backburning, Okanogan County Commissioner Jim DeTro has said.

Ranches in several parts of the county lost private timber, grazing grounds, hay, barns and equipment to agency backburning that ranchers opposed.

Kuchenbuch, her hus-

band, Casey, and her father, Rod Haerberle, fought a fire alongside firefighters on their ranch last summer and begged them not to backburn 1,000 acres of their private land.

The agency did it anyway to protect homes but destroyed Haerberle Ranch timber, miles of fencing, the family's mountain cabin and a set of corrals.

"We were told afterward that there is no restitution for our losses," Kuchenbuch said.

Touchy subject

Backburning is so touchy that agencies don't talk about it on their radios, rather commands are given in person, she said.

The homes could have been protected had the U.S. Forest Service allowed the Kuchenbuchs and Gebbers Farms to continue building a firebreak from private ranch land onto forest service property, she said. But the agency never fought the fire offensively, only defended homes, she said.

The forest service has said it doesn't attack fires when it's not safe to do so but that its goal in the Okanogan was to put them out.

Protecting towns was the priority and fire resources were spread so thin that rural residents were left to fend for themselves in many places, Kuchenbuch said.

When that happens, they don't have time to wonder whether a backburn they do or other efforts are legal, she said.

"We are forced to defend ourselves in any manner we know. If the Hammonds (in Oregon) are arson-terrorists, then so were a whole lot of people up here including the agencies and civilians who did whatever they needed to save their property," she said.

"It's hypocritical for the government to employ the same practices they convicted the Hammonds of," she said.

The Hammonds, who have already served sentences in jail, should be pardoned, she said.

"The law needs to be fixed," she said. "So they don't make common citizens into criminals."

Library: 'I think the council is straining to move forward, realizing we will not please everybody'

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again struggled with how — or if — to move forward on Heritage Square.

Councilors did settle on a range of possible options for a renovated library, including some of the same ideas the council had previously considered and rejected.

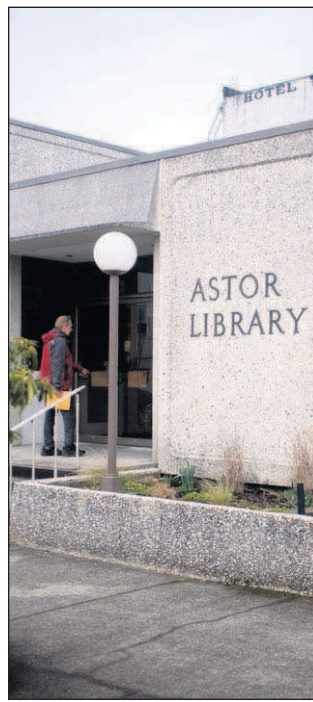
The city could expand the library where it stands on 10th Street — into the basement, the parking lot, or the vacant Waldorf Hotel, which the city would have to acquire and demolish.

Or the city could continue to look at a new library at Heritage Square.

Surprised by price tag

The work session, called after a December council meeting where councilors appeared surprised by the estimated price tag at Heritage Square, was the latest installment in a yearslong conversation about the need to modernize the library and redevelop an empty pit on Duane Street.

Any option the City Council pursues is bound to raise the hackles of some residents, Mayor Arline LaMear pointed out. "I think whatever we do is going to be a tough sell," she said.



Daily Astorian/File Photo
The Astoria City Council is struggling over how to renovate the Astoria Public Library.

Expanding the library into the basement — which would require an elevator and two sets of stairs for egress — would mean adding library staff to address security concerns, while expanding into the library's parking lot would reduce parking.

Meanwhile, any attempt to expand the library into the

neighboring Waldorf Hotel, also known as the Merwyn, will likely arouse the ire of preservationists who view the historic hotel as a relic of 1920s Astoria. In addition, the American Legion regards the library as a veterans' memorial and believes the Flag Room should not be altered, LaMear wrote in a summary.

Waldorf a challenge

LaMear said the city should not plan to renovate the library without also making plans to tear down the Waldorf, which she considers a derelict building. Chunks of the hotel's roof, cornice and siding have fallen onto the library, plugging the roof drains and causing thousands of dollars in damage, City Manager Brett Estes said.

"I would argue against renovating (the library) until something's done with the Merwyn. It's a danger," LaMear said. "We've had a lot of developers look at that building — a lot — and nothing pencils out. So how long are we going to let that building deteriorate in the name of preservation?"

City Councilor Russ Warr argued against building a new library in Heritage Square, saying that the expense alone

should rule out the option.

"I have not unmovable feelings but pretty strong feelings that (the current location on 10th Street) is the place that makes sense to build the new library," Warr said.

Councilor Cindy Price agreed, saying that the council has a moral obligation not turn its back on the existing library building, which she and Warr fear would sit empty if a new library goes in at Heritage Square.

LaMear, however, believes that the building would not go unused for long.

21st century library

Councilors Drew Herzig and Zetty Nemlowill said that a new 21st century library — coupled with affordable housing, which the city desperately needs — would represent the best use of the Heritage Square site.

"I think the council is straining to move forward, realizing we will not please everybody," Herzig said. "Whatever our decision is, we will make some of our citizens unhappy, and that makes us very unhappy, too, because we're going to have to live with it. But it's one of those situations where we have to cut a Gordian knot."

Union fees: Oregon is one of more than 20 states where public sector employees are forced to pay mandatory fees

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"It could have a huge impact on public sector unions in that the lifeblood you depend on would effectively dry up, that is union dues," said Keith Cunningham-Parmeter, a law professor at Willamette University who specializes in labor law.

Oregon is one of more than 20 states where public sector employees are forced to pay mandatory fees. Other states already prohibit that practice.

Public sector employees' union membership averages 17 percent in states that ban mandatory fees compared with 49 percent in states, such as Oregon, that allow mandatory fees, according to an amicus brief by a group of social scientists in support of the labor unions.

Officials with Oregon public sector labor unions said the case is an attack on the democratic principles of labor unions and on the middle class,

which has benefited economically from unions' work better wages and working conditions.

"Our belief is this truly is another attempt by the haves to have more and to have the have nots just do what they're told," said Hanna Vaandering, president of the Oregon Education Association, which represents 43,000 teachers and support staff at community college and K-12 campuses. "We will survive and will continue to advocate for public education."

Labor union officials refer to mandatory fees as "fair share" fees because the money pays for the cost of collective bargaining and pursuing grievances.



Keith Cunningham-Parmeter



Hanna Vaandering

Without mandatory fees, workers who decline to join the union would still reap the benefits of the union without paying any of the cost, labor officials said.

Oregon's public sector workers are under no obligation to join the union, but they often have to take action to opt out of paying full dues in favor of paying lower "fair share" fees, Cunningham-Parmeter said. While dues might cover the cost of some of the union's political activities, "fair share" fees are restricted to paying for col-

lective bargaining, grievances and other non-political services, the law professor said.

Depending on the contract,

some workers who decline to join the union still have to pay full dues upfront and then apply for a rebate for amount of the dues that would have gone toward the union's political activities.

The Oregon Education Association, for instance, provides rebates usually within a month of when workers apply for a rebate, said spokeswoman Lalia Hirschfield.

About 10 percent of eligible workers seek the rebate, she said.

While labor unions are focused on a worst-case scenario in which the court would prohibit all mandatory fees, the court also could make a more limited ruling, Cunningham-Parmeter said.

The court could choose to ban the opt-out process and require that workers opt into paying the full dues, he said.

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