



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Members of the Coast Guard explore Fort Clatsop and its uses as a possible shelter in case of an earthquake and tsunami during a drill Monday.

Drill: Short distance to park avoids potential hurdles



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Members of the Coast Guard including Skip Dronen, center, and Dave Bartram, center back, jog to Fort Clatsop as part of a tsunami drill Monday morning.

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Scott Tucker

Lewis and Clark National Historical Park superintendent

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Kenne asked what the members consider high ground. One Guardsman joked, "Anything higher than what I was walking on."

As part of the agreement with the national park, the Coast Guard is stashing an emergency kit at the park full of tents, sleeping bags, tarps, a hatchet, shovels and axes. The kit also includes a water filter, fire starter and other essentials.

Before evacuating, members would take a satellite phone with a connection to the district office in Seattle and hand-held radios.

"Our focus is food, water, shelter," Kenne said. "We are not really going anywhere for a few days. We are trying to make sure our people are safe."

'Lewis and Clark had it right'

Scott Tucker, Lewis and Clark National Historical Park superintendent, said he was approached by the Coast Guard about a year ago about using the park in a Cascadia event.

It's a natural partnership, Tucker said, especially because both are federal agencies.

A couple of years ago, the Coast Guard tried an evacuation drill at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center in Warrenton, but realized the center was too far away.

The short distance to the national park avoids hurdles such as damaged bridges.

Tucker points out the replica Fort Clatsop has 30 beds, if needed.

"Lewis and Clark had it right. They chose

this location because of its height over high tide," Tucker said. "Two-hundred years later, the ground is higher than the proposed tsunami zone."

The national park and Coast Guard are in the process of establishing a written agreement to formally have an evacuation plan in place. Along with storing goods at the park, Tucker said, the Coast Guard would be welcome to use the park's equipment in its maintenance shops.

"If our role in this is making sure the Coast Guard can do their job, I can sleep well at night knowing we are doing our piece for the community," Tucker said.

People first

In any emergency situation, Kenne said, the most critical thing is saving people.

Equipment comes second. If a helicopter is in the hangar, it's not going to get out in time. And if the power is out, the hangar doors would not even open anyway.

"Our focus is people first, if we can save them," Kenne said.

Along with becoming an emergency headquarters for the Coast Guard, the national park is also an official community assembly area for residents in the immediate area.

Kenne reminded the group Monday that their time at the park may be spent assisting their fellow community members.

"We may have to build shelter, not just for us, but there may be other folks," Kenne said. "We may be helping out folks like we always do."

Totem: Pole must be OK'd before the next fiscal year

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The statue will depict a member of the NeCus' village extending his arm out in a gesture of welcoming. Palette Group members are suggesting that the pole be placed just west of the picnic table at NeCus' Park in a clearing. The pole would face toward the ocean, as NeCus' village members did when they welcomed fishermen and traders approaching the Clatsop village by dugout canoe on the ocean.

Although the statue would be carved from a cedar log, it would have spots of black, red and blue paint. Members of the public arts committee questioned how intense the colors would be, and Basch, who has been in contact with Capoeman, said he thought they would be created from natural pigment.

Arts committee member Allyn Cantor, of White Bird Gallery, questioned how well the pole would wear in the weather. "Is it meant to be weather-worn?" she asked.

"Think of old totem poles you have seen," Basch replied. "We could talk to him (Capoeman) about touching it up later."

Basch noted that Capoeman is carving the statue "as a favor to me and my family. He would

charge twice the amount if he did it for another organization," he said. "If he were doing it for other cities, it would be much, much higher."

They also questioned what type of base would be used for the pole and how it would be stabilized to withstand windstorms. City Planner Mark Barnes, who attended the meeting, said he would check with the city building official to determine if the concrete pad would have to be engineered to provide more stability.

It could cost about \$5,000 to install the pole, in addition to the \$10,000 cost to create it, Kucera noted. That expense could come from the city's budget beginning the next fiscal year, which starts in July, he said.

Barnes also warned committee members that the design review board might want to wait until the designs for two other interpretive signs proposed for the park were submitted or until a citywide parks master plan is completed.

However, Barbara Linnett, chairwoman of the Palette Group, noted that the pole could be moved to another location — perhaps Les Shirley Park — if it wasn't deemed appropriate in NeCus' Park.

Because the funding would

come from a public arts grant designated for fiscal year 2015, the pole must be approved before the end of June.

"The alternative is not to do it at all," Linnett said.

Arts committee member Hank Johnson noted that the NeCus' Park plan calls for an eventual canoe landing on Ecola Creek. "This pole fits nicely with the landing," he said.

For many generations, the NeCus' village, on both banks of Ecola Creek, welcomed visitors who paddled canoes to fish or trade south around Neahkahnie Mountain north to the mouth of the Columbia River. They would often stop at NeCus' to visit and eat with relatives in the Clatsop and Nehalem tribes before continuing their journeys, Basch said after the meeting.

"Many people don't realize there were Indians here and there are still Indians here," he said. "This has been a beautiful place to come here for generations."

"I think it's important for people to realize that there is a group of people who consider this our homeland. And I think it's always great to see geography through the eyes of someone else, especially the aboriginal people who have deep, deep roots in this land."



Submitted Photo

A totem pole designed by Guy Capoeman. A 10-foot-tall welcoming pole in the figure of a Clatsop tribesman may soon be installed in NeCus' Park.