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Daric Williams paints one of the probation offices in the new Clatsop County Sheriff's Office on Wednesday. *Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian*

70 miles shielded

Conservation efforts save thousands of acres in Pacific County

By MATT WINTERS
EO Media Group

LONG BEACH, Wash. — In the past quarter century, Pacific County has become a focal point for land-conservation efforts. Private groups based elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest presently own more than 16 square miles of land here, in addition to about 50 to 55 square miles of conservation property managed by federal, state and local agencies.

The armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Southern Oregon heightened public awareness of some of the trade-offs of conserving land versus using it for income-producing activities such as forestry and ranching. The refuge's former occupiers are incensed about federal land ownership in the West. However, with legal title to about 2.75 percent of the land in Pacific County, the federal government is a substantial (but not dominant) property owner here.

Nevertheless, a small but vocal group of county residents has expressed concerns for years about incremental losses from local tax rolls. Their worries stem from property being acquired and set aside by conservation groups and public agencies, sometimes working together.

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MORE SPACE, MORE JAIL BEDS

Sheriff's Office soon to move to Warrenton

By KYLE SPURR
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — The Clatsop County Sheriff's Office is less than two months away from relocating to a remodeled building in Warrenton, a move that could free up space in Astoria and ease jail overcrowding.

The Sheriff's Office is moving from its current location below the county jail in Astoria to a renovated building it will share with the Parole and Probation Division.

Sheriff Tom Bergin said he plans to turn the empty space in Astoria into an opportunity for the overcrowded jail to add more beds. The tentative plan is to move administrative offices and the control center downstairs, opening room upstairs for 15 to 20 extra beds in the 60-bed jail.

"I'm hoping to be able to increase the upstairs by quite a few beds," Bergin said. "I'm hoping I could at least increase the jail by 25 percent."

Expanding the county jail has been a goal of Bergin's for years. He says the community needs a jail that is three times the size.

Each year, about 3,500 people are booked and released. Inmates are regularly released without having to post bail due to the overcrowding. The jail rents about 10 beds from Tillamook County for at least \$200,000 a year. In 2012, voters rejected a \$14



Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin walks through the construction site for the new Clatsop County Sheriff's Office. *Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian*

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Tom Bergin
Clatsop County sheriff

million proposal to add 100 beds to the jail.

The voters have spoken, Bergin said, and he is now focused on finding ways to address jail overcrowding without relying on a bond measure.

The \$1.5 million relocation project is being funded through a

special project budget approved by the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners.

"Instead of going to the people and saying 'I need all of this money.' It's just better to try to hopefully give the jail a little breathing room," Bergin said.

Evidence storage

Along with remodeling the 9,500 square-foot Parole and Probation building, a new 1,200-square-foot modular building is being constructed to store evidence.

An entire building used for evidence storage is a welcome upgrade, Bergin said, compared to the small lockers currently used to store evidence. Additional evidence is stored upstairs in the old jail, which is now the Oregon Film Museum.

The Board of Commissioners approved a \$42,581 contract with Spacesaver Specialists Inc. Wednesday night to install an evidence storage system inside the modular building.

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Legislators rush to pass minimum wage credits

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A bipartisan duo in the state House of Representatives is working to forge an 11th hour deal to offset the cost of minimum wage increases to small businesses, nonprofits and employers in natural resources industries.

State Reps. Brian Clem, D-Salem, and John Davis, R-Wilsonville, have proposed giving tax credits to certain employers who are most likely to struggle financially to meet the requirements of a new three-tier minimum wage plan.

"Clearly, based on the vote in the House and Senate, the only bipartisan thing about the minimum wage bill was bipartisan opposition to it," Davis said. "Even among those who voted for it, there was a lot of consternation and reluctance. As part of that, there also were assurances from leadership that we would be able to work on the proposals further. After the bill passed, more folks realized the devastating effects the bill is going to have on small businesses."

Clem, who voted for the bill, said he was concerned that small employers would have to lay off workers due to the cost of

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Groups seek emergency measures to save salmon

Hot summer led to massive sockeye die-off

By GEORGE PLAVERN
EO Media Group

Last year took a massive toll on sockeye salmon in the Columbia and Snake rivers, as high water temperatures killed hundreds of thousands of fish returning from the Pacific Ocean.

Conservation groups are pointing the finger at federal dam operators, and have asked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to come up with emergency measures to avoid a repeat in 2016.

On Feb. 9, groups sent a letter to Col. Jose Aguilar in Portland criti-

cizing the Corps' "inability to protect returning adult salmon from high water temperatures," and said another major die-off could push Snake River sockeye to the brink of extinction.

"If the Army Corps fails to adopt and implement emergency measures, it risks causing further massive fish kills, unauthorized take, failure of mandatory legal duties to protect endangered species and jeopardizing the continued existence of the Snake and Columbia rivers' salmon and steelhead populations in 2016 and future years," the letter states.

Both Columbia Riverkeeper and

Snake River Waterkeeper signed onto the letter, which does not propose any specific measures but points to several statistics underlining the urgency of the situation. They emphasized 96 percent of endangered Snake River sockeye died before ever making it to Lower Granite Dam in 2015.

The Clean Water Act requires temperatures in the Columbia River to stay at or below 68 degrees to protect native salmon and steelhead. Rock Peters, senior fisheries biologist for the Army Corps' Northwest Division, said temperatures varied in 2015 but eclipsed 70 degrees in July.

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Contributed photo

High water temperatures led to a massive die-off of sockeye salmon on the Columbia and Snake rivers in 2015.

