

Astoria man dies in head-on crash on US 30

The Daily Astorian

A 29-year-old Astoria man died after a two vehicle, head-on crash Monday on U.S. Highway 30 about 20 miles east of Astoria.

Randall T. Haines, 29, was driving a 2003 Ford Focus eastbound at about 5:30 p.m. when he drifted onto the shoulder. Haines lost control, crossed over into the westbound lane and struck a 2013 Ford Fusion head-on.

Haines was pronounced dead at the scene.

The driver of the Ford Fusion, Edward D. Levick, 66, and his passenger, Nydia

A. Levick, 97, both from Sequim, Washington, were taken to Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria. Nydia Levick was then transported to Oregon Health & Science University for life threatening injuries.

U.S. Highway 30 was closed in both directions for more than three hours.

Oregon State Police was assisted by the Knappa Fire Department, Medix Ambulance, Clatsop County Medical Examiner, Clatsop County Sheriff's Office and the Oregon Department of Transportation.

State police continue to investigate the crash.

Clam digging extended through March for Long Beach, Ocean Park

EO Media Group

OLYMPIA, Wash. — State shellfish managers have extended clamming at Long Beach-Ocean Park through March.

The Long Beach-Ocean Park area was previously scheduled to be open through March 10. Although Long Beach is open daily through the end of the month, optimal digging conditions occur when the low tide is 1 foot or lower, said Dan Ayres, coastal shellfish manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"There are several days early in the month when low tides will be high enough to make digging difficult," Ayres said.

Ayres noted that the seasonal shift of low tides from evening to morning takes place in March. When low tides occur in the afternoon or evening, no digging is allowed before noon. When low tides take place in the morning, no digging is allowed after noon.

Diggers at Long Beach should be aware that low tides will shift back and forth between morning and evening multiple times during the month of March.

"Low tides are a little unusual this March, which means diggers should be sure to check tide information before heading to Long Beach," Ayres said.

Long Beach will be open on evening tides March 1-10 and March 15-23 and will be open on morning tides March 11-14 and March 24-31. A full list of low tides in March is posted on WDFW's razor clam webpage at <http://1.usa.gov/1pebYa7>, where diggers should check for any potential changes to the opening at Long Beach.

In north Pacific County, the Twin Harbors digging area that extends from the entrance to Willapa Bay north to the vicinity of Westport remains closed. Levels of the marine toxin domoic acid remained above the 20 parts per million threshold at all three Twin Harbors test sites as of Feb. 10 and Feb. 11.

WDFW has razor clam recipes as well as advice on digging and cleaning clams on its Web page at <http://1.usa.gov/1nDN03w>

Under state law, diggers can take 15 razor clams per day and are required to keep the first 15 they dig. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container.

All diggers age 15 or older must have an applicable 2015-16 fishing license to harvest razor clams on any beach. Licenses, ranging from a three-day razor clam license to an annual combination fishing license, are available on WDFW's website at fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov and from license vendors around the state.

Oregon's wolf population exceeds 100, state says

Associated Press

PORTLAND — Oregon now has more than 100 wolves.

The state Department of Fish and Wildlife released its annual wolf report Monday, and it shows Oregon had 110 known wolves in 2015, a 36 percent increase over the year before.

The agency said in a news release it doesn't count a wolf without hard evidence, and biologists believe the actual population is likely higher.

State wolf coordinator Russ Morgan says northeast Oregon continues to have the most wolves, but there has been additional movement into the southern part of the state.

The report says wolves killed 10 sheep, three calves and one working dog last year. That's down from 2014, when wolves killed 30 sheep and two cattle.

Seven wolves died in 2015 — three of them were illegally shot.

West Coast port slowdown cost businesses \$770 million

Associated Press

YAKIMA, Wash. — A new report says the labor dispute that led to a slowdown at all West Coast ports last year cost Washington state businesses nearly \$770 million.

The Yakima Herald-Republic reported that a recent study from the pro-trade advocacy group Washington Council on International Trade found unshipped and delayed exports cost businesses roughly \$556 million.

Agriculture products were hit the worst.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the Pacific Maritime Association battled over contract negotiations from October 2014 to March 2015, leading to the slowdown.

Longshore union spokesman Craig Merrilees said Monday he had not seen the report. But he said economists have criticized previous studies trying to tease out such financial impacts as exaggerated and inaccurate.

Minimum wage tax credit proposal on hold

Lawmakers could take up idea next session

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A legislative proposal to offset the cost of minimum wage increases to small businesses, farmers and other natural resources employers appears to be on hold until at least 2017.

State Reps. Brian Clem, D-Salem, and John Davis, R-Wilsonville, had 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. The plan was laid out in Senate Bill 1532, which passed both legislative chambers earlier this month.

During negotiations with legislative leadership, the plan was whittled down to tax credits of no more than \$15 million a year only for employers involved in animal production, aquaculture, crop production, fishing, hunting, trapping and food manufacturing.

That amount was insufficient to cover the additional costs of all of those employers, so lawmakers would have had to find a way to prioritize how to divvy out the tax credits, Clem said.

Ag interests wanted more time

A group of associations representing agriculture has indicated it wants lawmakers to take more time to figure out those details, rather than push through legislation this session, which is scheduled to end by Sunday.

"The reality is that more time is needed to fully run cost and benefit scenarios to ensure any wage relief actually benefits the agriculture industry as a whole," representatives from the agriculture industry wrote in a letter to Clem. "We believe there may only be one shot at alleviating



Sean Ellis/EO Media Group

Farmers, onion processors and small business owners from Malheur County protest minimum wage hikes at the state Capitol in January. A legislative proposal to offset the cost of minimum wage increases to small businesses, farmers and other natural resources employers appears to be on hold until at least 2017.

the burden SB 1532 imposes on agriculture. The solution must meet the needs of our member families without picking winners and losers among the industry."

The letter was signed by the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, Oregon Association of Nurseries, Northwest Food Processors Association, Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Oregon Blueberry Commission, Oregon Seed Council, Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers Association, Far West Agribusiness Association and Oregon Wheat Growers League.

'Extremely disappointed'

"I'm extremely disappointed that our bipartisan effort to try relieve some of the significant burden imposed by the minimum wage bill has been reduced so far," Davis said. "Part of why there is so little interest in the current proposal is it's just so small. If we were going to try to cover part or all of increase each year to all businesses, it is hundreds of millions and possibly billions of

dollars. This is really a de facto tax we were trying to impose."

Clem, who voted for the minimum wage bill, said he was concerned that small employers would have to lay off workers due to the cost of the increased minimum wage while larger employers would easily be able to absorb the cost.

The tax credit would have reduced the effective wage rate for those employers. The amount would gradually climb in tandem with the minimum wage, reaching up to \$2 per hour per employee in July 2022.

Too complex

Clem and Davis said their original concept also would have set smaller increases in the minimum wage and lifted a ban against setting higher wages in Portland. It became clear early on in negotiations that both of those proposals were too com-

plex to push through the waning days of the Legislature's 35-day session, Clem said.

The minimum wage plan hikes minimum wages over a period of six years. The amount differs in each of three regions and is set according to a county's median income and cost of living. In Portland, minimum wage will reach \$14.75 in the Portland area, \$12.50 in rural and coastal counties with struggling economies and \$13.50 in the rest of the state by 2022.

Clem said he plans to pursue the wage support proposal in 2017.

"I think it's fair to say the independent-minded Democrats are satisfied that if ag thinks we can wait then we can wait to get it right," Clem said.

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The PUD's right to dig at Station Camp

The Chinook Observer, The Daily Astorian, the Washington State Department Historic Preservation, the Lewis and Clark National Park, and the Chinook descendants, have all been flogging the Pacific County PUD #2 for replacing two utility poles at Station Camp that were leaning and in danger of falling over.

The distribution line in question serves all the homes along that section of Hwy 101, the Dismal Nitch Rest Area, and carries phone and cable as well. The new easternmost pole carries a transformer that serves two nearby homes. The power line has been there for almost 70 years.

The Chinook Observer and Astorian make much of the fact that the PUD had a 50-year easement that expired 20 years ago. As they should, but I'm pretty sure that the implications of the expired easement are just the opposite from the claims of the PUD's indignant critics.

Pacific County's online records show that the PUD obtained an easement on July 9, 1946, "to construct, maintain, and operate an electric light and power line" on the McGowan family land, including a right of access, for a period of 50 years.

So what happened after the easement expired on July 8, 1996? Answer: the PUD continued to maintain and operate its power line across the McGowan property, "openly, continuously, uninterruptedly, and adversely" to the rights of the McGowan family, for a period of 20 years. In my opinion, after 7 years, the period of adverse possession in Washington State, the PUD had perfected a "prescriptive easement" to operate its power line across the McGowan family land in perpetuity.

This is just what PUD manager Doug Miller said, just before the Observer, the Astorian, and state and federal officials "provided information that raised doubts about Miller's version of events."

The only caveat to this conclusion would be if the McGowan family, at some time after 1996, gave written permission to the PUD to operate the power line across their property. That would change an "adverse" occupancy to a "permissive" one. Your reporter could check, but that just never happens.

The articles say that this land is being transferred to the National Park in March, and quotes the Park manager that "the Federal government does not issue easements." No problem. The PUD's prescriptive easement would be a solid encumbrance against the new title of the Federal government. If the National Park wanted to relocate this power line up on the hillside, I'm sure they could at Federal expense.

I visited the site. It appeared to me that the new poles had been installed very nearly in the same holes from which the old poles were removed. Last year's grass had been crushed by the PUD's pole trucks. I share the reporters' and the Chinook descendants' concerns for the historic and cultural value of Station Camp. But compared to the whole history of this site, the PUD's impacts from this emergency pole replacement were pretty minimal.

The article says that the PUD, and State and Federal officials have all agreed to sit down and work out a new power line easement before the site is handed over to the National Park in March. I'm pleased that the PUD would be willing to give the State and Feds some form of consultation in a recorded easement.

One of my points in this letter is to note that the PUD had every right to replace those poles back in December, without asking anyone's permission. The PUD did nothing wrong. So when the parties sit down at the table, it would be a really good idea for the State and Federal officials to start with an apology to the PUD for giving out misinformation and making negative remarks about the utility.

It's a little late for the Chinook Observer and Daily Astorian to publicly apologize. Next time, when it's their power pole about to fall over, when the rain is sideways at 50 MPH and the PUD is out there restoring their power, they can just say thank you.

Dave Barber
Retired Utility Real Estate Manager

Publication of this article was paid for by the author, after The Daily Astorian declined to publish it as a letter to the editor.