



Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Visitors are silhouetted against the sunset as they search for clams along the beach at Fort Stevens State Park in February.

Fort Stevens: Deluxe cabins are ideal for storm watching

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“It gives people an opportunity to visit year-round that they couldn’t do before,” Wing said.

Before the cabins, Wing remembers the park having 42 tent sites. Those tent sites sat empty until June each year because most people do not camp in tents on the coast in the winter. The park now has just six tent sites, as more visitors are opting for the cabins.

Wing said the deluxe cabins give people a whole new perspective of the park in the wintertime. They are ideal for storm watching, she said.

“It’s kind of a neat way to view the storms and still be cozy and warm,” Wing said.

Paddle away

Along with inviting people to storm watch from a cabin, the park has focused on offering more recreational opportunities in the offseason.

The park is forming a partnership with Clatsop Paddle Co. to offer adventure packages that bundle a stay at the park with paddleboarding on Coffenburg Lake. Details are being worked out to launch the pilot program this summer.

In addition, rangers are starting to lead kayak tours on Trestle Bay.

“We are just trying to offer some different opportunities to people,” Wing said. “It’s all about getting people out and interested in the outdoors.”

Given the opportunity, Wing said, visitors around the state are willing to recreate in rain or shine.

“If you are an Oregonian, you recreate in the rain,” she said.

Finding the time

Ranger Supervisor Michael Simonsen said the park’s staff has to find the time to finish maintenance projects while also catering to visitors.

The window to finish projects such as improvements to cabins and trails is shrinking.

Already this year, the park is gearing up for thousands of visitors for spring break, then the Astoria Warrenton Crab, Seafood and Wine Festival, before summer is in full swing.

“We get a little lull through May, then school is out and we are wide open until October,” Simonsen said.

This winter, park staff was able to finish a flurry of maintenance projects. The most noticeable may be the restoration of the boardwalk that leads to the wildlife viewing bunker off Parking Lot D



Ranger Supervisor Michael Simonsen walks along a renovated walkway leading to a wildlife viewing point in Fort Stevens State Park.

near Social Security Beach. The boardwalk was built nearly two decades ago.

“It had been a few years, and everything had rotted out,” Simonsen said. “We just came in and redid it.”

It took more than four months to finish the boardwalk, working on and off for a year. The boardwalk was left half done all last summer.

Park staff recently went through all of the bike trails to remove any roots protruding out of the ground. Since the bike trails are popular, staff had to work in sections to clear the trails. The bike trail project took about three months.

The park has nine full-time rangers, 26 seasonal workers and up to 60 volunteers. The park operates on a biennial budget, and has

\$150,000 budgeted for projects in 2015-2017.

“All of our projects are decided then (in the budget),” Wing said. “It’s just getting them completed that can take a little bit of time.”

Wing, who has worked with parks for 27 years, became the park manager in 2004. Her father worked at Fort Stevens while she was growing up. Wing said it was inevitable she would pursue a career at the park.

She enjoys getting to share her love of the park with more visitors each year. Most people who visit are on vacation and in a good mood. Seeing visitors appreciate the park makes the work year-round worthwhile, she said.

“You feel pretty lucky to work in place people pay to recreate in,” Wing said.



Since the park added 11 deluxe cabins five years ago, the park has seen more visitors in the winter.

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