

Fort Clatsop: Park recently received \$45,000 in federal funding

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“The park realizes we are inefficient in our flow and volume,” Matt Shaefer, the park’s chief of facility management, said.

The national park recently received about \$45,000 in federal funding to design a new water system in the park and a new water line across the Lewis and Clark River. Design work is expected to be complete by next year, with construction targeted to start in 2018.

An upgraded water supply will not only help protect Fort Clatsop from fire, but also the park’s administrative office, maintenance shop and visitor’s center that houses a full museum collection.

Overdue for rehab

Following the Fort Clatsop fire, an investigation revealed the park’s water system was overdue for rehabilitation. The water system dates back to when Fort Clatsop National Memorial was created more than a half century ago.

In addition, the park found the water line across the nearby river was much smaller than other portions of the line. The water line anchored to the bottom of the river has a 2-inch diameter. Officials estimate the line should have a 6-inch diameter to provide sufficient water flow.

The water flow coming out of the park’s fire hydrants is 70 gallons per minute. Fire departments recommend that hydrant flow should be 1,500 gallons per minute.

Shaefer said the park is partnering with Lewis and Clark Volunteer Fire Department and the Lewis and Clark Water District to design the new water system and line. The partners are discussing relocating a fire hydrant closer to Fort Clatsop and improving the water volume.

“We are in the exploratory phases of finding a good way to partner with the water district to help facilitate a good permanent fix,” Shaefer said.

Fire detection

At the Fort Clatsop fire,



National Guardsman and others work to clean up after the 2005 fire at Fort Clatsop.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian
Scott Tucker, superintendent of Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, and Matt Shaefer, the park’s chief of facility management, points out the location of a small pipe that restricts water flow to the park. The water line (shown in red) anchored to the bottom of the Lewis and Clark river has a 2-inch diameter. Officials estimate the line should have a 6-inch diameter to provide sufficient water flow.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian
Matt Shaefer, the park’s chief of facility management, stands near a receiver that works as part of the park’s fire-alarm system.

firefighters had a constant rotation of trucks coming through to help supplement the park’s water supply. Without support from the fire trucks, the park’s water flow would have petered out, Lewis and Clark Fire Chief Jeff Golightly said.

A redesigned water system would take some pressure off the fire departments.

“It would have helped us a lot as far as the suppression effort to have water readily available,” Golightly said.

When the new Fort Clatsop structure was built, it included a fire detection system connected to an alarm. The system is hidden in the corners of the fort.

The fire detection system notifies the park and fire departments right way if something is wrong.

“We will get a phone call in the middle of the night saying there is something wrong,” Shaefer said. “That’s what didn’t happen at the fort last

time.”

The fire was first reported the night of Oct. 3, 2005, by an Astoria resident who saw a bright glow south of Youngs Bay. The 50-year-old replica fort was fully engulfed in flames by the time fire crews arrived.

“It was originally reported as lights in the fog,” Golightly said. “It was disregarded until someone actually drove by and saw it burning and called. By the time we got there, it was

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fully involved and there was no chance of saving anything.”

‘Rest assured’

Area fire departments regularly hold training at Fort Clatsop to prepare in case they are called upon. With or without an adequate water system at the park, Golightly said, his department is ready.

“Depending on the nature of the fire, even after the system is redesigned, I would still have a minimum of two to three tenders to supplement the water supply,” Golightly said.

Scott Tucker, Lewis and Clark National Historical Park superintendent, said he trusts the fire departments to respond in time to an emergency. Upgrades to the sprinklers and fire hydrant will be an added benefit.

“Rest assured, if there were to be a fire, we do have a response plan,” Tucker said.

The park has been making do without the necessary

water pressure for more than a decade since the fire. The inadequate water system is one of many backlogged maintenance projects that go unfunded each year.

Deferred maintenance — the cost of maintenance not performed when scheduled and put off or delayed — totaled \$1.4 million at the park in fiscal year 2014-2015.

The total deferred maintenance in Oregon national parks reached \$104 million last fiscal year.

While the design for the new water system has been funded, Shaefer said, the National Park Service still needs to sign off on funding the construction work.

Revamping the park’s water system should be a top priority, he said, considering it helps protect a national park valued at \$12.3 million.

“Putting money toward fire protection is definitely money well-spent,” Shaefer said.



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