

Marine: Moratorium allows time to study funding, move

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Today, Kevin Leahy, the executive director of CEDR, called the state's letter "huge news."

Tim Fastabend, of Astoria Marine, could not immediately be reached for comment.

The approved cleanup plan includes capping contaminated soil at the shipyard and removing contaminated sediment from the shipways at an estimated cost of more than \$2 million. Astoria Marine representatives have said the plan will result in the closure of the shipyard, which repairs many of the region's fishing vessels.

Leahy had sent a letter to the state asking for the reprieve, saying the shipyard's closure would be a major blow to the region's economy.

Denise Löfman, director of the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce and a member of the community advisory group overseeing cleanup options for Astoria Marine, had sent a letter saying the pollution was isolated and does not affect surrounding property or the Lewis and Clark River.

Leahy's letter said a moratorium on the closure would allow local partners to explore the costs, funding needs and options for moving a service like Astoria Marine to a short-term or permanent location while the business continues operating.

The Port of Astoria has been looking at the feasibility of moving the agency's Pier 3 boatyard — and potentially the shipyard — to land the agency leases from the Department of State Lands on

the Skipanon Peninsula in Warrenton. Jim Knight, the Port's executive director, had also sent a white paper detailing the local need for a shipyard like Astoria Marine.

Most of the contamination at the site comes from when the 90-year-old shipyard was constructing wooden minesweepers for the U.S. Navy during World War II and the Korean War. Since then, the company has primarily serviced fishing boats.

Astoria Marine had faced listing as a federal Superfund cleanup site. Clatsop County Commissioner Dirk Rohne had said the local governing body had worked to get state oversight of the cleanup to have more influence over the process. In 2012, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency transferred cleanup oversight to the state.



The Daily Astorian/File Photo
Representatives from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, its governing body the Environmental Quality Commission and Gov. Kate Brown's office met in Astoria last year to see the progress on the environmental cleanup of Astoria Marine Construction Company. The company's large, covered work space could have to be torn down to reach contaminated soils underneath.

DUIs: So far, 256 drunken-driving cases have been filed this year

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Local impact

Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis said arrested visitors end up using local resources, including police, prosecutors, probation officers, treatment providers and jail staff.

"The citizens of Clatsop County, who pay taxes, are subsidizing visitors in ways that go beyond just our streets," Marquis said.

The Daily Astorian requested the drunken-driving data to get a snapshot of the caseload at the District Attorney's Office, which has traditionally handled the most serious prosecutions. Misdemeanor DUIs in Astoria had been referred to the city's Municipal Court until last year, when the City Council transferred the responsibility to Marquis and Circuit Court after a protracted public debate.

So far this year, of the 256 drunken-driving cases filed with the District Attorney's Office, 40.6 percent are visitors.

Astoria had a reputation as a hard-drinking port, and Seaside and the other beach cities had been a magnet for vacationers, well before the tourism boom of the past decade. But some of the ingredients behind the increase in tourism, like the popularity of craft beer and stylish new restaurants, are tied to drinking.

According to Travel Oregon, visitors to Clatsop County spent \$539.6 million in 2015.

"The very things that have attributed to a renaissance, particularly in Astoria, but also Clatsop County, draw more people here," Marquis said.

'People make mistakes'

Astoria Police Officer A.J. Duryea has become a top officer for drunken-driving arrests. He has made between 15 to 25 arrests per year since joining the department in 2012.

Obvious indicators of a drunken driver are when the

vehicle weaves, crosses the centerline or the headlights are off at night. Another sign is when a driver, after being stopped, fumbles with their registration and insurance more than usual or hands over a credit card instead of a driver's license. "That's something all officers are trained on. It's called difficulty presenting documents," Duryea said.

Often times, Duryea said, people are cooperative and know they made a mistake.

"Most people that get arrested made a mistake and that's the way it is," he said. "People make mistakes. It doesn't mean they are bad people. They just made a mistake and made a bad decision."

Failure to appear

Having so many out-of-county residents charged with drunken driving in Clatsop County creates a logistical problem of having them appear for their court dates and treatment programs.

Marquis said failure to appear rates are high for those from outside the county. In addition, defense lawyers can have a difficult time tracking down their clients and witnesses.

"If someone is local, it's less of an issue," Marquis said.

After being arrested in Seaside two years ago, Blaine was charged with driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving and reckless endangering. He was sentenced to probation, which he violated last year for not showing up to an evaluation with a probation officer.

Blaine's case is typical, Marquis said. Visitors often come to the coast, stay in a hotel, have some drinks and go out on the town. Unlike other tourists, Blaine made the poor choice of driving under the influence. It was his third arrest in less than three years.

"People like to come here and enjoy themselves," Marquis said. "Most people enjoy themselves responsibly."

Drug rules: Criminal activity related to heroin has surged in Oregon

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able to get the treatment they need," Workman said.

Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin, however, said he does not agree with the recommendation.

"If you keep lowering these crimes, pretty soon you are not going to have the accountability in the system," Bergin said. "It's a social experiment that is probably not good for the citizens of Oregon."

Heroin surge

Criminal activity related to heroin abuse, in particular, has surged.

In southern Oregon's Josephine County, for example, 2010 saw only four heroin-related prosecutions; by 2014 there were 237, the Daily Courier newspaper reported last week.

Several efforts are underway in the county to deal with the problem, including a "sobering center" established in a former warehouse that provides a safe place for people getting off addictive substances, and a treatment center that will offer methadone and support programs.

The Oregon law enforcement groups noted in a statement that drug possession often results in felony convictions, which "include unintended and collateral consequences including barriers to housing and employment and a disparate impact on minority communities."

Convicted users should instead be given individualized, mandated treatment, the groups said.

Work with governor

The groups said that they're committed to work with Gov. Kate Brown, lawmakers and prosecutors "to craft a more thoughtful approach to drug possession when it is the only crime committed."

The governor's press secretary said Brown is "pursuing policy changes to advance equity and fairness in Oregon's criminal justice system."

"The recommendation made by the Oregon sheriffs

and police chiefs is the type of innovative approach to criminal justice reform that Gov. Brown supports," press secretary Bryan Hockaday said in an email to The Associated Press.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon also applauded the stance taken by the sheriffs and police chiefs groups.

"We are encouraged that Oregon law enforcement recognize that harsh drug laws have been a failure, wasting taxpayer money and disproportionately impacting communities of color," said Kimberly McCullough, legislative director at the ACLU of Oregon.

David Rogers, executive director at the ACLU of Oregon, noted that when someone is charged with a felony drug crime it can prevent access to housing, employment, education and more.

The sheriffs' and police chiefs' associations said limited criminal justice resources should be focused on addressing violent crime and property crime.

Seaside: 'I think it's time we put some sidewalks in our town'

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requesting anything from the district at this time, but he eventually will need a school representative to be on the action plan development team. The representative can help identify "where our real problem issues are" and what areas should be the first to receive sidewalks, McDowell said.

The team also will include Shasia Fry, the transportation options specialist for North West Transportation Options, who shared with the school board how the Safe Routes to School program promotes healthy lifestyles, environmental awareness, safety and traffic relief.

Distance, traffic fears

In 1969, substantially more students were walking or biking to school than were being driven; now the situation has flip-flopped, she said. Parents identified distance and fear of traffic as the two main issues.

"Then they drive their students to school, creating more congestion and not allowing kids to walk safely in that traffic around the school," Fry said.

She and McDowell are encouraging Seaside to participate in the international Walk and Bike to School Day on Wednesday. This will be a way for them to "gauge the interest from the parents in this idea ... to see if the Safe Routes to School program would be viable here," Fry said.

As the program's funding comes from federal tax dollars that are received by each state's transportation department, Seaside has contributed over the years to putting in more sidewalks in Hood River, Portland, Eugene, Redmond, Bend and Corvallis, to name a few, McDowell said.

"We've provided money for them to put sidewalks in their towns," he added. "I think it's time we put some sidewalks in our town."

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