

Oregon behind on food inspections, increasing disease risk

By **ANDREW SELSKY**
Associated Press

more than 12,000 food safety licenses in Oregon. The auditors found that, as of October, 2,841 licenses were overdue for an inspection by more than three months.

Scary scenario

The 28-page report cites a scary scenario that was discovered during an inspection in one locale.

In June 2015, two food safety inspectors found hundreds of rodent droppings scattered throughout a grocery store in Portland, the report said.

“Seven dead mice were still locked in snap traps ... During a later visit, the inspectors found thousands of insects on glue traps and dead insects visible inside wrapped pack-

‘Seven dead mice were still locked in snap traps ...’

part of a 28-page report, citing a scary scenario at a Portland grocery store

ages of lettuce. This time, the rodents spotted were alive; one stuck to a glue trap behind the bread display, another running near the front of the store,” said the audit from Secretary of State Jeanne P. Atkins office. The inspectors closed and condemned the store until the problems could be resolved.

The audit pointed out that not all violations are so obvious, and that health hazards could come from an establish-

48 million people who get sick from a foodborne illness each year, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die.

The backlog of inspections in Oregon was “caused by an increase in the number of licensed businesses ... and an inspection staff busy with other duties,” said the audit, which is accessible via the secretary of state’s website. It recommended the agriculture department use stronger management practices, improve use of data and use its resources more strategically.

“Inspectors are also spending significant amounts of time on duties that are not related to inspections, such as attending training courses in specialized license types or answer-

ing customer questions on the phone,” the audit said.

It noted that the Food Safety Program has a contract with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to conduct some of their inspections in exchange for reimbursement. It recommended doing fewer FDA contract inspections.

Lisa Hanson, acting director of the state agriculture department, wrote in a response that the department will implement the report’s recommendations.

The audit stressed that adhering to food safety regulations is crucial to minimize the risk of contamination, and that it’s up to food safety inspectors to make sure those regulations are followed.

Parks: Many of the projects can be completed in one to five years

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American heritage, a bridge below the water-treatment plant to complete the loop, and a better boat ramp for dory launching at Tolovana State Park, with accompanying wheelchair access to wet sand.

Many of the projects can be completed in one to five years, while others could take up to 10 years.

City parks provide opportunities for interpretive signs on ecology, history,

water treatment, archaeology and tsunami preparation, according to the master plan information.

Though not considered a No. 1 priority, a potential plan for a multiuse path parallel to U.S. Highway 101 could connect Tolovana to midtown. The trail would provide a safer and less hilly route for pedestrians and cyclists, separate from traffic on the S-curves.

Another possible project could be converting Tolovana State Park to city ownership,

moving its aging restrooms by the beach and making further enhancements.

Tolovana State Park “could be a gem for the city,” Otak senior planner Glen Bolen said. “The journey to the beach could be a journey, not just a parking lot.”

A small bathroom near the bottom of the stairs leading to Haystack Rock is another possible project that could benefit Haystack Rock Awareness Program volunteers and visitors, Bolen said.



Options were presented at the city’s parks and trails master plan open house.

Lyra Fontaine
The Daily Astorian

Dam: Fulton wants CREST to be transparent regarding the removal

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the organization. “I think we need an agency like that in the county, but we need a well-governed agency,” he said.

Commissioner John Raichl said any direction to CREST should go through the group’s council of governments. “If this issue rises to the level you (Fulton) seem to feel it has, I would think we’d exercise the right to request a meeting (of the CREST council) be called,” he said.

Mushen agreed to call for a special meeting of the council if needed, but said any request for information should come from Warrenton.

“It seems like we’re carrying water for Warrenton,” Mushen said.

Fulton said he wants CREST to be transparent regarding the controversial dam removal project.

Dam backlash

CREST provides technical assistance and research to local governments and derives most of its budget overseeing fish and wildlife habitat restoration projects in the Columbia River estuary paid for by the federal Bonneville Power Administration. Bonneville is required to offset the negative impacts of its hydroelectric dam system on the Columbia and Snake rivers.

CREST, the Skipanon Water Control District and the city had agreed on a \$1.2 mil-

lion project to remove the dam and provide the city with a single-lane bridge for emergency access over the Skipanon River. The project would have been financed by the Bonneville Power Administration to help improve salmon passage and water quality.

The plan drew the ire of some residents and business leaders in Warrenton, who claim CREST and the water district downplayed the flood risk of the project. CREST withdrew from the project after the Warrenton City Commission voted not renew a deal with the task force and the water control district for the bridge.

Fallout

At a Port Commission meeting last month, Warrenton businessman Pat O’Grady brought a fact-finding report for the city of Warrenton written by Portland attorney Akin Blitz. O’Grady claimed the report as vindication of the criticisms of CREST. He called on the Port Commission to ask CREST to release all communication on the dam, and between CREST and the Port’s administration, and cease all business with the group until the records are produced. Later that meeting, Fulton voiced support for O’Grady’s request.

Fulton is a wetlands specialist for Warrenton Fiber. The company is owned by Warrenton’s Nygaard family, which has opposed the dam removal project and has been critical of CREST.

As a Port commissioner, Fulton was the agency’s representative on CREST’s council of local government representatives. He was replaced by Mushen shortly after the CREST council’s chair-

man, Clatsop County Board of Commissioners Chairman Scott Lee, questioned whether Fulton was representing the Port or his employer. The criticisms were related to alleged behind-the-scenes maneuvers by Fulton and his employer to foil the dam project.

Blitz’s report concluded the city should take control of the dam from the water control district for flood protection or as an asset to be removed later

for wetland mitigation credits. The report raised questions about CREST’s motives and whether the task force engaged in public corruption or civil rights violations, but the attorney has said he made no conclusive findings about CREST.

An attorney for CREST called Blitz’s report “extremely careless” and asked Warrenton to stop making damaging comments or risk legal action.

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