

Stream standards cause a ripple



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Pam Birmingham points to an area adjacent to her Elsie property where a clearcut logging operation occurred in 2011. The state's proposed stream buffer rules would not protect smaller streams that surround her home. Comments on the proposed rules will be accepted until March 1 and the rules will be voted on in April. "The new rules don't go far enough," Birmingham said Thursday.

Changes would increase buffers around waterways

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Opinions are divided on a state proposal to increase vegetative buffers along thousands of miles of small and medium fish-bearing streams on private land.

A public hearing on the rules Wednesday in Astoria brought out Clatsop County residents, who largely argued that the new changes don't go far enough in protecting water quality and fish habitat. At the same time, some foresters wonder whether the proposed increase in stream protection might be more about perception than science.

The Oregon Forest Practices Act was the first of its kind in 1971. But many see the state as having fallen behind the standards of its neighbors. Adding pressure is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which recently stripped \$1.2 million in federal grants from the state for a lack of progress on logging regulations in coastal watersheds to protect water and fish habitat.

The issue takes on special importance in the Oregon Coast Range, where more than 1,200 miles of streams — roughly half of the reaches affected by the new rules — would be impacted. Roughly one-third of the county's economic output comes from forest products.

State regulators argue they have made forestry practices in Oregon comply as much as practicable with the federal Clean Water Act.



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Heckard Creek, in the Lewis & Clark Timberlands, is a medium-sized, fish-bearing stream that under the state's proposed stream buffer rules would have to expand the amount of vegetation and trees around it.

MORE INFO

More information about the state Department of Forestry's new proposed stream buffer rules can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/zcstj2>. The state is taking comments until March 1. Email comments to RiparianRule@oregon.gov, or mail them to: Oregon Department of Forestry, Attn: Stream Rules, 2600 State St., Salem, OR 97310.

RipStream

In 2012, the state Department of Forestry concluded the RipStream Study, a decadelong look at the health of streams on state and private lands.

"What they found is a vast improvement over historical requirements," said

Brad Knotts, a field coordinator for the Oregon Forest Practices Act, during the hearing Wednesday.

The study also found that existing tree buffers on small- and medium-sized,

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Wal-Mart breaks ground in Warrenton

Retailer plans to open Supercenter in 2018

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Construction has started on the new Wal-Mart Supercenter at the North Coast Retail Center.

Skip Urling, planning director for Warrenton, said general contractor Deacon Construction picked up the building permits Wednesday and has started groundwork.

Delia Garcia, a spokeswoman for Wal-Mart, said the company plans a ceremonial groundbreaking early next month and to open the store in 2018.

Rumors of a Wal-Mart on the North Coast have been floating around for years. In 2009, Wal-Mart representatives announced the company's intention to build a store on vacant land behind Les Schwab Tire Center along U.S. Highway 101.

Then, at a Warrenton Planning Commission meeting in 2012, the company's lawyer and design team announced a plan to build a 153,500-square-foot, earth-toned Supercenter at the retail center. The company's design team said the store would include groceries, general merchandise, pharmacy and garden departments, along with a fast-food restaurant. The Planning Commission approved the design shortly thereafter, with minor variations.

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City wins judgment against Smithart

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

A Circuit Court judge on Thursday ordered a \$118,331 judgment against former hotelier Brad Smithart over room taxes he owes the city from the Astoria Riverwalk Inn.

The city sought the judgment after Smithart failed to follow the payment plan he had agreed to in June. The former hotelier had signed what is known as a confession of judgment, which allowed the city to collect without a trial in the event of a default.

"He confessed," City Attorney Blair Henningsgaard said.

Under the order from Judge Philip Nelson, a judgment lien is attached until the debt to the city is paid off. Smithart is involved with the Arc Acade downtown, but his assets are not immediately clear.

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Brad Smithart

Ackley leads Lampi by five votes in Warrenton

If commissioner gets one more vote, no recount will be required

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — City Commissioner Pam Ackley leads challenger Ryan Lampi by five votes — just one vote shy of avoiding an automatic recount, according to the latest round of Clatsop County election results.

After Election Day, Lampi led Ackley by a single vote,



Ryan Lampi



Pam Ackley

but he slipped behind after 78 more ballots were counted.

Ackley has 1,119 votes — or 49.6 percent — to Lampi's 1,114 votes — or 49.4 percent.

If this spread holds after all ballots are counted, an automatic hand recount must take place because the margin is less than one-fifth of 1 percent of the 2,254 votes cast in the

race. There were 21 write-in votes.

Right now, a five-vote margin is the cutoff point. If Ackley receives one more vote and Lampi receives none, the six-vote difference will remove the automatic recount requirement.

Ackley is "right on the cusp," Clatsop County Clerk Valerie Crafard said. "It's a nail-biter."

Lampi can ask for a recount, but he will have to pay for it.

The final results won't be known until at least Nov. 23, when they become certified with the Secretary of State's Office.

In a general election, the

Secretary of State orders an administrative hand count. The last day to start that this year is Nov. 29. Any automatic recount would take place after the administrative hand count is over, at a date to be determined, according to Crafard.

Clatsop County ballots have stopped trickling in from other counties, and discrepancies — such as signatures on mail-in envelopes that do not match voter registration cards — still need to be resolved.

In addition, ballots that machines could not read will need to be duplicated and reprocessed.

Ackley, 55, is a Realtor with Windermere Stellar, and

Lampi, 26, serves on the Warrenton Planning Commission and is a project manager at Big River Construction in Astoria. The candidates are vying for Position 1 on the City Commission.

"I'm very, very pleased to continue in my position, of course," Ackley said. "It's been a tight race, and I respect the process."

Asked if she's been on the edge of her seat, she said, "I'm very, very busy with my business, and you just get up every day and do what you do, and go with it, and hope the outcome is a favorable one."

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