



R.J. Marx Photo/The Daily Astorian

Jessica Sawtell, Estella Ann Gauthier and Jacob Gauthier at Providence Seaside Hospital.

Seaside hospital welcomes its first baby: Estella Ann Gauthier

Warrenton pair has the first South County baby of 2017

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Two babies came into the world at Providence Seaside Hospital on New Year's Eve before the clock struck midnight ushering in the new year.

Then there was a lull, and for those awaiting the first birth of 2017, Jan. 1 and Jan. 2 went by without a newborn at

the hospital.

That changed at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday when Jessica Sawtell gave birth to a 9-pound, 10-ounce baby girl, Estella Ann Gauthier, via C-section. Drs. Michael Adler and Dominique Greco delivered the baby.

"Everything was great, no problems at all," Adler said with a smile.

Sawtell and dad Jacob Gauthier are both Warrenton residents. Estella Ann is their second child. Sawtell works in Dr. Aaron Sasaki's office in Astoria and Gauthier is employed at the Warrenton Sawmill.

The new mom was up and moving the same day and by

Wednesday was receiving visitors.

"We didn't think we'd be the first," Gauthier said at the hospital.

"The staff here has been amazing," Sawtell said. "I'm feeling great, I'm already up and walking."

"Every time we ask for help, they're always right there," Gauthier said of hospital staff.

"We didn't expect the basket," he added, accepting the hospital's basket of blankets, towels, gift cards and baby essentials.

Meanwhile, Estella was up and alert, ready to greet the new year ahead.

Timber: DEQ acknowledged report had appearance of bias

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It also focused on the potential impacts from industrial logging operations, which own the majority of land surrounding many drinking water sources. That report prompted fears within the timber industry of a coordinated effort between coastal residents and environmental regulators to limit or prohibit logging along the coast.

They heaped piles of criticism on the Department of Environmental Quality, and prompted input from coastal legislators and others. Industry groups held a symposium on forest water quality, taking aim at the same issues raised in DEQ's work.

Ultimately, the Department of Environmental Quality shelved the report. Eighteen months later, the department still hasn't finished it and doesn't plan to publish.

Influential industry

The fate of that report offers a glimpse at what can happen when a state environmental agency's work runs afoul of a politically influential industry. It also shows how, on certain forestry issues, the agenda of state regulators aligns more closely with the timber industry than with concerned citizens.

"It's unfortunately part of a pattern in which the Department of Forestry has bullied DEQ," said Nina Bell, of Northwest Environmental Advocates.

Bell has been filing lawsuits over coastal water quality for years.

"That's not a surprise," Bell said. "That doesn't make it right. In fact it's just flat-out wrong for the Department of Forestry to be only advocating for landowners who stand to gain money by cutting down trees and not being there to help protect the public resources, like drinking water."

The Department of Environmental Quality considers coastal water systems especially vulnerable. Many are small, and with watersheds facing the ocean, they feel the brunt of coastal wind and rain, which can dump debris into drinking water sources.

"They are all facing very similar issues," Sheree Stewart, the department's drinking water protection coordinator, said. "A lot of those watersheds have forest industrial private land, and so the report needed to focus on what those land uses were."

Rockaway Beach

Consider last year, when a rainstorm dumped 18 inches in Tillamook County. That storm caused flooding and landslides. It destroyed culverts and left small streams looking like chocolate milk.

In Rockaway Beach, the water plant operator needed an excavator to clear the rock and sediment that had poured into Jetty Creek, the town's main water source.

Water-quality experts predict coastal storms to intensify because of climate change. They also say forest loss can exacerbate the effects of coastal storms.



Tony Schick/Oregon Public Broadcasting

Behind a fence, a recently cleared pile of rock, dirt and twigs sits on the banks of Jetty Creek near the surface water intake for the drinking water plant in Rockaway Beach. Coastal storms dumped much of this into the creek. Water quality experts say such storms make coastal communities vulnerable to source water contamination, which they expect to worsen because of climate change.

"So what we've seen is an increase in a lot of turbidity and sediments," Stewart said.

Turbidity is the technical term for the sediment and debris in water. Too much of it interferes with the chlorine used for disinfection. The result can mean chemicals in drinking water that are bad for people's health.

Rockaway Beach has struggled with turbidity for years. Residents there have gotten several alerts about harmful chemicals in their drinking water, byproducts from the disinfection process.

Jetty Creek

There's another factor in Rockaway Beach: clear-cut logging. Jetty Creek flows through private industrial forest, and 80 percent of this watershed has been logged in recent years.

Swaths of forests have been replaced by bald slopes.

Studies have shown forest loss can lead to greater water-quality problems, including higher treatment costs. The Department of Environmental Quality's draft report stated that "clearcut timber harvesting is known to increase landslide rates on steep slopes and increase streamflows and erosion." It also said narrow strips of trees left near streams are often thrown by the wind, and that timber harvesting can contribute sediment into streams through roads and slash techniques.

Industrial forest companies are by far the single largest owner of land in coastal drinking watersheds, owning 100 percent of some source water areas.

In fact, water for 40 percent of the drinking water systems on the coast flows through forest owned by private companies that log extensively. And 64 percent of all coastal water systems have had two or more alerts, warning customers of problems with disinfecting water so it is safe enough to drink.

A draft of DEQ's unpublished report included these statistics. The timber industry didn't like that. Neither did the Department of Forestry, which regulates the timber industry. They deny any link between forest loss and

increased turbidity, let alone problems with harmful disinfection byproducts.

Bull Run watershed

Timber industry groups caught wind of the agency's work at a Board of Forestry meeting, where resident Meg Thompson laid out her concerns, and said she and others were seeking full Bull Run-like protections.

The Bull Run watershed, which supplies drinking water for Portland, has been off limits to loggers since the 1990s.

"We're hoping that eventually using the technical support of DEQ and our source water risk assessments that we can develop full protective plans," Thompson said.

This testimony proved to be a significant concern of the industry.

Public records obtained by OPB show the groups told the Department of Environmental Quality's director the report encourages the reader to identify "threats" with little data. They also said DEQ should not help local activists in their push for tougher clean-water standards.

"While fringe elements have, over the years, occasionally called publicly for broad prohibitions on logging in coastal drinking watersheds, the thought that DEQ and Regional Solutions may be facilitating that outcome is alarming," the comments stated.

Officials with two industry groups, Oregonians for Food and Shelter, and the Oregon Forest Industries Council, declined to be interviewed for this story.

Public records also show Peter Daugherty, now the state forester, sent four pages of comments to the Department of Environmental Quality after the agency solicited his feedback. In them, he questioned both the science and the purpose of the report.

Daugherty, who was the department's head of private forests at the time, said "the document seems to be responding to citizen group concerns about forest management, rather than doing an unbiased analysis of threats to drinking water."

Forestry officials sug-

gested DEQ remove language about the connection between timber harvests and landslides or sediment in streams. They said the report needed to be reworded so that it didn't suggest the state's forestry laws were too weak to protect clean water.

Critical review

In an interview, Daugherty said the two agency's often work closely.

"Partners do do critical, and I mean critical, review of each other's work," Daugherty said. "We see that as a way to improve our partnership and come to a common understanding about the science on forest land and forest management."

He praised the quality of water that flows through Oregon's forests and questioned the premise coastal communities' water quality woes could be blamed on forest management — logging, construction and maintenance of roads and culverts, and pesticide spraying to kill plants that compete with newly planted trees after a clearcut.

"I don't believe that there's any scientific evidence that forest practices are directly related to some indications of potential increased turbidity in those systems," Daugherty said.

Department of Environmental Quality said they stood by the science in their report, but did acknowledge the report had the appearance of bias because it focused so much on private forests. The reason, they said, is the substantial amount of land owned by private forests.

The department has since shifted focus. It produced individual documents for each water system, instead of going ahead with its bigger-picture report that connects the dots on what water-quality experts and environmentalists fear is a systemic risk for communities all along the coast.

The agency now plans to conduct a statewide water assessment in the future, which won't single out logging or any other industry for degrading drinking water.

The Department of Forestry and timber industry groups both supported that shift.



Erick Bengel/The Daily Astorian

Brinley Elizabeth Anderson, the first baby born in Astoria in 2017, arrived at 6:58 a.m. Jan. 2 at Columbia Memorial Hospital. She was 8 pounds and 20 inches long.

Baby: 'It's been such a blessing to have her'

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DeWitt Construction, a company based in Vancouver, Washington. Wesley is also a member of the U.S. National Guard, based in Warrenton.

Brinley is the Anderson's third child after William Warren Anderson, 9, and Brielle Jane Anderson, 5. She's the 16th grandchild for Wesley's parents.

Brinley's older siblings are "just in love with her," Marijane said.

"They fight over who gets to hold the baby, so we've been using that to our advantage," she said with a laugh. "Go make your bed and you get to hold your sister. Pick up your dirty laundry, you get to hold your sister."

With Brinley's arrival, the Andersons said their family is complete.

"It's been such a blessing

to have her ... All the nurses were just super awesome and amazing to us," Marijane said.

The Andersons didn't learn until Brinley arrived that she was Astoria's New Year's baby, or that the distinction comes with perks: Columbia Memorial's auxiliary volunteers raise money every year for the hospital to purchase presents for its Christmas and New Year's babies. The Andersons received baby toys, baby clothes, baby soaps and other newborn essentials.

It will make an interesting story to tell Brinley someday, Marijane said. "She's special anyways, but it just makes it even more special."

Asked what he's looking forward to most as a father of three, Wesley said, "Watching them grow together."

— Erick Bengel

Strike: Deal was reached in Oregon

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crabs with major buyer Pacific Choice Seafood.

The processors had initially agreed to \$3 a pound in early December, then backed off to \$2.75, which led to the strike. The agreed-upon price is exactly halfway between those figures.

The association says the deal was reached in Oregon, which sets the price for the entire coast.

Bernie Lindley, a crab fisherman in Brookings, Oregon, said he has mixed feelings about the price.

"Happy? I don't know," Lindley told the Curry Coastal Pilot. "In a successful nego-

tiation, nobody's happy and nobody's pissed. For me, personally, I wish it would've been resolved more fairly for the fishermen, but we're back to work, and so be it."

The strike left crab pots empty in places such as Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco during what would normally be among the busiest times for the craved crustaceans.

The season's beginning was also slowed by the presence of domoic acid in some parts of the three states, which can make the crabs unsafe to eat. And even now it could be further slowed by a big weekend storm approaching the Western U.S.

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