

Furr: ‘Seeing everything clean. That’s the best’

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from depositing trash in a public right of way last year. He was acquitted of offensive littering and sentenced to probation, court records show.

Furr said he has been able to reach an agreement with ODOT to work along Highway 101. He hopes the high visibility will make people recognize a problem he feels has been forgotten.

“People clean up streams, and they clean up beaches. But the trash on the road is where a lot of it comes from,” Furr said.

Melyssa Graeper, who is the coordinator of the Necanicum Watershed Council, has been following Furr throughout his journey and supports him when she can.

“I’m pleased at the effort one person is making to not only improve his community, but the whole coastal community,” Graeper said. “It’s sad how much garbage there is, but it’s impressive how much of a difference one person is making. His white garbage bags are starting to make people start asking questions.”

Graeper said his work is



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

LEFT: Dozens of bags of trash with the word ‘CARE’ written on them collected by Raymond Furr can be seen along Highway 101 waiting to be picked up by the Oregon Department of Transportation. RIGHT: Furr has been working since July along Highway 101 from Coos Bay to Astoria picking up trash along the side of the road.

important to the watershed council because eliminating litter on the road can have an overall positive impact on local watersheds.

“It’s not intentional garbage always — sometimes wind tips over garbage cans, and things fly out of truck beds,” she said. “But all storm drains lead to the ocean, and all this garbage will go and flow to the lowest point. As a council, the next step is to stop having the garbage end up on the road in the first place.”

Today, Furr will end his journey in Astoria, where he plans to spend time with his son for three weeks before turning around to start picking up trash down the other side of the highway.

“I can’t do anything else — I feel like I have to do this,” Furr said. “I get a lot of ‘thank-you’s,’ which is nice, but I want people to do something better. I hope I inspired you to see all this trash.”

There are a few things he plans to do differently the sec-

ond time around. On his three-week break, he hopes to spray-paint “CARE” onto all of his garbage bags before hitting the road, rather than doing them in the evenings in his car.

He also hopes to make Leaven No Trace a nonprofit in the hopes of securing grants to finance his cause.

But for Furr, what makes the journey rewarding will remain the same.

“Looking backward and seeing everything clean,” he said. “That’s the best.”



EO Media Group

Researchers are looking at plastics in shellfish.

Plastics: ‘When you eat clams and oysters, you’re eating plastics as well’

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And lately, the shellfish biologist is making other unappetizing comments to her dinner party guests — about plastics in those shellfish.

In 2016, she and her students at Vancouver Island University planted thousands of clams and oysters across coastal British Columbia and let them soak in the sand and saltwater of the Strait of Georgia. Three months later, they dissolved hundreds of them with chemicals, filtered out the biodegradable matter, and looked at the remaining material under a microscope. Inside this Pacific Northwest culinary staple, they found a rainbow of little plastic particles.

“So when you eat clams and oysters, you’re eating plastics as well,” she said.

Funded by the Canadian government and British Columbia’s shellfish trade association, the project aimed to learn whether the shellfish aquaculture industry may be contaminating its own crop by using plastic infrastructure like nets, buoys and ropes. The experiment was a response to those claims by local environmental groups.

But tracking the origins of tiny plastic particles in a big ocean is new territory. So Dudas turned to Peter Ross, who has studied the effects of ocean pollution on sea life for 30 years.

“We’ve long known that plastic and debris can be a problem for ocean life,” said Ross, director of the Vancou-

ver Aquarium’s Ocean Pollution Research Program.

In 2013, he began sampling the coast of British Columbia for microplastics. The researchers found up to 9,200 particles of microplastic per cubic meter of seawater — about the equivalent of emptying a salt shaker into a large moving box.

“So, large numbers,” Ross said. “Rather shocking numbers.”

Microfibers

They found plastics that were made small, like the polystyrene beads sold as bean bag filler and fake snow, and nurdles, the hard resin pellets used as a raw material for other plastic products. Microbeads, common in toothpaste and face wash, were also present.

But the majority of microplastics in Ross’s samples resembled those showing up in Dudas’s shellfish. They’re showing up by the thousands along Puget Sound’s shorelines too. They’re microfibers.

“It’s overwhelmingly fibers,” Ross said. “And they’re being readily consumed at the bottom of the food chain, in zooplankton.”

The local research is adding to evidence of a problem that touches every corner of the planet: from the depths of the ocean abyss to the surface waters of the Arctic to an area in the middle of the Pacific Ocean now known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Scientists think plastic pollution in the ocean could outweigh fish in the ocean by 2050.

Pot: Agreement fuzzy in terms of what can be disclosed

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The different approaches are an example of how state marijuana rules and the interpretation of those rules are still catching up to the drug’s legalization, even as recreational pot stores in Oregon have become as familiar as gas stations.

“It’s a statewide question of what we can disclose and what we cannot,” said Wendy Johnson, intergovernmental relations associate with the League of Oregon Cities. At the same time, she added, cities must comply with local budget requirements to account for all incoming money.

“We just need some clarity,” she said.

Johnson expects clarity could arrive next week in the form of a legal opinion from the state Department of Justice, requested by the

Department of Revenue.

Not all of Oregon’s cities and counties passed local taxes, but most of those that did signed agreements with the Department of Revenue for collection.

With these kinds of taxes there is usually a regional breakdown, explained Joy Krawczyk, a spokeswoman for the Department of Revenue. The department required confidentiality agreements with the cities it collects local marijuana taxes for in order to protect information about individual tax returns.

If a city with multiple pot shops is also located inside a region with just a handful of shops, “you can back into those amounts” if the city releases its own revenue numbers, Krawczyk said.

In some ways, the situation is similar to what Astoria

sees when the city receives its portion of state liquor tax revenue, Brooks said. “We don’t necessarily get a blow-by-blow of ‘XYZ liquor store reported ...’”

Still, the agreement is fuzzy in terms of what can be disclosed, and to who, Johnson said.

“For cities that have an agreement (with the Department of Revenue), one, it’s a bit unclear,” she said, “and, two, it will vary in application because of the size of the city and the number of shops.”

“It’s new, and it’s developing after the fact,” said Brooks.

Johnson said no one really knows what annual revenue from the local marijuana tax and shared portions of the state tax will look like, and the amount will likely fluctuate. Each quarter, cities will have to confirm that they allow the sale

of recreational marijuana and marijuana products within their city limits. As different cities change direction, the shared tax revenue will only go to cities that still allow pot sales.

The League of Oregon Cities had advised cities to “budget cautiously for the first year and a half because it was in such flux,” Johnson said.

Astoria didn’t include any marijuana tax revenue projections in its budget for this fiscal year at all.

“You’re always better off to not plan on spending resources you don’t know if you’re going to get or not,” Brooks said.

The local marijuana tax is a new revenue stream. “We don’t have this kind of history with this product, with these retailers,” she said.

Tax: ‘No city has figured this out perfectly yet’

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City staff have been asking for this information, but, so far, most travel companies have not been forthcoming, Sawrey said. Often rooms are sold at a discount to these companies, which take profit off the sale. Without knowing which rooms are being sold to what company, figuring out which company to hold accountable for taxes on the profit is difficult.

“It takes more time for us. Are people not reporting? Do they misunderstand? We don’t know the situation if we don’t have numbers in front of us,” Sawrey said.

Sawrey and Herdener hope that changing the ordinance to require travel companies to file

directly to the city or face fines will set clearer expectations.

Earlier this year, Airbnb presented a voluntary agreement to Seaside to collect thousands of dollars of lodging taxes on vacation rentals.

Some saw the agreement as an opportunity reap the benefits of previously untapped revenue. Some in the lodging community, however, think the agreement gives Airbnb an unfair advantage over other hotel owners, and ultimately drains affordable long-term housing units to the vacation rental market.

“This is an evolving area. Cities all over Oregon are having trouble with this,” Herdener said. “But to whoever is listening, it is important to have this in our code so

(intermediaries) know they are responsible.”

It’s hard to estimate how much more revenue these changes could bring in for the city, because there is so much variation between lodging options. For City Councilor George Vetter, the solution comes from striking a balance between keeping the property owner and the intermediary on the hook.

“I’m reluctant to take the burden off the property owner, because those are the only people we have control over,” Vetter said.

Whatever the solution to this issue may be hard to come by.

“No city has figured this out perfectly yet,” Herdener said.



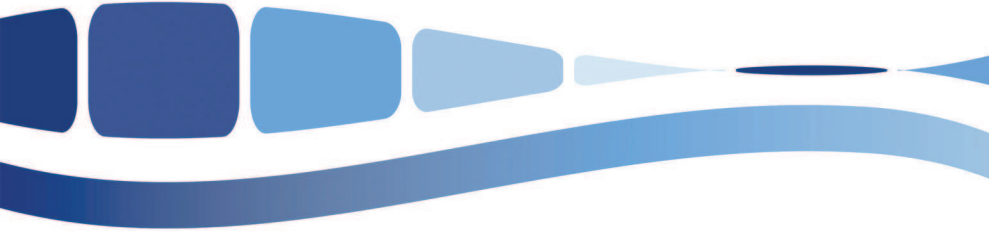
Collaboration

Jennifer Lycette, MD
Oncologist

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