

Tankers: River mile 39 riskiest place for ships

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Nearly 40 percent of the risk of spills came from vessels grounding while powered, while one-third of the risk was from collisions with other vessels. Tankers are at greater risk than articulated tug barges, which are more likely to have redundant propulsion and steering systems that kick in after a failure.

The riskiest place for ships was at river mile 39, near Skamokawa, Washington, and the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer, because of a turn in the channel and rock hazards. Several groundings have occurred nearby in recent years, most recently the methanol and glycol tanker Argent Cosmos in July. Kirk said the study looked at stationing a tug nearby but found it not to be cost-effective.

"Even though it appears as a spike in the data, we're still talking about small numbers," Kirk said. "The risk of anything bad happening on any transit is very low."

Given the relatively low amount of oil traffic on the river, the work group putting together the report recommended following existing safety rules.

"The big things coming out of the study that there was a lot more safety collaboration than Ecology and legislators were aware of," said Dan Jordan, a Columbia River Bar Pilot who helps guide ships over the bar



Washington Department of Ecology
The last major cargo spill on the Columbia River was when the SS Mobil Oil ran aground near Warrior Rock in Columbia County, spilling 200,000 gallons of heavy oil.

and helped in the study.

If traffic increases from a new terminal, however, the report recommends developing new policies to recommend a tug tethered to oil-laden tankers. Oil tankers do not currently require a tug unless there's a mechanical or other safety issue, said Marine Science Technician Jeffrey Deronde with the Coast Guard. Barges towed by tugs often require a smaller "tag" tug at the stern to assist with steering. The Department of Ecology

was directed to produce the report after the passage by the Washington Legislature of the Oil Transportation Safety Act of 2015. The department contracted risk management consultant DNV GL to conduct the study.

Much of the work was through the Lower Columbia Region Harbor Safety Committee, an industry stakeholder group focused on safe and efficient river transit. The group includes the Coast Guard, regional ports, local govern-

ments, Columbia River Pilots, Columbia River Bar Pilots, shippers, oil spill responders, bulk terminal operators, shipping agents, the Merchants Exchange of Portland and other stakeholders in the maritime industry.

"We wouldn't wait until those tankers actually showed up on the river," Kirk said. "We think that starting work on that guideline sooner rather than later will help people understand how to best escort tankers on the Columbia River."

Airbnb: 'We've got to curtail this a little bit'

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hosts in 2016, up from the \$1,400 the year before. But it is nowhere near what the city should be collecting, Finance Director Susan Brooks said.

"When we were speaking with Airbnb they indicated that based on the sales that were booking through their site in 2015, they would have collected and turned over about \$20,000 worth of transient room tax versus the \$1,400 that we saw and that was just Airbnb," Brooks said.

A list of properties offering Airbnb-type or homestay rentals, generated by Councilor Cindy Price and amended by staff, lists more than 60 properties, only some of which appear to be in compliance with city codes. It is by no means an exhaustive list, Ferber said.

Though Ferber and the city's building codes permit technician, Lisa Ferguson, have been working with Clatsop County to further identify illegal rentals and bring them into compliance, the city does not have a clear sense of how many Airbnb-type rentals are active.

"It's a landscape that changes daily," Brooks said.

Designing it

Price and Councilor Zetty Nemlowill commended

the staff for their work, but argued that Astoria should also consider capping the number of short-term rentals allowed, saying such rentals exacerbate a shortage of workforce housing. Price suggested also putting a limit on the number of nights people could rent rooms out to visitors, saying it would discourage people from buying second homes only to rent them out as vacation rentals year-round.

Mayor Arline LaMear and Councilor Bruce Jones were not convinced a cap is necessary, or that people who rent out on a short-term basis would ever be interested in opening those same rooms to long-term renters. Jones suggested implementing staff's suggestions and taking additional steps as needed.

Councilor Tom Brownson challenged the idea that Airbnb is as negative a force as Nemlowill and Price indicated. He said he was open to talking about a cap, but agreed with Jones that it would be best to implement a permit first and wait to see what more is needed.

The city is lucky Airbnb-type rentals are a relatively new phenomenon, he said.

"We've got to curtail this a little bit and control it a little bit ... and design it for our community," he said.

Davis: Confident he will be able to work with current commissioners

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Davis touts his data analyst experience as a signal that he can reach compromises. In a county that depends largely on timber revenue, for instance, commissioners must be able to make decisions that balance economic development and environmental conservation, he said.

"I fall maybe on the environmental end of the spectrum,

but somewhere in the middle," Davis said. "I think I've taken people's thoughts and opinions and information from research and synthesized it into something that's good and meaningful to people."

In May, Davis lost a close race for an Astoria School Board to incumbent Jeanette Sampson. The issue that prompted that run — as well as his upcoming commissioner bid — is an ongoing county

study examining the feasibility of privately funded universal preschool. Commissioners approved the study in March.

"I have concerns about the wisdom of using private funding techniques to create these public programs that may well be needed," Davis said.

A general supporter of universal preschool, Davis proposes letting residents decide through a bond measure. Though taxpayers would pay,

the measure would still have a solid chance of passing, he said.

"People want preschool programs in their community," Davis said. "My suspicion is that school funding measures are one of the easier sells as far as bond measures go."

Davis also may push for commissioners to be more involved in policymaking rather than delegating authority to the county manager, he said. In what has become a

contentious county issue, Commissioners Lianne Thompson and Kathleen Sullivan have expressed similar sentiments this year, while others on the board have pointed to limitations to their roles under the county charter.

"I find myself wanting to see them making policy that more actively, sort of, sets an agenda," Davis said. "Even within the model that Clatsop County has, there might be

room for a more active role for the commission to be setting the agenda."

Davis is confident, though, that he will be able to work productively with any of the current commissioners.

"I agree with 90 percent of what they decide to do," Davis said, "and the few things I maybe don't agree with at first blush, I've got to think there's more information I don't know."

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