

DOCUMENTING THE PROBLEM

Beach cleanup documentary filmed on Oregon's shores

By **BRENNA VISSER**
The Daily Astorian

In his work at Ocean Blue Project, Richard Arterbury said he has found that more people know what to expect at a Christmas tree lighting than a beach cleanup.

Arterbury and his team at the environmental nonprofit that focuses on river restoration and ocean health are looking to close that knowledge gap. They are filming a documentary on the Oregon Coast about beach cleanups and the consequences that come with increasing plastic marine debris.

Starting in April, Ocean Blue Project will host and document about 50 beach cleanups on the West Coast. A large portion will be filmed on Oregon beaches, including Fort Stevens State Park, Seaside and Tolovana State Park. The film, tentatively titled "Do it for the beaches," is expected to be released in about a year.

"We wanted to document what we were already doing," said Arterbury, president of Ocean Blue Project. "When we're on the beach doing cleanups, people ask, 'What are you doing?' and when we show them what we are picking up they are shocked and surprised."

Throughout the tour, the 5-year-old nonprofit is aiming to remove more than 50,000 pounds of plastics and microplastics. Microplastics are extremely small pieces of debris broken down from larger waste in the ocean, coming in a variety of colors and often mistaken for sea glass.

Earlier this year, more than 240 pounds was filtered from the sand in front of Haystack Rock. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimates 100 million tons of this debris fills the ocean, impacting thousands of marine animals who ingest it. There has been a good amount of local attention drawn to this issue over the last

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Plastic debris lies in the sand near Cannon Beach as visitors to the area build a campfire in the background.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Plastic materials, such as this deflated ball, can pose a hazard to wildlife in the area.



Ocean Blue Project
Volunteers with the Ocean Blue Project help remove plastic and other trash from Manzanita Beach in April.

Distraction probed in fatal train derailment

Emergency brake went off automatically

By **MICHAEL BALSAMO**
and **HAVEN DALEY**
Associated Press

DUPONT, Wash. — Federal investigators in the deadly Amtrak wreck want to know whether the engineer was distracted by a second person in his cab as his train hurtled into a curve at more than twice the speed limit.

Three people were killed Monday when the train barreled into a 30 mph zone at 80 mph and plunged off an overpass, sending rail cars plummeting onto a busy interstate highway south of Tacoma.

A conductor in training was in the locomotive with the engineer at the time, investigators said. A federal official who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity said authorities want to know whether the engineer lost "situational awareness" — didn't realize where he was — because of that.

On Tuesday, National Transportation Safety Board member Bella Dinh-Zarr said preliminary information indicated the train's emergency brake went off automatically and was not manually activated by the engineer. That could mean he did not realize the danger.

The engineer, whose name was not released, was bleeding from the head after the derailment and his eyes were swollen shut, according to radio transmissions from a crew member. The transmissions mentioned a second person in the front of the train who was also hurt.

In some previous wrecks, train operators were found to have been seriously fatigued or distracted by a cellphone or something else.

Investigators in Monday's accident also confirmed that technology that can automatically slow or stop a speeding train, known as positive train control, was not in use on that stretch of track. Track sensors and other PTC components have been installed, but the system is not expected to be completed until the spring.

Regulators have been pressing railroads for years to install such technology, and some have done so, but the deadline has been extended repeatedly at the industry's request and is now set for the end of 2018.

Dinh-Zarr said it is too early in the investigation to say whether positive train control would have prevented Monday's tragedy but noted that a mandate to install the system on tracks nationwide by 2015 had been pushed back by Congress.

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal said on Capitol Hill on Tuesday that failing to enforce the new deadline would be a "moral failure."

"If we do nothing else in this Congress, let us insist that that deadline without additional delay," the Connecticut Democrat said.

Investigators will talk to the engineer and other crew members and review the data recorders from the lead locomotive and the rear engine. They are also trying to extract data from inward- and outward-facing on-board cameras that were damaged in the crash, Dinh-Zarr said.

The train, with 85 passengers and crew members, was making the inaugural run

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Port Commission writes off debt for Astoria Ferry

Nonprofit restoring the Tourist No. 2

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Daily Astorian

A divided Port of Astoria Commission voted 3-2 Tuesday to cover \$3,000 in back-due moorage and utilities for the Astoria Ferry Group at North Tongue Point.

The nonprofit is trying to restore the Tourist No. 2, a former Columbia River ferry, before purchasing the vessel from owner Christian Lint. The ferry docked at North

Tongue Point in August 2016 after a journey from Bremerton, Washington, around the Olympic Peninsula and down the coast to Astoria.

Until this month, when the Port ended its tenure at North Tongue Point, the ferry group was a tenant and had paid more than \$12,000 in rent and utilities. But the lack of public exposure and difficulty in access has severely restricted the ability to raise money, the group said in a recent letter requesting a grant from the Port to write off the remaining debt.

"With much help, we are again making progress," the group's letter said. "We very

much want to square our balance with the Port of Astoria. Your grant of \$3,000 would put us within striking distance."

Tom Brownson, an Astoria city councilor, mariner and member of the Astoria Ferry Group, represented the nonprofit, asking the Port to play a small part in helping the group restore a piece of regional maritime history. Commissioners Dirk Rohne and Bill Hunsinger and President Frank Spence supported the Port writing off the debt.

Commissioners James Campbell and Robert Stevens took issue with giving

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria Commission voted to write off \$3,000 in moorage and utilities the Astoria Ferry Group owed on the Tourist No. 2 at North Tongue Point.