

## North Coast advocates for national parks

Dedicated funding sought for maintenance

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
*The Daily Astorian*

North Coast governments are urging federal lawmakers to push for reliable funding for the National Park Service, pointing to nearly \$12 billion in deferred maintenance in parks across the country.

Clatsop County, Astoria and Warrenton recently passed resolutions recognizing the cultural, educational, recreational and economic benefits the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park brings to North Coast communities, and supporting legislation that would help establish dedicated annual money for park maintenance.

“The growing backlog of infrastructure repairs in our national parks must be addressed if they are to keep up with increased visitation,” Astoria Mayor Arline LaMear said in a statement, adding, “Making sure visitors to Fort Clatsop have a safe and enjoyable visit is good business for Astoria and other cities that have a national park in their backyard will tell you the same.”

With its older facilities and a water system in need of an upgrade, the Lewis and Clark park had an estimated \$2.5 million in deferred maintenance in 2016. Some of these projects will be tackled in the next few years.

Park Superintendent Jon Burpee does not have an official opinion on the bipartisan National Park Service Legacy Act that was introduced last year and that the local resolutions support. The act would provide dedicated annual funding over the next 30 years to address park maintenance.

The Lewis and Clark park is “fairly fortunate” in being able to do some of the work in-house and also being able to utilize park entrance fees from visitors, he said.

“That’s not always the case for every park,” he said, adding, “I’m pretty confident big chunks (of deferred maintenance) can be handled in the next couple of years.”

“It’s not necessarily the flashy stuff,” he said, “but it’s stuff that people don’t realize is there until it goes wrong.”

Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer’s first job was as a Youth Conservation Corps intern at Lewis and Clark. This later turned into a summer job as a park ranger, he said.

“With very few opportunities for paid internships that can lead to real jobs in Warrenton, my employment at the park played a pivotal role in my early life and career, and I know others in my city have felt the benefit of such economic and learning opportunities,” he said in a statement. “It is important that we continue to ensure that those opportunities remain accessible.”

The National Park Service estimates that in 2016 the Lewis and Clark park brought in more than 281,600 visitors, who spent more than \$16 million in local area and supported 260 local jobs.

Clatsop County Commissioner Scott Lee said the Lewis and Clark park and the Fort Clatsop replica are “more than important pieces of our history, they generate significant economic activity for Clatsop County and its communities.”

Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

A hiker strides into the South Slough Trail in Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in 2017.



## SALVAGING A SCHOOL



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Chairs and other signs that the building once served as a school remain scattered around the gym.

## COMMUNITY INTEREST PUTS PURCHASING FORMER SCHOOL BACK ON THE TABLE

By BRENNA VISSER  
*The Daily Astorian*

**C**ANNON BEACH — After more than four years, the former Cannon Beach Elementary School still sits vacant at the entrance of the town.

Some of the water fountains have started to grow moss. Old school chairs and debris from strong winter storms are scattered on the gym floor. The school, known for its dome-like gym, was closed due to tsunami safety concerns and lack of funding in 2013.

In the last few months, the city has received a growing number of letters with a similar request: Is the city going to buy the school?

Cannon Beach has considered purchasing the building from Seaside School District. Progress has been slowed by concerns about how it would be funded and

how it fits with other looming capital projects like the South Wind evacuation site and an aging City Hall.

The city and the school district were unable to come to an agreement during preliminary negotiations last year, and the project shifted to the back burner.

But interest from individuals and around Cannon Beach, as well as a survey showing 77 percent of citizens believe developing the school into a community center is a priority, has put acquiring the facility back on the table.

“Some may say, ‘Why would you want to buy an old gym building?’” said Mayor Sam Steidel, a long-time proponent of buying the property. “It used to be a very central part of the community. And it’s the entrance to our town. People care about that, and I think there’s been lots of efforts by citizens to say so.”

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The gymnasium at the Cannon Beach Elementary School has been deemed in good condition by a recent engineering report.



## Survival tools for the homeless

Community groups share services

By R.J. MARX  
*The Daily Astorian*

SEASIDE — Many of the things people take for granted every day — clean clothes, a toothbrush, a pair of glasses — are out of reach for the homeless.

Project Homeless Connect, a one-day event to provide services to the homeless and near-homeless, came Tuesday to Seaside. More than 40 nonprofit, governmental and

faith-based agencies filled the Seaside Civic and Convention Center. Visitors could receive medical screenings, hearing tests, eye exams, immunizations, haircuts, personal care items, clothing vouchers and a hot meal.

Alan Evans of Helping Hands Re-entry Outreach Center distributed a basic toiletry kit, with tissue, toothpaste, soap and more. “We give people a nice little packet,” Evans said. “We want to make sure they have the necessities to stay clean and stay warm.”

Last year, Helping Hands distributed about 400 kits. Tuesday they expected at least that many. “It’s been a steady

flow since we opened the door, and it’s only been an hour,” Evans said.

Sarah Mitchell and Michael McNickle of the Clatsop County Department of Public Health shared information on the county’s needle replacement program, which aims to stop the spread of infectious diseases through shared needles and syringes.

Molly Irons and Justin Abbott of Providence Seaside Hospital signed up families for the Providence Seaside Healthy Smiles mobile dental van. The program offers free sealants, cleanings and dental



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Shawna Neumeister and Crystal Moody, sexual assault advocates of The Harbor.

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