

An iconic light shines brightly

North Head fans glimpse restoration

By DAMIAN MULINIX
Chinook Observer

CAPE DISAPPOINTMENT, Wash. — For the first time in a few years, visitors to the annual anniversary event at the North Head Lighthouse last weekend had the opportunity to tour not only the grounds and the residences, but also view the light itself.

And due to a delay in beginning the next phase of restoration work, the 120-year-old sentinel will be open through the summer.

“This is a great year, because this year the lighthouse is open for tours. It hasn’t been open for two or three years because they’ve been working on it,” said Janet Easley, secretary of the Keepers of the North Head Lighthouse.

The event, which is hosted by the Keepers, who were formed in 2009, and Washington State Parks, was originally going to offer only a brief window to tour. That has been expanded due to delays in the arrival of materials that will be used for phase three of the restoration project, which will now start in the fall.

That work will include the stone base of the lighthouse, installation of windows in the work room, and interior stucco and painting. According to the Keepers recent newsletter, future projects will also include an Americans with Disabilities Act compliance upgrade of the south pathway and stabilization of the lookout area to curb erosion.

“So the lighthouse will be open for tours all summer, which is good news,” she said.

A tour through history

“A visit to North Head should include the entirety of what we have to offer,” said Cape D interpreter Steve Wood, who noted that this lighthouse has a lot more to see than many others.

“A big thing that separates North Head from other Northwestern lighthouses is we’re the most intact,” he said. “We have all of the buildings from the lighthouse, the attached work room, oil houses, keeper residences, the barn, you name it. You can go to other lighthouses, who — maybe — have a more dramatic view, but you’re not going to see all of the buildings.”

But it’s more than just the structures that make North Head special, said Wood. “The structure of North Head, while it has its elegant design facets, is

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Janet Easley
secretary of the Keepers of the North Head Lighthouse

a very simple structure. It’s the people that have really given life to the history here. If we didn’t have those little stories, it would just be a lighthouse that people guess upon. We have that accessible history here, which really stands out to me.”

Wood said he likes that North Head really attracted “the best of the best,” including the architect Carl Leick, a well-known “master of his trade,” who also designed the Flavel House in Astoria. The very first lighthouse keeper at North Head, Alexander Pesonen, came from Tillamook Rock, where he rose through the ranks up to principal keeper in just two years.

According to Wood, Pesonen went through some pretty harrowing experiences at “Terrible Tilly” and when he transferred to North Head, it was like he was coming to a place where he could settle down for the remainder of his career. He was later awarded the Lighthouse Efficiency Star, which was given to the very best light stations, for four consecutive years.

“Those two really speak to the history here,” said Wood. “They not only gave birth to it but also gave it life.”

Limited time to visit

This summer will be the first time the lighthouse has been regularly open for visits and tours since 2015.

“We will be open through Labor Day for tours, so we’re going to have a full summer out here,” said Wood. “I know the attraction this lighthouse is, and we’ll keep it open as much as we can.”

Wood said that having the lighthouse open to tours is a big draw for the park.

“Oh, absolutely. If they know they can go to the top, you bet.”

Wood noted though that once the work begins this fall, it is uncertain how long it will take.

“That’s a good question, and it’s anyone’s guess,” he said. “They’ll cease operations in the wintertime. The conditions are just not conducive (to work), and restart as early as



Damian Mulnix/Chinook Observer

Visitors toured the lamp room of the North Head Lighthouse Saturday.



Damian Mulnix/Chinook Observer

Visitors to the North Head Lighthouse lamp room got a good look at the lantern Saturday afternoon. The lighthouse will be open for tours throughout the summer, thanks to delays in the delivery of restoration materials.

mid-March.”

Wood said that people should really take advantage of the lighthouse being open this summer, because they’re not certain when it will be open again in the near future.

“So it’s pretty safe to say that all next year we will be closed. It might be tough, so this summer is the option for the foreseeable future,” he said.

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Father drowns, son missing off Rockaway Beach

Associated Press

ROCKAWAY BEACH — A Colorado man apparently drowned off the Oregon Coast after attempting to rescue his son, who is missing after being hit by a wave while boogie boarding in the ocean.

The Oregonian reported that a search is ongoing for Samuel Vicente Allen, 17, from Fort Collins, Colorado.

Oregon State Police say the teen was visiting Rocka-

way Beach Wednesday with his father, Robert Joseph Allen, 50, and other family members.

Police say the teen was riding his board when he was knocked off by a wave. His father went into the water when relatives couldn’t see the boy from the shore.

Another family member called 911 around 2:20 p.m. after losing sight of the father.

A Coast Guard helicopter found the father dead about 45 minutes later.

Oregon to require testing for cyanotoxins in water

Associated Press

SALEM — The Oregon Health Authority is preparing to start requiring routine testing of water sources for toxins after contaminated water was discovered in Salem.

The new rules aimed at major drinking water systems in the state will be stricter than current federal guidelines, the Statesman Journal reported.

State health officials hope to install temporary rules by the end of the month that will require local officials to notify the public of test results.

The move comes after toxins were discovered in Salem’s drinking water. The amount of cyanotoxins in the water was high enough to potentially harm children under 6 years old and some adults with compromised immune systems.

While testing for cyanotoxins has not previously been required in Oregon, Salem officials do test for the toxins.

The city issued a do-not-drink notice May 29, which

was eventually lifted Saturday. The city reissued the notice Wednesday after another round of tests. City officials have been criticized for not revealing that they had positive test results earlier.

An Oregon Health Authority official had recommended city officials delay the advisory citing guidelines from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

“The Salem experience helped us understand that the guidelines from EPA on cyanotoxins are voluntary guidelines, not regulations,” Oregon Health Authority Director Patrick Allen said.

The guidelines may be insufficient in a situation that could be getting worse in Oregon and requires a regulatory approach, Allen said.

Toxic algae blooms are becoming increasingly common in Detroit Lake — but until now they haven’t entered Salem’s water system at dangerous levels.

The temporary rules will get the state through the current algae-bloom season, Allen said.

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We will have a coned off area for those who want to bring their Ford Trucks. We also ask of those who wish to, please bring a written memory or thought of Dale to be gathered and shared with family and friends in the days ahead. We have heard from so many of you and find this to be comforting. He was a humble, kind and generous man that will live on in our hearts for years to come.



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