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ONE DOLLAR



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

The Tourist No. 2 relocated earlier this month to the commercial waterfront complex Pier 39.

Warming drives the spread of toxic algae

Researchers see danger in massive blooms

By TOM JAMES
Associated Press

SALEM — The words blasted to cell-phones around Oregon's capital city were ominous: "Civil emergency — prepare for action."

Within half an hour, a second official alert clarified the subject wasn't impending violence but toxins from an algae bloom, detected in Salem's water supply.

Across the U.S., reservoirs that supply drinking water and lakes used for recreation are experiencing similar events with growing frequency. Last year, the Oregon Health Authority issued a health advisory for Coffenbury Lake at Fort Stevens State Park for a massive bloom of blue-green algae, the first advisory for the lake.

The trend represents another impact of global warming and raises looming questions about the effects on human health, researchers say.

"When water bodies warm up earlier and stay warmer longer ... you increase the number of incidents," said Wayne Carmichael, a retired Wright State University professor specializing in the organisms. "That's just logical, and it's being borne out."

Technically called cyanobacteria, the ancient class of organisms that create the blooms are present nearly everywhere water is found but thrive in warm, still bodies like lakes and ponds. They also create a unique class of toxins, the impact of which on humans is only partly understood.

Long linked to animal deaths, high doses of the toxins in humans can cause liver damage and attack the nervous system. In the largest outbreaks, hundreds have been sickened by blooms in reservoirs and lakes, and officials in some areas now routinely close water bodies used for recreation and post warnings when blooms occur.

But less is known about exposure at lower doses, especially over the long term.

Small studies have linked exposure to liver cancer — one toxin is classified as a carcinogen, and others have pointed to potential links to neurodegenerative disease. But definitively proving those links would require larger studies, said Carmichael, who helped the World Health Organization set the first safe exposure standards for the toxins.

"It's absolutely certain in my mind that warming temperatures are going to end up causing more of these algal blooms," said Steven Chapra, an environmental engineering professor at Tufts University.

Chapra led a team including scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in one of the most comprehensive studies of the interplay between global warming and the blooms, published in 2017.

Because they prefer warm water, higher summer temperatures and more frequent heat waves help the organisms. More frequent droughts also cause reservoirs to be shallower in summer, causing them to warm faster.

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ASTORIA FERRY FINDS HARBOR

Tourist No. 2 docks at Pier 39

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Astoria Ferry Group's efforts to get the Tourist No. 2 back operating on the Columbia River are solidifying behind a new homeport, grant funding and a project manager.

The vessel was brought to Astoria in 2016 by owner Christian Lint. But aside from some short stints at the Columbia River Maritime Museum, the vessel has largely languished in anonymity at North Tongue Point, an industrial dock on the eastern edge of the city. A year ago, the group considered giving up the restoration until a new infusion of interest and board members brought the project off the rocks.

Earlier this month, the ferry moved to Pier 39, a waterfront commercial complex along the Columbia where volunteers hope improved access and visibility will lead to more community interest.

"We have our own spot now," said Cindy Price, a ferry board member and Astoria city councilor who is running for mayor. "It has been a challenge to get things really going until we got here."

Despite essentially living out of a suitcase, the group has still gathered numerous donations from local businesses and secured grants to help with the ferry's restoration, Price said. A \$20,000 grant from the Oregon Community Foundation will help overhaul the vessel's electrical system. Another



Sam Shogren, a maritime heritage consultant, will oversee the restoration of the Tourist No. 2.

grant from Restore Oregon paid for a preservation plan on the vessel by Sam Shogren, a maritime heritage consultant the ferry group is bringing on board to oversee the restoration.

"Having completed the preservation plan, it helped give the board a roadmap on where to go in the future," Shogren said.

The group needs between \$2 million and \$3 million to fully restore the ferry to the Coast Guard's satisfaction and build a sustainable operation, Shogren said. The process will have to be split into several phases over the coming years and require a capital campaign seeking out grants, private donations

and corporate sponsorships.

The final cost for the restoration will require an inspection of the hull and will depend on how historically accurate the ferry group wants it to look, but the vessel has solid bones and a regional history that lends itself to seeking grants and donations, Shogren said.

Built in 1924, the Tourist No. 2 operated as a ferry between Astoria and Megler, Washington, until it was made obsolete by the opening of the Astoria Bridge in 1966. The ferry relocated to Pierce County, Washington, and continued running routes until 1995.

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'WE KNOW THAT TO MAKE THIS PROJECT REALLY SUSTAINABLE, IS IT NEEDS TO GET RUNNING ON THE RIVER.'

Cindy Price | ferry board member and Astoria city councilor who is running for mayor

Marine life a passion for Miami native

Bilingual outreach at Haystack Rock

By BRENNNA VISSER
The Daily Astorian

CANNON BEACH — For as long as she can remember, Andrea Suarez has had a passion for marine life.

As a child living in Miami, Florida, much of her childhood was laced with days on the beach, exploring seaweed patches, or enjoying the occasional day trip to Sea World. She remembers a



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian
Andrea Suarez is the new bilingual coordinator at Haystack Rock Awareness Program.

news broadcast of a bottlenose dolphin that had washed ashore. She cried to her parents, begging for them to take her to the beach, so she could help push the dolphin back into the sea.

While Suarez wasn't able to save the dolphin that day, she will have the chance to protect sea life as a new coordinator for the Haystack Rock Awareness Program. In a newly-created position, Suarez will manage the beach wheelchair program and take the lead on all bilingual interpretation — two new endeavors for the 33-year-old program.

"When they offered me the job I couldn't believe it," Suarez said. "Being on the beach, helping people ... You're going to pay me money for this?"

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