

State says medical marijuana program needs more oversight

Grow sites need more scrutiny

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau



EO Media Group

The Oregon Medical Marijuana Program doesn't have reliable, independent ways to verify grow site addresses, and it doesn't do enough inspections of grow sites, according to a report by the Oregon Health Authority.

SALEM — Oregon's reporting and tracking of medical marijuana has been "inadequate and inaccurate," increasing the risk of medical marijuana being diverted into the black market, a new state report says.

The Oregon Medical Marijuana Program doesn't have reliable, independent ways to verify grow site addresses, and it doesn't do enough inspections of grow sites, either, according to a report by the Oregon Health Authority. There are more than 20,000 medical marijuana grow sites in the state. But last year, the medical marijuana program inspected just 58 sites.

Registrants also comply with reporting requirements at low rates — in 2017, monthly

compliance rates among growers ranged from 26 percent to 42 percent. The program has also had problems "ensuring the appropriate and verified destruction" of medical marijuana products that fail lab tests for pesticides and other chemicals.

Oregon voters legalized medicinal use of marijuana in 1998. The Oregon Health Authority says some of the

problems with Oregon's system have existed since the system got up and running in 1999.

But some of the problems were made worse by changes to the market after Oregonians voted to legalize recreational cannabis in 2014.

Oregon Health Authority Director Patrick Allen, who requested the report, said in a statement that the agency is

working to improve tracking growers, enforcing rules and "making sure product that fails testing has been destroyed."

"More than 40,000 Oregonians depend on medical marijuana to treat their qualifying medical conditions," Allen said. "We are taking steps to maintain the integrity of Oregon's medical marijuana program and make sure medical products reach the patients who need them."

The agency claims "chronic underfunding and understaffing" limit the medical marijuana program's ability to properly regulate medicinal marijuana.

Anthony Taylor, president of Compassionate Oregon, a patient advocacy group for medical cannabis, declined to comment late Thursday because he had not had a chance to review the report.

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

Gearhart latest coast city to consider beach wheelchairs

By **R.J. MARX**
The Daily Astorian

Empire Park and Recreation District.

GEARHART — Access to free beach wheelchairs for people with disabilities could move to Gearhart, following in the tracks of Manzanita, Cannon Beach and, most recently, Seaside.

Randy Anderson, who helped pioneer the Seaside program, went before the Gearhart City Council on Wednesday to propose a similar service in Gearhart. He also offered to launch the Gearhart program with the donation of the city's first wheelchair.

Anderson proposed a partnership with the resort Gearhart by the Sea to provide storage closer to the beach. "Then it's right on the beach access road," he said.

Visitors could park on Ocean Way or North Marion, he said, and access the wheelchair by using an electronic code. He said he would provide maintenance on the wheelchair.

"What a worthwhile program to get started," Mayor Matt Brown said. "I'd be very interested in seeing this happen."

Seaside's beach wheelchair program opened for free public rentals in July, administered by the Sunset

The first person to use the program in Seaside was a 16-year-old girl, Anderson said at the Gearhart meeting.

"This was the first time she was able to access the beach, touch beach sand and touch the ocean," Anderson said. "A perfect start." Seaside has two wheelchairs in service, both donated by Patrick and Denise Duhachek of Wheel Fun Rentals. Anderson has donated a third wheelchair to Seaside, expected to be available later this month.

"They're pretty durable and they move pretty easy," Anderson said. "When you get into some of the softer sand, it's a little difficult, but when you get into the hard-packed sand, it's a breeze."

Anderson asked the city to cover the cost of a \$13 per month insurance policy.

The budget could "take on this cost," City Administrator Chad Sweet said. "The risk is pretty low. And I like the public-private partnership on this."

Resident Jeanne Mark suggested establishing a fund for additional wheelchairs. "If the one is successful, it's likely we can fund another," Mark said.

Cockrum, Smith announce re-election bids in Gearhart

By **R.J. MARX**
The Daily Astorian



Paulina Cockrum



Kerry Smith

GEARHART — Kerry Smith and Paulina Cockrum will seek a return to the Gearhart City Council.

Smith and Cockrum made their re-election campaign announcements at Wednesday's council meeting. So far, they are the only candidates.

Smith, a Gearhart resident for more than 30 years, worked in the home construction industry and with the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. He was elected to the council's District 1 seat in 2014, defeating incumbent Al Carder.

Smith said he enjoys the work and working with the council. "I'd like to see us bring Gearhart into the 21st century completely — but stay small, stay friendly and not lose sight of that," he said.

Originally from Seattle, Cockrum is a nurse at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria

and was selected by the governor to serve on the Coordinated Care Organization Criteria Work Group. A former member of the Gearhart Planning Commission, Cockrum was appointed by Mayor Dianne Widdop to fill the unexpired term of City Councilor John Duncan in District 3 after Duncan died in 2015.

Cockrum serves on the city's Community Emergency

Response Team.

"Most importantly, I would like to be an advocate for our current comprehensive plan and make sure we're following that in every subject that comes to us, any development we undertake," Cockrum said after the meeting.

She characterized her time on the council as positive and praised the council's ability to compromise.

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Inquiries/RSVP's, please contact: Bahadur Singh 503-559-8233 or bahadurji@yahoo.com