Water: 'Aging infrastructure ... contributes to bacteria problems'

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Historically, the city has also considered other sources, such as wildlife, as a possible culprit. Two DNA-tested samples were inconclusive, but pointed to some animal contamination. This could be waste left by seagulls on someone's roof or feces left by an elk near a stream getting filtered down through the city's water channels.

"I think it's normal activity. Dogs or elk or what have you are going to do what they are going to do," City Manager Bruce St. Denis said. "It washes into a gully where it concentrates, and then when it rains it all comes out one

While the source remains unclear, St. Denis said recent smoke testing did not indicate issues within the wastewater system.

"If the contaminants were coming from the city's wastewater system, the readings would be elevated on a continuous basis," St. Denis said. "They are not."

But Plybon argues that given how frequent high bacteria readings have been historically, it is unlikely Cannon Beach's aging infrastructure plays no role.

Plybon cited multiple infrastructure issues listed in the city's wastewater master plan, which was adopted earlier this year and outlines projects that need to be addressed over 20 years. When it was adopted, the Ecola Creek Watershed Council requested the city prioritize repairs near the Chisana Creek and Gower Street outfalls.

Plybon said he applauds the city for doing a wastewater review, which Surfrider has asked the city to do for years. But without first addressing infrastructure issues, the city can't rule out the possibility high bacteria could be related.

"Maybe not all of these things will contribute to the issue, but in my opinion it's likely a cause," Plybon said. "Because it's been a cause in every community we've been to with these issues. These are common issues, having aging infrastructure on the coast — and it contributes to bacteria problems."

St. Denis said projects listed in the master plan are long-term issues, and to his knowledge are not directly contributing to bacteria

Without a pattern

Part of the difficulty in narrowing down a source for the bacteria is the fact high readings don't appear to have a pattern, St. Denis said. Spikes are often seen after heavy rains or at the height of tourism season, but high readings have been recorded during all times of the year and in different weather

That is why the city decided to reinstate the water testing program, only this time to schedule samples on the day before and after heavy rains to see if there is a pattern.

The city will also start testing on the east side of U.S. Highway 101 — farther than previous tests have gone — to see if any bacteria is originating from wildlife in the hills. There are also plans to do more extensive DNA testing, St. Denis said, but the city is searching for a lab to analyze samples since Oregon State University no longer offers the service.

'We're just looking for clues," he said.

Vigil: GoFundMe page raised \$3,335

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"A lot of times that means not going back to the place that we're from because the risks are too high," Charlie Chancellor said. "Damian is the person that really shined the most.'

Michael Chicurel recalled checking in at the treatment center last year a few days after leaving jail, having not showered and with a half-full suitcase in hand. Burrell, who completed his intake paperwork, immediately assumed a mentor role.

'Without him, I wouldn't be standing here, and I probably wouldn't be on this planet anymore," Chicurel said.

Garrett Haskins, another friend who overcame substance abuse, said Burrell shared a connection with his 2-year-old son, Gregory. He watched a video Wednesday of Burrell holding Gregory as the toddler laughed.

"He kept looking at him and saying, 'Stylin' and profilin' cuz,'" Haskins said.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

People gathered at the Astoria Column for a vigil for Damian Burrell.

Max Johnson also spent time in treatment and recalled living with Burrell. He likened their living situation to the movie "The Odd Couple," with Johnson being the tidier roommate. Still, they shared plenty of laughs, and Burrell checked in with him regularly.

In the years they knew each other, Johnson noticed an evolution.

"The real Damian came out

and developed into a remarkably hard-working young man with goals," Johnson said.

Burrell started working in the shipping department at Lektro in 2017. Though his co-workers recalled plenty of belly laughs, Burrell was known as a hard worker.

When not working, Burrell would spend hours fixing and cleaning his car and the recently purchased motorcycle. He sometimes spent late nights writing poems and

Sands spoke about the many times Burrell would cheer her up through his sense of humor. Even when she was mad, one look from Burrell

could reverse her mood. She would often hide when he arrived home, prompting a game of hide-and-seek. When he would find her, Burrell's

excitement was overflowing. Burrell's mother, Eileen Jackson, thanked everyone who attended the vigil.

"I can only hope Damian can see how much he was really loved," Jackson told the dozens of people holding candles

A GoFundMe page was set up to help offset Burrell's funeral costs. In the one day after the page was created, 41 people donated \$3,335.

"He died clean and sober, which not a lot of people get to do," Chancellor said. "It wasn't really long, but he got to be the Damian he really was — a really good person."

Homeless: Transportation will be a challenge

Continued from Page 1A

"It's a place to go," said Vernon Hall, co-director of Filling Empty Bellies. Carlsen and Hall will begin

using the building almost immediately, but it will be several weeks before they are able to open a resource office and longer to set up a commercial kitchen. The lunches will continue at Peoples Park. Food storage will gradually shift to the building so volunteers can use the space to prepare meals. Filling Empty Bellies serves an average of 30 to 40 people at their lunches. Of those people, most — around 20 people or more - are consistent participants, attending the lunches and helping to manage the program.

Over the past six months, Filling Empty Bellies has shifted its focus to become an organization run "by street people, for street people,"



The Daily Astorian Food collected for Filling **Empty Bellies.**

Carlsen said. She and Hall plan to continue this model at the drop-in center. But transportation will be a challenge. The people Filling Empty Bellies serves have scant resources and often no mode of transportation besides their own two

The drop-in center is Bellies. Carlsen has worked at the base of the city's South Slope, on the other side of the hill from downtown. The bus route ends roughly a mile away from the building. Hall hopes Filling Empty Bellies will be able to work with the city, Clatsop County and the Sunset Empire Transportation District on solutions.

He and Carlsen believe the drop-in center will be a positive development both for the people they serve and the broader community, which has struggled with how to address a spike in homelessness. The center will draw homeless people away from downtown, where their presence has been controversial, Carlsen said.

Total Employment and Management — or TEAM, an employment agency with an office in Astoria — is leasing the building and splitting the cost of rent with Filling Empty with TEAM as a representative and on special projects while TEAM has found jobs in the area for a number of Filling Empty Bellies participants.

The employment agency will use part of the building and employ some of Filling Empty Bellies' participants to take care of building maintenance, cooking, cleaning and office work.

Filling Empty Bellies organizers began looking for a building in January with the hope of providing a place for homeless people to go during the day and access multiple resources. Drop-in centers have come up as an option in discussions at the city's homelessness solutions task force meetings.

"It's kind of surreal to be honest," said Carlsen, who is taking it one step at a time. "All along this has just been the vision.

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