

# Bigfoot's Steakhouse in Seaside will close after lease dispute

The owner announces 'sad' decision

By R.J. MARX  
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Thousands of visitors have posed in front of the namesake Big Foot statue and have enjoyed steaks, prime rib and smiley-face fries for the kids at the iconic Bigfoot's Steakhouse on Roosevelt Drive.

After more than 20 years in business, the restaurant will close its doors after failing to come to a lease agreement with the landlord, according to owner Janis Riesterer. "I think everyone is very, very sad," she said. "Word is spreading very fast."

Riesterer, originally from Minnesota, conceived and operated the restaurant with her husband, John, who died in 2013.

This was the Riesterers' first go at the restaurant business. They found the statue of Big Foot at a Seaside curio shop, and used the huge wooden Sasquatch as a theme. The restaurant opened in March 1998 as Bigfoot's Pub 'N Grub Steakhouse on



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

A Sasquatch has welcomed thousands of visitors to Bigfoot's Steakhouse.

the site of what used to be a used car dealership.

The restaurant won fans far and wide for its food, cocktails and welcoming family atmosphere. "We did it with the concept 'build it and they will come,' and it worked," Riesterer said.

Residents will never forget the generosity of the restaurant's owners during the Great Coastal Gale of 2007. While other restaurants were shuttered, Bigfoot's continued to serve throughout the week. "My husband had a big generator and for

that entire week, we fed all of Cannon Beach, all of Seaside, a lot of Astoria and Warrenton," Riesterer said. "They just kept coming day after day, and they were so thankful we were open. Everybody was so happy to be here. Because everybody was out of power."

During the storm, restaurant staff scoured the county to find "all the stuff we needed," as highways were closed and deliveries were at a standstill.

When a driver crashed into the iconic statue, an enterprising photographer sold the picture to Maxim Magazine.

Bigfoot's Steakhouse has 22 employees, Riesterer said, including Matt Colburn, who has been with the steakhouse since its inception.

Riesterer said she would not be reopening elsewhere. "At 70, I couldn't do that again," she said.

She plans to stay in Seaside, but said she hasn't yet figured out what she will do next.

As the final days of the restaurant tick off, Riesterer thanked the community for their support. "We're going to miss everyone and all my staff is going to miss everyone," she said.



Chuck Overton/Windermere Realty

A lake on the Palmberg property in Gearhart.

## New subdivision proposed in Gearhart

Owners seek a zoning change

By R.J. MARX  
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — One of the last large parcels of land in Gearhart could be converted into a subdivision.

The 29.5-acre project on McCormick Gardens Road will go before the Planning Commission on Thursday for a zone change from rural agricultural to medium density residential, which would include single-family and multifamily homes.

Because of wetlands and a freshwater lake, Windermere real estate broker Chuck Overton, who is representing the property owners, said he anticipates between 4 and 7 acres will be buildable pending rezoning approval, with a

potential of 25 to 40 lots.

Homes could sell in the \$300,000 range. "We're not trying to build \$800,000 homes," Overton said. "We're trying to fill a need."

The site is the former Palmberg Paving Co. The owners have put the property up for sale for \$2.5 million.

The project could be an opportunity to bring affordable housing to Gearhart, Overton said, although the pricing would be up to the developers. "The big demand is the \$350,000 price range and down," he said.

With wetlands, soil, geologic and traffic studies complete, if the property is rezoned, the developer could come right in and build, he added. "It's a perfect scenario. The demand is really high. If we can get somebody to come down here and build this out, it's going to be a success."

# Dead hiker in Welches likely killed by cougar

By GILLIAN FLACCUS  
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Authorities say a dead hiker whose body was recovered this week was likely killed by a cougar, marking the first fatal attack by a wild cougar in Oregon and the second in the Pacific Northwest this year.

Search and rescue teams found the body of Diana Bober, 55, on Monday off a trail in the Mount Hood National Forest in Welches, about 40 miles southeast of Portland. Her body was several miles from where searchers found her car last week near a ranger station.

Bober, an avid hiker who often trekked in the Mount Hood and Columbia River Gorge area, was last heard from by family and friends on Aug. 29. She was reported missing on Friday and it's still unclear when she started her hike, said Sgt. Brian Jensen of



National Park Service

A cougar is suspected of killing a hiker in Welches.

the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office.

Her body had injuries consistent with a cougar attack and a medical examiner ruled out the possibility that she was mauled after she died of another cause, Jensen said. DNA samples collected at the

**'This is an unprecedented event in Oregon. We don't know what risk it poses to the public.'**

Brian Wolfer,  
watershed manager for the state Department of Fish and Wildlife

scene were being flown by the Oregon State Police to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service laboratory for further analysis, he said.

Authorities warned a local school district of the attack and advised other hikers to stay out of the area.

Oregon wildlife officials are attempting to find and kill the animal, he said.

"This is an unprecedented event in Oregon," said Brian Wolfer, watershed manager for the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. "We don't know what risk it poses to the

public."

Cougar sightings are relatively common in Oregon, par-

ticularly in more rural areas, but Bober's death appears to be the first fatal attack.

There are about 6,600 cougars — also commonly called mountain lions or pumas — throughout Oregon. State wildlife officials get about 400 complaints about the animals each year, according to authorities.

Cougars can be killed by landowners or law enforcement officials when they pose

a threat to human safety or cause damage to livestock or agricultural crops. They also can be hunted.

Over the past decade, about 20 cougars have been killed each year in the wildlife management area where Bober's body was found.

In May, a mountain biker in Washington state was killed by a cougar on a trail east of Seattle, the first fatal attack in that state in 94 years.

## Olympia woman falls and dies while hiking near Snoqualmie Pass

Choate grew up in Oysterville

By LOGAN STANLEY  
The Olympian

OLYMPIA, Wash. — An Olympia woman and Mountaineer member died Sept. 5 while hiking near Snoqualmie Pass, according to Sgt. Ryan Abbott, a spokesman for the King County Sheriff's Department.

Laurie Choate, 64, had gone up to a portion of the Pacific Crest Trail and spent the night there with a friend, Abbott said. On their way back on the Kendall Katwalk, Choate slipped and fell 300 feet below. Choate's friend called 911, and a helicopter from the King's County Sheriff Department was brought in.

However, conditions were too risky to make an attempt to reach her, Abbott said. Para-

medics arrived on the scene about 20 minutes later, and pronounced Choate dead.

According to The Mountaineers, a local nonprofit group for hikers and those passionate about the outdoors, Choate was an active member and volunteer leader with the Olympia branch.

Choate, who grew up near

her family's oyster farm in Oysterville, is a former director of nursing and allied health at Clatsop Community College. She also was a longtime member of the Astoria School Board.

A service for Choate will be held at 1 p.m. on Thursday at First Lutheran Church in Astoria.

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**Nick Bond**  
University of Washington College of Atmospheric Sciences

Nick Bond is a principal research scientist with the Joint Institute for the Study of the Atmosphere and Ocean of the University of Washington and affiliated with NOAA. A Climatologist for Washington since 2010, Nick's research focuses on the weather and climate of the Pacific Northwest and it's link between the climate and marine ecosystems of the North Pacific.

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