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Board shake-up at mental health agency

Board chairwoman resigns

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

The board chairwoman at Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare has resigned, explaining that the performance of the board and the mental health agency no longer aligned with her core values.

Debbie Morrow informed Clatsop County on Friday that she chose to step down. Dr. Greg Sawyer, another board member, also resigned.

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Debbie Morrow

Amy Baker

Executive director returns

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

Amy Baker has returned as executive director of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare after the mental health agency's board completed an investigation into her conduct.

Baker was placed on administrative leave in late December for reasons that have not been publicly disclosed. The agency's board said Friday night that an investigation had concluded but did not release

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

A vehicle traveling on U.S. Highway 30 passes the site of a rock slide.

State often deals with rockfalls and slides

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Storms have yet to cause a major landslide on U.S. Highway 101 this winter, but it is the time of year when road crews expect to see some damage.

If you're new to the state Department of Transportation's district office in Astoria and low on the totem pole, it's likely you'll pull night duty this winter, and one of the night shift's primary tasks is to patrol the coastal highway, visiting trouble spots and sweeping fallen rock out of the roadway.

The highway, like U.S. Highway 30 or U.S. Highway 26 that cut through dynamic landscapes, is constantly at the mercy of the weather. Small rockfalls and landslides are chronic in some spots.

"It's very unpredictable for the most part, but what we can predict is that they do happen," said Lou Torres, a spokesman for the Department of Transportation.

Highway 101 — or the Oregon Coast Highway — was built in the 1920s in response to growing demand for a highway along the coast. The roadway piggybacked off an early need for emergency preparedness after World War I.

But the highway is caught in a network of ongoing slides related to erosion by high wind and waves and heavy rainfall during winter storms in January and February.

Development — such as the construction of the highway itself — has, in some places, exacerbated the natural movement of land. A portion of Highway 101 in Curry County is periodically closed by landslides, issues that began in 1938 when the road was constructed, according to the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries.

Landslides

Last April, a landslide sent about five dump trucks-worth of material across Highway 101 near Hug Point several miles south of Cannon Beach. The slide closed the highway for several hours. Though it happened in the middle of the day, no injuries or accidents were reported.

In fact, injuries from rock and landslides on Highway 101 are rare, as far as state officials are aware. Certainly, though, slides have caused serious damage to vehicles, said Mark Buffington, manager for the Department of Transportation's office in Astoria.

In some places in Clatsop County, the highway carves between hillsides. Motorists drive through areas where a rock wall looms on one side and a sloped outcropping rises and falls on the other. This method of construction left certain spots open to landslides, mudslides and rockfall.

There's a 10-mile stretch in the southern portion of the county and farther south, closer to Tillamook, where crews are constantly picking up rock or moving mud.

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'AS LONG AS WE HAVE WHAT WE HAVE NOW ... WE'LL ALWAYS DEAL WITH THAT. BETWEEN GRAVITY AND THE INTENSE RAINFALL THAT WE GET, WHEN YOU ADD THAT TOGETHER, YOU'LL ALWAYS HAVE A PROBLEM.'

Lou Torres | spokesman for the Department of Transportation

Astoria, Ilwaco settle dredging dispute

Private mediation over work at the West Mooring Basin

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

A little over a year ago, the ports of Astoria and Ilwaco signed the first-ever intergovernmental agreement across the Columbia River to dredge the Port's West Mooring Basin and open 35 slips at a marina with a waiting list of more than 100 boats.

But the partnership only removed half of the expected sediment and opened less than a third of the intended slips, requiring a private mediation to avoid a lawsuit.

"Fundamentally, we didn't get what we wanted, and they didn't get what they wanted," said Jim Knight, the executive director of the Port of Astoria.

The cash-strapped Port has not been able to dredge the West Mooring Basin, a popular marina just west of the Astoria Bridge, in more than a decade. Many of the slips turn to sandbars at low tide, leaving boats high and dry and damaging docks.

Dredging is allowed on the lower Columbia between Nov. 1 and Feb. 28. The Port's maintenance staff and its aging dredge, the Felkins, are often tied up dredging the waterfront to keep log, fishing and cruise ship docks open for business.

The Washington port, mostly based around marinas in Ilwaco and Chinook, had a hydraulic suction dredge small enough to fit inside the Astoria marina's seawalls. Ilwaco agreed to dredge in Astoria in November and December of 2017 before heading back across the river to maintain marinas.

"All intentions were that we were going to be able to help out a neighboring port, and we did the best we could," said Guy Glenn Jr., the manager of the Port of Ilwaco.

Ilwaco's dredging in Astoria was supposed to start Nov. 1, but took nearly an additional month to commence. The project was beset by problems, from Astoria taking longer to get federal permits to Ilwaco's dredge breaking down. The project also faced delays from stormy weather.

Ilwaco's dredge ultimately returned to Washington after only opening up about 10 boat slips.

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Artist hungry for a second food-themed show

Deluca hosts show to benefit charity

EVERYDAY people

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

Last year, Sid Deluca encountered something he hadn't previously imagined in his five years of involvement with Astoria art shows.

Deluca, Joi Smith and Phil Spencer were planning a food art benefit show at Smoked Bones BBQ, featuring a selection of food-themed art. Much of the proceeds from the show would have been given to a local food nonprofit.

The only problem: a fire broke out at the restaurant a few days before the show. Damage was minimal, but the need for a completely rebuilt smoker and other repairs forced the eatery to temporarily close.

The art show would have to wait.

"I've never had an art show close because a venue burned down, so that was a first for me," Deluca said.

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Sid Deluca

Art on display at Smoked Bones BBQ.

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