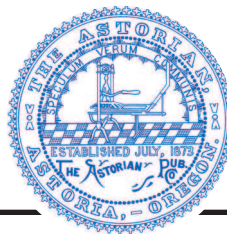


OPINION



the Astorian

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Founded in 1873

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OUR VIEW

Please leave artifacts in place

‘Looting’ isn’t a word that crops up very often in local news coverage, so it caused a degree of consternation last month when it was applied to a theft inside Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

Thefts from recognized and unrecognized archaeological sites are, however, a pressing concern all around the world — one that deserves local attention.

Most humans are acquisitive creatures, and some activities that professional archaeologists might define as looting are regarded in a far more benign light by participants. Many who live in more arid areas of the West look for Indian arrowheads and other stone artifacts with no ill intent, even though picking them up on federal property is almost always a violation of the law. Depending on individual state laws, even collecting artifacts on private property may be legally problematic.

Looting archaeological objects for profit is an even more serious problem worldwide, with the spread of metal detectors — along with lax enforcement — opening many sites to commercial exploitation. The spoils often end up being sold online. Even in the U.S., there is an ongoing crisis relating to thefts from ancient Indian sites, along with fossils from widespread paleontological sites in the West.

Why is any of this a problem? For one thing, “finders, keepers” is not a valid legal doctrine. The theft of objects from public property is a theft from all of us, and robs the future of opportunities to better understand the past. Theft of Native American objects is a particular insult, as tribal members prop-



National Park Service

Lewis and Clark National Historical Park conservation intern Kelli Daffron measures where looters disturbed an archaeological site near the park’s Netul River Trail.

erly regard such things as important links to ancestors and cultural patrimony.

From a scientific perspective, removing an object from the con-

text in which it was located robs it of much of its value. A particular kind of stone projectile found in a specific soil stratum might tell an important story about a previously

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unknown past, while it becomes merely a pretty piece of rock once removed without careful study of where it was. In a real-world example of this, an archaeological dig at one of the national park’s sites on the Washington shore of the Columbia found humble beads, broken pottery and other objects that revealed it to be the likely home of legendary Chinook Chief Comcomly, and one of the original international trade marts on what we now call the Pacific Rim.

The looting at Fort Clatsop apparently did not involve Indian material, or far less Lewis and Clark items, which are vanishingly rare. But it could have told some other notable story about our forebears here in the Columbia-Pacific region. So little attention used to be paid to the lives of ordinary working people that an archaeological site associated with them might tell us some meaningful story about life here a century or more ago.

As this area becomes ever more densely populated, it’s crucial that we all bear these issues in mind. Metal detecting is fun and legitimate. But when it comes to serious artifacts and potential archaeological sites, the real fun stems from calling in the professionals to see what they can learn and share about this area’s fascinating past.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Taylor for Sunset Empire

I support Larry Taylor for Position 1 on the Sunset Empire Transportation District Board. Larry’s two decades of experience as a manager for a high-tech firm in the Willamette Valley (now retired) make him a great asset for the district.

He understands complex, involved budgeting, is a skilled negotiator, has a level head and is uniformly considerate in working with others. He shows respect to others both in the workplace and in less formal settings.

He is committed to working to expand and upgrade the services the district provides, and understands how critical reliable and safe bus service is for those who depend on the local transit system to help them shop, get to work, attend classes and access medical providers.

He is patient, very articulate, meets others on an even keel, is very forthright and handles difficult people with great skill. I can strongly recommend him for the Sunset Empire Transportation District Board.

DAVE KRUGER
Astoria

Help ducks, not people?

In The Daily Astorian on April 30, the front-page article in the right-hand column was titled, “Homeless on the margins for suicide prevention: County struggles to find resources.”

And, just to the left of that article we see, “Missing Mom: Orphan ducklings get extra care at Wildlife Center of the North Coast.”

That juxtaposition would be funny ... if it weren’t so sad.

JULIE SNYDER
Brownsmead

Lead from the front

My Republican friends, the threat to our country is not from the poor souls fleeing violence arriving at our Southern border. Nor is it from Democrats trying to make sure you have health care,

child care, a livable minimum wage and a plan to battle climate change.

No, the threat to our nation is from Russia attacking our democracy, and the current occupant of the White House denying all evidence of it, and obstructing any inquiry into it.

What follows is a letter I wrote to U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, and I urge you to do the same:

It is time for Congress to act. Enough is enough. The Trump strategy to deny, delay, distract, disrupt and disinform is shredding our Constitution. It is time to stand up to this bully once and for all.

Enough with Democrats making the political calculus of whether this helps or hurts the chances of voting him out of office. Enough with waiting to see if the public supports impeachment, or worrying if the Republicans in the Senate would convict.

In the Nixon era the public was not in favor of impeachment when the hearings began, and the Republican party was strongly in support of Nixon. Look how that turned out.

Stop leading from behind. Lead from the front. Do your job and uphold your oath to defend our Constitution. Protect our nation and our democracy from this authoritarian demagogue and his minions.

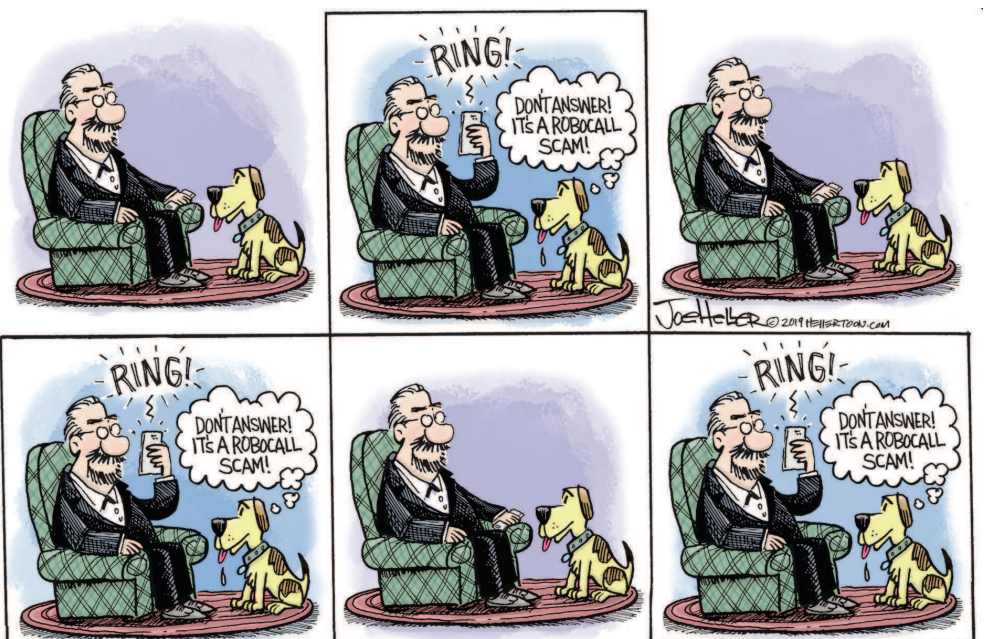
ERIC HALPERIN
Gearhart

Spending our tax dollars

Elections have consequences. And not just at the national level. People we elect in the May 21 county special district elections help decide how to spend your tax dollars. They decide about policies, budgets and key personnel.

These volunteers serve on the boards of our school districts, fire districts, the Port of Astoria, the college board, health districts, the Sunset Empire Transportation District and more.

Check out the 88 Clatsop County residents who have stepped up as candidates for the boards of the special districts. Many of them are in the county elections booklet mailed to all voters. Thanks to all of them for offering their time, talents and



PAVLOV'S DOG + CELLPHONE

work to benefit our county.

If you don’t receive your ballot by May 8, or if you need to replace it, contact the county elections office at 503-325-8605. You can also stop by the office at 820 Exchange St., second floor, in Astoria.

Don’t sit on the sidelines. Don’t let other people decide for you which candidate is best. Vote, even if you don’t love every candidate. Support candidates who want to make their district the best it can be. If you don’t vote or speak up, how will your elected officials know what you want?

Be a voter. Turn in your ballot by 8 p.m. on May 21. Postmarks don’t count.
LAURIE CAPLAN
Astoria

MacDonald, Gaebel for Sunset Empire

A special district is a nonpartisan governmental body led by an elected board whose focus is solely devoted to the district’s reason for existence. Sunset Empire Transportation District focuses on one item only — transportation for Clatsop County residents, visitors and tourists.

Since the district’s financial downfall eight years ago, SETD has risen to being a rural transit district respected throughout Oregon and beyond.

While SETD will never be the size, or have the number of routes or the tax money that a transit district such as TriMet in the Portland area has, we have moved forward in many ways. The board has worked hard together, made difficult decisions, carefully watched the financials and taken steps intended to increase ridership.

In 2016 the board adopted a transportation plan after spending 18 months talking with the public via open houses, stakeholder interviews and surveys in order to get the public’s opinion of needed transit changes. Additional frequency on Highway 101 was added, and Route 15 was added to better serve Warrenton.

Fares were lowered to \$1 per ride, replacing the higher zone rates. The cost of monthly passes, including low-income passes, was lowered. Electric buses, better for the environment, are being discussed. A transit app was added that can predict your bus’s arrival time.

The board realizes the need for increased routes and less wait times. These issues are being addressed. Service improvement priorities recommended by the Transit Advisory Committee will begin in June.

Please join me in retaining the incumbent members of the board by voting for Tracy MacDonald and Lylla Gaebel.

CAROL GEARIN
Warrenton