

Parks: 'More people are coming, but we don't have more resources'

Continued from Page A1

"It's not about getting more visitors here," said Nan Devlin, executive director of Visit Tillamook Coast. "It's about managing them when they get here."

Multiyear project

The tourism network came out of a multiyear project led by Travel Oregon to look at how to make tourism more sustainable, environmentally and economically.

"The North Coast is clearly entering a new part of its destination 'lifecycle,'" said Kristin Dahl, vice president of destination development for Travel Oregon, in a statement announcing the formation of the North Coast Tourism Management Network in May.

"Key to moving forward will be finding the right balance between the economic and social benefits of tourism and the impacts that high visitation can have on traffic, local services, natural resources and quality of life."

Around the world, Devlin can point to examples of tourism gone awry, where crushes of visitors have had major impacts on the quality of life and fragile ecosystems.

As far as natural resources are concerned, the North Coast isn't quite there yet, she said. "We're nowhere near what is termed 'overtourism,' ... but we're going to be if we don't manage it and get a handle on it now." "We just want to get



Visitors to Haystack Rock walk around the tide pools.

Photos by Colin Murphey/The Astorian

ahead of the game," she added.

David Reid, the executive director of the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, sees the potential for more ecotourism-type activities: mountain biking, trail systems and river excursions. He views the rural tourism studios Travel Oregon hosted last year and the tourism management network as important tools to adjust tourism and make sure it is something that helps, rather



A father and son look at wildlife in the tide pools near a beach at Ecola State Park.

than hinders, the coast.

It remains to be seen how

the projects proposed by the tourism network's com-

mittees progress and what kinds of impact they have on visitor awareness.

More and more waste

For now, Ben Cox, park manager of the Nehalem Bay Management Unit, which includes Ecola State Park, is taking steps to address the impacts in the parks he oversees, particularly the wads of used toilet paper and less savory human-generated discoveries rangers find along popular trails.

For state parks, one of the consequences of increased tourism is an uptick in the number of people who seem uninformed about how to be responsible in beautiful but potentially dangerous areas like coastal cliffs, or just how much of an influence their activities can have on plants, animals and landscapes.

Rangers are seeing more and more waste left behind, Cox said. Whether it's dog waste, human waste or garbage, "in a lot of ways personal responsibility sort of flies out the window," he said.

Cox plans to place one, possibly two, portable toilets at the South Neahkahnie Mountain trailhead. They already maintain these kinds of facilities at Saddle Mountain during the winter, when the flush toilets need to be shut down.

"We are recognizing, slowly, within the system, within the department, there is a need for more toilet facilities," Cox said.

With more tourists comes a heavier demand on a park's septic and water infrastructure. There's also the plastic, paper and food waste that emerges from the bowels of cars and is carried in sacks or by the fistful to park trash cans. Managing all this comes at an extra cost. The added expense takes away from resource-protection or education projects rangers might otherwise tackle.

"The more people that visit, the harder it becomes," Cox said. "More people are coming, but we don't have more resources."

Craft3: Lender will decide where to invest over the next six months

Continued from Page A1

Adam Zimmerman, the CEO of Craft3, said the lender will decide over the next six

months where to invest the \$50 million in tax credits.

"It's our expectation that between three and six projects will be rural in nature,"

he said.

Craft3 invests in projects around the Pacific Northwest. Which ones get funded depend on their ripeness, and

Craft3 encourages locals to reach out with proposals. The typical project funded requires between \$5 million and \$20 million, with rural projects

usually under \$10 million, Zimmerman said.

The New Markets Tax Credit program is set to expire at the end of the year. Craft3

has come out in support of legislation backed by the congressional delegations of Oregon and Washington state to permanently fund the program.

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