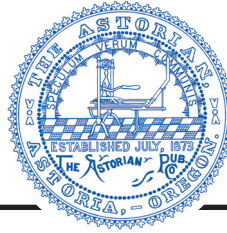


# OPINION



# the Astorian

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## OUR VIEW

# RV living a sign of the times

**W**ith the North Coast's affordable housing crisis in full swing, it is hard to defend Clatsop County's rule about recreational vehicle living.

The rule restricts people from living in their campers, trailers and other recreational vehicles to no more than 30 days out of a 90-day period.

Simple question: Where are they going to spend the other two-thirds of the time?

In November, the Oregon Law Center contacted the county asking it to loosen up its rules, which have been on the books since the early 1980s.

In the past year, 27 violations have been reported and 11 RVs removed from locations because their occupants have fallen foul of county rules. These rules were intended for summer visitors' parking, but the focus of the debate has changed with the housing crisis.

The issue embraces all sorts of practical matters. Neighbors understandably complain about giant rigs parked for long periods in their neighborhoods. There's also the delicate matter of the disposal of waste.

Gail Henrikson, the county's community development director, has the task of weighing public health with the need for compassion. We will acknowledge it's



Several RVs find free parking on side streets on the North Coast.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

a tough balancing act.

County Manager Don Bohn rightly says there is more awareness of the need to create an environment for affordable housing on the North Coast. While these discussions continue to take place, the pace at which the government and the private sector are turning talk into action just isn't fast enough.

No one is suggesting that peo-

ple living full time in their RVs on the side of the road is ideal. But RVs do offer a roof over peoples' heads. A seasonal moratorium on enforcement would be a reasonable stop-gap approach while longer-term solutions are envisioned.

Many of the ideas the county is weighing, such as an inventory of county-owned properties and the creation of a homelessness fund, have been on the table for awhile.

Where is the urgency?

Other communities in the western states have accepted that it is reasonable for governments to find ways to offer sites for safe overnight parking with access to sanitary facilities and sometimes even showers. Why not here?

County and city leaders have to consider more creative approaches to housing for any meaningful progress to occur.

## GUEST COLUMN

# The tragedy at Falcon Cove

**I**'ve been thinking a lot about what to say on The Ship Report about the tragedy on the beach at Falcon Cove near Cannon Beach this weekend. A dad and his two small children were swept out to sea by what seems to have been a sneaker wave. The two children died and the dad was in the hospital.

I talk about safety a lot on The Ship Report and I usually mention it when something like this happens, as a cautionary note. I hope the message of safety reaches people.

I can't imagine the torment this father will go through in the aftermath of this event. What's called for now is compassion in the face of unspeakable loss.

But I do have a few thoughts that might be useful, beyond the usual safety warnings: Saturday I felt distraught and sad about this, and I know from reading social media posts that other people felt it, too.

That's the thing about living in a coastal community. We're tight-knit here, like it or not, and we feel what's happening to one another. When a boat goes down, or a person is lost overboard, or people get swept out to sea, we all grieve. And we're grieving now, again. It's a price we pay for living in this beautiful, dangerous place.

To get some perspective, I drove to Cape Disappointment on Saturday and did what I have been telling you all to do when these storms hit: I went up to the visitor center on top of the cliff and went to the big observation room where you can look out over the Columbia River Bar. I was able to sit alone for awhile and stare out the window at the mouth of the river. A line of breakers 20 feet high was creating a formidable barrier to anyone wanting to cross. No one was.

As I sat there watching the water closely, I was struck by the raw, seething, tremendous power in it. We see it some-what in the gorgeous photos people take of giant waves exploding in the air at Waikiki Beach, or in the pounding surf you can hear for miles away. As I looked at the water roiling at the base of the cliff, and churning out on the bar, I could feel the immense, overwhelming energy there. That force is part of our experience



One child was killed and another is missing after being swept into the ocean on Saturday off Falcon Cove.

Mark Graves/The Oregonian

*IF WE HAVE ANY ADVENTUROUS SPIRIT  
IN US AT ALL, WE'VE SOMETIMES PUT OURSELVES  
IN SITUATIONS WHERE, HAD THE WRONG THING  
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IF WE'RE STILL HERE, WE'RE FORTUNATE.*

every time we get near the shore, or venture out in a boat. It's the force that sinks ships and fishing boats, pounds beached vessels to bits and drags buoys off their moorings. It's more powerful than any of us. And it's your companion on every beach walk, every boat ride, every trip to the coast.

The confusing thing is, on Saturday, despite all the warnings, it just didn't look that bad out there, even though it was. When I was there, there were no towering waves, like in a movie, and for someone unfamiliar with the ocean, it looked like a

stormy day like many others. But out there, the ocean was full of wild energy waiting to be expressed in potentially destructive ways.

Please don't ever forget that the ocean is there, that it's bigger than you, and does not necessarily have your best interests at heart, or care that you came there to have a good time. The warnings are not for the timid, for those who are easily scared off. They're for everyone, even the strong and young, and there's no shame in heeding them.

If we have any adventurous spirit in us

at all, we've sometimes put ourselves in situations where, had the wrong thing happened, we could have died. I know I have. If we're still here, we're fortunate. Dan Haag, head of the Manzanita Visitors Center, said it best in a Facebook post this weekend. Find a loved one and hug them tight. I'd add this: please do your best to keep them off the beach when conditions are severe. That's love in action.

And, a heartfelt 'thank you' to our first responders who stand ready to go into harm's way at a moment's notice. That's love in action, too. We are fortunate to have them — the U.S. Coast Guard and local law enforcement rescue element. They do their best for us every day, no matter what, without judgment. Another big thing to be grateful for.

That's all I have right now. Be safe out there, and take care of each other.

Joanne Rideout is news director of Coast Community Radio and author of *The Ship Report*.