

IN BRIEF

Metal reported missing from Astoria Riverfront Trolley barn

Astoria police received a report Monday of a theft of equipment outside of the Astoria Riverfront Trolley barn. Train rails, joint bars and tie plates stored outside the barn were taken. Some of the material is used by the non-profit for track repair and some of it is used to make souvenirs to generate more funding during the coronavirus pandemic.

Anybody with information about the missing materials can contact officer Alex Whitney at the Astoria Police Department.

— *The Astorian*

Wyden will seek reelection in 2022

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden says he's seeking reelection in 2022, ending speculation that Oregon's senior senator might retire and pave the way for a crowded lineup of potential replacements.

Wyden, 71, told Oregon Public Broadcasting he believes he has more work to do in Washington D.C.

"Of course I'm running," the Democrat said. "There's so much to do for Oregonians, and I'd very much like to have the honor of representing Oregonians again."

Wyden holds several key positions in Congress, including on the Senate Intelligence Committee. Should Democrats regain control of the Senate this month, Wyden is in line to chair the powerful Senate Finance Committee.

One of his priorities in the coming Congress, Wyden said, is wildfire preparation and prevention. He and U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley have proposed creating a 21st century civilian conservation corps — essentially a modern re-creation of a program that was part of President Franklin Roosevelt's efforts to pull the United States out of the Great Depression.

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

Washington state extends coronavirus restrictions

Washington state Gov. Jay Inslee on Wednesday extended restrictions on businesses and social gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic for another week.

Inslee said the restrictions are now due to expire on Jan. 11.

"This choice is not easy," Inslee said via Twitter. "Next week I'll be announcing more details about our new plan to safely reopen."

In mid-November Inslee, in response to rising case numbers, announced a host of businesses must close their indoor services, including fitness facilities and gyms, bowling centers, movie theaters, museums, zoos and aquariums. Retail stores — including grocery stores — were told to limit their indoor capacity to 25%.

Also, indoor social gatherings with people from more than one household are prohibited unless attendees have either quarantined for 14 days before the gathering or tested negative for COVID-19 and quarantined for seven days. There's no enforcement mechanism for indoor get-togethers.

— *Associated Press*

Willapa Valley eyes in-person learning

MENLO, Wash. — The Willapa Valley School District is the first district in Pacific County to eye returning to in-person learning beginning next week.

Students are expected to enter their respective classrooms on Wednesday, roughly two months after all districts inside the county returned to remote learning during the week of Nov. 11.

"With the governor's new guidelines for school openings, all students, preschool through grade 12, will return," Superintendent Nancy Morris said. "The guidelines are based on studies showing that COVID infections have not spread in schools due to the strict protocols in place."

"I feel Willapa Valley will be able to continue our strict safety protocols as we had in place earlier this year when students were in school."

— *Chinook Observer*

DEATHS

Dec. 30, 2020

WILDGRUBE, Fred Leo, 80, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Caldwell's Funeral & Cremation Arrangement Center of Seaside is in charge of the arrangements.

Dec. 28, 2020

CUMMINGS, Nancy E., 85, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Astoria City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

TUESDAY

Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, noon, work session, (electronic meeting).

Port of Astoria Commission, 4 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Clatsop Care Health District Board, 5 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors, 5:15 p.m., workshop, (electronic meeting).

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VACCINE ROLLOUT

LEFT: Registered nurse Jaime Humphries vaccinates Jessica Gauthier against the coronavirus at the Astoria Armory on Thursday. **BELOW:** Dozens of health care workers got vaccinated against the coronavirus at the Astoria Armory on Thursday.

Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian



Industrial logging a risk to drinking water

Small towns often bear the brunt

By **TONY SCHICK**
and **ROB DAVIS**

*Oregon Public Broadcasting
and The Oregonian*

On a damp night in November 2019, dozens of residents packed into the local firehouse in Corbett, a town about 30 miles outside of Portland. Water manager Jeff Busto told the crowd that logging had devastated a creek that provided part of the town's drinking water supply.

A timber company had clearcut thousands of trees along the creek, leaving only a thin strip standing between the town's drinking water and recently flattened land strewn with debris. A single row of trees was left on either side to protect it from mud, herbicides and summer sun. After many of those trees were bowled over by wind, the creek flow dropped so low that the town could no longer get water.

As a result, Corbett now had only one creek supplying drinking water for more than 3,000 residents. If a wildfire or more logging compromised the remaining creek, the town's taps could run dry in as little as three days, Busto said.

"I'm really seriously concerned about the future of this community," Busto told the crowd. "There are places all over the world that lose their water source and they lose their town. If you guys don't have water coming out of your tap, you're not going to be able to live here."

In rainy Oregon, communities tap a network of streams and creeks to supply millions of residents with cold, clean water. The problem is that the land surrounding drinking water streams is, in many cases, owned not by the towns or the residents who drink the water, but by private timber companies that are now logging more intensively than ever, cutting trees on a more rapid cycle and spraying herbicides to kill other plants that compete with replanted seedlings for sunlight.

In the past two decades, Oregon environmental regulators identified industrial logging as a risk to more than 170 public water systems, listing clearcutting, road building and pesticide spraying as potential sources of contamination.

Timber companies have successfully fought to keep Oregon's laws much more



Photos by Brooke Herbert/The Oregonian

Clearcut forests are shown in western Oregon.



Stevie Burden, the former mayor of Wheeler, looks out the window of her kitchen.

'IT IS ABSOLUTELY RIDICULOUS THAT WE HAVE TO FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHT TO CLEAR WATER IN THE FACE OF GIANT CORPORATIONS COMING IN AND BASICALLY HAVING NO ACCOUNTABILITY.'

Stevie Burden | former mayor of Wheeler

lenient than neighboring states, lobbying lawmakers and the public through opinion campaigns to burnish the industry's reputation. Oregon legislators have failed to change logging laws that state regulators, scientists and the federal government say are insufficient to protect clean water, leaving small towns with millions of dollars in additional costs, an investigation by Oregon Public Broadcasting, The Oregonian and ProPublica found.

Many of those communities are in Oregon counties already bearing the brunt of timber tax cuts, which cost the state nearly \$3 billion in revenue that would have been largely used to fund schools and local governments.

Lawmakers and forestry

officials have joined timber executives in defending current environmental laws, saying they protect communities without unnecessarily burdening one of Oregon's most important industries. But they have ignored the costs to communities that say they are powerless to protect their most critical resource: water.

More than two dozen communities have had at least 40% of the forests around drinking water sources cut down in the past 20 years, according to an analysis by the news organizations.

In Corbett, the town has started excavation work to find a new water supply. Residents will have to help pay the \$2.2 million cost. In Wheeler, the investment in a new water system happened 16 years

ago, but residents of the former mill town on the coast will be paying off the \$1.1 million debt.

"It is absolutely ridiculous that we have to fight for our right to clear water in the face of giant corporations coming in and basically having no accountability," said Stevie Burden, former mayor of Wheeler. "And the responsibility for it ends up in these really tiny little municipalities and water districts that can't afford to shoulder the cost."

A spokeswoman for the Oregon Forest & Industries Council, a lobbying organization, said the state has robust and effective rules to protect drinking water.

"Oregonians should feel confident forest practices strongly protect their drinking water," Sara Duncan, the spokeswoman, said in an email.

Duncan pointed to pollution monitoring data from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality that found public and private forests provide the cleanest water in the state. The government agency says the data is not an appropriate metric because it is too imprecise to measure the effectiveness of Oregon's logging rules.

Recent research funded by the industry also challenges the council's claim. This year, Oregon State University released two studies, which found logging can cause long-lasting water shortages and pollute drinking water with herbicides and dirt. A March study examining timber practices over a 60-year period found that water levels in streams surrounded by industrial timber plantations dropped by more than 50%

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