



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The landslide started at the end of Blue Ridge Drive, where a house burned down in December 2019.

## Landslide: One of several to hit area this year

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funding from the Department of Labor and have a contractor on-site. I will continue to engage with all the parties involved to make sure the federal responsibility is fulfilled.”

At the top of the slide is the broken foundation of a derelict house that burned down in December 2019. The Matsos suspect the fire weakened the soil and contributed to the slide. The property belongs to Paul Mossberg, who died in 2017.

“I don’t even care (who’s responsible), because my house is safe, my husband’s safe, my dogs” are safe, Cheryl Matson said. “I just care that somebody comes in and cleans up this mess.”

Jeff Harrington, the Astoria public works director, said the Department of Labor plans to have the road cleared by the end of the week. The road appears stable, and the city’s water main underneath is undamaged, he said.

“Like everywhere else in town, it’s just landslide terrain that, with enough rain, decided to move,” Harrington said.

The landslide is one of several to hit Astoria this year during a particularly wet winter. A slide in January east of the city trapped a passing truck and temporarily closed U.S. Highway 30.

Another slide in January sheered off part of a steep slope in Uniontown and uprooted the home of Cati Foss, leaving it wedged

against a neighboring property and sitting on top of the sidewalk along Alameda Avenue. She and the neighbor suspect leaking pipes might have contributed to the slide.

A GoFundMe account has raised more than \$37,000 to help the Foss family move the house, which is now sitting on blocks. Foss said her family is still trying to pay off the cost of moving the house off the sidewalk and doesn’t know yet whether it can be affordably salvaged.

“I’m still waiting to hear back from the insurance company,” she said. “I am trying to get a geotechnical engineer to kind of help speed up the process. But basically, where the house is right now, is where we’re

stuck.”

Cheryl Matson said her home was built on bedrock, but that she worries about the trees still perched in the landslide zone.

In addition to the slide just north of her home, state geological maps show another large historical landslide just south of the property. Harrington said city records show two landslides occurring on Tongue Point in 1917, albeit without specified locations. He suspects the new slide just north of the home isn’t done moving.

“That’s what concerns me, is that the whole hillside is just one huge landslide, you know,” Harrington said. “Because it all looks the same when you’re out on the ground.”

## Salmon: ‘I have a lot of faith in the fish’

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Under the model, changes in the ocean presented more of a threat to salmon than what they could confront during the freshwater stage of their lifecycle.

It was surprising to see how much the ocean stage dominated, scientists said. The ocean is in many ways still a “blue box.” But the study’s authors had already gotten a hint of their predictions in real time.

Though aspects of the work had yet to be finalized, researchers had already completed their model when a mass of warm water formed off the West Coast nearly six years ago.

The so-called “Blob” formed in 2013 and 2014 and persisted through 2015 and 2016. Temperatures inside this warm water anomaly were recorded at nearly 3 degrees C warmer than normal and it set off a chain reaction — a bomb, some scientists said — through the marine ecosystem. Salmon returns over the next few years ran the gamut from “poor” to “concerning.”

“To some extent, we’ve already seen exactly what we predicted,” said Lisa Crozier, a research ecologist with NOAA’s Northwest Fisheries Science Center and lead author of the recent

study. “It’s frightening.”

The study does not detail what types of conservation and management actions should happen to protect salmon under shifting climate conditions — that is the work that needs to happen next, Crozier said.

But, Richard Zabel, head of the fish ecology division at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center and one of the paper’s authors, told The Seattle Times “all alternatives have to be on the table.”

### ‘Hard choices’

For decades now, there have been efforts to recover salmon with some successes along the way, the researchers write.

“However,” they continue, “there are hard choices where human demands on land and water have come at the cost of wildlife.”

“The urgency is greater than ever to identify successful solutions at a large scale and implement known methods for improving survival,” the study states, while also noting, “we have shown that prospects for saving this iconic keystone species in (the United States) are diminishing.”

U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, recently unveiled a plan to breach four dams on the lower Snake River by

the end of the next decade in an effort to conserve salmon populations.

But there are many unknowns. As climate change pressures pull certain ecological threads or unfold in ways scientists did not expect, it isn’t always clear what else starts to unravel or what knits back together in new ways.

Crozier is part of a push now to delve into models that will look across marine species and their life cycles to start to build an understanding of intersecting relationships between predators and prey and how they all might shift in different ways with climate change.

Despite all the terrible things that have come with the coronavirus pandemic, Crozier believes the temporarily lower carbon footprint that came with decreased travel may offer an important opportunity.

Normally, researchers look to quantify human impact by comparing differences between years, something that is hard to isolate for climate change research as human activities rush forward. With the pandemic, air traffic slowed and there were fewer vehicles on the road as work and school moved into the home.

“We were quieter for a while,” Crozier said, “and

that’s a big deal for the ocean.”

### ‘Faith in the fish’

While the news is dire for salmon under the model she recently had a hand in completing, Crozier is not without hope. The situation is not a simple black and white, she said.

“It’s not really a good situation, but I don’t think they’ll go completely extinct,” Crozier said. “I think they will change their behavior. They’ll modify things. That’s what salmon do, they change.”

While salmon are resilient and adaptable, it is on humans to watch for these responses and “give nature the flexibility it needs,” she said.

“I have a lot of faith in the fish,” she added. “I have a lot of faith that a lot of people care about these fish and I have a lot of faith that people will see the shared benefits.”

Then there is everything we don’t know, things scientists cannot predict about salmon and how climate change alters their habits and relationships with prey and predators. There could be an “ecological surprise,” the study states, “that will reverse the historical relationship between (sea surface temperature) and salmon survival.”

“I hope for the unexpected,” Crozier said.

## Risk: ‘We are seeing great progress in stopping the spread’

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“For the second time in a row, we are seeing great progress in stopping the spread of COVID-19 across Oregon and saving lives,” the governor said in a statement Tuesday.

“Oregonians continue to step up and make smart choices. While these county movements are welcome news, we must continue to take seriously health and safety measures, especially as more businesses reopen and we start to get out more. As we see infection rates going down and vaccinations ramping up, now is not the time to let down our guard. Continue to wear your masks, keep physical distance and avoid indoor gatherings.”

Clatsop County, which

has been in the high risk category for the past two weeks, is one of 10 counties that will be at lower risk through March 11. Five counties will be at extreme risk, 11 will be at high risk and 10 will be at moderate risk.

Mark Kujala, the chairman of the county Board of Commissioners, said the announcement is welcome news for local business owners.

“Many have been struggling with restrictions and limitations on indoor activities, so it’s good news,” he said. “But if we want to stay in the lowest risk category, we can’t be complacent.”

“So we’ll need to continue to limit exposure risk through masking and social distancing. And of course, the effort to get our community vacci-

nated will continue to be the major focus in the months ahead as we navigate through this.”

Counties with a population of 30,000 or more are evaluated for risk based on virus cases per 100,000 over two weeks and the test positivity rate for the same period.

Counties at lower risk have a case rate under 50 per 100,000 people, and may have a test positivity of 5% or less.

As of Saturday, Clatsop County had 30.5 cases per 100,000 over a two-week period. Test positivity was 1.5%.

Capacity for indoor dining at restaurants and bars in counties at lower risk can increase to 50% with a mid-night closing time. Up to 300 people can dine outdoors. Tables must be limited to

eight people.

Gyms, indoor pools, museums, theaters and other entertainment venues can operate at 50% of capacity.

Grocery stores, pharmacies, retail shops and shopping malls can operate at 75% of capacity.

Churches can increase capacity to 75% indoors and 300 people outdoors.

Indoor social gatherings must be limited to 10 people from four households in counties at lower risk. Outdoor gatherings can have 12 people.

Indoor and outdoor visits are allowed at long-term care facilities.

The county has recorded 780 virus cases since March. According to the county, 18 were hospitalized and six have died.

## County reports 12 new virus cases

The Astorian

Clatsop County reported 12 new coronavirus cases over the past few days.

On Wednesday, the county reported two cases.

The cases include a female between 10 and 19 living in the northern part of the county and a man in his 70s living in the southern part of the county.

Both were recovering at home.

On Tuesday, the county reported 10 cases.

The cases include a man and a woman in their 30s, a woman in her 60s and a man in his 80s living in the southern part of the county. The others live in the northern part of the county and include two females between 10 and 19, a woman in her 20s, two men in their 40s and a woman in her 60s.

The county has recorded 780 cases since last March. According to the county, 18 were hospitalized and six have died.

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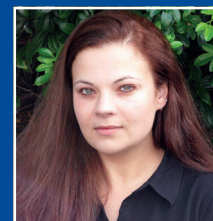
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