

IN BRIEF

Tornado confirmed in Ilwaco

ILWACO, Wash. — The National Weather Service office in Portland has confirmed that a tornado touched down in the Vandalia neighborhood of Ilwaco late Friday.

The tornado came at the heels of an extraordinarily active weather pattern along the Washington state coastline, where special marine statements were issued for possible waterspouts.

“Yesterday, we had a lot of active storm cells off the coast, just pretty strong showers that were brushing along the coast,” Shawn Weagle, a National Weather Service meteorologist, said. “One of them got a bit of rotation with it as it started to move inland. So basically got just enough spin at the right time where you ended up with a weak tornado.”

The weather service sends a team to the location of any suspected tornado to investigate the damage and determine its strength using the Enhanced Fujita scale.

The team arrived in the area around 8 a.m. on Saturday and concluded that an EF0 tornado touched down at the intersection of Redwing Way and Captain Gray Drive.

Six injured after rollover in Long Beach

LONG BEACH, Wash. — Six people were injured on Saturday afternoon after a rollover crash on the beach a mile south of the Cranberry Road beach approach.

Witnesses reported that the vehicle, identified as a 2000 GMC Yukon driven by an Idaho Falls, Idaho, man, was traveling along the beach at a high rate of speed, performing what are called “cookies” or “doughnuts,” according to the Washington State Patrol.

The vehicle then fishtailed, lost control and rolled over up to three times, coming to a rest on its wheels at the edge of the waterline.

— *Chinook Observer*

City Hall clerk to retire in Gearhart

GEARHART — For 17 years, Gail Como has been the first person residents meet at Gearhart City Hall.

At a City Council meeting this month, City Administrator Chad Sweet announced Como’s decision to retire May 1.

“Everything goes through Gail,” Sweet said. “She’s integral to us. She’s going to be hard to replace, but I’m looking forward to her being retired. We’re happy for her.”

— *The Astorian*

DEATHS

March 20, 2021

CRANE, Ann Mary, 88, of Warrenton, died in Seaside. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

March 19, 2021

PASSMORE, Koeta “Jo” Fay, 81, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Ocean

View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

March 16, 2021

DAVIS, Rose Marie, 84, of Astoria, formerly of Gearhart and Warrenton, died in Salem. Johnson Funeral Home in Salem is in charge of the arrangements.

CORRECTION

First name incorrect — Su Coddington, who serves on the board of the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, is running for the board in the May election. Her first name was incorrectly spelled Sue in an In Brief item on A2 on Saturday.

ON THE RECORD

Assault

• James Robert Young, 51, was arrested Saturday in Warrenton for two counts of assault in the fourth degree, two counts of unlawful use of mace in the second degree and disorderly conduct in the second degree. Police were called just before 2 p.m. after Young report-

edly sprayed two people with bear repellent.

DUI

• Barry William Lempea, 81, of Astoria, was arrested Wednesday on 33rd Street and Lief Erikson Drive in Astoria for driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving and resisting arrest.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY

Astoria Planning Commission, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

Seaside Airport Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Warrenton City Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.

WEDNESDAY

Astoria Parks Board, 6:45 a.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

Port of Astoria Finance Committee, 1 p.m., (electronic meeting.)

Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting.)

THURSDAY

Sunset Empire Transportation District Board, 9 a.m., (electronic meeting.)

the Astorian

Established July 1, 1873
(USPS 035-000)

Published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday by EO Media Group, 949 Exchange St., PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103 Telephone 503-325-3211, 800-781-3211 or Fax 503-325-6573. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Astorian, PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103-0210

DailyAstorian.com
MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
MEMBER CERTIFIED AUDIT OF CIRCULATIONS, INC.

Circulation phone number:
800-781-3214

Periodicals postage paid at Astoria, OR

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BEACH DAY



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Gavin McClelland, left, and James Stoner build a sandcastle fortress at Oswald West State Park.

Newspaper article leads to changes on treacherous portion of Highway 101

By JEFF CLEMENS

Chinook Observer

RAYMOND, Wash. — The Washington State Department of Transportation has made significant changes at a hot spot on U.S. Highway 101 north of Raymond that has had a series of serious injury collisions in recent years, including a fatality in early 2018.

The treacherous corner between Butte Creek Road and Smith Creek Road now has additional signage after the department took note of a “thought-provoking” article by the Chinook Observer published in December after a near-fatal accident in the section on Dec. 4. The collision resulted in two patients — one in critical and another in serious condition — being airlifted to trauma centers.

“We review all our highway routes all across the southwest region, which is probably 2,000-3,000 lane miles of highway, and we try to do that on a five-year basis,” David Burkey, of the Department of Transportation, said. “What we try to do is identify trends and crash hot spots and stuff like that and see if we can find some kind of safety improvements that we can do to those locations. That’s originally how we would find those types of things.”

“In this case, I had an email come through somebody sometime in December 2020 that said there was an article in the Chinook Observer that said something about crashes on curves out on Highway 101 by Smith (Creek Road),” he said. “What people don’t realize is we can’t get out to every location; we have maintenance people that are out there that tell us we have crash history we can look at. For whatever reason, nothing spiked in that area when we did our safety audit.”

As a result, Burkey had some of his co-workers take a closer look at the highway section, and they were able to identify the curve as having “higher than expected to see numbers” for crashes. The six-year look at the road determined that the collisions were predominantly in the northbound direction.

“First thing we do is we go out and make sure we have the proper signing out there, and we checked that, and we had proper signing,



Jeff Clemens/Chinook Observer

More prominent safety signs have been installed on a curve on U.S. Highway 101 where there have been several serious traffic accidents in recent years.

‘YOU CAN POST SPEED LIMITS AND SIGNS, BUT IF PEOPLE DON’T HEED THEM, THEN WE ARE OUT TO HAVE SOME OF THE SAME CONTINUING PROBLEMS. HOPEFULLY, THESE NEW SIGNS AND THE OTHER THINGS (THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION) WILL DO WILL HELP CONTRIBUTE TO THE SAFETY IN THE AREA.’

Washington State Patrol Sgt. Brad Moon

which typically is some sort of an advance sign in front of the curve, either windy road or a curve sign at the curve,” Burkey said. “Then we look at the curve and see if we have like a large arrow and then the advisory speed you should drive it at. Everything looked OK there, but our job is to find more things that we can do to enhance it because we can’t guess why people do the things they do when they crash.”

“So we looked at that and some countermeasures that are somewhat effective and other stuff and tools we have in our toolbox to make safety improvements. So what we did on the curve is we went in there, and we put supplemental signs,

which are called chevrons, at 80-foot spacing throughout the whole curve so as you’re driving down the road, you see them the whole direction. We added (the) advisory speed again, and we added post reflectors to the post so as you’re driving at night, it lights it up like a picket fence. We also put a guidepost out there,” Burkey added.

On top of the corner changes, the Department of Transportation looked at the intersection of Highway 101 and Smith Creek Road roughly a half-mile from the corner. The crash history wasn’t as significant, but they determined that the section could use a few enhancements, as well.

“It’s like you have a vertical curve and a horizontal curve, which means you have issues a little bit, and so we looked at adding some advance signing to let people know the intersection was coming up,” Burkey said.

Burkey explained the changes were made, in part, to help reach the state’s goal of “Target Zero,” which is to have zero traffic-related injuries or fatalities by 2030. He admits the goal is somewhat impractical, but it isn’t impossible.

Washington State Patrol Sgt. Brad Moon, who leads the Naselle detachment, is excited to see changes in the treacherous section. He has championed ideas to improve safety in the section for at least the past year and has had numerous conversations with the Department of Transportation. According to Burkey, he meets with Moon and Washington State Patrol twice a month, and they keep in close contact and even spoke together about the Observer article.

“I think that between the article (the Observer) wrote and the discussions we had, and them also trying to address things in the area, all played roles in them being able to put these signs up with the idea of it working toward the overall public safety and the safety of traveling vehicles through that area,” Moon said. “Obviously, we are going to continue to encourage people to pay attention to signs because if they don’t pay attention to the signs, then we can still continue to have some of those issues.”

“You can post speed limits and signs, but if people don’t heed them, then we are out to have some of the same continuing problems. Hopefully, these new signs and the other things (the Department of Transportation) will do will help contribute to the safety in the area.”

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