

Playland: ‘We want people to get out there’

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North Coast Trail Alliance and Lewis & Clark Timberlands collaborated to create the approximately 6-mile Klotchy Creek mountain biking trail system, which opened in 2019. The trails are on the timberlands while an entrance is on the nearby county land.

Dougherty said the timber company isn't required to have recreation opportunities on its land, but it feels it's important to do so.

“We want people to get out there to enjoy the timberland and connect with nature and see some of the things we're doing,” he said. “We also want to be part of the community. We don't want to be completely blocked off and hidden from the world.”

Chad Washington, the stewardship and community engagement coordinator for Greenwood Resources, said the timber company adopted the park to maintain it and pick up garbage.

“We certainly embrace local recreation on our timberlands and I think it's important for people to be on the landscape and close to forestry,” he said. “We're committed to keeping our lands open to the public as long as it doesn't put our timberlands at risk.”

During hunting season, Lewis & Clark Timberlands



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

There are 6 miles of mountain bike trails just behind Klotchy Creek County Park.

gets thousands of visitors on its property from all over the U.S. Members of the public are expected to get a free permit to access the land when it's open.

The area is closed to the public during fire season. Washington said the conditions are especially dry right now after the heat dome Oregon experienced at the end of June. Tender new growth has died on some of the trees, creating extra fuel if a fire were to ignite there.

“We need the land to be a saturated sponge and now we have a dry sponge with a little misting at the top,” Washington said.

Deer and elk in the area often feed on young trees,

so Lewis & Clark Timberlands allows hunting on the property.

“By providing hunting opportunities, it provides free range meat for the public and helps mitigate the damage those animals do to our young trees,” Washington said. “That's a mutually beneficial activity.”

Public entities also manage land for recreation in addition to their main purpose. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages Julia Butler Hansen Refuge on both sides of the Columbia River specifically to conserve habitat for the threatened Columbian white-tailed deer. But it also allows for waterfowl hunting in a separate part of the

refuge.

Jake Bonello, the assistant refuge manager, said the Columbian white-tailed deer is only found west of the Cascade range.

“Their numbers have dwindled to very low numbers and by the time this habitat was discovered, it was one of the last remaining habitats for them,” Bonello said. “It's important we can protect and conserve as much habitat as possible for them.”

The refuge, between Longview, Washington, and Westport, offers one trail that is open year-round and other trails that are open seasonally. Hunting and fishing is allowed in the exterior areas that can be accessed by boat, while the interior of the refuge is closed to hunting in order to protect the deer.

Bonello said the recreational opportunities are all about engaging with the public.

“There are no recreational fees here, everything is provided for the sake of education and outreach and getting people outdoors,” he said. “Education and outreach is important just to get as many people on board with the efforts to protect the Columbian white-tailed deer.”

One of the best ways to do that, he added, is for people to go out to the refuge and see the deer in person.

Carrier: Could bring in \$1 million in revenue

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the ship and Astoria-area leaders have given him little encouragement.

The association, with 1,200 members scattered throughout the United States, asked the Navy to try to preserve it in 2001. It secured pledges of \$5 million.

When officers rejected this idea, reportedly because it was not among ships listed for possible preservation, the group's leadership changed direction. In a recent newsletter, its president, Jim Melka, of Independence, Iowa, lamented, “It looks as if we have lost the battle to save the ship.”

“We are trying to find a location to set up a USS Kitty Hawk museum,” the group told members online. “More details will be forthcoming, but association leadership is considering everything from a place on USS Midway on the West Coast to a building in Kitty Hawk, N.C., on the East Coast, and everywhere in between.”

‘Too much’ to handle?

Nix pointed to the Midway, a carrier in San Diego, as an example of how a community can preserve history while creating a lucrative tourist attraction. His research suggests that 1.3 million visitors to the museum annually pump \$4.7 million into Southern California. Other retired fighting ships attract visitors in Bremerton, Washington, and elsewhere in California and the Atlantic coast.

He estimates potential visitor counts for the Kitty Hawk on the North Coast might reach one-quarter of Midway's numbers — resulting in \$1 million revenue.

Astoria-area leaders who replied to Nix's campaign offered unanimous respect for preserving the nation's military history. But their consensus was that installing a 1,069-foot aircraft carrier on the Astoria waterfront and coping with the influx of visitors would overwhelm the community.

Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones is deputy director of the Columbia River Maritime Museum. He replied to Nix in March that the museum is focused on the \$1.1 million dry docking of the 128-foot Lightship Columbia. “I'm afraid our museum does not have an appetite for taking on a project of such exponentially larger proportions and logistical requirements,” he wrote.

He noted as mayor he would be interested in learning of others' interest, but added, “An attraction that could generate an additional 400,000 annual visitors might be seen as too much of a good thing, because of the additional infrastructure required to support so many visitors in a town of only 10,000.”

Jones, who served as a sector commander in the U.S. Coast Guard, warned that deferred maintenance costs and the costs associated with docking the ship would have to be factored in.

In his reply to Nix, David Reid, the executive director of the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, pointed to the brief Astoria stop-over of the USS Missouri in 1998. The historic battleship, the site of Japan's 1945 surrender in World War II, was being towed from Bremerton to become a museum in Hawaii. The crowds and accompanying traffic chaos demonstrated how the North Coast could not cope, he wrote.

“Since those days we have expanded operations and land use at the Port, redeveloped other waterfront buildings, increased our year-round (and especially summertime) visi-

torship, and increased our population,” wrote Reid. “The roads leading to and from town, however, have not widened a single lane and are already overburdened on busy weekends.”

Reid said in his discussions with maritime and government leadership, all agreed that the ship should be preserved for future generations to enjoy. But, he added, “This is an eminently worthy project that is simply outsized for our community.”

Deadline approaching

Nix is not deterred and is seeking support from elected leaders. “I am trying to spread the word and hope we can get some state resolutions,” said Nix, who is encouraged by the belief that federal matching funds could help with costs.

He said it is important to save the Kitty Hawk because it is the last of the oil-fired carriers. Later nuclear-powered craft may be less likely to be saved for private use because they pose potential contamination issues. “There are only two supercarriers left,” Nix said. “Once they are gone, they are gone.”

But the clock may be ticking.

I AM TRYING TO SPREAD THE WORD AND HOPE WE CAN GET SOME STATE RESOLUTIONS.

Bill Nix | retired sailor campaigning to save the USS Kitty Hawk from the scrapyards

The carrier was decommissioned in 2009 at a ceremony Nix attended. It is docked at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton amid other unwanted military vessels.

The Kitsap Sun newspaper, which covered the association's unsuccessful campaign to save it, noted that it will likely be sold for scrap. Since 2014, surplus carriers Constellation, Ranger and Independence have been towed around the tip of South America to ship-breaking yards in Brownsville, Texas, on the Gulf Coast, the newspaper has reported.

The latest action in April was a thorough exterior cleaning so its hull will not carry invasive species when it is moved. No scrap bids have been announced, the newspaper reported.

However, Nix is not entirely alone.

When his project was highlighted in The Astorian's In One Ear column earlier this year, it was enthusiastically supported by Seaside resident Nguyen Trung, who noted the size of the vessel, including its 4.5-acre flight deck, would be its attraction. “This offers limitless potential for usage: restaurants, stores, festivals, museum, garden, park, lodging, conference rooms, theater, sports, etc.”

Trung highlighted the Queen Mary, a 1936 luxury British cruise ship, had been preserved in Long Beach, California. “What a cool idea,” Trung added. “I do hope this gem will be saved.”

Masks: Oregon is facing a spike in hospitalizations

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in the state's executive branch to be vaccinated by Oct. 18.

Earlier this week, Brown had urged other counties to take action after Multnomah County, the state's largest by population, opted for a mask requirement. The state had transferred power to counties after lifting most virus restrictions at the end of June.

“The latest science is clear: although unvaccinated individuals are more likely to contract the disease, both vaccinated and unvaccinated people can spread the delta variant,” the governor said in a statement. “Masks are a simple and effective way to make sure you are not unknowingly infecting your friends, family members, neighbors and colleagues.”

“After a year and a half of this pandemic, I know Oregonians are tired of health and safety restrictions. This new mask requirement will not last forever, but it is a measure that can save lives right now.”

‘A statewide issue’

Mark Kujala, the chairman of the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, said the mask mandate comes as a surprise. He said he felt as if it would be something left up to local communities to decide.

“I just anticipated that

when we'd have this discussion that we'd have to do some outreach in the community to let them know what's being considered and certainly some discussion amongst the cities and mayors because this certainly impacts them,” Kujala said. “But I understand that it's a statewide issue right now and we see numbers that are alarming.”

Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones said he supports the decision and feels that while perhaps inconvenient, the mask mandate is necessary.

“The large number of unvaccinated people contributed to the rapid surge of the delta variant and will possibly lead to further variants that are even worse than the delta variant,” he said.

“As mayor, I urge everyone, unless your physician recommends against it, get the COVID-19 vaccination, so we can get the pandemic under control. Because this could've been avoided.”

Clatsop County had stopped providing regular updates about the number of local hospitalizations tied to the virus, which, during most of the pandemic, had been comparatively low. On the county's COVID-19 Public Information Hub, the county lists 10 hospitalizations from July 31 to Friday — eight who were unvaccinated and two who were vaccinated.

“I can verify that we have

a lot of cases, both in the county and cases from folks that are home and not being tested. We also know that we have a number of hospitalizations, mostly unvaccinated individuals,” said Kujala, the director of the Columbia Memorial Hospital Foundation.

“It's certainly as high of a concern now as it's ever been in Clatsop County.”

‘Too late’

The speed of the delta variant has astounded health officials, who said each infected person can infect eight other unvaccinated people. Previous versions of COVID-19 didn't exceed a 1 to 3 infection ratio.

“Being vaccinated now is too late for this surge,” said Dr. Renee Edwards, the chief medical officer of OHSU Health.

Edwards said observation of patients suggests the delta variant makes unvaccinated people sicker than earlier versions. Even though many patients admitted to the hospital are in a younger 30 to 50 age group, the overall result has been rapidly increasing numbers of cases requiring more and longer medical care.

While other states and cities have recently reintroduced mask requirements, Brown has steadfastly stuck to a voluntary effort. Oregon Health Authority officials

Beach driving: Vehicles can get stuck in the sand

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“When you talk about the coast as a dynamic environment, we generally mean physically dynamic, but it's also socially dynamic,” Havel said. “People's needs change. And when there's places to park off the beach and when it's better for enjoyment of the beach and better for the natural systems, then parking needs to be moved off.”

The state tested the closure during the pandemic,



Erika Bolstad/Stateline.org

A beach north of Pacific City is one of several that the state closed to motorized vehicles this year.

then opened a public comment period before making a decision this spring.

In the comments reviewed by Stateline, many people pointed out that driv-

ing onto the beach was one of the few ways that those with limited mobility could access their favorite spots. But many locals said they were tired of the disruption and environmental costs of beach driving. “There have been plenty of times that I have witnessed cars on the beach nearly hitting pedestrians,” wrote Janine Bulgrin of Pacific City. “In addition, the numerous instances of cars getting stuck in the sand and, at times, engulfed in the ocean.”

Cases: 81% of reported cases in July were among unvaccinated

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Tom Bennett, a county spokesman, said the outbreaks fall into several categories: people who live or work in congregate settings; workplaces; food processing or agricultural settings; and schools.

“We can't identify specific locations, but the number of

outbreaks is as much a result of the rapid communitywide spread of the virus as it is with factors at any particular location/organization,” Bennett said in an email.

The county said that more people are seeking to get tested for the virus, straining the testing capacity at local hospitals, clinics and the county Public Health

Department.

As of Friday, 22,414 people in the county — 56.8% — had been fully vaccinated. The county has set a goal of having 27,533 people — 70% — vaccinated to try to achieve herd immunity against the virus.

The Oregon Health Authority corrected information released last week as part

of the state's monthly report on breakthrough cases. The health authority said 82% of the 55 people who died from the virus in July were unvaccinated, not 91%, as originally reported.

The health authority said 81% of the 12,514 reported virus cases statewide in July were among the unvaccinated.