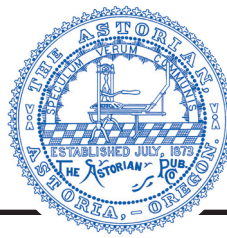


OPINION



the Astorian

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OUR VIEW

A glimpse of the future

It came off as a little gimmicky 10 years ago when Washington state and Oregon environmental agencies began promoting king tides as a preview of the potential impacts of sea-level rise. It's starting to feel more legitimate following January's widespread flooding around the mouth of the Columbia River and Willapa Bay.

Damaging dozens of homes — some severely — these floods were caused by heavy rain, high mid-winter tides, melting high-country snow and building in low-lying areas. This is a moderate La Niña year, a climatic pattern known for causing wetter-than-usual winters in the Pacific Northwest.

Such combinations aren't terrifically unusual. While there have been some exceptionally wet days, our overall precipitation this winter is falling within historic norms. It's been rainy but not apocalyptically so, and bright sun these past several days is a reminder why so many of us prefer the coast to dank and gray Puget Sound.

Climate scientists are quick to accurately point out that one episode of flooding has little if anything to do with the still-slow increase in the volume of the ocean — which has long been offset in this vicinity by the Juan de Fuca tectonic plate pushing under and uplifting our coastline.

Even so, floods in neighborhoods from Raymond to Warrenton to Seaside are instructive when it comes to land use planning, facility siting and other issues that go to the heart of acknowledging that things will be changing and we need to adjust. The sooner we get to it, the more likely it is that com-



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

A gate near the Necanicum River was partially submerged by floodwaters during January storms.

munities and families will be able to cope longer and find ways to live with rising water.

Although every flood-prone neighborhood, street and highway has unique characteristics that will have to be remedied by careful engineering, it's possible to perceive some broad themes.

Many communities on the Pacific Northwest coast are built on sediment deposits carried downstream by the Columbia and smaller rivers. Places like Long Beach, Seaview, Surfside and Seaside are low in elevation with high winter water tables. Although they are laced with a combination of drainage canals, wetlands and pumping stations, there are situations when the flood-control infrastructure just can't keep up. It's time to look at all these provisions again to see what improvements are needed.

New construction in flood-prone areas should be discouraged. If it is permitted, it would be smart to plan for flooding by elevating structures so water can rise underneath without compromising living areas and utilities. It may be necessary to expensively raise some existing homes.

Every landowner must carefully consider how modifications could affect neighbors — the time when it was considered acceptable to fill and raise the ground level of entire building sites is long past. Preserving wetlands can seem like an expensive nuisance, until your property floods because someone thoughtlessly filled one in.

It's a tall order getting streets, sewer and water systems, highways and vital public buildings out of harm's way. As a pragmatic matter, finances will dictate waiting until many of these assets are

worn out or unusable before they are replaced or redesigned. But where there are high and dry alternate sites, facilities should be gradually shifted to them. As a stop-gap, high-capacity portable pumps might keep some local streets passable — an investment that more frequent flooding may justify.

Only time will reveal exactly how — or if — we can manage to adapt to higher water. It's crucial that local elected leaders and agency heads learn to be adept at communicating to the public about how to prepare for long-term flood risks, and about disaster response when floods happen.

Adaptation and gradual retreat will be a persistent theme for coastal residents worldwide in the coming decades. There will be intelligent, cost-effective responses. Let's make sure the Pacific Northwest is among the smart ones.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More parking

We have had the hole in Astoria for some time now. Yes, do something with it, but do not take away parking space.

It is now very difficult to find a place to park in Astoria. What we need is more parking space, not less!

ARDATH DIANE FINUCANE
Warrenton

Opposed

I am opposed to the Astoria City Council amending the development code and comprehensive plan for the Heritage Square block.

The streets of Astoria are unsafe now because of homeless and mentally challenged people. I agree the city needs to develop programs, medical care and housing for them, but not in the heart of the city and in an available parking space.

There are 500-plus members of the Astoria Senior Center, which is across the street from the location being considered, and many of the members walk to the facility.

People with mental issues are frightening and threatening to elders. We hear of scary situations regularly now, and this plan would only exacerbate the situation.

Revitalize downtown Astoria by doing projects to benefit the businesses and residents of Astoria. Build housing units with parking outside the core of downtown. Provide assistance to the needy, but don't destroy the livability of the city for the rest of us!

BRENDA HOXSEY
Warrenton
Member, Astoria Senior Center

Desensitized

Marian Turski, Holocaust survivor, age 95, was 13 when the rules started to change:

"First they said we weren't allowed in swimming pools, so we said OK, we can go to the lake. Then they said we can't sing inside certain buildings, so we said OK, we can sing somewhere else.



LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Astorian. Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship. All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month. Letters written in response

"They said our children can't play with theirs, so we said OK, they can play among themselves. Then they said we could not enter stores until after 5 p.m., and we said OK, there is less to choose

to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

from, but at least we can still get food. A few bystanders agreed, many more just stood and remained silent.

"Most people talk about the end, but I will never forget the beginning. The

feeling of confusion, the rules that never made much sense, how we were suddenly excluded from places and other people. All it took was a single step, but then it became one step at a time."

Having witnessed both the beginning and ending of the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question," Turski noticed that once the populace is desensitized to disparate treatment of people, the government moves quickly to impose restrictions on travel and jobs, then begins removing people from their homes.

Two years ago, federal and state bureaucrats and politicians told us they needed "15 days to slow the spread" of the coronavirus. That was the first step! When is the last step? A better question is: "What will the last step look like?"

DIANE GRUBER
Oysterville, Washington