

IN BRIEF

State reports dozens of new virus cases for county

The Oregon Health Authority reported dozens of new coronavirus cases for Clatsop County over the past several days.

The health authority reported 30 new coronavirus cases for the county on Tuesday and 97 new cases over the weekend.

Since the pandemic began, the county had recorded 4,116 virus cases and 37 deaths as of Tuesday.

Without ordinance, RV campground in Seaside can stay

SEASIDE — Without an ordinance providing options for overnight camping, encampments like the 30-vehicle lot on Necanicum Drive and 10th Avenue will remain in place.

“I do think that you probably could restrict using that property, but you’d have to have an alternative,” City Manager Mark Winstanley said.

At a City Council workshop in late January, councilors sought rules for health and safety. How any property selected for encampments and parking would be managed would also be a concern, City Attorney Dan Van Thiel said.

“There has to be a sanction or provision in the ordinance that sanctions or allows the court to do something with those people, if they have violated the ordinance,” Van Thiel said.

Judge McIntosh recognized as Juvenile Court champion

Judge Dawn McIntosh, the presiding judge of the Clatsop County Circuit Court, has received the 2021 Chief Justice’s Juvenile Court Champion Award.

Given annually to a Circuit Court judge, the award recognizes McIntosh’s work in advocating for children and bringing attention to cases involving child abuse and neglect in the state’s judicial system.

— *The Astorian*

Ilwaco port names new manager

ILWACO, Wash. — Richard Titus has been named the new Port of Ilwaco manager, taking over from Guy Glenn Jr., whose last day was Monday.

Like Glenn, Titus will also manage the Port of Chinook under a joint operating agreement in place since January 2016.

Glenn was named Ilwaco port manager in 2013, taking over from Jim Neva. He was Ilwaco’s second-longest serving manager since 1958, behind Robert Peterson, who served from 1971 to 1991.

In a letter to the community, Glenn thanked his staff and other supporters.

— *Chinook Observer*

DEATHS

Feb. 1, 2022

WAHLSTROM, David Peter, 78, of Rosburg, Washington, died in Rosburg. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Jan. 28, 2022

BOWERS, Marilyn, 81, of Astoria, died in Vancouver, Washington. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Theft

• Derrick Ray Maxhimer, 33, of Astoria, was arrested on Jan. 27 at Walmart in Warrenton for theft in the second degree and criminal trespass in the first degree.

Unauthorized use of a motor vehicle

• Russell Dean Brooks, 36, of Astoria, was arrested on Friday at Exchange and 12th streets in Astoria for the unauthorized use of a motor vehicle that had been stolen from Clatsop Community College the day before. A passenger, Hillary Jeanette Bastiaen, 37, of Warrenton, was arrested on a warrant. The vehicle contained property believed to have been stolen.

Criminal mischief

• Denis John Reynolds, 36, of Astoria, was arrested on Tuesday on W. Marine Drive for criminal mischief in the second degree and harassment. He was arrested again later that day, in the same location, for criminal mischief in the second degree.

DUII

• Britnee Rose Tsuneo, 28, of Astoria, was arrested on Monday at Exchange and 14th streets in Astoria for driving under the influence of intoxicants.

• Zachary Lawrence Spooner, 25, of Cannon Beach, was arrested on Friday at W. Marine Drive and Antwerp Street in Astoria for DUII.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

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

Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

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Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

A colorful mural with a simple, heartfelt message now greets students inside Ilwaco High School. The ‘You Are Loved’ mural, designed in bold block letters and latex paint, is the work of artist Alex Cook. It is the latest installment of a nationwide project to help promote self-worth through art.

Oregon tries to tweak land use rules to save Highway 101

Cracks threaten coastal backbone

By KRISTIAN FODEN-VENCIL
Oregon Public Broadcasting

A couple of miles north of Newport, U.S. Highway 101 runs above Moolack Beach, affording breathtaking views of the Pacific.

The highway is straight and relatively flat in this spot, so not a big engineering challenge. But the planning director for Lincoln County, Onno Husing, can stand here and watch bits of tarmac crumble into the ocean, 80 feet below.

“It’d be pretty hard to stand here and look at what we’re looking at, and not be concerned,” he said recently.

On the beach, waves roll in constantly, in the process steadily eroding the land supporting the highway. Thousands of people drive this stretch to get to work everyday, or because they live in Lincoln City or Tillamook. Highway 101 is a lifeline, linking communities across the coast.

“You don’t need to be an engineer to understand that the highway is threatened,” Husing said.

Moolack Beach is just one of dozens of problem spots along Highway 101. Husing and other experts say the road needs reinforcing, especially with what’s known in the engineering world as riprap — placing large rocks at the base of the road to break up wave energy and reduce ocean erosion.

But the Oregon Department of Transportation isn’t allowed to use riprap along Highway 101, because back in 1977, the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission adopted Goal 18 as part of Oregon’s comprehensive land use planning effort. That rule blocked the use of riprap for any new development, unless there’s an exception.

This was near the beginning of the environmental movement. Goal 18 was a way of ensuring Oregon’s coast didn’t come to resemble California — with hundreds of miles of oceanfront riprapped against erosion.

Many people don’t like the way riprap looks. And it can cause waves to scour the beach of sand. That means that eventually, there’s no more beach left for the public to enjoy.

But developers are soon imaginative bunch. As an as Goal 18 was adopted, they started pushing back against the definition of “develop-



Kristian Foden-Vencil/Oregon Public Broadcasting

Onno Husing, the planning director for Lincoln County, can stand on U.S. Highway 101 and watch bits of tarmac crumble into the ocean.

ment” in the state rules. In 1984, the state officially defined the term to include “... houses, commercial and industrial buildings, and vacant subdivision lots which are physically improved through construction of streets and provision of utilities.”

Meg Reed, a coastal specialist with the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission, said the new definition has gaps: “That definition does not include public infrastructure,” she said. “Roads, sewer lines, campgrounds, lighthouses: it doesn’t include any of that in the definition.”

In other words, using riprap to protect Highway 101 hasn’t been allowed for 45 years. And that’s a challenge for a road that runs right up against the coast for many of its 362 miles.

Backbone

Highway 101 is the backbone of Oregon’s coastal transportation system. It officially became U.S. Highway 101 back in 1926, as cars were becoming more common. Squeezed between the ocean and the steep slopes of the Coastal Range, the highway has never been as important to interstate commerce as, say, Interstate 5. But it is key to linking coastal communities together.

It’s also a testament to engineers that Highway 101 has lasted close to 100 years with relatively few upgrades.

But in 2002, the Oregon Department of Transportation identified 25 sites of concern. They included areas of the highway being undercut by erosion, or in danger from landslides, floods, sea

level rise and storm surges. As coastal residents know, it’s not uncommon for stretches of 101 to be closed for days, weeks or even more. In some spots, closures mean travelers have to drive all the way into the Willamette Valley to reach their destination.

So in response, state leaders decided it was time to rewrite Goal 18 so the highway can be repaired. Suggestions were put forward by developers and environmentalists. Public meetings were held. Reed said in the end it became very controversial.

“It got pretty far until it came to our commission for its final hearings, and then there was a big public outcry from many different sides,” Reed said.

In the end, the state decided not to touch Goal 18, so Highway 101 remains unreinforced.

Fast forward another 20 years, and those 25 areas of concern identified by the transportation department are now more like areas of alarm.

The transportation department has bolted rulers across some cracks to check for movement. They’re also digging wells to monitor the groundwater. A change in groundwater levels can predict or even cause a landslide.

The problem is so bad the state has decided to try to rewrite Goal 18 again. But this time, they’re limiting themselves to one small tweak.

“We’re going to put in a specific exception for public roads along the oceanfront that were developed as of January 1, 1977,” Reed said.

Geoff Crook, with the transportation department, said Highway 101 definitely needs work. “ODOT very much welcomes any change to the current Goal 18 exception process,” he said.

But rewriting Goal 18 worries environmental groups.

Development concerns

Briana Goodwin, with the Surfrider Foundation, said advocates understand Highway 101 needs to be safe. But they’re worried changing Goal 18 might allow more development and add to the scouring of beaches.

“We know that developers are waiting to see what happens with Highway 101,” Goodwin said. “And we do expect that if the law is loosened up at all or any loopholes are opened, that there will be a lot more applications for Goal 18 exceptions.”

Meanwhile, bits of Highway 101 continue crumbling into the sea. Husing, the Lincoln County planner, said if the road gave out underneath his feet, emergency rules would allow diggers on-site within hours to shove riprap into place and reopen the highway.

“ODOT would be in here on an emergency basis,” Husing said. “It’d make your head spin. They’ll come in here and they’ll fix that.”

He said local authorities think Highway 101 is just too important to fall into disrepair. They also think there are better ways of maintaining an important road than waiting for emergency repairs.

The Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development has put together an advisory committee to come up with draft rule language. The committee is made up of small businesses representatives, environmentalists, someone from the Department of Transportation, a Tillamook County public works representative, a Coos County commissioner and others.

Their language will be finalized by staff and legal counsel at the state. A seven-member commission, appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state Senate, will then have a series of public hearings this summer to talk about the proposed rule.

The commission is expected to vote on the issue in July.

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