



INSIDE

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Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Astoria has three wastewater treatment lagoons in Alderbrook.

For Astoria breweries, wastewater a byproduct of success

City working with businesses to preserve treatment lagoons

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

As craft breweries in Astoria have soared over the past decade, so has the impact on the city's wastewater treatment.

Three treatment lagoons on the east end of Alderbrook progressively treat wastewater before it is released into the Columbia River. Built in the 1970s, the lagoons were not designed to treat industrial waste, which is higher strength and usually has dramatically higher concentration of solids than residential or other commercial waste.

When breweries, cideries and distilleries began cropping up, the potential impact of large quantities of wastewater on the treatment system was not known. Over time, as production increased at Fort George Brewery and Buoy Beer Co. — the city's largest breweries — the concentration of suspended solids from the hops, barley and yeast used in the brewing process started to strain the system.

By 2019, the city estimated the lagoons received enough solids for 23,000 people, more than double the city's population.

The city was facing costly upgrades to increase capacity and significant

THE PROGRAM REQUIRES ALL EXISTING AND NEW FERMENTATION CLUSTER BUSINESSES TO HAVE INDUSTRIAL DISCHARGE PERMITS, WHICH SET THE LIMITS. IT WILL ALSO INCLUDE A NEW RATE STRUCTURE THAT WILL CLASSIFY DIFFERENT USERS BASED ON CONCENTRATION OF WASTEWATER.

environmental fines if treated wastewater pumped into the river was not clean enough for federal standards.

The impact caught the city and the two breweries by surprise.

"Back when we didn't know what it was doing, or the volumes were smaller — it was just kind of creeping up on us — we could look at it and say, 'Wow, this is scary,' or, 'Hey, our limits are getting up there,'" said Jeff Harrington, the city's public works director. "But now we're bumping

right up against the edge."

The city began working with the two breweries, the state and others to develop solutions, including an industrial pretreatment program, which limits the amount of industrial waste that can enter the treatment lagoons.

The program requires all existing and new fermentation cluster businesses to have industrial discharge permits, which set the limits. It will also include a new rate structure that will classify different users based on concentration of wastewater.

The city is moving forward with another project to increase capacity, which is expected to be complete by 2025. Until then, the remaining capacity has been dedicated to existing businesses. New breweries will be required to treat wastewater to the level of a residential user before it enters the lagoons.

The City Council is expected to approve an ordinance in the coming weeks that will formalize the program and set a framework. Separate resolutions will detail specific aspects, including the limits and rate structure.

The first public hearing on the ordinance will be held Monday night.

Some business leaders and brewery owners feel the new regulations and wastewater fees could make further expansion in Astoria too costly, or make it too expensive for new ventures to enter the market. There are also concerns that businesses will be left to compete for capacity.

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County extends vacation rental moratorium

Commissioners agree on new operating standards

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners on Wednesday night extended, for the second time, a moratorium on new vacation rental permits.

Last August, the board approved a moratorium to give the county time to figure out where and how to regulate short-term rentals, which in recent years have multiplied in unincorporated areas from Clatsop Plains to Cove Beach, Knappa to Jewell. An extension was approved in December.

The board's decision to extend the freeze by another 120 days — ending on Aug. 26 — came as the last extension was scheduled to end.

The board can lift the moratorium sooner if it resolves the most controversial issue: In which zones should vacation rentals be a recognized use?

At Wednesday's meeting, county commissioners tackled two pieces of the vacation rental issue.

They approved revisions to the operating standards for short-term rentals in the county code.

The standards address nuisances such as noise, litter and parking. Owners must post a good-neighbor flyer that spells out rules around campfires, speed limits, quiet hours, trespassing and other conduct. They must also display information about power outages and the possibility of disasters such as wildfires, tsunamis and landslides. The standards outlaw permit transfers; new owners must apply for new permits and have units reinspected.

If complaints arise, property agents or representatives must contact renters within 20 minutes. They must respond in person within an hour for serious complaints — such as a failing septic system or too many occupants on the grounds — and within 24 hours for milder ones, according to the county staff report.

People who make knowingly false or unsubstantiated complaints will face a fine, the staff report says.

As a housekeeping matter, commissioners also voted to move the operating standards for Arch Cape — the only zone where vacation rentals are an explicitly recognized use — from the Land and Water Development and Use Code to the county code, where the other operating standards live.

"It appears that we are eating this elephant one bite at a time," Commissioner Lianne Thompson said.

She noted on Wednesday that she heard more agreement on the issue among members of the public who spoke than in previous meetings. "I think our approach, while time-consuming, is the most effective for maintaining good neighbors and good neighborhood relationships," Thompson said.

Property owners have long rented their homes in the county's unincorporated areas, but the advent of online platforms such as Airbnb and Vrbo has streamlined the activity.

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'K-So' is now 9 years old.

Adventure through the eyes of a dog

National parks worker authors children's book

By ABBEY McDONALD
The Astorian

When Laura Taylor's son started speech therapy, his therapist noticed that he responded well to rhymes and repetition. So Taylor started telling him stories.

She drew from her experience

working for the National Park Service and began to make up poems about their dog "K-So's" adventures across America. In the tales, the dog traversed iconic forests and befriended bears.

"When I would make up stories about K-So, he would just laugh and laugh and would then fill in some of the blanks," Taylor said. Since then, his speaking has improved greatly.

The exercise left her with over a dozen half-written poems and sto-

ries, which she thought might make a fun book to keep for her two children, ages 3 and 1. Her husband, Robert, encouraged her to work with an illustrator and publish it.

Taylor independently published "K-So Visits the National Parks," in January. It includes her poems alongside vibrant illustrations by Catarina Neto of K-So exploring lava flows and waterfalls at famous sites.

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'THE POSITIVE RESPONSE AND FEEDBACK HAS JUST BEEN REALLY NICE. A LOT OF MY FRIENDS HAVE LITTLE KIDS WHO ARE JUST IN THE PERFECT AGE RANGE FOR THE BOOK. SO THEY HAVE JUST LOVED IT. EVERY LITTLE KID LOVES DOGS AND PARKS AND NATURE.'

Laura Taylor



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Laura Taylor stands for a portrait holding her book in Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.



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