

Council from 1A

Dunes City councilors and residents have debated the contentious septic ordinance issue for more than 10 years. Ordinance No. 228, the most recent septic ordinance proposed, is intended to repeal and replace Ordinance No. 203 adopted by the council in 2010.

Because Dunes City does not have a sewer system and all residents and businesses rely on septic systems for wastewater disposal, concerns have arisen over the years that some septic systems have not been properly maintained. This concern is magnified because city residents rely on water from Woahink and Siltcoos lakes for drinking water. Improperly maintained septic systems could jeopardize the quality and safety of that water.

The primary concern is how often residential septic tanks should be inspected and whether or not it be mandatory.

Jacob Callister from the Lane Council of Governments explained the county's findings on distinctions between Ordinance No. 203 and Ordinance No. 228.

Ordinance 203 requires residential septic tank inspections at least every five years and annually for commercial properties. Several part-time residents argued that they are only in the property a few months out of the year and should not be subject to the five-year inspection rule.

According to Callister, in November, the Dunes City Planning Commission voted 2 to 1 to recommend the city council take no action on Ordinance No. 228.

Callister pointed out several differences between the cur-

rent and proposed ordinances. He read, "Ordinance No. 228 requires inspection by a 'qualified' inspector based upon the most current Oregon State University Extension service septic tank maintenance rules or other standards adopted by the city council."

Ordinance No. 203 only requires an inspector to have a city license.

He added, "The state does not require any maintenance programs for septic tank systems and only gets involved when they fail. The state is only involved in the birth and death of septic systems."

Callister said state regulations require any septic ordinance adopted by the city must be an improvement over what the state requires. He said Ordinance No. 228 meets that requirement.

Councilor Tom Mallen said, "I was a state of Oregon plumbing inspector. For many years I built and designed septic systems. This community is not wealthy and our budget is tight. My recommendation is that we scrap the whole thing. We don't know what we are doing, we don't have the staff and Lane County does. My recommendation is we follow their rules."

Several Dunes City residents spoke in favor of and in opposition to the proposed new ordinance.

After John Stead requested a two-week extension on public input, Mills referenced a letter from Sean Malone, attorney for the Oregon Coast Alliance, also requesting a two-week extension. The council then voted to extend the deadline until April 28.

Anyone interested in making a written comment regarding Ordinance No. 228 may submit it to Dunes City Hall at 82877 Spruce St., Dunes City, by 4 p.m. April 28.

Estuary from 1A

After pulling up the scotch broom, the class — clad in rubber boots and waders — divided into four separate groups to study various elements of the Siuslaw River estuary during last Monday's -0.8 foot low tide.

Volunteer Brian Hudson showed students how to dig for bay clams while conducting a survey to estimate the number of clams in the estuary.

"We are doing a quick survey to count the number of clams per square yard," Hudson explained. "Then we will multiply that number by the number of square yards in an acre and multiply that by 100 acres, the size of the Siuslaw estuary."

By this method, Hudson estimates the clam population of the estuary to be more than 5 million. Most are soft shell and purple varnish clams. Both are invasive species, according to Hudson.

"The soft shell clams came in the 1800s on the lumber boats," Hudson said. "The purple varnish clams are more recent. In the last few years they have come in from Asia. They are in most of the Oregon bays now."

The positive news is that both species are good eating. Another group learned how

to dig for sand shrimp from volunteer Steve Hatler.

"I'm showing the kids how to harvest sand shrimp so they can use them to go fishing. They make great fishing bait," Hatler said. "We are also showing them the difference between a male and a female. We finally got a female that has some eggs."

Hatler also showed students the variety of marine life living on the pilings exposed by the minus tide.

Abigail DeYoung from the U.S. Forest Service, assisted by volunteer David Mills, helped students explore the wrack line, the debris left by the tide at the high water mark.

Marine engineer Jack Akin from EMC Engineers in Grants Pass told students about the erosion problems facing the east end of the port property and possible solutions.

The all-day field trip concluded with the class taking the bus out Highway 126 to learn about the Waite Ranch Tidal Wetland Restoration project, which is reconvertng the 211-acre property back to wetlands after being used as cattle grazing for many years.

The grants from the two organizations provide enough money to pay for about 50 similar field trips for Siuslaw, Mapleton and Reedsport school districts.

Search from 1A

was reportedly under the influence of drugs and alcohol when he swam 40 yards from shore and never returned.

Responders arrived soon after the caller advised dispatchers that he could no longer see O'Hollaren in the water.

The sheriff's office, Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue, Florence Police Department and the U.S. Coast Guard responded and began the search.

According to Chief Boatswain's Mate (BMC) Ben Snider, Coast Guard Station Siuslaw River provided two 47-foot motor lifeboats for the search. Fifteen people responded, including the on-duty crews and additional personnel.

The search continued throughout the night using helicopters from Sector North Bend.

"The visibility aspect is a huge factor," Snider said. "We were looking at the surf line, an area that is difficult to see during day time."

The search at sea factored in winds, currents and tidal conditions to define a search area that eventually covered 100 miles.

"As time continued, we

expanded our search to include the set and drift," Snider said.

In total, Station Siuslaw River's two motor lifeboat crews, an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew from Air Station North Bend, a Dolphin aircrew from Air Facility Newport and an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew from Coast Guard Air Station Astoria all responded.

Lane County Search and Rescue and Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue searched the beach areas north and south of the Siuslaw River jetties. The fire department used ATVs.

As the search continued, no sign of O'Hollaren appeared.

Sector North Bend called off the search at 1:40 p.m. on Saturday, April 16.

"We extend our condolences to the man's family as the decision to suspend a search is never easy," said Lt. Anna Steel, search and rescue mission coordinator for the case. "We also hope to prevent future tragedies by reminding the public that drinking impairs your judgement, sense of distance and direction. As the weather warms up, we urge beachgoers and boaters alike to stay sober and stay alive."

As of Tuesday, O'Hollaren still had not been found.

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