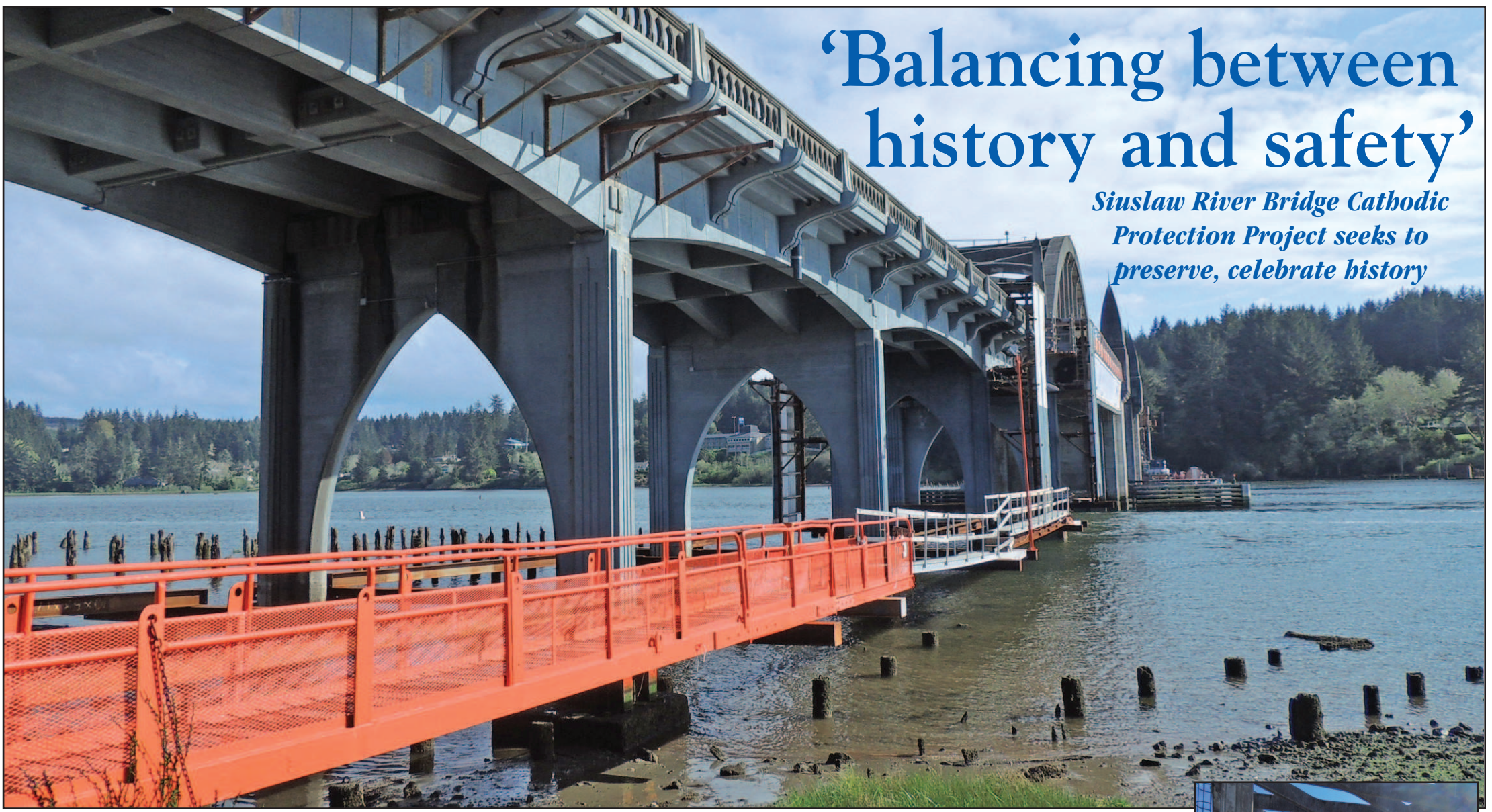


Siuslaw News Coast Life

SENIOR NEWS CALENDAR

INSIDE — 6B



‘Balancing between history and safety’

Siuslaw River Bridge Cathodic Protection Project seeks to preserve, celebrate history

PHOTOS BY CHANTELE MEYER/SIUSLAW NEWS

Oregon Department of Transportation’s (ODOT) contractors Hamilton Construction Co. and Great Western are moving main construction and equipment to the south end of the Siuslaw River Bridge. Meanwhile, containment structures (right) are being placed at the north end of the bridge for the continuing replacement of bridge railing.

The iconic Siuslaw River Bridge has reigned over Florence since its completion in 1936. Now, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) is overseeing improvements to increase the integrity and longevity of the bridge. The main components of the Cathodic Protection Project, scheduled to be completed in March 2019, are repairing damaged concrete and replacing bridge railings. Additional features include seismic improvements and safer and more accessible sidewalks.

The Siuslaw River Bridge is one of five major bridges constructed along the Oregon Coast Highway (Highway 101) during Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidency. Engineer Conde B. McCullough created a unique Art Deco design for each of the bridges, emphasizing symmetrical patterns, geometric forms, elegant arches and sunburst motifs.

“I just love our bridge,” said ODOT Public Information Officer Angela Beers Seydel. “It’s beautiful. I was so sad when they took down the Alsea Bay Bridge. That’s why we’re doing this. We can’t lose another one.”

Due to corrosion, ODOT demolished the original Alsea Bay Bridge in Waldport in 1991 and replaced it with a more modern, durable span.

“There’s pain in keeping the bridge updated, but it’s something to keep investing in. There’s a reason these bridges are iconic,” Beers Seydel said.

ODOT awarded Hamilton Construction Co. the primary bid for the Siuslaw River Bridge project. The secondary contractor is Great Western, who specializes in the zinc application process of cathodic protection. The process involves sandblasting and cleaning concrete before coating surfaces with zinc.

According to ODOT, installing a zinc surface coating on coastal bridges protects the reinforcing steel

within the concrete from corrosion.

The grey zinc coating runs from the tideline up the bridge supports.

Contractors work in two groups — one group working on the cathodic protection, and one group removing and replacing bridge railing.

“We have about 15 people out here working every day,” said ODOT Senior Inspector Nate Neal.

Crews are required to wear hardhats, safety harnesses, life vests and other safety features as they work in the construction zones.

Neal himself is on hand to check progress and inspect elements at various points in the project.

“We haven’t had any big surprises,” he said.

Recently, the crews moved most of their equipment — including noisy generators — out of Old Town Florence and across Siuslaw River to the south end of the bridge.

“The cathodic protection is moving south, and the replacement of the bridge rail is swapping positions,” Neal said.

He added that the sound complaints had dropped off now that the noisiest equipment was across the river.

Next, crews will begin removing the walking bridge that allowed workers to reach the stationary barge parked under the north span. That means the small parking lot under the bridge will be open by May, just in time for the 110th annual Rhododendron Festival in Florence, when up to 15,000 people attend the weeklong festivities.

“We work with the increased traf-



From left, ODOT Public Information Officer Angela Beers Seydel, Project Coordinator Shane Prohaska and Senior Inspector Nathan Neal tour the Siuslaw River Bridge Cathodic Protection Project last week. “It’s what I love about my job — days like this,” Beers Seydel said.

fic of Rhody Days. We shouldn’t be as much of a pain with our equipment this year,” Neal said.

He said work would mostly be done at night from May 17 to 21, and that crews would continue to monitor traffic on Highway 101.

“We were successful with that last year,” Neal said. “In fact, I was able to come out and spend the Rhody Days weekend out here.”

Beers Seydel said, “(Being ready for Rhody Days) was a promise we made to the governor, as well, when she was here.”

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown visited Florence March 14 to hear about the Siuslaw River Bridge Cathodic Protection Project, ODOT’s partnership with the City of Florence on the ReVision Florence Project and the area’s economic development and to hold a community forum.

As the crews working on the bridge rail come closer to Old Town, people will be able to see the slight differences between the old railing and the new, safer railing. ODOT designers created the new rails based

on the shape of the old.

“Our designer did a great job creating forms that work really well. The design matches really close,” Neal said. “Something you will notice as you walk past is the height difference.”

Besides raising the height to be elbow-high on an adult, each decorative opening on the new rail features a metal arch to prevent things from falling through.

“That’s what this project is about — balancing between history and safety,” Neal said.

As for the color difference, Neal advised waiting a for years for the moss to grow.

“It’s noticeable now, but once we have all new rail here, no one will know. Give it a few years,” he said.

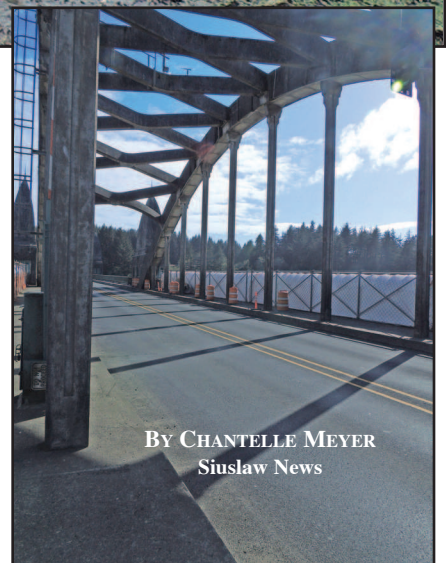
Now that the construction barge is across the river, crews often spend their entire days onsite. With the weather slowly warming, this will become easier on the crew.

“The cold weather caused a little bit of issues with the concrete and rail work, but the containment has to be environmentally controlled for the zinc application,” Neal said.

Inside the containment structures, the temperature has to remain above 65 degrees, and can get as high as 90 degrees. A filtration system attached to the structure filters out dust and sand.

Wind can also be an issue, especially when crews are moving structures or using the barge and crane.

“The things they are moving are pretty big sails,” Neal said. “If crews pick up those in 30 miles per hour winds, things could get away from them.”



By CHANTELE MEYER
Siuslaw News

“That’s the delight about the coast, however. You have a rainy day and turn around and it will be sunny.”

During April, crews will be working between 4 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, with occasional 2 a.m. starts. They will continue sandblasting on the south end of the bridge, with some touch up work on the north end. Rail replacement will begin to move north.

Beers Seydel said people driving on Highway 101 should expect some lane closures during the day for bridge rail replacement and other work. Delays may be up to 20 minutes, but will normally be five minutes or less.

When ODOT began the bid process in 2014, a letter sent out to the community said, “Overall, the bridge preservation project is both for historic preservation and safety.”

Siuslaw Pioneer Museum, 278 Maple St. in Florence, has more information on the history of the Siuslaw River Bridge, including artifacts removed during ODOT’s 2010 upgrade of the mechanical and electrical elements of the drawbridge. For more information, contact the museum at 541-997-7884 and www.siuslawpioneermuseum.com.

For more information on ODOT’s Siuslaw River Bridge Cathodic Protection Project, visit www.Siuslawbridge.com.

NATURAL PERSPECTIVE — Gems of springtime



By EMILY J. UHRIG, PhD
Special to the Siuslaw News

Spring has arrived on the coast and so have some long-distance visitors: rufous hummingbirds. These tiny birds, weighing little more than a penny, have made an impressive journey of more than 3,500 miles from wintering sites in Mexico.

The name “rufous” refers to their rust-colored feathers which, in males, are especially vivid and accompanied by a fiery orange throat.

Arriving in our yards, these little gems join the larger, green Anna’s hummingbird, which overwinters in Oregon. Despite their small stature, rufous hummingbirds are very territori-

al and often described by field guides as pugnacious and feisty.

They may even chase larger hummingbirds away from feeders, but who can blame them? We’re all a little grumpy after a long-haul journey and they’ve done it powered only by flower nectar.

In addition to being accomplished travelers, rufous hummingbirds are notable for their memory and learning abilities associated with locating food sources. As they zoom around our yards, they may appear to be randomly flitting between flowers or feeders, but the birds are actually making decisions

on where to find nectar.

For instance, they can remember which flowers have been emptied and avoid visiting them until the nectar has had time to replenish. Such efficiency in feeding is important for sustaining an animal whose resting heart rate can be around 500 beats per minute.

While we often associate hummingbirds with red flowers, and most backyard feeders are red, biologists have shown that the birds rely more on flower location rather than color when choosing where to feed.

Experiments using artificial flowers show that rufous hummingbirds return

to a location where they were previously successful in finding nectar even if the color of flower in that location has changed.

This location-based memory appears to be based on recognition of nearby landmarks similar to how you could still find your favorite coffee shop even if it had been painted a different color since your last visit.

We are lucky to host such amazing birds in our own backyards, and their brightness is a very welcome sight at the end of a gray Oregon winter.

So get your feeders out and enjoy these little springtime gems.