



New signs on Highway 101 mark the reduced speed zone around ODOT's Siuslaw River Bridge construction projects.

JARED ANDERSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

Bridge from 1A

For the construction zone itself, ODOT is requiring workers to escort pedestrians around any blocked sections of the sidewalk which are identified as open for pedestrians. This will be particularly useful when construction must be done on portions of the sidewalk, which can block the access path of pedestrians. To help with

this, ODOT has brought in a third flagger to help pedestrians traverse the obstructions.

Finally, any debris or material created by the construction is required to be cleaned up on the open sidewalk. Tripping hazards are prohibited.

As to why these changes are only now being implemented, Beers Seydel stated that it can be difficult to foresee problems before they occur.

"We are always looking for ways to improve, and it helps to have people let us know when they see issues and have concerns," she said. "We try our best to be proactive in our safety measures on each project, but unfortunately needs for specific situations may not be readily apparent until we're in the midst of construction. Safety needs can and do change as projects continue."

Because of the fluidity of these situations, Beers Seydel recommended that the public

stay involved in safety issues regarding ODOT projects.

"We look forward to hearing what people have to say about the improvements and to their sharing any further needs that may come up," she said.

ODOT recommends that if other concerns about the long-term safety of the bridge come to light, the public can contact the Lane Area Commission on Transportation at lanecounty.org.

Founder from 1A

Additionally, Estes believes that everyone can bring something to the table when working in groups. She points to the Quaker's use of this idea — which the Quakers refer to as seeking unity or "gathering the sense" of a meeting — for the past 300 years as the model used by members of Alpha Farm.

Estes and a small group of friends moved to Oregon and purchased Alpha Farms in 1972. The decision to locate here was a practical one, based on a simple desire to live a less-structured and less-stressful life with a closer association with the land, and, hopefully, a healthier life as a result.

"We were either going to move to Vermont or Oregon. Then we realized the growing season in Vermont is short. It is beautiful there but we needed a longer growing season to be a successful and productive farm," Estes said. "We wanted to grow most of our own food and Oregon is warmer and has a longer growing season so we settled here."

Estes is the only surviving member of the first group that settled on the 280 acres of Alpha Farm. The land was bought and owned collectively and the consensus process was the manner in which the group arrived at decisions.

Estes believes the days of collective ownership and putting the needs of the group before the needs of the individual may have passed.

"There have been a lot of changes over the years. It's not just at Alpha; it's in our society and the people who come to Alpha. We've become a much more 'I' centered or 'me' centered society," she said. "Now, there are large groups of people that are not that way. But in general, over at least the last 10 or 15 years, we've moved to a place where money and how much you have has become much more prevalent, particularly among the young people."

As Estes approaches her 90th birthday, her eyes still sparkle when she speaks of the dream that inspired the formation of Alpha Farm. But there is sadness in her voice when she looks to the future of the community to which she has given her spirit and resources over the decades.

One example of these shifts in priorities that Estes points to is related to the closing of Alpha Bits, the small café run by members of the farm.

The café had coffee and snacks and operated for years until recently closing its doors, primarily due to a lack of interest by newer community members.

"Why did we close Alpha Bits? Because we could not attract people who wanted to work as service. Not for money, not for wages, but to serve people and take care of them as they passed through. And that was the original idea, that it would be an outreach place, to give people a small space to relax and renew."

However, developments occurring at Alpha farms may be a precursor to beneficial changes in society, Estes believes.

"One really positive thing we've been working for a long time on has happened. We have entered into a conservation easement agreement with the government. This agreement says that we will not log our property and the land and the forest will remain as it is," she said.

The agreement is with the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Safeguarding the forest was one of the reasons the original members bought the Deadwood property and to have finally protected 180 acres of the land is a testament to Estes' tenacity and dedication.

"There are three other property owners nearby that have signed conservation easements. Eventually we hope there will be a whole protected corridor for wildlife, which was one of our original goals," she said.

Estes is also encouraged by the response of students speaking out and becoming involved in national conversations.

"I watch these kids out of Florida and I think, 'Yes! You got it!' These kids are amazing, they are smart and articulate and they are so impressive and that's what I am holding onto," Estes said. "I also hold onto the hope that there will be a recognition that we are all in this together. We need to communicate respectfully and with appreciation for other points of view and other opinions, and that's what I hope will happen before I'm gone."

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