

**SignalViewpoints**

# Encampments, trash pile up at Mill Ponds

**SEEN FROM SEASIDE**

R.J. MARX



The entrance to Mill Ponds is only a few feet from U.S. Highway 101 in south Seaside, but a few steps in, the sidewalk ends and low reeds bristle along the water.

Wide paths provide entry into a dark and deeply wooded world. Blinding sun suddenly blazes through the gaps between leaves before you return to the trail. You would only expect night birds, the running of fish, the slap of a beaver's tail.

As the path grows deeper, bicycle tires, old shoes and twisted rags dot the paths. A dump site holds an old crate, ripped plastic, headless dolls. Suddenly you are stepping into damp pillows, fractured crates, hypodermic needles and crusty coffee cans.

In February, 32 volunteers inspired by Seaside's Jesse Anderson's cleanup efforts collected tires, bikes, buckets and needles. The Public Works Department hauled 50 yards — about 26 tons of garbage — using the city dump truck, two dump boxes, a backhoe and mini-excavator.

That was February and the next month the coronavirus pandemic paused their efforts. In the time since trash at Mill Ponds and other natural areas throughout Seaside have increased.

Seaside Community Cleanup founders Brady Chandler and Anderson hope to bring attention back to cleaning up. I took a tour of the area with Chandler on Saturday and talked about his cleanup efforts and homelessness in the area.

**Q:** How many encampments are here?  
**Chandler:** I can think of at least five. There are a lot of abandoned sites. Maybe because of the weather. Maybe because certain people got busted, or just broke up camp. Maybe because I was stomping around through here. Maybe they moved out or because of our interaction with them.

**Q:** What kind of interaction?  
**Chandler:** I want them to clean up their trash. I get a whole roll of garbage bags from The Home Depot or Costco. We give them out to whoever wants them. Thirty bags in a roll. It's to whoever wants them.

**Q:** You buy them with your own money?  
**Chandler:** My own money.

**Q:** Do people use the bags?  
**Chandler:** Some do. We say, we're not trying to be the bad guy here. We're not trying to force you out. We just want you to keep your site clean.

**Q:** Do the police come out here?  
**Chandler:** I keep calling the police and reporting this to them. The police know my name now. They show up and take pictures and document it. They issue fines. The fines never get resolved. The fine is \$500 and it costs us thousands. Police only come when people report stolen goods.

The fire department only comes when there's big black smoke and someone complains from the area. Usually then it's a big fire and they cite them for nuisance burning.

(A transient) used to have a camp that they scraped out in February. Now he's back over there (pointing). We know for a fact that he makes litter everywhere he goes.

I filed a complaint with the police and the police say to me, where do you want us to put him? "We can't make him move. We can't put them anywhere. We can't put him in jail for littering."

The issue is unless there is some place designated for them to stay, they can't officially move them. They don't have an area that is developed enough so that they could sustain people with bathrooms, garbage receptacles, showers.

**Q:** Why would someone choose this lifestyle over an indoor shelter?  
**Chandler:** People don't want to live in a shelter because they want the freedom: "I'm living out here and not having any rules," or anything, honestly.

**Q:** Do other areas in Seaside face the same issues?  
**Chandler:** I grew up in the woods by the Cove riding my bicycle. Now there are tents set up and people threatening you with axes. A woman actually pulled a machete on me.

**Q:** What should the city do?  
**Chandler:** They (transients) shouldn't be here. They should have an area that's designated for them.



Trash collects at a park site.



Bike tires, tarps and other material at an encampment.



Inside of a recently abandoned tent.



Elements of outdoor living. "This is one of the cleaner sites," volunteer Brady Chandler of Seaside Community Cleanup said.



"They float on a boat to get out here," Brady Chandler said of this encampment.



Needle found on the ground at Mill Ponds.



Brady Chandler leads a tour through the Mill Ponds.

**PUBLIC MEETINGS**

Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.

**MONDAY, DEC. 14**

**Seaside City Council,** 7 p.m., 989 Broadway, <http://www.cityofseaside.us>.

**TUESDAY, DEC. 15**

**United Health District of Clatsop County,** 8 a.m., Seaside Civic and Convention Center, 415 First Ave.

**Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board**

**of Directors,** 5:15 p.m., 1225 Avenue A.

**Seaside School District,** 6 p.m., [www.seaside.k12.or.us/meetings](http://www.seaside.k12.or.us/meetings).

**Seaside Planning Commission,** 6 p.m., work session,

City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**WEDNESDAY, DEC. 16**

**Seaside Tourism Advisory Committee,** 3 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**THURSDAY, DEC. 17**

**Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission,** 3 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District,** 7 p.m., webinar on Broadway

Middle School purchase, [sunsetempire.com](http://sunsetempire.com).

**TUESDAY, DEC. 29**

**Gearhart City Council,** 6 p.m., work session, 670 Pacific Way.



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