



# Clatsop Tidings

*A monthly review of County business*

*"Neighbor to neighbor, serving Clatsop County with integrity, honesty and respect"*

April 2010

## Warren Slough railroad repair gets Corps' okay

After a lengthy delay, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has given the green light for repair work to the washed-out railroad line at Warren Slough north of Knappa, Clatsop County officials learned Wednesday.

The county, along with Portland & Western Railroad, the Oregon Department of Transportation, local landowners and other parties, has been attempting to untangle a snarl of regulatory and ownership issues surrounding the site since the grade was breached in a storm in November 2006.

The damage washed out a section of the Portland-to-Astoria rail line and exposed several acres of adjacent pastureland to daily flooding during high tides. That high water in turn has jeopardized the nearby Ziak-Gnat Creek county road.

The Corps notified Portland & Western Railroad by letter March 17 that it is issuing a permit authorizing the repair work. Portland & Western leases the rail line from the ODOT Rail Division, which owns the railroad grade itself – the two

entities will share the cost of the repair project. Representatives of the company and the state agency met that same day to finalize plans for the work, which may begin within the next two weeks.

The work will include repair of the grade and rail line, and the installation of a 72-inch-wide culvert and tidegate to better control water flow into the adjacent pastureland. Two other existing pipe/culverts with tidegates located near the wash-out site will also be repaired.

The goal of the culvert/tidegate work will be to return the area to the same amount of tidal water flow that existing before the wash-out. This allowed some flooding of the pastureland in the winter and lesser amounts of water in drier months, but protected adjacent roads.

The rail line was first washed out at Warren Slough during a winter storm in December 2005. The resulting flooding also destroyed the bridge over Ziak-Gnat Creek Road, which lies approximately a quarter-mile south of the rail line. Because the wash-out of the bridge cut off



The railroad grade at Warren Slough was washed out in November 2006.

access to several nearby residences, the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners declared an emergency and authorized the county Road Department to launch immediate repairs to the railroad grade to prevent further flooding.

Because the 2006 event, which took out a section of railroad grade immediately east of the 2005 wash-out site, did

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## Fairgrounds tax levy appears on May ballot

Ballot Measure 4-148, appearing on the May 18, 2010 primary election ballot, asks voters to approve a five-year tax levy for the Clatsop County Fairgrounds.

### What is Ballot Measure 4-148?

Ballot Measure 4-148 is a five-year local option tax request. It would allow Clatsop County to levy a property tax of 7 cents per \$1,000 assessed property value each year for five years, beginning in fiscal year 2011-12, for the operation and maintenance of the Clatsop County Fairgrounds and the annual County Fair.

The measure would raise an estimated \$365,220 its first year. The amount would rise to an estimated \$411,000 the fifth year.

For the owner of a \$200,000 home, the annual cost of the levy would be \$14.

The new levy would replace an existing five-year levy, approved by voters in 2006, that is set to expire next year. That levy charges 9 cents per \$1,000.

### How would the money be used?

The revenue would pay for a variety of

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### Upcoming County Meetings

**Planning Commission**  
Tuesday, April 13, 10 a.m.  
Judge Boyington Building

**Board of Commissioners**  
Wednesday, April 14, 9 a.m.  
Judge Boyington Building

**Board of Commissioners**  
Wednesday, April 28, 6 p.m.  
Judge Boyington Building

*Times subject to change*

# Fairgrounds hosts Open House April 28 for questions from public

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maintenance and improvement projects at the fairgrounds. They include improvements to the parking facilities, converting a barn into usable event space, and upgrades to the concert stage. The fairgrounds staff is also working with the Energy Trust of Oregon on plans to install energy-efficient lighting fixtures. The funding would also be used for marketing to increase use of the facilities.

The 2006 levy has funded the installation of a cover on the outdoor riding arena, upgrades to the sound and electrical systems, roof repairs, landscaping projects and replacement of tidegates.

## **Why does the fairgrounds need a tax levy?**

Rental fees and funding from the Oregon Lottery cover the fairgrounds' annual

operating costs, which include the facilities' staff and utilities, but do not provide adequate funding for needed maintenance and improvements. Clatsop County paid off the voter-approved bond that funded the fairgrounds' development in 1994 and subsidized the facilities' operations for several years, but no longer provides funding.

In 2004, after a number of years of revenue shortfalls, the Fair Board assembled a blue ribbon committee to study the fairgrounds' operations and funding issues, and commissioned a marketing study of the facilities as well. As a result the board decided to seek voter approval for a five-year tax levy.

## **Who uses the fairgrounds?**

The fairgrounds is located on 109 acres three miles south of Astoria, and includes a 40,000-square-foot indoor arena,

15,000-square-foot exhibit hall, horse barns for 100 animals and other facilities.

Along with the annual Clatsop County Fair, the fairgrounds also hosts major yearly events like the Scandinavian Festival and the Crab, Seafood and Wine Festival, as well as concerts, rodeos, car shows and RV rallies. The facilities also host 4-H and FFA events, private affairs such as weddings and banquets and special events like the annual Christmas Gift Basket program. Many of the users, including 4-H and the Christmas Basket program, are given use of the facilities at reduced or no cost.

## **How can I find out more?**

The fairgrounds will host an open house Wednesday, April 28 from 6 to 8 p.m. where citizens can meet staff and Fair Board members to discuss the levy and other issues.

## *County picks new treatment provider*

The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners voted March 24 to approve a contract to transfer local addiction treatment services to Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare.

County officials said the switch should involve no disruption in services for clients of the program's alcohol and drug treatment and prevention programs.

"Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare has been a dependable provider of services to citizens in need locally for many years, and we're confident they will bring the same care and professionalism to this new mission," Clatsop County Manager Duane Cole said.

Clatsop Behavioral is currently the provider of contracted mental health services for Clatsop County. The agency will take over the treatment program from LifeWorks Northwest, which informed the county last month it was ending its services on the North Coast effective June 30.

"We're all very excited" about the transition, Clatsop Behavioral Director Nancy Winters said.

Treatment services are provided by Clatsop County through several separate contracts together worth up to \$352,000 a year. They include three separate treatment and prevention contracts totaling \$266,700 in state pass-through dollars, plus \$85,000 in state funding for services to the Community Corrections and Juvenile departments.

The state funding pays for 40 treatment slots with LifeWorks, which serves roughly 250 clients in Clatsop County in various programs, including outpatient treatment and youth and family prevention services. Most clients are referred to the programs by Drug Court, from driving under the influence cases, and the Community Corrections and Juvenile departments, as well as schools and the state Department of Human Services.

Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, founded in 1963, currently provides a variety of mental health services to approximately 1,000 clients a year in Clatsop County. Services include group and family counseling, case management, crisis response and support groups.

## Permit: Ownership, fish delay approval

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not pose as great an immediate threat to the Ziak-Gnat Creek Road, the county did not declare an emergency. But efforts to obtain the necessary permit from the Corps of Engineers for the repair work became bogged down by questions over the ownership of the grade, including the discovery of a long-dormant diking district that owned a levee near the railroad grade. The presence of young salmon in the flooded fields also complicated matters.

The Corps has jurisdiction over all in-water work in the Columbia River.

While it has no authority over the railroad line or grade, Clatsop County took the lead in coordinating the permitting process in make sure nearby county assets like Ziak-Gnat Creek Road are protected, said Ed Wegner, Transportation and Development Services Director. During very high tides, the inflowing water often rises up to the edge of the roadway.