

## **Clatsop County Press Release**

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No one ever does anything about the weather, the saying goes, but local officials are trying to do something about one chronic weather-related headache.

Clatsop County, local cities, the Port of Astoria and the state highway department have partnered to find a solution to the flooding that hampers traffic on U.S. Highway 101 at Beerman Creek south of Seaside.

The group plans to commission a study of the problem, which occurs nearly every year when heavy rains coupled with high tides send water flowing over the banks of the nearby Necanicum River and onto the roadway, causing traffic restrictions and even closures.

Hydrology specialists were interviewed last month, and the group will recommend a name to the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, which is tentatively scheduled to approve a contract with the selected consultant on Feb. 24.

All of the participating entities have pledged to contribute toward the cost of the study. The county itself has earmarked \$15,000.

More than a dozen high-water notices have been issued in the past five years and a number of closures – some for “low-profile” vehicles and, on two occasions, to all traffic – have been imposed, leaving motorists stuck with no convenient detours available.

The flooding has been an irritant and worse for North Coast residents, business owners and visitors for years. In 2008 local cities urged Gov. Ted Kulongoski to support a solution.

While Highway 101 is under the state’s jurisdiction, Clatsop County has joined in the effort for a solution because of the route’s critical importance to citizens and businesses, and the real hardships that the yearly restrictions and closures cause the whole county.

“ODOT is only responsible for the right-of-way, but the flooding also occurs on the private property next to the highway – those are county residents,” County Manager Duane Cole said. “The county felt it was necessary to provide leadership to resolve the flooding.”

The study area will stretch from the Highway 26 intersection to Avenue U in Seaside, and include river flow measurements, computer modeling and analysis of existing data, according to Ed Wegner, director of the county Transportation and Development Services Department, which helped coordinate the consultant interviews. The study, expected to be completed in August or September, isn’t intended to design a detailed project but instead to set out a series of alternative solutions, he said.

The seemingly obvious solution – simply raising the level of the roadway – won’t necessarily work, Wegner said. The highway itself already acts as a kind of dike, restricting the flow of water, and any solution may require some sort of water control measures away from the roadway.

The project is modeled on a similar study conducted two years ago in Tillamook County that examined possible fixes for the frequent flooding problems at the Wilson and Trask rivers, Wegner said.

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