

# CASCADIA

*An Independent Newspaper for the Pacific Northwest*

# TIMES

## TREASURES OF THE OREGON SHORE

**CAN OREGONIANS PROTECT  
THIS RICH COASTAL LEGACY?**

## TREASURES OF THE OREGON SHORE

IS THIS WHAT TOM MCCALL HAD IN MIND? . . . . . 3	OREGON'S MOST POLLUTED BEACHES . . . . . 14
TREASURES OF THE OREGON SHORE . . . . . 4	RETURN OF THE NATIVE . . . . . 16
WHERE'D THEY PUT THE OCEAN? . . . . . 7	THE POLITICS OF SALMON GET PERSONAL IN SALEM . . . . 20
WHEN A DAY AT THE BEACH MEANS A TRIP TO THE DOCTOR . 8	PROTECTING OREGON'S OCEAN . . . . . 22
SAND LAKE, OREGON'S LAST UNTOUCHED ESTUARY. SOON TO BE A GOLF COURSE? . . . . . 11	OPINION: CAN OREGONIANS PROTECT THIS RICH COASTAL LEGACY? . . . . . 24
WHEN LIFE ON THE COAST IS A REAL CLIFFHANGER . . . . 12	RESOURCE GUIDE . . . . . 25



Cover Photo: Arch Cape. Above: Tierra del Mar beach, looking toward Cape Kiwanda. Photos by Lisa Skube

# Ten Years

This issue of Cascadia Times marks our 10th anniversary.

MORE ON THE JOHN B. OAKES AWARD

Visit the Oakes Award web site at [www.oakesaward.org](http://www.oakesaward.org)

# CASCADIA TIMES

Editor/Publisher Paul Koberstein  
 cascadia@spiritone.com  
 Operations Manager/Publisher Robin Klein  
 robin@spiritone.com  
 Design Cascadia Times

## BOARD OF ADVISORS

- Susan Alexander, San Francisco, Calif.
- Pamela Brown, Portland, Ore.
- Peter Chilton, Pullman, Wash.
- Ellen Chu, Seattle, Wash.
- David James Duncan, Lolo, Mont.
- Pat Ford, Boise, Idaho
- Michael Frome, Bellingham, Wash.
- Ian Gill, Vancouver, B.C.
- John Haines, Portland, Ore.
- Neva Hassanein, Missoula, Mont.
- James Karr, Seattle, Wash.
- Ken Margolis, Portland, Ore.
- Marshall Mayer, Helena, Mont.
- Christopher Peters, Arcata, Calif.
- Catherine Stewart, Vancouver, B.C.
- Jim Stratton, Anchorage, Alaska
- Sylvia Ward, Fairbanks, Alaska
- Charles Wilkinson, Boulder, Colo.

Cascadia Times is published by Cascadia Times Publishing Co., 25-6 Northwest 23rd Place, No. 406, Portland OR 97210-3534. Subscriptions are \$30 per 5 issues, \$56 for 10 issues. The entire contents of Cascadia Times are copyright © 2003 Cascadia Times and may not be reproduced in whole or in part without permission of the publisher. The publisher encourages unsolicited manuscripts and art, but cannot be held responsible for them. Manuscripts or material unaccompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope will not be returned. Cascadia Times encourages electronic submissions to e-mail box cascadia@spiritone.com. We reserve the right to print letters in condensed form.

Printing by Signature Graphics  
 1-800-578 1497 x529 sliebert@signature-graphics.com

Founded 1995 by Paul Koberstein, Robin Klein, and Kathie Durbin. Original designs by Bryan Potter.

### How to Reach Us

(503) 223-9036 • <http://www.times.org> • 25-6 NW 23rd Place, No. 406, Portland OR 97210

SPECIAL  
REPORT



BY PAUL KOBERSTEIN

Tom McCall called it a shameless threat to our environment and to our whole quality of life, an unfettered despoiling of the land, a “coastal condominium.” In his opening address to the 1973 Oregon Legislature, Gov. McCall explained, “We are dismayed that we have not stopped misuse of the land, our most valuable finite natural resource.”

McCall’s vast environmental legacy included the Beach Bill, a law preserving access to the sandy shoreline for everyone. But he was not the first governor to champion the Oregon Coast. Gov. Oswald West, who thrust all Oregon beaches into public control by simply declaring them state highways, warned everyone to be wary of potential threats to the Coast. In 1913 he said, “No selfish local interest should be permitted, by politics or otherwise, to destroy or even impair this great birthright of our people.”

With free access to all the beaches and the Coast’s rich, scenic vistas, countless visitors share Oregonians’ passion for this spectacular shoreline. The 362 miles from Astoria to Brookings draw 3.5 million visitors a year to Oregon, from every state and numerous countries, and the millions of dollars they spend.

And yet, it’s clear from a two-year inquiry by *Cascadia Times* that Oregon’s other natural treasures, like the Columbia River

Gorge, get more protection than the Coast. Slowly over the years, the Coast has been robbed of pieces of its beauty, its wildness and its solitude — a process that has built continuing momentum.

Twenty-three beaches have been polluted at various times with enough fecal wastes to make you sick; many are in areas without sewage treatment facilities. Tillamook County is the fastest growing county on the Oregon Coast; more than 78 percent of its growth since 2000 is happening in unincorporated areas that often lack sewage treatment.

Coastal coho salmon runs remain in inten-

sive care, the result of 150 years of abuse: we have been fishing them nearly to extinction, destroying their habitat, and crowding them out by pumping rivers full of hatchery breeds.

Oregon has allowed public and private forests on the Coast to be cut aggressively enough to endanger the fish and wildlife that live in them. In the ocean, overfishing has nearly destroyed the once-abundant rockfish. Citizen efforts to restore salmon, block unwise development, and protect marine areas and coastal forests honor the legacies of McCall and West.

The coastal zone receives 60 to 180 inches of rain in a year, yet in summer, rivers sometimes don’t have enough water for both people and salmon. Some towns on the Coast are seeing so much development that they are scrambling to find water to meet future needs. With exponential growth ahead, an epic confrontation over water seems likely.

“No selfish local interest should be permitted, by politics or otherwise, to destroy or even impair this great birthright of our people.” — Gov. Oswald West

Traffic, a nightmare on the Coast, is growing much faster than the population in Lincoln City and several other towns.

The coastline is retreating in many places. As the Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition and others have documented, many dwellings are in danger of falling into the sea, and some have already. Because development is allowed to proceed without due respect for coastal hazards, residents are demanding permission to install riprap and other permanent structures to halt erosion. If allowed, these structures can permanently damage beaches.

Many of today’s Oregon leaders are hoping

IS THIS WHAT  
TOM MCCALL HAD IN MIND?



SELLING OF THE COAST — Wetlands were filled in the Nehalem River Estuary, above, to ready this site for development. This parcel was once a tidal marsh. About 68 percent of the Coast’s wetlands have been lost. Photo by Joel Koberstein.

for a different future, but thus far have been unable to persuade this generation of Oregonians to embrace their vision. Sprawl is erasing scenic views, contributing to beach pollution, and encroaching into sensitive environments and landslide-prone areas. Voters opened the door to even more sprawl by passing Ballot Measure 37 last November.

Oregonians have a say in the management of all the Coast’s beaches, shorelands, rivers and forests. They are making large annual investments in restoring the salmon. And yet, few Oregonians participate in local decisions affecting the Coast.

Coastal governments seldom encourage public participation; the Port of Astoria last year blocked the public from knowing about a deal to sell public land for liquid natural gas terminals until after the deal was done. City councilors, county commissioners and state legislators are frequently openly hostile to citizens who advocate, as McCall did, for the protection of coastal resources. The voter’s intent to protect salmon habitat has been subverted by politicians who want to keep coastal areas open for misuse and overexploitation.

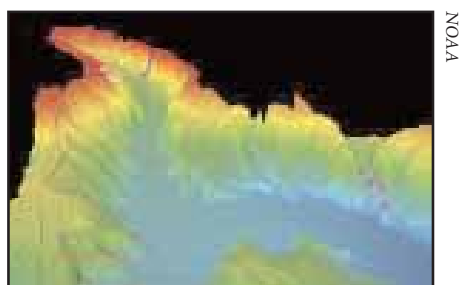
Oregonians across the state are rolling up their sleeves, expressing their convictions and working to reclaim the Coast’s rich legacy before it is lost. That’s a future both Tom McCall and Oswald West had in mind.

# TREASURES OF THE OREGON SHORE

PROTECTED PLACES ON THE COAST REMAIN VULNERABLE TO SPRAWL, POLLUTION AND UNSUSTAINABLE LOGGING

Over the last 200 years, the Oregon Coast has lost two-thirds of its wetlands and tidal marshes, more than 80 percent of its coho salmon, most of its ancient forests and rockfish, and all of its sea otters. They gave way to urbanization and agriculture, commercial logging and fishing. And yet today, the Oregon Coast is still a vibrant place of wild rivers, lakes, wetlands, dunes and spectacular views. Though the beaches are protected, and many of the distinctive places have been preserved, new developments are being approved beside and around them, while massive clearcuts are fragmenting habitat and despoiling streams in the headlands. Threatened species like the western snowy plover, coho salmon, northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet hang in the balance.

KEY: The numbers 9 in the text correspond to the numbers on the map on the opposite page. Green blocks are proposed protected areas in the Pacific Ocean to be closed to bottom-trawling



Astoria Canyon

**1** ASTORIA CANYON, the ancient mouth of the Columbia River, is submerged under the Pacific Ocean. The computer generated drawing (above) from NOAA looks east toward land. The canyon is home to a wide variety of rockfish and has been designated by the Portland Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area (for more on Important Bird Areas, see Page 24). It is now protected from bottom trawling, the most damaging type of commercial fishing. The Bush administration favors offshore oil development and aquaculture. Located offshore of the Columbia River's mouth.



Heceta Bank

**2** HECETA BANK is a hotspot for black corals, and has been designated by Portland Audubon as an Important Bird Area. Commercial bottom trawling has occurred for decades on this large rocky shoal on the Continental Shelf. The seafloor provides specialized habitats for many species of groundfish and invertebrates. Increased fishing pressures, habitat alteration, and environmental changes have pushed fish stocks to alarmingly low levels over the past decade. Located west of Yachats.

**3** ROGUE CANYON is one of several places off the Coast where the conservation organization Oceana has identified concentrated areas of living sponge and coral habitats based on NOAA records that it reviewed. The canyon resembles an underwater river with steep walls and a wide array of habitats that vary in temperature, pressure, salinity, light, and nutrients. Located west of Gold Beach.

**4** LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE totals 42,000 acres, including numerous islands, sandbars, mudflats, tidal marshes, and tidal swamps. This encompasses 40 percent of the Columbia River estuary. The area is important juvenile salmon habitat and is a major stopover for migratory waterfowl and wintering geese and ducks. The refuge supports peak shorebird populations of 150,000. Five proposed liquid natural gas terminals in the estuary have prompted local concerns. Located in the Columbia River estuary.



Gearhart Bog

**5** GEARHART BOG PRESERVE, acquired by The Nature Conservancy, is the largest contiguous wetland of its kind remaining on the Oregon Coast. Gearhart Bog includes several rare plant communities and the southernmost occurrence of conifer swamp in North America, a habitat type more often seen in British Columbia and Alaska. Located north of Seaside.

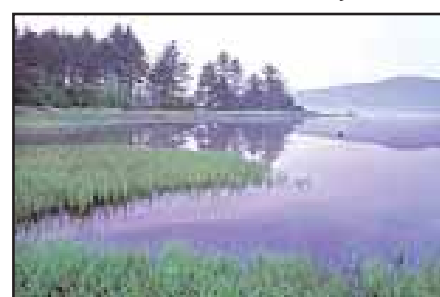
**6** NEAWANNA WETLANDS is a former sawmill purchased by the North Coast Land Conservancy and the city of Seaside. Priorities for further acquisition include about 20 acres along the Neawanna River estuary and a 78-acre Sitka spruce swamp. The property also includes 17 acres of wetlands with some need for restoration, which would benefit native coho salmon. Located east of Highway 101 in Seaside.

**7** CIRCLE CREEK is a high quality coastal wetlands providing stream habitat that is important for juvenile salmon and steelhead rearing. The site also includes 160 acres of Sitka spruce swamp, a forested wetland type that has largely been eliminated from the North Coast, about 60 acres of emergent wetlands and 70 acres of seasonally flooded pastures that provide important habitat for wintering waterfowl and other migratory birds. Two herds of elk use the open fields almost daily during the spring and winter. The site provides an ecological link between existing conservation lands and the upland forests of Ecola State Park. Located at the south end of Seaside.



Tillamook Rainforest

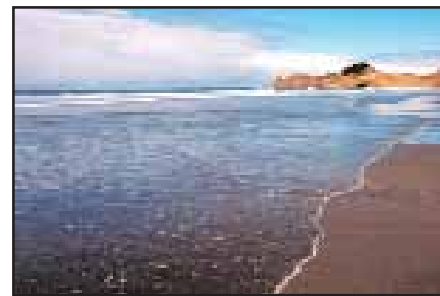
**8** TILLAMOOK RAINFOREST is one of the largest contiguous expanses of unprotected coastal temperate rainforest in the lower 48 states. The forest's watersheds provide drinking water for thousands of people and are home to dozens of species, including coho, steelhead, Chinook, marbled murrelets and bald eagles. A recent Oregon Department of Forestry study shows that current logging levels of 223 million board feet per year are 30 percent more than forests can sustain if they are to protect salmon, wildlife and other imperiled species. Further increases in logging will only make matters worse, yet the Legislature is calling for logging 250 million board feet per year. Located in eastern Tillamook County.



Kilchis Point

**9** KILCHIS POINT, acquired by the Trust For Public Land for the Tillamook Pioneer Museum, covers more than a mile of undeveloped shoreline and constitutes the last large block of forested wetland on Tillamook Bay. The 137-acre property includes a 1.3-mile stretch of cobble beach and tidal marshes where three streams enter the bay. Kilchis Point was once the site of the largest Indian village on the bay. TPL has helped to protect a total of more than 3,300 acres on the Coast. Located near Bay City at the mouth of the Kilchis River.

**10** SAND LAKE ESTUARY AND WHALEN ISLAND provide habitat for small runs of coho and chum salmon; and steelhead and sea-run cutthroat trout. Whalen Island is also prime foraging ground for one of the most productive bald eagle nests on the Oregon Coast (consistently two young per year) and numerous peregrine falcons. The state's purchase of Whalen Island in September 2000 marked the first major land acquisition funded through Ballot Measure 66, a 1998 initiative that allocated state lottery revenues to state parks and habitat conservation and watershed restoration efforts. Located 4 miles north of Pacific City in Tillamook County.



Cape Kiwanda

**11** CAPE KIWANDA is one of Oregon's most photographed places and a favorite beach for surfers. The beach and dunes are site of a new hotel development (see Page 8). Over the next decade, some \$40 million in new condos and other developments are planned in the vicinity. Cape Kiwanda is also the launching point for Pacific City's famed dory fishing fleet. Located in Pacific City.



Roy Lowe/US Fish and Wildlife

Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge

**12 NESTUCCA BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE** encompasses 524 acres of tidal saltmarsh, mudflats, diked wetlands, pasturelands, grasslands and mixed forest. The refuge was established to provide habitat for wintering dusky and threatened Aleutian Canada geese and to protect diverse coastal wetland habitats and upland buffers for a variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, marine mammals, endangered species, raptors and songbirds. Portland Audubon designated the refuge as an Important Bird Area. The refuge also provides essential habitat for juvenile salmonids, including coho, Chinook, steelhead and cutthroat trout. *Located near Pacific City, in and around Nestucca Bay.*



David Pitkin/US Fish and Wildlife

Neskowin Marsh

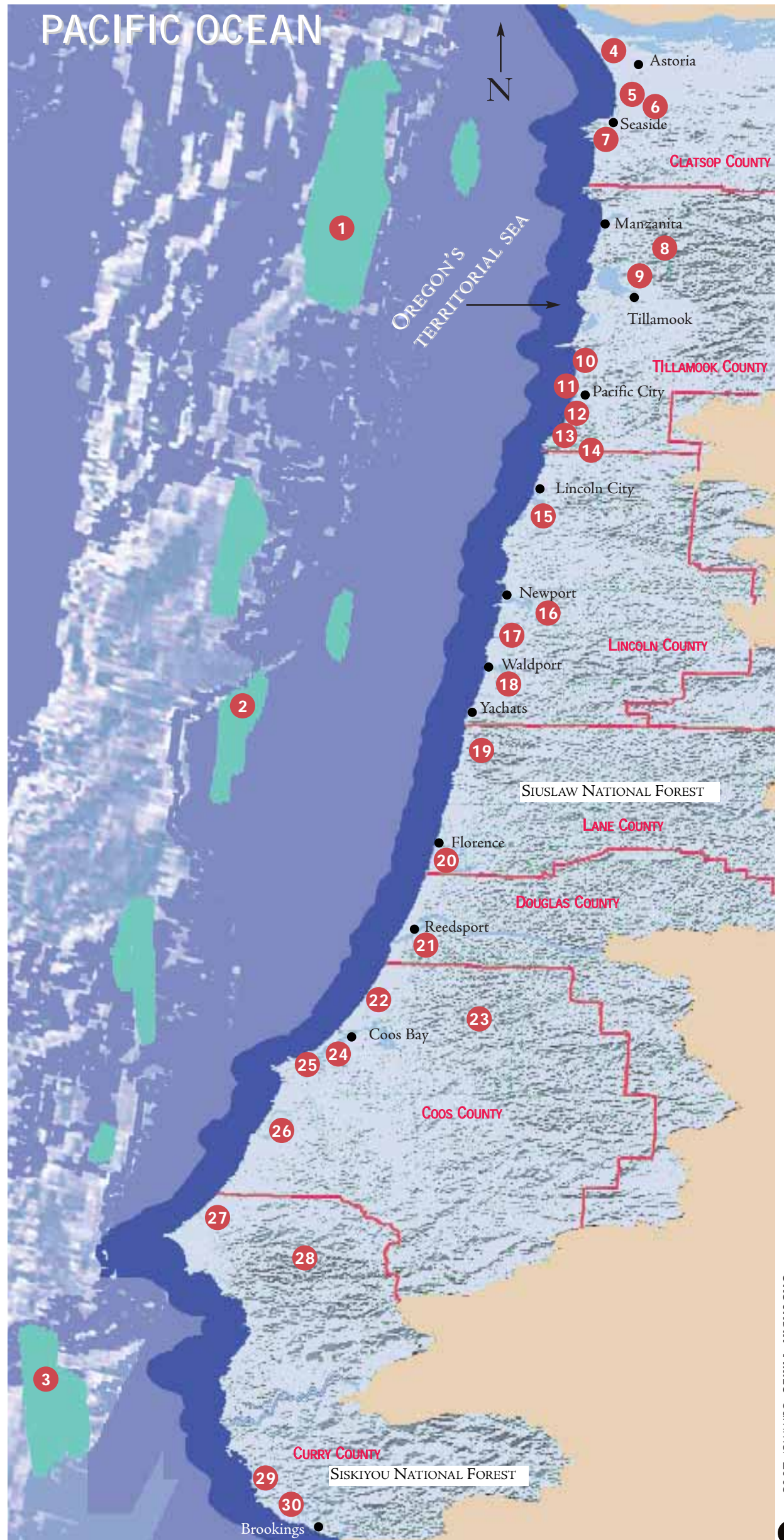
**13 NESKOWIN MARSH** is a unique 175-acre freshwater wetland that includes the southernmost coastal sphagnum bog habitat on the Pacific Coast. It hosts several high quality rare plant communities, including a sedge fen, and provides habitat for a variety of waterfowl and other waterbirds. Juvenile coho salmon overwinter in the marsh and cutthroat trout are also present in good numbers. A large subdivision borders the marsh, and a second one is planned. *Located just north of Neskowin between the sand dunes and Highway 101, five miles south of Nestucca Bay.*

**14 SALMON RIVER ESTUARY** includes more than 235 acres of tidal wetlands restored by the U.S. Forest Service. Future plans include reconnecting the estuary to Salmon Creek under Highway 101 and restoration of stream and wetland habitats east of the highway. *Located at Cascade Head Scenic Research Area, five miles north of Lincoln City.*

**15 SILETZ BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE** totals 519 acres of tidal marsh, mudflats, sloughs, grasslands and coniferous forest in and around Siletz Bay. A citizen-led effort helped to create the refuge. Portland Audubon designated the bay as an Important Bird Area. Negotiations to buy up to an additional 280 acres are continuing. The priorities include lands along the lower Siletz River and Drift Creek that could be restored as tidal wetlands. The refuge staff is working with the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians and the U.S. Forest Service to study the use of tidal wetlands and diked areas by juvenile salmon. The bay and tidelands are used by shorebirds and waterfowl, and support significant salmon and trout populations. *Located south of Lincoln City.*

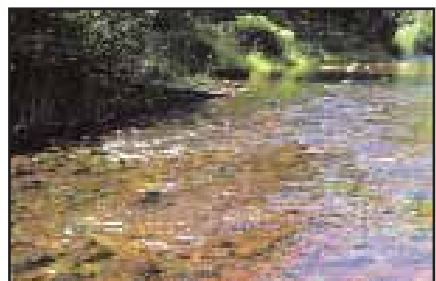
**16 YAQUINA BAY ESTUARY'S** tidal marshes provide important habitat for coho salmon, brown pelicans, bald eagles, and marbled murrelets, as well as for sea-run cutthroat and steelhead trout, chum salmon and Pacific lamprey. The estuary is an Important Bird Area supporting high use by waterfowl and a large diversity of migratory shorebirds. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board in partnership with The Wetlands Conservancy and Central Coast Land Conservancy has received a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire 600 acres of salt marsh. *Located along the Yaquina River between Newport and Toledo.*

(Continued on page 6)



**17 BEAVER CREEK MARSH** is part of a larger wetland system that extends several miles up the creek through bottomlands that have been drained for pastures. The marsh provides important habitat for wintering and migrating waterfowl and supports native stocks of coho salmon, steelhead and sea-run cutthroat trout. Other wildlife include a variety of songbirds, shorebirds, marsh birds (including Virginia rail and sora) as well as a pair of bald eagles. *Located off Highway 101 between Newport and Waldport, just east of Ona Beach State Park.*

**18 LINT SLOUGH** is a mile-long stretch of estuarine wetlands. In the 1960s, the Oregon Game Commission oversaw construction of an earthen dam on Lint Creek, an experiment to improve rearing conditions for juvenile coho salmon by controlling the salinity of the creek. The fish succumbed to disease, ending the experiment. A restoration project involving the Mid-Coast Watershed Council and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will return the slough to a more natural condition. *Located on the south side of Alsea Bay, near Waldport.*



Tenmile Creek

Paul Koberslein

**19 THE CUMMINS CREEK WILDERNESS AND TENMILE CREEK** landscape south of Cape Perpetua on the Siuslaw National Forest is the largest tract of coastal temperate rainforest in the lower 48 states, a spectacular remnant of the giant spruce/hemlock rainforest that once blanketed the North Coast. Old-growth Sitka spruce are as big as ten feet wide. The area has been designated an Important Bird Area for the marbled murrelet, and is home to bears, salmon, elk, giant salamanders, and river otters. Forests in the bordering Yachats River watershed are slated for a massive 1,000 acre clearcut. Efforts to encourage more sustainable logging on private land have not yet been successful. *Located in Lane County 10 miles south of Yachats.*



Glenada Dunes

Paul Koberslein

**20 GLENADA DUNE** is one of last dunes in Florence still visible to travelers on Highway 101. Other Florence dunes, such as the spectacular Cannery Dune north of town, are blocked from view by development. The Glenada Dune south of town borders the Siuslaw River near its mouth. Lane County, which owns the site, has plans to sell it to fund its parks program. Citizens for Florence, a local group, has asked the city or Oregon State Parks to purchase the 80-acre site. *Located at the south end of the Siuslaw River Bridge.*

**21 SMITH RIVER** A levee was breached during a storm, allowing a 25-acre pasture to return to a partially flooded tidal wetland. The owner has donated the land to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, allowing complete restoration of the wetlands. One half-mile upriver, the ODFW owns 75 acres of land that will also be restored. Overall, this project will permanently protect 100 acres of intertidal emergent wetlands with significant benefit for juvenile salmon. *Located 1.5 miles above the confluence of the Smith River's confluence with the Umpqua River near Reedsport.*

**22 HORSFALL WETLANDS** consists of shallow ponds and seasonal wetlands in the deflation plains of dunes, providing valuable year-round habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds. Deflation plains were greatly expanded when European beachgrass was introduced to stabilize the dunes. Wind scours the land between the dunes to groundwater level, creating freshwater ponds and marshes. Current efforts to restore the wetlands include controlling Scotch broom in the uplands. *Located in the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area.*



Elliott State Forest

Umpqua Watersheds

**23 ELLIOTT STATE FOREST** is a solid block of 93,564 acres of public forests in a sea of private land — the only refuge for the northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets and coho salmon trying to survive between widely spaced federal reserves on the South Coast. It is the most landslide-prone state forest in Oregon, resulting in clearcuts delivering sediment to fish streams. *Located just east of Reedsport Oregon and west of Loon Lake, in the Umpqua and Coos River watersheds.*



South Slough

Department of State Lands

**24 SOUTH SLOUGH** is a 4,771-acre natural area, located in a sheltered arm of the Coos estuary. It was established as a National Estuarine Research Reserve in 1974, the first in a nationwide system of coastal reserves dedicated to estuarine research, education and stewardship. The Coos estuary, covering an area of approximately 13,300 acres, is the sixth largest estuary on the Pacific Coast. Residential developments are proposed on adjacent lands. It's a mixture of open water channels, tidal and freshwater wetlands, riparian areas, and forested uplands. *Located near Charleston.*

**25 SUNSET BEACH STATE PARK** has beautiful sandy beaches protected by towering sea cliffs. The park features 66 tent sites, 8 yurts, and some of the worst water pollution at any beach on the Oregon Coast. The Oregon Health Department has measured fecal coliform levels up to 15 times the level it deems safe. Since 2003, the beach has violated state water quality standards for fecal pollution 37 times, or 15 percent of all samples taken. *Located 12 miles west of Coos Bay.*



Bandon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge

US Fish and Wildlife

**26 BANDON MARSH NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE** encompasses more than 700 acres in the lower end of the Coquille River valley, which is the most important wintering area for waterfowl on the Oregon coast, supporting up to 57,000 ducks and geese. Restoration is needed to

provide habitat for native salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout stocks, as well as to improve the overall health of the estuary. *Located on the north side of the Coquille River, immediately upstream from the U.S. Highway 101 bridge.*

**27 THE PROPOSED NEW RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE** contains the largest unfragmented grasslands habitat on the entire Oregon and Washington coasts. It supports the largest spring staging area for Aleutian cackling geese in Oregon, and habitat for a variety of migratory birds including shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors and songbirds. More than 100,000 western sandpipers and 2,000 whimbrels have been recorded on a single day. The New River estuary also provides overwintering habitat for juvenile threatened Coho salmon. *Located south of Bandon State Park, along the New River estuary.*



Elk River/Copper Salmon Proposed Wilderness Area

Jim Rogers/Friends of Elk River

**28 COPPER SALMON PROPOSED WILDERNESS AREA** would protect the upper reaches of the Elk River, one of the most productive salmon streams in the U.S. outside of Alaska. It contains some of the largest stands of ancient low-elevation coastal forests in the Northwest, including some of the last disease-free stands of old-growth Port Orford cedar. The proposal would extend Grassy Knob Wilderness eastward, protecting most of the North Fork and the north side of the South Fork Elk River. *Located in the Siskiyou National Forest east of Port Orford.*

**29 CROOK POINT** was acquired by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service in 2000. Until its purchase, it was one of the last privately owned, undisturbed coastal headlands in Oregon. It supports native vegetation including up to 19 "special status" plant species. The headland also includes unique geologic formations and pristine intertidal plant and invertebrate communities. The adjacent coastal rocks within Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge harbor large seabird colonies, including the second largest breeding colony of Leach's Storm Petrels in the state. Harbor seals make extensive use of the area's beaches and Steller sea lions haul out on rocks just offshore. *Located about about 12 miles south of Gold Beach.*



Arches/Sam Boardman State Scenic Corridor

Oregon State Parks

**30 SAM BOARDMAN STATE SCENIC CORRIDOR** is a 12-mile long park with a rugged, steep coastline interrupted by small sandy beaches. It was named in honor of Samuel H. Boardman, the first Oregon Parks superintendent who helped create many state parks in the early 20th Century. Thanks to Boardman's vision, there are now 81 state parks, recreation sites, natural sites, waysides, viewpoints and scenic corridors along the Oregon Coast. Boardman State Park includes 300-year old Sitka spruce trees, Arch Rock and Natural Bridges, and 27 miles of Oregon Coast Trail that weave through the giant forests. Across U.S. 101 from the park, the city of Brookings has approved a massive development of 1,000 dwellings and commercial buildings. *Located 4 miles north of Brookings.*





## WHERE'D THEY PUT THE OCEAN?

Sprawl obstructs views, pollutes beaches and mars Oregon's scenic shoreline

**P**ACIFIC CITY — All year long, surfers ride the waves at this small Tillamook County town, one of Oregon's most popular beachfront resorts. Haystack Rock, the tallest of three towers by that name on the Coast, stands offshore, with the scenic dunes of Cape Kiwanda circling around to the north. At the Pelican Inn brewpub on the beach, patrons soak up these breathtaking views with their award-winning ales.

Not many years ago, the surfers shared Pacific City with its famous dory fishing fleet, often camping for days in the county parking lot at the beach without any trouble. But now tourists have discovered Pacific City. The parking lot is often full, even with an extra 40 spots added this year.

Like numerous places on the Coast, Pacific City is in the throes of a real estate boom. Open spaces up and down the Coast are giving way to new condos, hotels, second homes and mansions. In Pacific City alone, some \$40 million worth of projects are in the works. One such project, a new hotel, is emerging on the beachfront dunes in front of Cape Kiwanda and Haystack Rock. This development may contribute to the local economy by providing jobs, but critics say it will come at an unacceptable price.

Millions of tourists travel to the Coast every year to take in the sights, spending millions of dollars along the way. Would they be so eager to visit favorite views that have been altered like the dunes at Cape Kiwanda? Some are worried.

"It's one of the most photographed

scenes on the Oregon Coast," says Phillip Johnson, director of the Coastwatch program operated by the Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition. "And now people are going to have some condo-looking excrescences right in their viewfinders. This kind of thing degrades the coastal experience of countless thousands of people to benefit a few."

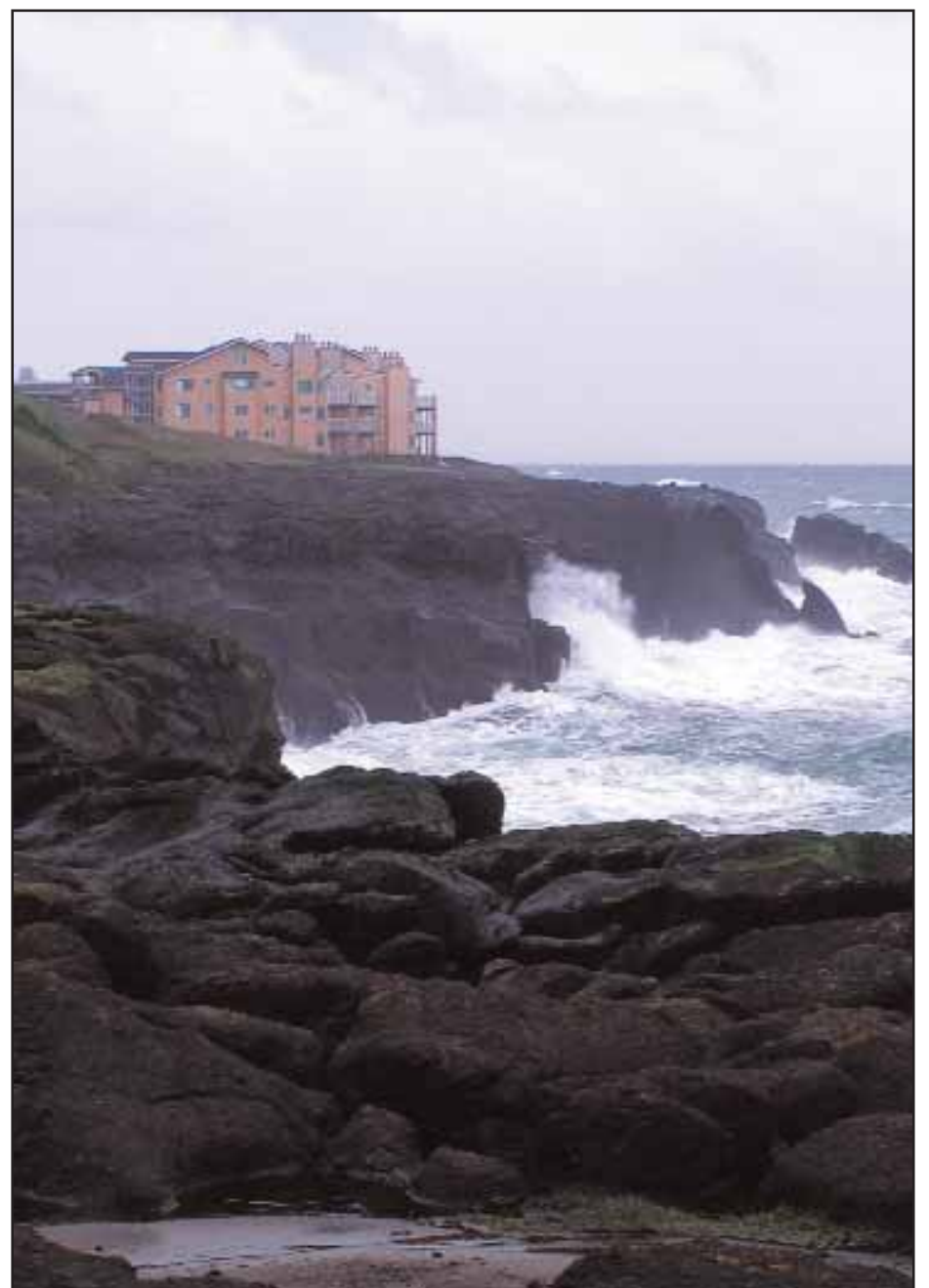
In other words, if you ever intended to shoot pictures here one day, and didn't want a shiny new hotel in the frame, you're too late.

"Scenic views are an important part of the coastal economy," says Cameron LaFollette, a land-use activist with 1000 Friends of Oregon, another opponent of the Cape Kiwanda condos. Three groups — 1000 Friends, Oregon Shores, Oregon Shores and the Oregon Downtown Development Association — have launched the Oregon Coastal Futures campaign to promote better stewardship of coastal lands. "None of the coastal counties take the views into consideration when they issue building permits."

Nor are there any state laws to prevent a developer from altering the priceless views. "One of the undone things in protecting the Oregon Coast is protecting the view," says Bob Bailey, who heads the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development's Coastal Program.

Some say sprawl is transforming the Coast's natural character into something that looks more like a certain state to the south of Oregon.

"Having condos built up close to the edge of the bluff will turn an extraordi-



**SPOILING THE VIEW FROM BOILER BAY** — One of the great attractions of the Oregon Coast is the spectacular scenery around places like Boiler Bay. Or it was. Now it's a nice view of condos. This shoreline is home to the largest populations of sea urchins on the Oregon Coast, and once harbored the urchin-eating sea otter. Dave Hatch, of the Elakha Alliance and a member of the Siletz Indian Tribe, is leading a campaign to bring the sea otter back to this spot and other places on the Oregon Coast. The two condo projects above are wedged between the surf and Highway 101, just north of Depoe Bay. A rare type of was destroyed during construction. The condos in the top photo have been beset with construction problems related to mold, according to a report in *The Oregonian*. Photos by Paul Koberstein/Cascadia Times

Since 1973, Oregon has maintained a statewide program for land use planning, based on 19 Goals. Six of these goals address protection for the coast

**GOAL 5: OPEN SPACES**

Local governments shall adopt programs that will protect natural resources and conserve scenic, historic, and open space resources for present and future generations. These resources promote a healthy environment and natural landscape that contributes to Oregon's livability.

**GOAL 7: COASTAL HAZARDS**

Local governments shall adopt plans to reduce risk to people and property from natural hazards including floods, landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis, coastal erosion, and wildfires.

**GOAL 16: ESTUARIES**

Local governments must recognize and protect the unique environmental, economic, and social values of each estuary and associated wetlands; and protect, maintain, where appropriate develop, and where appropriate restore the long-term environmental, economic, and social values, diversity and benefits of Oregon's estuaries.

**GOAL 17: SHORELANDS**

Requires that cities and counties establish a "coastal shoreland boundary" on lands bordering coastal waters, including estuaries. Lands within the boundary are to be planned and managed to recognize their relationship with, and importance to, coastal waters.

**GOAL 18: BEACHES AND DUNES**

To conserve, protect, where appropriate develop, and where appropriate restore the resources and benefits of coastal beach and dune areas; and to reduce the hazard to human life and property from natural or man-induced actions associated with these areas. No riprap is allowed along the shoreline in front of developments built after Jan. 1, 1977.

**GOAL 19: OCEAN RESOURCES**

To conserve marine resources and ecological functions for the purpose of providing long-term ecological, economic, and social value and benefits to future generations.

Near Pacific City, a development known as Nantucket Shores is under construction next to Cape Kiwanda. A sign promises a gated community with private beach access, a private lake, and a gated community. The developer's brochure urges potential buyers to "come see one of America's remaining jewels and join the rare few who have seen its potential."

These developments, LaFollette says, "show the change in many new projects: expensive housing, usually for



**WRECKING VIEW?** — A hotel is beginning construction on dunes just below the tree line in this picturesque scene of Cape Kiwanda in Pacific City, permanently altering — some say ruining — the view. *Photo by Lisa Skube*

nary part of the Oregon Coast into just more of the same over-development which people expect of California, but — at least until recently — didn't expect here," says Fran Recht of the Oregon Shores coalition.

Recht, a former member of the Depoe Bay Planning Commission, says communities are so eager to please developers they forget about the qualities that make the Coast special, like the views.

This summer in Depoe Bay, developers completed a condo project next to Boiler Bay State Park. Another, larger project has been built next door. The two projects form an almost solid wall; behind the wall the ocean disappears from view for a full half-mile.

The projects, with their massive parking lots, resemble a typical apartment complex in the suburbs; they do not seem particularly sensitive to the surrounding environment. They hug the rugged, basalt-rimmed surf. One of the projects destroyed a rare shoreline bog. Close by, a short, rough trail takes hikers to what are said to be some of Oregon's richest tidepools. From there, the hikers can take in stunning views of migrating and resident gray whales — not to mention a slice of the suburbs.

Sprawl, the low-density homes and businesses outside cities, is rapidly redefining the U.S. 101 corridor along the Coast in other ways: polluting the beaches, threatening ecologically sensitive areas, emerging among landslide-prone shoreline dunes and cliffs. It is fueled by an influx of retirees, trust funders and vacation-home buyers, and is showing no sign of slowing down.

As the Pew Oceans Commission noted in a major report two years ago, "If we are to protect coastal ecosystems, constraining sprawl is not just an option, it's a necessity."

In Tillamook County, the Coast's fastest growing county, almost all new development is sprawling outside the cities.

Between 1990 and 2004, Tillamook County grew by nearly 16 percent, according to the U.S. Census. More than 70 percent of this growth went outside the cities. From 2000 to 2004, nearly 79 percent of its growth was outside cities. Coastwide, nearly 33 percent of the growth is outside cities, and it's about 9 percent statewide. These figures do not count the substantial seasonal population growth that results from the development of vacation homes and resorts in rural areas.

Oregon's land-use system was designed 30 years ago to prevent sprawl by focusing new development inside cities. But on the Coast, where land-use regulations are weakest in the state, according to the watchdog group 1000 Friends of Oregon, the land-use system just encourages sprawl.

Some 80,000 acres of coastal counties are rural land that can be legally converted to suburban subdivisions. These lands are within rural "urban growth boundaries" and as a whole are large

enough to contain a one-half mile wide strip of homes on both sides of Highway 101, stretching for about one third of the entire Coast, says Bob Stacey, executive director of 1000 Friends.

The sites in highest demand are those closest to the beach. Geologists say many of these sites have been and will continue collapsing due to erosion. The owners of these properties are pressuring local governments to allow them to protect these sites by installing riprap along the shore. Riprap unusually consists of large boulders placed at the base of dunes and cliffs. Studies show riprap destroys beaches.

Sprawl is also threatening sensitive lands, like the barely touched Sand Lake estuary in Tillamook County which developers are eying as a poten-

tial private golf resort, as well as a place to build condos and a restaurant.

Most of the North Coast at one time was heavily forested with Sitka spruce, which in Oregon is at the southern extent of its range. About 80 percent of the North Coast spruce forests have been lost, according to the Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center at Oregon State. Sitka spruce forests are being converted to residential homes around the towns of Astoria, Seaside, Cannon Beach, Tillamook, Lincoln City, Newport and points in between.

One of the largest new developments on the Coast is a subdivision of 200 houses going in at Netarts. The land has been clearcut, though construction has yet to begin. "The urban growth boundary is pretty large around Netarts," says Allison Asbjornsen, a Netarts resident, as well as president of the Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition. "Our sewage plant under a lot of pressure already — this is adding more than half again to the sewage system. This is a big problem."

She says coastal residents can contact their county planning departments to find out how large their local urban growth boundaries are, and if necessary should try to reduce their size.

Another development, known as Sahhali Shores in Neskowin, would encircle Neskowin Marsh, a unique 175-acre freshwater wetland that includes the southernmost coastal sphagnum bog habitat on the Pacific Coast. It is located next to the Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

"It is being fought by people in Neskowin, but it's going to be tough, because it's inside the community growth boundary," LaFollette says. The Nature Conservancy tried to buy about 75 acres of the site and transfer the site to the wildlife refuge, but was not successful.

Nearby, an existing development known as Sahhali North "has already ruined a stretch of beach, and this would be much worse," she says.

**"If we are to protect coastal ecosystems, constraining sprawl is not just an option, it's a necessity."**

*— Pew Oceans Commission*



## POPULATION: Oregon Coast's Fastest Growing Cities 1990-2004

Warrenton leads the pack with 61.5 percent growth:

City	County	1990	2004	% Growth
1 Warrenton	Clatsop	2,681	4,330	61.5
2 Florence	Lane	5,171	7,830	51.4
3 Depoe Bay	Lincoln	870	1,240	42.5
4 Brookings	Curry	4,400	6,050	37.5
5 Rockaway Beach	Tillamook	970	1,320	36.1
6 Cannon Beach	Clatsop	1,221	1,650	35.1
7 Bandon	Coos	2,224	2,990	34.3
8 Yachats	Lincoln	533	710	33.2
9 Waldport	Lincoln	1,595	2,060	29.2
10 Lincoln City	Lincoln	5,903	7,470	26.5
11 Gold Beach	Curry	1,546	1,930	24.8
12 Manzanita	Tillamook	513	630	22.8
13 Wheeler	Tillamook	335	410	22.4
14 Dunes City	Lane	1,081	1,300	20.3
15 Newport	Lincoln	8,437	9,760	15.7
16 Seaside	Clatsop	5,359	6,080	13.5
17 Siletz	Lincoln	992	1,130	13.9
18 Toledo	Lincoln	3,174	3,580	12.8
19. Tillamook	Tillamook	4,006	4,350	8.6
20. Coos Bay	Coos	15,076	15,700	4.1

### The Coast's Shrinking Cities, 1990-2004

Four coastal cities lose population:

City	County	1990	2004	% Loss
Reedsport	Douglas	4,796	4,230	-11.8
Nehalem	Tillamook	232	210	-9.4
Myrtle Point	Coos	2,712	2,490	-8.2
Astoria	Clatsop	10,069	9,880	-1.8

### Growth in areas outside cities, by county, 1990-2004

(These unincorporated areas outside cities are usually not connected to sewage treatment facilities. Development in these areas often results in increased water pollution and sprawl.)

	Countywide Increase	Increase outside cities	% Outside Cities
Tillamook	3,380	2,379	70.4
Coos	2,427	1,143	47.1
Clatsop	3,099	1,065	34.4
Lincoln	5,511	1,065	19.3
Curry	1,823	-376	-1.7

## TRAFFIC: Jamming the Oregon Coast's Highway 101

Growth in traffic at key intersections, 1993 to 2003

City	% Change	County	% Change
Lincoln City	67.3	Lincoln County	20.70
Newport	66.5	Clatsop County	20.60
Cannon Beach	57.3	Tillamook County	14.80
Garibaldi	50.0	Coos County	3.90
Brookings	47.2	Curry County	-0.06
Tillamook	44.4	Lane County	-1.10
Gearhart	37.3	Douglas County	-5.60
Seaside	25.7		
Astoria	24.7		
Waldport	24.4		
Manzanita	12.5		
Warrenton	11.8		

Source: Oregon Department of Transportation. Based on average daily traffic counts in 1993 and 2003

### The traffic nightmare

Traffic volumes are increasing by more than 50 percent a decade along stretches of U.S. 101 from Newport to Cannon Beach. Traffic counts are growing much faster than population in Lincoln City and other cities, indicating their popularity among tourists. A recent AAA study said traffic on highways leading to vacation spots across the country is exploding. It said highways connecting the Willamette Valley to the Oregon Coast are the most clogged destination highways in the country.



**PRIVATE PARADISE** — "Come see one of America's remaining jewels, and join the rare few who've seen its potential," says the sales brochure for the new Nantucket Shores development north of Pacific City. *Photo by Paul Koberstein*

second homes, and not affordable to most coastal residents"

Oregon's land-use system has slowed the pace of sprawl, but is not capable of halting it, says Bailey of the Department of Land Conservation and Development.

The 2004 passage of Ballot Measure 37 in Oregon may further weaken the Coast's land-use protections. A property owner can now seek a building permit even if current zoning rules disallows it, so long as the rules were put in place after the owner purchased the property. If the local government denies the permit, the property owner can try to collect compensation. If Measure 37 developments are allowed, more sprawl is likely.

People are using Measure 37 to take advantage of opportunities to build big subdivisions on the oceanfront. One property owner in Lincoln County

wants to use Measure 37 to build a subdivision on rural land, and in Tillamook County another owner would build condos on some 80 acres in a dairy farming area next to Nestucca Bay.

"The Coast has not yet had a big number of claims like Washington or Yamhill Counties. But as time passes there will be more claims that severely damage both farmland in coastal counties such as Tillamook County, and scenic beauty along the shoreline," LaFollette says.

Oregon's land-use system is based on 19 goals that steer development toward cities and away from farms, forest, estuaries and shoreline. On the Coast, however, some of these goals are routinely disregarded, such as one requiring counties to inventory and where possible to protect open space. County officials say they lack funding to pay for such an inventory.



**PAVED PARADISE** — Cars jam U.S. 101 as they enter Lincoln City from the north. Traffic volumes have been increasing in Lincoln City faster than any other place on the Oregon Coast, rising 67.5 percent from 1993-2003.

Oregon's land-use system embraces the principle of "smart growth" — high density housing within an "urban growth boundary" where people can live, work and play in the same area. The principle, LaFollette says, works well in urbanized areas like Portland but not so well in resort areas dominated by second homes.

An example is the South Coast city of Brookings, which in 1997 annexed 3,500 acres next to Sam Boardman State Scenic Area. Brookings is planning a 1,000-home development, plus a commercial center and a college campus. Many of these homes are likely to be vacation retreats, as are similar developments up and down the coast.

"This model leads to huge recreational ghettos, empty most of the time," LaFollette says. "They destroy a neighborhood or town. A smaller, gentler requirement of fewer houses and slight clustering, would be better for both land and the cultural areas. Ironically, developers love this high-density 'smart growth' stuff on the coast, because they can just make money hand over fist."

One such place is Indian Point on the South Slough estuary south of Charleston in Coos County, where local residents are fighting a development proposed by a California timber baron named Hank Westbrook. He is "spouting all the smart growth platitudes, and this thing if built will ruin the area," LaFollette says. "Smart growth is wonderful. But it has to be applied in the right places in the right way."

## When a day at the beach means a trip to the doctor

Lincoln City, the largest town between Coos Bay and Astoria, sprawls for mile after endless mile along U.S. 101. The city was once proud of its sprawl. In the 1960s, it called itself "the 20 miracle miles." Oregon's Gov. Mark Hatfield said it was more like "the 20 miserable miles." Today, traffic on U.S. 101 in Lincoln City is getting congested faster than anywhere one on the Coast (see chart Page 10.)

In the heart of Lincoln City, the "D" River — a 120-foot river listed by the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's shortest — cuts across a wide expanse of sandy beach as it flows from nearby Devils Lake to the Pacific Ocean.

Sprawl wears many faces, and one of



**RIDING THE TAINTED WAVES** — Surfers on the Oregon Coast have experienced illness after surfing at beaches contain dangerous levels of fecal coliform.

them is water pollution. Twice in July 2005 water quality testing by the Oregon Department of Health found dangerous levels of fecal contamination on the beach near the mouth of the D River. Since the state agency began testing in 2002, Oregon's beaches have been found unsafe on 132 occasions.

On July 11, the state agency took samples of the water and sent them to a lab for analysis. Two days later, the Health Division posted a warning sign urging people to avoid contact with the water. Testing results showed that the levels of fecal pollution were the highest on Lincoln City beaches since sampling began in 2002.

On July 14, a reporter arrived at the beach to find two young boys swimming in the surf next to the river. The warning sign was nowhere near the pollution; it was posted in the middle of a parking lot about 50 yards from the beach.

"I don't know who chose the location for the sign, but I think, in general, they seem more afraid of scaring away

two weeks later.

Interestingly, if D River Wayside had been in the state of Washington, where the pollution rules are much tougher, it would have been deemed unhealthy on both July 11 and July 13. Oregon provides the weakest possible protection against fecal coliform on beaches allowed by federal law.

Even so, no one can say whether swimmers at the D River Wayside on July 11 or 12th were safe. And since the beach wasn't posted until the 13th, those swimmers would have had no way of knowing about any potential danger.

The D River wayside is downstream from numerous sources of pollution. The river flows out of Devils Lake, which has been riddled with blue-green algae blooms that can be toxic. Volunteers with a local watershed group have complained that manure has been dumped in the floodplain and in wetlands upstream from the lake.

State officials must wait two or three days for lab results before they can issue a warning. The EPA is encouraging

"People are constantly reporting to me that they have an ear infection, or a cut that wouldn't heal for months."

— Markus Mead, Surfriders Foundation

tourists than protecting their health," said Paul Katen, a watershed volunteer in Lincoln City.

It's not certain, however, that the two boys were in any danger. The Health Division tested water samples at D River Wayside again on July 13. This time, the results showed that the contamination had receded to levels deemed to be safe under Oregon regulations.

"We have no reason to believe that the swimmers were at any known risk of bacteria exposure, as levels had dropped significantly from the first sample," said Joel Sherman of the state health department.

The July 11 sample was the 12th time in three years that the water at D River Wayside was not safe for human contact, in violation of state water quality standards. A 13th violation occurred

states to use new methods that could yield results within 24 hours.

Oregon suggests people stay out of the water for 48 hours after rainfall. But this precaution is not foolproof. It did not rain during the days before the July violations.

Beach-goers are lucky that Oregon even monitors its beaches at all. As recently as 2002, state officials had no data to show how badly polluted the ocean beaches might be. Though the potential threat was well known from monitoring performed by the Surfrider Foundation, the state still encouraged people to swim at the beaches.

An epidemiological study in Santa Monica Bay, Cal., demonstrated that anyone swimming or surfing near pollution discharge drains faced an increased risk of illness. The fecal coliform bacteria in those discharges can cause infec-

tions, and in vulnerable populations, can cause blood stream infections, heart valve problems and meningitis, the U.S. EPA says.

For years, surfers have been complaining about getting sick from Oregon's beaches, says Markus Mead, a longtime surfer on Oregon beaches. He heads the Surfrider Foundation chapter in Newport, Ore.

"Many of the symptoms are similar to eating bad Mexican food," he said.

In 2004, as Mead was surfing off Newport, the county sheriff sped out in a motorboat to warn him and others about a large spill of raw sewage a few miles up the nearby Yaquina River in Toledo. "He ordered us out of the water," he says.

The Toledo spill led Mead to think about the health dangers of surfing. Until then, he had suffered several ear infections a year. Now that he wears ear plugs those infections have ceased, but he is still vulnerable to infections in his eyes, nose and digestive tract.

"People are constantly reporting to me that they have an ear infection, or a cut that wouldn't heal for months."

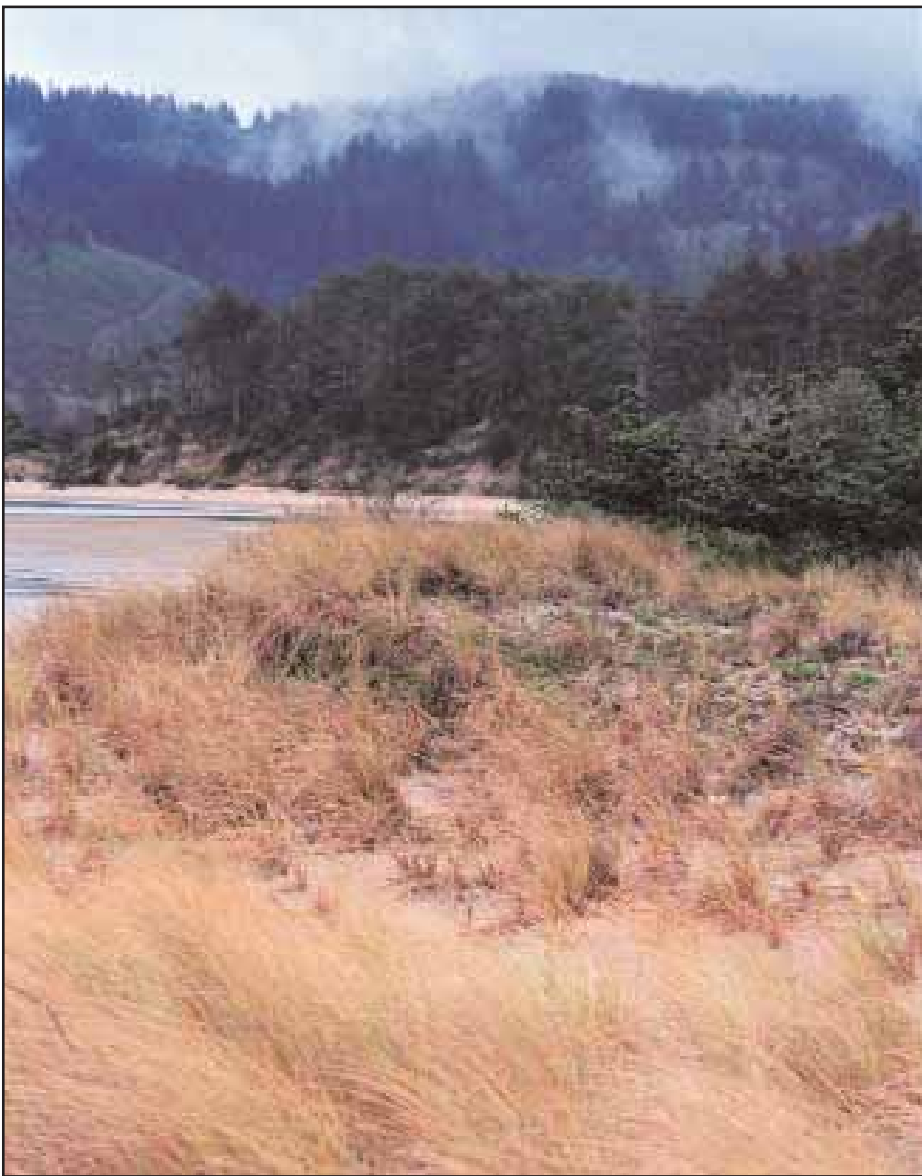
Nationally, the Surfrider Foundation has been a leading advocate for testing beach water for pollution. Beaches in all coastal states, Mead says, are potential health hazards for surfers. A breakthrough came in 2000 when Bill Clinton signed the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act (better known as the Beach Act).

The Beach Act is designed to protect beach-goers from health risks by requiring states to warn the public when beach waters are unsafe for swimming, surfing and other activities. "The Beach Act sets up a really important program, but the program is underfunded," says Jackie Savitz of conservation group Oceana. "It's authorized at \$30 million per year, but President Bush this year only asked Congress for \$10 million."

In 2002, Oregon became the last coastal state to join the program. Oregon began by testing more than 50 beaches, but recently reduced testing to just 24, though it has increased the frequency of testing on many beaches to twice a month.

The Health Division has posted 33 health advisories in the last two years at 23 different beaches. The agency warns people that the water is unsafe for human contact, but does not close the beaches. Most of the contaminated beaches are north of Yachats, but Sunset Bay State Park beach near Coos Bay has had by far the largest number of violations, 37, as well as some of the highest levels of fecal pollution.

The health division does not always issue a warning when dangerous levels of pollution are detected. A review of state beach monitoring data by Cascadia Times found that in 2002 no advisories were issued on six different Oregon beaches when dangerous levels of fecal bacteria was detected in the water. Some of these contaminated samples were taken in the D River, and by law the state cannot post freshwater streams. (See pages 14 and 15 for details on Oregon's beach pollution data.)



**SAND LAKE ESTUARY**— A proposed golf course at Sand Lake would be built next to the estuary on Sand Lake Spit, prime habitat for the threatened western snowy plover. *Photo by Lisa Skube*

Under the stricter health standards enforced in the state of Washington, four additional Oregon beaches would have been unsafe for swimming.

On seven occasions, the Oregon health division detected fecal contamination at levels 10 times greater than Oregon's standard. Two tests came in at 27 times the safe level.

On average, health advisories for contaminated Oregon beaches have stayed in effect for a little more than three weeks, as officials wait for pollution levels to recede to safe levels. At Sunset Bay State Park, one health advisory remained in effect for four months.

By law, none of the federal funds for testing beaches under the Beach Act can be spent looking for the source of the pollution. And yet, it's not easy to stop the pollution if you don't know the cause, Mead says. The state of Oregon is pursuing federal grants under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act for pinning down the source of this pollution.

The Health Division says bacterial contamination in coastal recreational waters can come from a variety of sources, including development, sewage treatment plants, failing septic tanks, urban stormwater runoff, disposal of human waste from boats, bathers themselves, and waste from animals.

Rural structures built on septic tanks next to the beach are possible sources of beach pollution. Contamination can include all kinds of chemicals and heavy metals from toilets, sinks, showers, storm drains, streets and parking lots.

However, the state only tests for fecal coliform.

Many areas outside cities on the Coast have no sewage treatment facilities, and the individual septic systems attached to structures in these areas often drain into porous, sandy soils that cannot prevent fecal contamination from reaching the beaches, estuaries or rivers, especially after it rains. The pollution is potentially worse where septic tanks are failing.

This contamination harms not only humans, but aquatic ecosystems as well. Pollution can contaminate spawning areas close to shore and has been detected far out on the Continental Shelf.

## Sand Lake, Oregon's most untouched estuary. Soon to be a golf course?

About 5 miles north of Pacific City, the tiny Sand Lake estuary has somehow been spared the development that has been transforming the rest of the Coast's tidal lands for 150

years. Other than a farm that operated beyond the south shore and a few homes in upland areas, the estuary has changed little.

But change is afoot, as is evident from the numerous signs posted in the area urging people to "Save Old Beltz Farm." A proposed golf course has been stirring heated opposition in the nearby Tierra del Mar and Netarts communities, as well in other places on the Coast and in the Willamette Valley.

Kathi Myron, who grew up in Tierra Del Mar, knows the location around Sand Lake estuary of most of the tiny orchids that sprout blue blossoms in the summer. "My dad first took us fishing at Sand Lake when I was 2 years old," she says, referring to herself and her brother. "The aura around Tierra Del Mar from Sand Lake to Pacific City is in my blood, a part of me I cannot escape," she wrote in an essay about the estuary. "The ambience here has grounded me; given those of us who know this place sustenance, a sense of belonging to something bigger, something profound. The wild and almost untouched acreage surrounding the proposed golf course has been a part of this to our extended families.

"If you've known a place like this, you understand what I mean and you would know the environment here is incompatible with the planned development. This is not about prohibiting further improvements, this is about saving an area so rare, it still boasts of marshes, sand dunes, bird habitats, and as sentimental as it may sound, the tranquility of Eden."

The estuary is a rearing area for native coho and chum salmon, as well as steelhead and cutthroat trout. Many species use the estuary for foraging, roosting and nesting, including the threatened western snowy plover. Other species that make a home in the estuary include bald and golden eagles, great blue herons, egrets, songbirds, shorebirds, waterfowl, beavers, otters, deer, elk and black bear. The golf course would be built next to the estuary on Sand Lake Spit, a prime habitat for the snowy plover.

Sand Lake estuary is the last of its kind in Oregon — a fully-functioning, undeveloped tidal and dune ecosystem.

Two years ago, Seattle developer John Fought announced plans to build on the south part of the estuary, just north of Tierra Del Mar. His plan called for a 16 included a sandy spit between the estuary and the Pacific Ocean. His project was backed by two executives of Nokia Corporation, a Finnish cell phone company.

"It's the largest block of undeveloped shoreline left in private ownership on the entire Oregon Coast," says Dan Serres, an activist who grew up nearby. He is director of Flow — Friends of Living Oregon Waters — a conservation group based in Grants Pass.

The developers said their private course would attract as many as 30,000 golfers a year who would mostly fly in and stay overnight in a modest-sized clubhouse — paying membership dues of \$100,000 for the experience.

Fought and company trumpeted their assertion that the golf course, named Pacific Gables, would be friendly to the environment. They said they intended to seek certification from "Audubon

## WETLANDS LOST

Oregon's estuaries have lost most of their tidal wetlands. Only Sand Lake, Necanicum Estuary and Netarts Bay are largely untouched

Estuaries and the wetlands that surround them are the biological "hot spots" on the Coast. They are rich in food and play a key role in the life of salmon. They are also heavily used for agriculture and urban development. Since 1870, more than 68 percent of the coastal wetlands have been filled; 24 percent of the estuaries have been diked and converted to other uses. Yet little has been done to make up for past losses. Today, wetlands and estuaries are largely protected, but they are increasingly vulnerable to sprawl, pollution and logging on lands nearby. This chart lists Oregon's 17 major estuaries and the percent of wetlands and estuaries acreage each has lost.

ESTUARY	WETLANDS LOSS
Coquille	-94%
Nestucca	-91%
Tillamook	-79%
Nehalem	-75%
Yaquina	-71%
Coos Bay	-66%
Columbia	-65%
Siuslaw	-63%
Siletz	-59%
Alsea	-59%
Salmon	-57%
Chetco	-56%
Umpqua	-50%
Rogue	-41%
Necanicum	-10%
Netarts	-7%
Sand Lake	-2%

*Source: James W. Good, Summary and Current Status of Oregon's Estuarine Ecosystems, 2000*

International," which would "independently confirm" that it had complied with national environmental standards for golf course management.

What the developers failed to mention is that Audubon International is hardly independent, but is in fact a front for the United States Golf Association, an industry group of golf courses. Other backers of Audubon International include four golf course superintendents associations, golf courses and a lawn mower manufacturer. For a fee, Audubon International designates golf courses as Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries. Similar certifications are available from Audubon International to developers of cemeteries, municipal parks, campgrounds, resorts, stores, industrial facilities, marinas, residential



**TRADING WETLANDS FOR GOLF LINKS** — The developers of the proposed golf course at Sand Lake would fill 7 acres of wetlands. Another 84 acres of wetlands are located in bottomland hardwoods next to the estuary that would be chopped down and filled. *Photo by Lisa Skube*

communities, and preparatory schools.

Despite the similarities in name, there is no connection whatsoever between Audubon International and the National Audubon Society.

“Audubon does not certify golf courses, or any other development, as being environmentally sound,” says John Flicker, president of the much-larger National Audubon Society, founded in 1905. “Indeed, Audubon more often opposes such development. Audubon also owns and manages many Sanctuaries around the country. Audubon Sanctuaries are natural places protected from development, not places certified for development.”

The developers proposed to fill 7

acres of wetlands. They also would chop down another 84 acres of bottomland hardwoods next to the estuary.

Sand Lake has seen less development than any other estuary on the Coast (see list on Page 11). This amount of wetlands loss would nearly equal all of Sand Lake’s wetlands loss since 1870.

“There is no oceanfront site left on the Oregon Coast that can accommodate a development like this and avoid wetland fills of unacceptable magnitude, and the developers know it,” according to the Northwest Environmental Defense Center, a legal advocacy group based in Portland.

The Sand Lake golf project has

evolved in recent months. John Fought apparently has dropped out of the picture, but property owner Frank Bastasch of a Los Angeles suburb continues to show interest.

In June 2005 Bastasch and a consultant met with Tillamook County planning officials to discuss potential changes to the proposal. Bastasch, designer of the Eagle Creek Golf Course near Estacada, Ore., inquired whether the county would allow a hotel, timeshare condos and a restaurant in addition to a golf course at the site, according to Lisa Phipps, a county planner who also attended the meeting. Bastasch did not return a reporter’s phone calls.

The Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department has attempted to purchase the site, but negotiations stilled because of the high asking price. Allison Asbjornsen, of Netarts and a member of a citizen group, the Sand Lake Task Force, that is fighting the golf course, has closely tracked the proposal. “The owner simply wants more money than the appraisal justifies. These sites are incredibly valuable, and few very are available,” she says. “It’s an area of great beauty, and it’s close to Portland.”

If the project is built, significant impacts on local drinking water supplies are likely, says Linda Steiner of Tierra del Mar, directly to the south of Sand Lake. The Sand Lake golf course would use up to 450,000 gallons of water per day for summer irrigation. The runoff, filled with pesticides and fertilizers, would leach through the dunes into the wetlands, marshes and estuary, she says.

Tierra Del Mar hardly has enough water to meet its own needs — and sometimes it runs short. The community was without water for six hours over the Fourth of July weekend in 2005. “We solely depend on the Beltz Creek for water to our community as do Sand Lake property owners, and I don’t think the development would have any rights to the water we are supplied from this creek,” Steiner says.

Developers of the nearby Nantucket Shores gated community, who support the golf course proposal, have offered to sell water to Tierra Del Mar residents as an enticement for them to drop their opposition, she says.

Tierra Del Mar’s water supply has been threatened before. In the late 1980s, the U.S. Forest Service proposed a massive clearcut in the watershed that supplies their water.

The endangered marbled murrelet stopped the timber sale, Steiner says.



**GOLF, ANYONE?** — An eagle cruises over the surf at the mouth of the Sand Lake Estuary north of Pacific City. A plan to build an 18-hole golf course, condos and a restaurant has been discussed with Tillamook County officials. *Photo by Lisa Skube.*

“I personally spearheaded the appeals, went out with the marbled murrelet crews in surveying the proposed clearcut area and did see murrelets flying into the watershed and landing in trees.”

Today, the watershed that supplies Tierra Del Mar’s drinking water — the watershed just east of Sand Lake Estuary — is the only unlogged watershed on the Hebo Ranger District on the Siuslaw National Forest

## Life on the Coast can be a real cliffhanger

About 10 miles north of Sand Lake, on the outskirts of Oceanside, the cliffs are crumbling beneath a massive condo development known as “The Capes.” Intense winter storms swept away much of a sandy hillside during the late 1990s.

Built in 1992, the condos were marketed as a “new Salishan,” a reference to an exclusive beachside golf resort south of Lincoln City. Today The Capes are stuck in a slow motion disaster, awaiting an eventual collapse. It serves as a curiosity as well as a warning to anyone thinking of building close to shore.

None of the 130 townhouses have fallen to the sea as of yet, but geologists say it’s just a matter of time. One of the buyers was Mark Hatfield, the former Oregon senator.

The landslide under The Capes was first noticed in 1997 by local home owners. The slide began after winter El Nino-related storms wiped out the toe of dune, making it unstable. A small slope failure on the seaward side of a steep hill indicated that minor but steady movement was accelerating.

A stairway to the beach was damaged and had to be removed. Ground cracks opened, and lawns dropped 18 inches in January 1998. They fell another 5 feet a few weeks later, and fresh slumping was visible from the beach.

The main area that’s been moving is about 900 feet long and 500 feet wide. It is currently endangering 10 houses, with 10 more at risk in the near future.

Many people saw it coming. “It was built on a dune,” says Phillip Johnson of Oregon Shores’ Coastwatch program.

Oregon Shores, which fought Tillamook County’s issuance of a building permit for The Capes, contends that local governments are not considering landslide and erosion hazards when approving developments like this one. The group says the county allowed the developer to build much too close to the edge of the cliff.

The state of Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development says the collapse at The Capes could have been easily prevented, if only the planners and developers had consulted existing geologic studies. The landslide is an old structure of sand lying over muddy debris. A high modern dune that had supported the toe of the landslide gave way, triggering the collapse.

When the hill beneath the condos at The Capes crumbles, it won’t be the



**BUILT ON A SAND DUNE —** Homes along the Oregon shore will always be vulnerable to the combined effects of wind, rain and erosion. In the photo at top, The Capes development hovers at the edge of a cliff that has been collapsing since 1997. Owners sought to have riprap installed at the base of the cliff to prevent further erosion, but were denied the necessary permit. State law bans riprap in front of dwellings built after Jan. 1, 1997. Riprap prevents sand behind the rocks from replenishing the beaches, eventually leaving the beaches barren of sand. *Photo by Paul Koberstein*

**WHERE’D WE PUT THE HOUSE?** — At Falcon Cove south of Cannon Beach, middle photo, several streets of homes have fallen off the cliff. This home disappeared in the 1980s. *Photo by Joel Koberstein*

**THE RAP AGAINST RIPRAP —** At Neskowin, below right, this home was built before 1977 and therefore can legally be protected by riprap. Prof. Jim Good of Oregon State University predicts that many more beaches will be riprapped in the future, despite the state prohibition. Property owners who build too close to shore will demand a change in the law, he says. *Photo by Paul Koberstein*

first time the forces of sea, wind and rain destroyed beachfront property on the Oregon Coast. Far from it.

In the early 20th Century, a small town on Bay Ocean Spit in Tillamook Bay grew to become a popular tourist resort. Today nothing remains but sand and brush. The ocean took it out. It’s hard to find even the foundation of the hotel that once stood there.

In 1942, a development at an area known as “Jumpoff Joe” in Newport crashed down the cliff overlooking Nye Beach. More than a dozen homes were lost. In 1982, a condo development was built on the remaining bluff. Before the construction was finished, the cliff began to collapse under the foundations.

At Falcon Cove south of Cannon Beach, several streets of homes have fallen off the cliff and others are teetering on the brink.

Potential disaster lurks along rivers as well. For example, in Pacific City along the Nestucca River, buildings are hanging over the water.

Back in Pacific City, by July 2005 the Cape Kiwanda dunes had been graded



and appear ready for construction. Besides adding a new façade to a famous view, the proposed condos may also be in harm’s way. Roger Hart, a consulting geologist for Oregon Shores, contends they sand dune is not stable.

The developer, Nestucca Ridge Development, claims the dune is stable. Like its ill-fated decision in The Capes, Tillamook County sided once again with the developer.

Oregon Shores’ Coastal Law Project is battling developments in Brookings, where hillsides north of town formerly owned by U.S. Borax is targeted for a massive residential development; and in Coos Bay, where a controversial development is planned adjacent to the South

Slough National Estuarine Reserve. Oregon Shores is also proposing a law that would require sellers to warn buyers of real estate hazards before they make their purchase.

Over the next 50 years, on shorelines across the United States, erosion may claim one out of four houses within 500 feet of the ocean, according to a 2000 study by the Heinz Foundation. Roughly 1,500 homes and the land on which they are built will be lost to erosion each year, on average. Some of those mostly likely will be in Oregon.

It’s not just homes that are vulnerable. At Beverly Beach State Park south

(Continued on Page 23)