

January 24, 2008

Jetty fix again tops wish list

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TILLAMOOK — Money for Tillamook Bay north jetty repairs is again — as it was last year — first on a prioritized wish list for congressional funding drawn up last week by county commissioners.

The jetty project involves securing \$4.3 million to place boulders for jetty repair — including \$525,000 to dredge the entrance to the harbor. The jetty

project was already allocated \$3.1 million in past appropriations, which the U.S. Corps of Engineers will use to buy and stockpile boulders at the jetty site.

The list of top project-funding priorities will be sent to members of Oregon's congressional delegation, representing a united front for the county when it comes to seeking federal dollars.

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The list of projects, and a few more funding needs were presented Monday to a visiting U.S. Rep. Darlene Hooley (D-Ore, 5th Dist.), who expressed appreciation for this "consensus agenda."

The list of top-three requests for funding also include the Project Exodus Oregon Solutions projects involving creating kind of a relief valve for flood waters through Hall Slough, Dougherty Slough and a modified wetlands and swale (\$1.5 million), facilitating the exodus of flood waters to exodus to the bay.

Mark Trenholm, director of Tillamook Estuaries partnership stated in a message to commissioners, "Because of the demonstrated community support for this project and the technical rigor through which it was conceived, I am confident that Exodus represents a long-term, sustainable solution to the U.S. 101 flooding issue."

He also noted during Hooley's visit the advantage of combining the ecological benefits of creating fish passages while also moving water to relieve unacceptable flooding. It also implements a management plan that has been in place for a decade, he said.

The third priority is a combined request for funding to build an earthquake-resistant, combined City Hall and fire station in Nehalem (\$2.7 million) and an upgrade for Garibaldi's City Hall (\$87,000).

Nehalem Mayor Shirley Kalkhoven made a case last week for replacement of the Nehalem City Hall and fire station, noting that it was built in the early 1950s, is not earthquake resistant and is a danger to fire trucks and equipment, as well as a detriment to its use as an emergency shelter. She also noted its strategic value as a community shelter during emergencies.

Garibaldi's City Hall, also built in the 1950s, serves a similar function during emergencies, as was demonstrated during December's extended power outage, with some 750 emergency meals served, according to Mayor Suzanne McCarthy and City Manager Kevin Greenwood. This upgrade in a phased remodeling of the facility would allow required accommodations for the disabled and expand and improve the currently inadequate kitchen facilities to accommodate larger numbers of people during an emergency.

Other projects vying for placement on the funding priority list included:

- Two drainage projects in Wheeler, with a combined projected cost of nearly \$1.2 million, along with waterfront dredging, with no calculated cost.
- An upgrade of metal bridges along the Port of Tillamook Railroad route.
- Relocation of the World War

II-era blimp Hangar B, which houses Tillamook Air Museum at the port.

- An upgrade of the county's tsunami sirens and emergency communications.

Tillamook County is believed to be one of just a few counties in Oregon that brings diverse groups together to develop a consensus-based list of funding priorities, which it has been doing since 2001.

During Hooley's visit, other funding needs were aired, including those for:

- Raising or relocating Tillamook County General Hospital's helicopter landing pad, which is covered with water during flooding events. The estimated cost would be \$1.9 million, according to hospital officials.

- Relocation of Garibaldi's water transmission line from its two wells off the Miami River which has become exposed over a series of storm events. City Manager Kevin Greenwood estimated this could cost approximately \$80,000.

- Relocating Bay City's City Hall and Fire Hall from the tsunami zone to higher ground. This is estimated to cost about \$3 million, according to Fire Chief Don Reynolds. These facilities are essential to the city's residents during disaster events. "Without a City Hall/Fire Hall, we're in trouble," he said.

In other concerns brought before Hooley:

- Shawn Reiersgaard of Tillamook County Creamery Association pointed out the importance of the Farm Service Agency in Tillamook, which has been earmarked for closure.

- Chad Allen of Tillamook Bay Habitat and Estuary Improvement District noted the devastating impact the recent national focus on grain funneled into ethanol production rather than on livestock feed has had on grain prices. "If something isn't changed, there won't be farms anymore," he said.

- County Commissioner Mark Labhart emphasized the importance of renewing the now-expired federal Safety Net funding (which has been paid to counties and school districts in lieu of federal timber receipts).

For Tillamook County, the funding represents, \$1.8 million, or some 40 percent of the Roads Department budget, as well as \$600,000 to the county general fund. While loss of this funding will be devastating to Tillamook County, it will be devastating to three other Oregon counties, which will be in danger of "going insolvent," Labhart said.

- Commissioners Labhart and Charles Hurlman reminded Hooley of the national security implications of the WCF cable that has been damaged alongside the Port of Tillamook Bay railroad track lost in the December storm.