

Port Maintenance keeps pace through winter

The winter storm that hit Hood River County after the new year put the Port of Hood River's maintenance department to the winter test for the first time in years. From keeping critical roads and access to Port properties clear, and Port buildings damage-free, to making sure boats stay afloat at the marina, the department's schedule was on overload.

"That week was like one long, never-ending day," recalls maintenance manager Joe Ponders.



Port maintenance manager Joe Ponders (left) and long-time employee Ernie Enos

Ponders says his crew was prepared, but probably not as well as usual because the area hasn't been subjected to a serious winter storm in years. Only half of the six-man crew had experience operating the Port's plows.

With the number of Port buildings, many aged, the damage was little. A waterline at the cruise ship dock froze and blew, and has since been repaired. Also, a bank of sinks in the men's restroom at the Hood River Expo Center froze and thawed without incident.

The Port's Expo Center use was donated to the local Red Cross chapter to provide shelter and nourishment to many truckers stranded in Hood River as a result of highway closures. ODOT contacted the Port to obtain permission for trucks to park at the waterfront property until they could resume their travels.

Juggling Act

The maintenance department's first priority during a winter storm is to keep the bridge approaches clear of snow and ice. The Port cooperates with neighboring jurisdictions. ODOT and WSDOT are

responsible for the highways that lead to the bridge approaches, however the Port will generally assure the road is plowed and sanded on the Oregon side back to the intersection.

During severe winter weather, the bridge deck grating rises in esteem. "It has never been a problem during a winter storm because the snow goes right through it," Ponders says. "It's the best surface for snowy, icy conditions, although people don't like it on their chains."

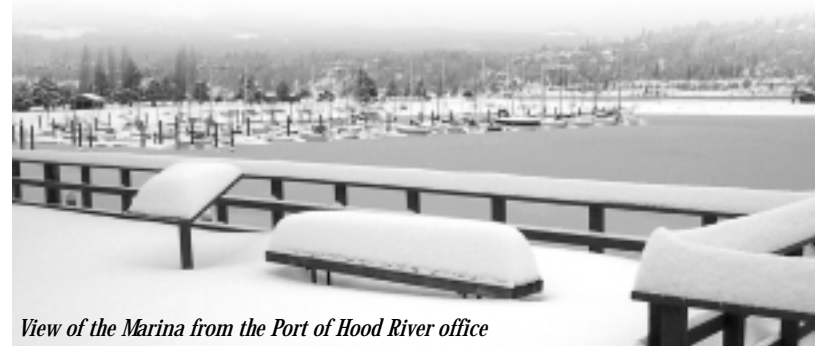
The Marina boat basin is the next priority. "We keep a close watch on boats, even though we aren't technically responsible for them," clarifies long-time maintenance employee Ernie Enos.

"The real problem with boats sinking is environmental," Ponders adds. "If a boat goes down, there's a fuel spill and then it's a severe problem." The Port office attempts to contact boat owners during inclement weather.

In addition, the department clears access to the Big 7 building and parking lot, UTS Portsite, Homeshield, and the Hood River Expo Center. "It's a real juggling contest because we try usually to get things opened up by 6 o'clock every morning," Ponders relates. "When snow is a foot or two deep and you go through with a plow, you're a real hero. Then it gets hard and sets, and you go through with a plow, and you're not a hero any more."

Fortunately the City of Hood River often helps with Portway. "And if we're passing on city roads we'll drop a plow blade just like everyone else," Enos says

The Port of Hood River's main plow is a 3/4 ton truck, aided by an open cab John



View of the Marina from the Port of Hood River office

Deere with a plow attachment, and another truck with plow blade at the airport, so efforts are limited.

The Ken Jernstedt Airfield and then John Weber Business Park receive final attention. The airport runway is kept clear for emergency landings. The Port takes care of the driveways and parking lots at John Weber Business Park; the county plows the loop road.

Access to properties in Port Marina Park, such as DMV, the Port office and the boat launch (in case of emergencies) is also required.

With six full-time crew members, Port maintenance splits up and tries to watch everything closely. Some walk through the buildings to make sure pipes aren't freezing or roofs leaking.

Seasonal shifts

"Winter responsibilities require a shift in our work," Ponders explains. "In summer, we're occupied by tourism and ground work. Beginning in September, we do a lot of building maintenance and repair." For example, the crew was indispensable in the transformation of the former Western Power plant into the site for new business Homeshield.

After about eight weeks preparing for Homeshield's occupancy, the crew turned directly to UTS Portsite to ready space for RBS Batten Systems. Next the crew is preparing for new tenant Servpro beginning in February.

The crew will soon focus on Big 7

modifications for Columbia Gorge Community College's new Hood River campus. That work schedule will take them into late spring, in time for the seasonal shift back to grounds maintenance and summer recreationalists.

Ponders worked for the City of Hood River's public works department for nine years before coming to the Port in 1988, around the time of the last cannery building demolition.

"I've plowed snow for 25 years. It's action, it's cool to be out in the middle of a snow storm," Ponders expresses. "The hardest part can be when people aren't patient. You are trying to do a job and get it done right and they are sour about it."

"There are a lot of storms worse than this one," reflects Enos, who has worked in Port Maintenance since 1980. "One year we lost the airport runway, we couldn't find it. Another year the marina froze completely."

Regardless, the Port Maintenance crew's responsibilities are like one big juggling act. "One person's small problem is just as big to them as another's big problem," explains Ponders. "We try hard to make everyone happy."

When another major storm hits, Port maintenance should be prepared. The crew stocked up on everything from windshield de-icers to sidewalk salt. "We're ready for the next one," Ponders says.

"That week was like one long never-ending day," recalls maintenance manager Joe Ponders.



Truck drivers took refuge on Portway Ave, and at the Expo Center, awaiting the reopening of I-84



Winter 2004

Bridge Redecking Project Commences

Surveying of the Hood River Interstate Bridge took place in early January to provide contractor Christie Constructors with specifications for the upcoming \$7.5 million bridge decking replacement. Patrons of the bridge most likely experienced a foreshadowing of expected crossing delays to resume February 9th.

Once the project begins, there will be on-going delays and night time closures until the decking replacement is complete in about 18 months. The Port advises bridge users to allow extra time for each trip, and to regularly obtain updated information about delay and closure schedules.

Night closures are expected to begin in early April, and will likely take place Sunday through Thursday nights, from approximately 9:30 pm to 5:00 am.

"It is imperative that we bite the bullet and get the bridge redecking done," asserts Port Commission President Don Hosford. "It is absolutely essential for the future safety of the people who use the bridge. A recent survey showed overwhelming support to get the job done soon, no matter what the inconvenience. We need to get on with it."

The interstate bridge was last completely redecked in 1952. The current project entails replacing the steel deck,

underlying stringers and guardrails, which will enhance safety and reduce maintenance costs. It will also extend the useful life of the bridge 20 years or more.

The plates of bridge decking will be assembled in Vancouver, Washington, then transported and staged near the Port of Hood River Expo Center. Decking panels will be replaced during the night time closures.

Another positive outcome of the new steel grid surface will be the discontinuation of ongoing maintenance that caused delays every spring and fall.

Reader boards will be placed on intersecting highways and Interstate 84 to alert inbound traffic of the project. The Port of Hood River is also making every effort to provide updated information to local patrons.

Forums will be held in mid-February for employers and emergency services to gain input on accommodating special needs within the contractual obligations of the project.

A public forum for interested frequent bridge users is tentatively scheduled for mid-March. More information on meeting time and location will be posted on the Port's web site, and publicized in local media.

Port seeks legal rulings on waterfront initiative

The Port of Hood River has taken steps to clarify the lawful effect of a City of Hood River citizen initiative to rezone a major portion of the Port-owned Hood River waterfront as a public park by seeking rulings from two legal bodies.

The Port asked the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) to rule on the validity of Ballot Measure 14-16, approved by City of Hood River voters in November. The majority of the Port District's residents live outside the city limits, and therefore were unable to cast

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PORT OF HOOD RIVER

PO Box 239
Hood River, OR 97031

CLIP FOR REFERENCE

Bridge users can subscribe to the Port of Hood River's **EMAIL NOTIFICATION LIST** for updates on bridge construction and closure schedules.

Please log on to the Port's web site at **portofhoodriver.com** to subscribe.

A special telephone hotline will also relay up-to-date information. Call toll-free

877-BRIDGE-0
(877-274-3430)

or locally at 541-386-6832.

For further details, contact the Port of Hood River at 541-386-1645 or email porthr@portofhoodriver.com.

The Port of Hood River values the public's feedback regarding the bridge project. Please contact the Port office at 41-386-1645 or send an email to porthr@portofhoodriver.com to express any concerns or suggestions.

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Waterfront *continued from page 1*

votes on the ballot measure. This process is expected to take the better part of this year.

Another legal measure was pursued with the filing of an action in Circuit Court to interpret the effect of Ballot Measure 14-16.

Both actions are expected to shed light on the issue of how the initiative fits into the legal and land-use framework established by state law. LUBA action is expected to settle procedural issues relating to the statewide land-use system, while a Circuit Court review of the measure is expected to look at larger legal and Constitutional issues.

"It is the fiduciary responsibility of the Port to protect its assets, and these actions should provide legal clarity to both the Port and City Council so we can move forward with the waterfront rezoning," explained Port Commissioner Bill Lyons.



Message

From the Executive Director

Dave Harlan

It's 1951. A cup of coffee costs you less than a dime and a gallon of gas less than a quarter. That big house on the hill above downtown Hood River seems overpriced at

\$30,000. And crossing the Columbia to visit friends or relatives on the Washington side costs a whopping 75 cents. That's a lot of money when the average weekly paycheck is \$60 or less.

It's 2004. That cup of coffee costs a dollar or more, depending on terminology and additives. That gallon of gas will cost you close to \$2, and that house on the hill will run you well over \$200,000. But if you're running to Bingen or White Salmon, or perhaps coming the other way for some grocery shopping, you're still paying 75 cents to cross the Columbia. And 75 cents is a whole lot less of most people's weekly take home pay than it was in 1951.

But you don't have to pay. Those who want to avoid the toll can by driving roughly 20 miles to the east to cross at The Dalles, and roughly the same distance back. But doing so will cost a lot more in time and money than paying the 75 cents, and the savings in time alone is enough of an incentive for most people to pay the toll.

That's because an extended social and economic community has built up around the bridge, a community that would not be there without it. The bridge makes it possible for members of that extended community to live in Washington but shop and do business in Oregon. And, without that link, the interrelationships and interconnections that tie Bingen, White Salmon and surrounding communities to Hood River simply wouldn't be there today.

The presence of a sales tax on the north side of the Columbia combined with the lack of one on the south side would still mean Washington residents living nearby would be inclined to shop in Oregon. But that shopping would likely occur in Portland or in The Dalles via the US Highway 197 Bridge. And while they wouldn't be paying 75 cents to cross the river, they would be paying higher costs in time and money to get to shopping, employment and entertainment opportunities. And every time they filled their gas tank on the Oregon side they would also pay, as they do now, the gas taxes that are used to maintain the bridge at The Dalles.

Since the Hood River Bridge isn't part of the state or federal highway system, it's not eligible to receive gas tax monies to pay the cost of maintenance. And since the bridge is now 80 years old, it needs to be maintained. To do that, toll revenues will be needed as long as the bridge is in use. The redecking project now under way is part of the Port's ongoing efforts to maintain the bridge into the foreseeable future. A new crossing is being discussed, but is decades in the future. In the interim, the existing crossing will need to continue to serve, helping to maintain the social and economic links that its existence has created.

RBS Battens keeps wind in sails

A new tenant at UTS Portsite building is local sail batten manufacturer, RBS Battens Systems. RBS was founded by Romeo Robichaud in 1985 in San Diego, Calif. Robichaud moved the company to the Gorge in 1993, like many local entrepreneurs yearning for a new lifestyle, after years of coming to Hood River to network at the annual windsurfing Pro-Ams.

In those days, windsurfing battens made up 95 percent of RBS's product line. Today windsurfing battens comprise around one percent of RBS's products as a result of the company shifting its primary focus to the yachting industry.

RBS supplies battens for all types of sailboats—from dinghies to racing boats—and everything in between.

The batten maker's two largest accounts happen to be the two largest sail makers in the world, North Sails and Quantum Sails.

"Our carbon battens are produced using an aircraft grade T-700 series carbon fiber which gives us a higher stiffness to weight ratio for our performance battens," according to Robichaud. "North and Quantum order them for most of their race boats." Smaller sail lofts place orders, too, keeping RBS orders shipping all over the world.

RBS Battens' success is mainly a result of the company's unique products. Robichaud explains, "Our pulform process uses a proprietary epoxy resin matrix instead of polyester that sets us aside from competitors." With this process RBS makes a stronger, flexible batten that will take more bend.

RBS Battens Systems was previously located at 1027 Industrial from 1993-99. The company then licensed Chinook Sailing Products to manufacture its battens for the past few years, but strategically chose to bring production back in-house. "We are moving toward a whole new process, a thermal plastic process that we will be using in the future," Robichaud relates, "this will enable us to create our own stock, as well as new products."

For the time being, the UTS Portsite building suits the company fine. If the thermoplastic process takes to market, RBS will likely expand to accommodate an increase in production.

RBS Battens just might be the battens of choice in the 2004 Olympics in Athens. "We supply the majority of battens to Olympic Class boats like the Stars," Robichaud claims. "The trials are coming up, and my neighbor Steve Erickson is crewing with Mark Reynolds, who's been competitive in the last four summer Olympics."

As the future looks bright, RBS's slogan, "Keeping the wind in your sails," should continue to ring true for the new Port tenant.

Romeo Robichaud demonstrates the flex characteristics of RBS Battens' state of the art materials



Busy Year Ahead for the Port

2003 was an active year for the Port of Hood River, with major projects moving forward in areas of waterfront rezoning, bridge project planning and preparations, property sales and new tenant leases. This year promises to be another productive one, with the continuation of important projects and many new ones on the horizon.

Columbia Gorge Community College Coming to Big 7

The Columbia Gorge Community College temporary Hood River site will be the Port's Big 7 building, as the city of Hood River approved its conditional use in the light industrial-zone. The college hopes to find a permanent site in the next three to five years.

CGCC will occupy up to 5,000 square feet at 616 Industrial St., on Big 7's top floor, next to new tenant Gorge Networks. Also occupying the former fruit storage plant are Electronics Assemblers, Century Moulding, Shred Alert, Northwest Graphicworks, Carbsense Foods and Equal Exchange Coffee.

Initial CGCC plans will be to offer a state-of-the-art technology center and a basic skills training center. Two classrooms will also provide space for the curriculum, as well as a convenient location for students seeking two-year associate degrees and/or the foundations to transfer to a four-year institution.

The Community College's budget constraints have limited its ability to generate a Hood River campus after voters of Hood River and Wasco Counties approved annexation of eastern and central Hood River County in 2001.

On the upside, community colleges nationwide have been tapped by President Bush as a solution for affordable job training, key to the country's future prosperity.

"Educational access and economic development are the targets of the Hood River Tech Center. And the timing couldn't be better," claims Dr. Frank Toda, CGCC President. "President Bush hopes to provide \$250 million to the nation's community colleges for training in technology-based fields, and the kind of partnership we're creating with the Port of Hood River is right on the mark with that initiative: leveraging resources and utilizing

technology to strengthen our community's workforce and our educational systems."

The Port of Hood River has worked closely with the college over the past year, and will discount the lease on the Big 7 space, with gradual annual increases.

Also aiding in the campus development is the Port of Hood River's acquisition of a \$150,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education to purchase and install the latest in computer equipment and software. Other grants from the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will aid in campus enhancement.

Improvements to the building's interior are scheduled for this winter and spring, as are parking improvements to allow for 40 spaces at the north side of the building. The opening of the college site is tentatively scheduled for summer term.

"The value of a CGCC campus in Hood River is unquestionable from the education viewpoint," illustrates Port Commissioner Bill Lyons. "However, it is just as important from an economic development viewpoint. The Hood River County Economic Development Policy is built on three legs: to retain and expand existing businesses, to diversify by attracting new businesses, and to provide high quality education and training. A key action item in the policy is to 'establish a community college satellite campus and a technology center' which is viewed as critical steps for ensuring the educational and economic future of the community."

The program will also benefit local high school students seeking advanced college credits.

For more information or suggestions, please contact Mike Doke at the Port of Hood River office, 541-386-1645, or email porthr@portofhoodriver.com.

Columbia Building Sold

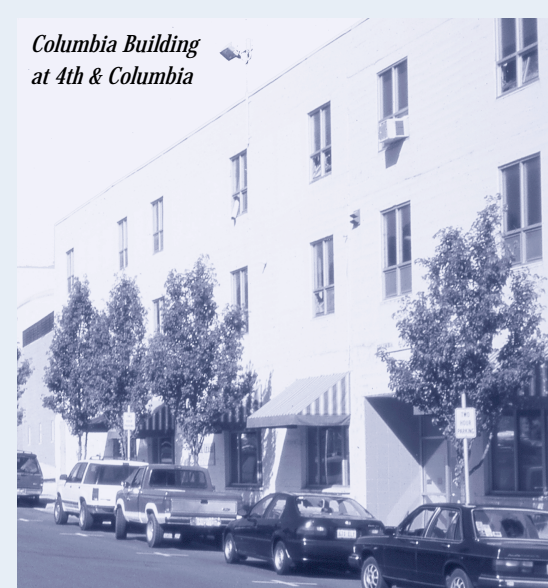
The Big 7 is the only Port-owned building left in the Diamond Cannery Complex, after the sale of the Columbia Building last fall. The

Columbia Building was purchased by Key Development Corp., an investment firm from Bend which also owns the GRAF Building, another Cannery Complex property. The Port of Hood River

purchased the Diamond Fruit Cannery Complex in 1984, including 14 buildings on 21 acres of downtown Hood River real estate for \$800,000. The complex renovation required a Port investment of \$9.5 million, plus nearly \$1.5 million in federal, state and local funds. The Port's debt was paid off in mid-2002.

Now the Diamond Complex is home to over 20 businesses with over 900 employees, generating nearly \$20 million in annual payroll. The entire complex has been back on the tax rolls for over a decade now, with a total assessed valuation exceeding \$20 million.

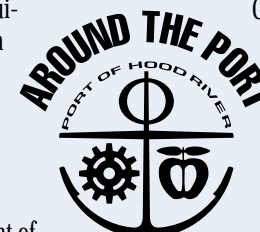
Columbia Building at 4th & Columbia



New Tenants at Waterfront

There are two new tenants at UTS Portsite. RBS Battens Systems (see story page 2), is joined by Servpro, a residential and commercial cleaning business that specializes in catastrophic restoration due to fire, smoke and water damage. Owners of the local franchise serving Hood River, Wasco, and east Clackamas Counties are Joel and Annette Olsen. Servpro moves to Hood River in February from the Port of Klickitat, to accommodate another tenant's expansion needs.

Approximately 7700 sq. ft. of space remains at UTS Portsite, and 1900 more will be added when Community Corrections moves its office to the Hood River County Courthouse.



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PORT MEETINGS

Regular Port Commission meetings are held on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month in the Expo Center Conference Room. The Port welcomes your questions, comments and suggestions.