



# Oregon Coastal Notes

Oregon Coastal Zone Management Association

November 21, 2006



## *The Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribe Honors Wilbur Ternyik at Seaside Ceremony—Onno Husing, OCZMA Director*

When most people think about Seaside, Oregon, they remember the busy downtown, the hotels, gift shops, arcades, and restaurants, and the turn-around/prom/seawall structure on the oceanfront.

At the North end of Seaside, however, there is a very different special place. This is where the Necanicum River, Newanna Creek and Neacoxie Creek join together and empty into the Pacific Ocean. This extraordinary setting—a delta in the dunes—is blessed with a salt marsh and uplands dominated by Sitka spruce.



On Saturday, May 27, 2006, a remarkable ceremony took place here; a gathering of the descendants of the original human inhabitants of this land, the Clatsop-Nehalem people. This is the Native American Tribe that hosted Lewis & Clark and the Corps of Discovery at Fort Clatsop during the winter of 1805-1806.

### *A Brief Look Back in Time*

Despite their pivotal role in history, the Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribe never received recognition by Congress. What happened? During the 1800s, European settlers overwhelmed their lands on the North Oregon Coast. In response, in 1851, the Clatsop-Nehalem people entered into an agreement with their colonizers (the Tansy Point Treaty). In exchange for their lands, the Clatsop-Nehalem people would be granted a reservation where Fort Stevens is located today. And, the Clatsop-Nehalem people would be allowed, for all time, to fish and hunt at the confluence of the Necanicum, Neawanna, and Neacoxie. Again, Congress didn't ratify the treaty or recognize the Clatsop-Nehalem Tribe.

In 1986 local conservationists established an organization called the North Coast Land Conservancy (NCLC). Over time, the NCLC developed a relationship with the descendants of



the Clatsop-Nehalem people. The alliance is a natural one. For thousands of years, the Clatsop-Nehalem people utilized this strategic location in Seaside because of the access to water and teeming wildlife populations. And, the NCLC was formed to protect part of this natural legacy.

In 1997, a real estate trust headquartered in Texas purchased a large piece of undeveloped property where the Necanicum, Neacoxie Creek, and Neawanna come together on the north bank of the Necanicum. The land, 19.5 acres, was zoned for development. Predictably, a large condominium project was in the works. The NCLC and other local leaders began to raise awareness about the natural and historic significance of this unique place.

The developer purchased the property without ever visiting Seaside. As the project proceeded, obstacles to developing the property mounted. When the developer, Robert Barnhart (a Texan), saw photos of the property, he grew concerned about the impact of the condominium project. What a fortunate turn of events. The Clatsop-Nehalem people finally got a good break.

Mr. Barnhart donated the 19.5 acres to the NCLC. A short time later, in 2001, the Seaside Urban Renewal District acquired an additional 2.5 acres of land adjacent to the property along Highway 101 for \$860,000. A federal Scenic Byway Grant (administered by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)) provided \$640,000 towards the purchase. It took hard work, tenacity and luck to pull the deals together.



### *A Moving Ceremony*

On Saturday, May 27, 2006, a ceremony honoring Wilbur TERNYK (80)—a dedication of the bronze statue of Wilbur sponsored by the Bridges Foundation—was held at this site in Seaside. Wilbur was honored for his contributions to coastal planning, and, because he is a Tribal elder. Wilbur asked the Bridges Foundation to locate the statue at the future site of the natural history center. Why does this location mean so much to Wilbur? Wilbur was born in

Astoria and grew up in Warrenton. Wilbur is also a direct descendant of Chief Cobway, the famous Clatsop Chief who greeted Lewis & Clark. Wilbur moved to Florence, Oregon in the 1950s. But, his spiritual roots remained in Clatsop County. So, for Wilbur, the decision to locate the bronze in Clatsop County is a homecoming.



It was chilly and a little rainy the morning of the ceremony. Thank goodness the winds were calm. A large sturdy white tent sheltered the 250 or so attendees. People under the tent could look beyond the speakers/podium at the estuary. An ocean-going canoe carved from a large cedar log (a replica of canoes used by Clatsop-Nehalem people) was parked on a trailer next to the tent. During the ceremony, a procession of wildlife visited the site, making the event even more special.



Neal Maine, the Executive Director of the NCLC, was master of ceremonies. Neal shared the story of how the land was preserved. Seaside Mayor Don Larson and Clatsop County



Commissioner Patricia Roberts offered gracious welcoming remarks. Ann Richardson from Congressman David Wu's Office read a statement from Congressman Wu. Steve Shane, a Tribal member, dressed in traditional clothing, recited a Clatsop prayer and addressed Wilbur as "grandfather."

Dick Basch, a leader of the Clatsop-Nehalem Tribe, recounted the history of the Clatsop-Nehalem people. Dick also explained why the land here is so special. I then had the honor and challenge of describing Wilbur TERNYIK's amazing life story in 10 to 15

minutes. I concluded my remarks by declaring, "I do not believe that we are here today by accident. In times of great need the Great Spirit, the Lord, or the Universe, however you see it, provides the people the leaders they need. Wilbur TERNYIK is such a leader."

Members of the Clatsop-Nehalem Tribe presented Wilbur and Joyce TERNYIK with a number of gifts. State Senator Betsy Johnson delivered a brief but extraordinary tribute. Lorenzo Ghiglieri (the sculptor of the bronze—see his web site for additional information), Rainy Arago Lehrman (the carver of the wooden base), and Jack Bridges (of the Bridges Foundation) shared their thoughts.



It was Wilbur's turn to speak. Dressed in his signature Indian jacket with a necklace of grizzly bear claws, Wilbur reflected upon the history of the Oregon Coastal Conservation & Development Commission (OCC&DC) (information on history of OCC&DC can be found on OCZMA's web site), and the significance of the ceremony to the Clatsop-Nehalem people. With humility, TERNYIK recognized the contributions of many other leaders he worked with over the years. Wilbur changed subjects and talked of his love of plants. He asked the crowd, "What's the most important thing about plants?" Wilbur called out, "Their roots! Plants are a lot like people. When they've got good roots, they have a good chance of making it in life."

Near the end of his speech, Wilbur said, "Now, I have something I want to give you." He reached down into a bag and pulled out a remarkable Clatsop-Nehalem Tribal artifact: a several hundred-year old front-piece to a Clatsop ocean-going canoe carved from whalebone. Holding it aloft, Wilbur exclaimed, "This may be the most precious artifact from our Tribe. Many years ago, a short distance from here, this artifact was taken from a Clatsop Indian grave. It was



probably the grave of a significant person.” Wilbur continued, “A collector in Medford ended up with it. He gave it to me because he knew I was a Clatsop. Today, I return it to you.” Wilbur handed the whalebone carving to the Chair of the Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribe, Diane Collier, as a wave of applause enveloped them.

At the final stage in the ceremony, three Clatsop-Nehalem teenagers (two young women and a young man) were asked to come forward. Wilbur presented the young people two large feathers. The feathers symbolized the passing of the torch to the next generation of Clatsop-Nehalem people. With a warm smile, Wilbur said to them, “We have made an important start today. We must remember our ancestors who lived at this special place. Now, it’s up to you to carry on the tradition.” It was an honor to witness this compelling moment.



### *What’s Next?*



The ceremony on May 27, 2006 marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribe and the North Oregon Coast. The Tribal Council and the NCLC are seeking resources to build a natural history center next to U.S. Highway 101 at the property. The Bridges Foundation (thanks to Kathy Bridges, Jack Bridges and other members of the Bridges Family) made a gift to the Tribe to get things rolling. The great majority of the 20+ acres in north Seaside will remain undeveloped. A low-impact nature trail will wind through the property.

In addition, an effort is underway to gain formal recognition of the Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribe. On the Tribe’s web site ([www.clatsop-nehalem.com](http://www.clatsop-nehalem.com)) there’s a description of the Clatsop-Nehalem history/culture and the Tribal recognition process. Formal recognition of the Tribe would, of course, be an achievement. But, for the Clatsop-Nehalem people, the most important thing is that their journey has begun; a journey that could cement the memory of the Clatsop-Nehalem people for all time.

The bronze statue of Wilbur TERNYK is on display at the Gateway Discovery Center: Coastal Natural History Center in North Seaside. This small temporary facility is located on the west side of U.S. Highway 101 next to the river. It’s easy to find. In time, the statue of Wilbur TERNYK and other exhibits will be re-located to a larger natural history center at the site. The address is 2674 Highway 101 North. The phone number for the Gateway Discovery Center is 503-738-5618. People are welcome to contribute to the planning process for the building of the NCLC’s natural history center. Contributions can be made in the form of a check or by credit card (see the North Coast Land Conservancy’s web site for additional information on making contributions.



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## Information about OCZMA

The Oregon Coastal Zone Management Association (OCZMA), formed in 1976, is a voluntary association of coastal counties, cities, ports, soil & water conservation districts, and the Coquille Indian Tribe on the Oregon Coast established to provide a forum for the resolution of issues of particular concern to the local governments of the coast and the people they represent.

### Association Officers

**Lucie La Bonté** • Chair (Curry County)

**Vice Chair** • Vacant

**Terry Thompson** • Secretary-Treasurer (Lincoln County)  
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## Association Membership

### Counties

Clatsop County  
Coos County  
Curry County  
Douglas County  
Lane County  
Lincoln County  
Tillamook County

### Cities

City of Brookings  
City of Coos Bay  
City of Cannon Beach  
City of Depoe Bay  
City of Florence  
City of Garibaldi  
City of Lakeside  
City of Lincoln City  
City of Nehalem  
City of Newport  
City of North Bend  
City of Port Orford  
City of Reedsport  
City of Rockaway Beach  
City of Tillamook  
City of Toledo  
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Port of Bandon  
Port of Brookings Harbor  
Oregon International Port of  
Coos Bay  
Port of Garibaldi  
Port of Gold Beach  
Port of Nehalem  
Port of Newport  
Port of Port Orford  
Port of Siuslaw  
Port of Tillamook Bay  
Port of Toledo  
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### SWCDs

Clatsop SWCD  
Coos SWCD  
Curry SWCD  
Lincoln SWCD  
Siuslaw SWCD  
Tillamook SWCD  
Umpqua SWCD

### Indian Tribes

Coquille Indian Tribe