

## The Oregonian

# Abandoned boats along Portland waterways receive long-awaited attention

*By Diana Kruzman  
August 12, 2019*

When the sailboat finally sank, leaving its mast and part of its hull sticking up above the waters of the Willamette River, it spurred a flurry of action at Sellwood Riverfront Park.

For months, residents of the Sellwood neighborhood in Southeast Portland and other visitors to the park had noticed five or six boats tied to the public dock. Many were piled high with belongings and they attracted groups of people who often hung out on them.

Visitors found it harder to access the water and worried about where the trash and sewage from the boats were ending up.

When the sailboat sank toward the end of July, residents like Scott MacLean pushed hard for city government to do something about it.

“You give these people notices but no one ever tows them, so over time these boats have all started sinking,” MacLean said. “There’s sunken boats up and down the river.”

The Sellwood park boats are part of a larger issue that city, county and state agencies are struggling to tackle. Since the start of a new funding cycle on July 1, these agencies have ramped up efforts to clear abandoned and derelict vessels from Multnomah County waterways – which number close to 150 at last count.

In just over a month, two agencies alone — the Oregon State Marine Board and Department of State Lands – have spent about \$50,000 to remove a dozen boats from the Willamette and Columbia rivers, according to Marine Board program manager Josh Mulhollem.

That includes 10 boats seized from the Swan Island Lagoon on July 26, an operation that the agencies had to hold off on for more than a year for lack of funding.

The number of abandoned and derelict vessels around Portland has “taken off dramatically” over the last few years, Mulhollem said, and the two agencies quickly ran through most of their money in the first year of the last two-year funding cycle.

Now, Mulhollem said, they’re playing catch-up.

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In the last two years, the Marine Board spent nearly all of its \$150,000 budget to remove 45 vessels from public waterways in Oregon. Most of them — 37 — were near Portland, in Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas and Columbia counties. Each cost several thousand dollars to remove.

The agency must stretch its budget to cover the entire state, but Multnomah County has by far the biggest share — 147 vessels currently require cleanup in the county alone, according to a count earlier this year by the Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office.

“If you do the math, we’re going to struggle to get the whole way to June 30, 2021, at the current rate we’re going,” Mulhollem said. “This problem is bigger than all of us can deal with.”

“Non-compliant” vessels in the Portland area refer to abandoned boats and those not seaworthy, not properly registered or otherwise breaking the rules in some way, said Sgt. Mark Herron, who leads the Sheriff’s Office’s boat removal efforts.

While numbers for previous years aren’t available because this is the first year the Sheriff’s Office used a new counting method, it’s clear from observation that it’s a growing problem, Herron said.

That’s cause for concern, said Justin Russell, who manages the Department of State Lands’ abandoned boat cleanup program. The boats can take up space at public docks or release trash and sewage into the water, he said.

“A lot of the boats are not in a good state of repair, so there’s a lot of boat sinkings,” Russell said. “And when the boats sink, the owners tend to walk away, and the taxpayers, our agencies, are left to get them out of the water.”

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For MacLean, the boats tied to the dock at Sellwood Riverfront Park were so obstructive that he contacted the city seven times by email and phone to have them removed.

MacLean, a 54-year-old real estate agent, said he uses the park a few times a week for walking and paddleboarding and had seen the boats there, completely encircling the dock, for the past several months.

City ordinance prohibits keeping vessels tied up there overnight, but MacLean said the boats blocked access to the water and left no space for temporary docking.

He felt frustrated that the boats’ owners had let some of them deteriorate to the point of sinking.

“Boat ownership comes with responsibility and hopefully a sense of stewardship towards the water and other boaters,” MacLean said.

About a week after the sailboat sank, Portland Parks & Recreation — which manages the Sellwood dock and is responsible for removing abandoned vessels there — posted notices telling the boat owners that they would have to move.

The sunken sailboat had been tied to several trees and was threatening the dock’s structural integrity, said Parks & Recreation spokesman Mark Ross. Officials closed the dock for two weeks starting on Aug. 7 so the bureau can conduct safety tests, he said.

The sunken sailboat’s owner managed to remove the boat himself, sparing the city the towing costs. But over the past five years, Portland Parks & Recreation has removed seven boats from all of its properties along city waterways at a cost of \$12,470, which it shared with the Marine Board. The agency operates five parks with public docks.

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The problem with abandoned vessels goes hand-in-hand with the city’s homelessness crisis, Russell said, with many people turning to boats as a form of shelter when they can’t find housing elsewhere.

In the last few years, he’s seen more clusters of boats in areas such as the North Portland Harbor and around Ross Island, often connected to homeless camps on the beach.

For the most part, the State Lands Department doesn’t go after people who appear to be living on their boats as long as they abide by a state law requiring them to move five miles away after 30 days, Russell said. For those whose boats get confiscated because they break the rules, the

department sometimes works with homeless services agencies such as JOIN to offer alternative housing solutions.

Quinn Colling, an outreach coordinator for JOIN, said often people prefer to live on the water rather than in a camp or at a homeless shelter.

“A lot of people living on the water wouldn’t consider themselves homeless,” Colling said. “They have a roof, they have a functioning toilet, they have a way to cook their food. People feel secure and safe and self-sufficient.”

When authorities enforce the 30-day rule, it affects their sense of safety, Colling said.

“People are trying to get their needs met in any way possible, trying to be close to services, where they work, their communities of support,” he said. “When you’re having to move frequently it impacts all of that.”

For Mulhollem, though, the major problem with people occupying boats in the water is what happens once the boats no longer function.

Sunken boats are three times more expensive to remove, Mulhollem said, and once one reaches that point, agencies are just “treating the symptom” of a larger problem.

Instead, he said the Marine Board is trying to prevent those boats from becoming abandoned in the first place.

“We’re telling people that they need to have an end-of-life plan for your boat,” Mulhollem said. “Watercraft eventually become obsolete, and part of owning a watercraft is knowing you’ll have to dispose of it.”

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Your City Hall: Plan touts benefits of deconstruction**

*By Jim Redden  
August 12, 2019*

#### **Public comments sought on proposal to double houses and duplexes that must be deconstructed**

**WHAT IS HAPPENING?** The city's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability is accepting public comment through Thursday, Aug. 15, on a proposal to the number of homes planned for redevelopment that must be deconstructed instead of demolished. Deconstruction reduces waste and airborne contaminants caused by demolition, but increases housing costs slightly because it is more expensive and takes longer.

**WHAT WOULD CHANGE?** In 2016, the City Council required that residential redevelopment projects deconstruct rather than demolish houses and duplexes that were built in 1916 or earlier, or that are designated as historic regardless of age. The bureau says that such homes account for roughly 33% of the 240 that are torn down every year in Portland. The bureau estimates the requirement has so far resulted in more than 2 million pounds of material salvaged for reuse.

The bureau now wants to expand the requirement to houses and duplexes built in 1940 or earlier. The bureau estimates the requirement would apply to approximately 66% of homes torn down every year.

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** The bureau says that deconstruction protects health, creates pathways to construction careers and generates both affordable and high-end reusable building materials. It says the change would: create a two-fold increase in capturing demolition waste, which then can be reused (annual increase of approximately 800,000 pounds); remove the equivalent of approximately 128 more cars from Portland's roads for a full year; and create more opportunities for both existing and new deconstruction contractors, including businesses owned by and employing women, people of color and other under-represented communities in the field of construction. Since the requirement was first created, the number of certified deconstruction companies in Portland has increased from two to 10.

**WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS?** The bureau admits that deconstruction costs more than demolition, although the cost difference is coming down. Contractors confirm deconstruction costs thousands of dollars more than demolition and also takes longer, in part because of the still-limited number of certified companies. The additional cost is a relatively small percent of the total price of a finished home, however.

**WHAT CAN I DO?** You can learn more about the proposal at [www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/738154](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/738154). To submit comments or ask questions, contact Shawn Wood at [shawn.wood@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:shawn.wood@portlandoregon.gov) or 503-823-5468.

A public hearing to consider the proposed amendments will be scheduled at Portland City Council in early fall. If approved by the City Council, the proposed amendment would go into effect on Dec. 31, 2019.

## **Sara Boone makes history as chief of Portland Fire & Rescue**

*By Zane Sparling  
August 13, 2019*

### **Commissioner Hardesty appoints city's first-ever female African-American fire chief at PCC ceremony.**

History was hewn with an axe as the city's first-ever female African-American fire chief took the helm of Portland Fire & Rescue.

From the podium at the swearing-in ceremony, Fire Chief Sara Boone told a large crowd of family, friends and fellow first responders that her No. 1 priority was ensuring the safety of everyone who calls Portland home.

"My position is not a position of power, but a platform of support," Boone said in a speech met with cheers and applause at the Cascade Campus of Portland Community College on North Killingsworth Avenue on Monday, Aug. 12.

"Courage and strength, care and compassion are not qualities worn on our shoulders and sleeves like rank," she continued. "They are not part of this uniform that we take off when our shift ends. These values are the foundation of who we are as a department, a city and a nation."

The chief shared that her journey began when her birth mother made a choice, "based on love," to give her up for adoption. Boone then grew up in Portland with a family that taught her "anything is possible."

She graduated from Lincoln High School as an accomplished athlete, and later joined the fire bureau's apprenticeship program following a chance conversation with a fire inspector while student teaching at Marshall High.

She was the bureau's first female African-American firefighter when she joined in 1995, and also the first to be promoted to battalion chief in 2014. Over her 24-year career, Boone has gained leadership experience with the bureau's operations, logistics and safety divisions.

Overseeing a bureau with a 136-year-long history as a paid firefighting force, Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty said the appointment was long overdue. But despite the "deep bench" of talent within Portland Fire & Rescue, Hardesty said Boone's promotion wasn't a foregone conclusion.

"Just like most firefighters, she gave me a list of reasons why she would be a horrible choice," Hardesty recalled with a laugh. "She didn't know that I had a secret weapon, and that was Ryan Gillespie."

Gillespie, who has finished his six months as interim fire chief, was one of many who praised Boone for the job. Gillespie met Boone during his first shift at Station 14 about 20 years ago.

"You have a passion for this," he said, "and now with you as our fire chief, that passion will spread even further."

Boone presented a special commendation to Erwin Warren, a retired trainer of countless firefighters during a career of decades with the bureau.

When Warren taught Boone, it was part of a 24-person class that had access to only one engine. A bit of a stretch, considering that Portland typically assigns just four firefighters to each truck.

A lot has changed since then, but not everything.

"I was impressed then, and I'm impressed now," Warren said of Boone.

## **Willamette Week**

### **Portland's Yearly Traffic Death Toll Just Hit 35—Higher Than In All Of 2018**

*By Hannah Chinn*

*August 12, 2019*

**The most recent crash occurred Monday morning along Southeast Division Street, one of the deadliest streets for traffic in the city.**

A woman critically injured in a Southeast Portland crash Monday morning has died, according to Portland police. Her death brings the year's total number of traffic fatalities in this city to 35—more than in the entirety of 2018.

The crash occurred shortly before 5 am today. Police said it involved two vehicles, and a second driver was arrested at the scene.

The crash occurred around Southeast Division Street and 112th Avenue, ranked one of the deadliest corridors in the city for all modes of transportation. Despite recent efforts to make the street safer, this is the third fatality in the outer Division stretch in the past eight months.

Vision Zero, an initiative adopted by the City of Portland in 2015 to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries on city streets, released data recently indicating that traffic-related deaths in 2018 were the lowest in four years. But 2019 stats show that progress is slower than the city might hope.

"The latest data indicate that both deaths and serious injuries resulting from traffic crashes have decreased in Portland relative to prior year data," Vision Zero's 2018 report states. "...[But] although these data are promising, one year does not make a trend and one death is too many."

## **The Portland Mercury**

### **NW Everett Gets a Bus-Only Lane**

*By Blair Stenvick*

*August 12, 2019*

This week, cars driving along NW Everett Street are learning to share.

Over the weekend, Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) crews transformed one of NW Everett's two traffic lanes into a bus-only lane, spanning the distance between where NW Everett intersects with NW Broadway and the Steel Bridge. The new lane is expected to speed up trips for buses that use NW Everett's Steel Bridge connection to cross the Willamette River—namely, TriMet's 4, 8, 16, 35, 44, and 77 bus lines, which combined carry over 4,000 people each day.

The project is part of Portland's Central City in Motion (CCIM) plan, a slate of 18 projects meant to ease congestion in downtown Portland and the city's inner east side that were adopted by Portland City Council last year. Other CCIM projects include making the Better Naito bike lanes permanent, and creating a bus-and-bike-only lane on SW Madison in May 2019.

"Transit is one of the most efficient, equitable, and sustainable ways to move people in cities," reads a PBOT press release. "Improvements like these on NW Everett Street reduce congestion and make riding the bus more convenient and reliable, encouraging more Portlanders to leave their cars at home when traveling into the Central City."

Though the new bus lane (technically a "Business Access and Transit Lane," meaning cars can still use it to make right turns) only comprises about seven blocks, PBOT and TriMet say they expect the change to greatly improve Portland's entire transit ecosystem. Buses have slowed as congestion has worsened in Portland's core—for example, PBOT says Line 4 buses are 14 percent slower than they were 10 years ago—and eliminating the chokepoint near the Steel Bridge will hopefully have a ripple effect on the rest of downtown traffic.

Recent data from the bus and bike lane on SW Madison backs up that theory. Line 2 is one of TriMet's most populated bus routes, and it uses the SW Madison bus lane to reach the Hawthorne Bridge when headed eastward. Since May, TriMet has observed that Line 2 buses are 20 percent faster during evening commute hours. Line 14, another route that includes SW Madison, has become 60 percent more likely to be on schedule.

This is one of several PBOT projects meant to improve traffic congestion in downtown Portland. PBOT has plans to install a bus and bike lane over the Burnside Bridge either this year or next. In June, Willamette Week reported that City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who oversees PBOT, has a plan to add more bus-only lanes throughout the city. The full details of that plan have not yet been made public, but it will include painting those bus lanes red to keep drivers out—something PBOT also plans to do for the SW Madison and NW Everett bus lanes, once it

receives approval from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The FHWA has recently approved red bus lanes in San Francisco, among other cities.

TriMet is working closely with PBOT to see these changes through—the TriMet board voted to contribute \$3 million for bus projects in July. A TriMet staffer said at the time that there was a “ripeness within the city” for red paint lanes to be enacted quickly

### **Further Reading (linked below)**

**[Summer in the City Is Hot, but Some Neighborhoods Suffer More](#)**