



Kristy McCaskell courtesy photo | Skamania County Pioneer

## A late bloomer

Stevenson resident Kristy McCaskell sent in a photo of a trillium in bloom on March 22, the second day of spring. But her attempt to capture the first trillium was bested by Skamanis resident Bernadette Peters, who had her photo of a trillium in the March 11 edition of *The Pioneer*.

## Interstate bridge replacement program joint statement from Washington, Oregon governors

Oregon and Washington remain fully committed to replacing the 109-year-old Interstate Bridge. The bridge represents a critical connection between the two states and is vulnerable to collapse in a major earthquake. An Environmental Impact Statement stated: "This collapse potential is due to the fact that hundreds of timber bridge support piles sit within loose sand that can liquefy during an earthquake." While costs have increased due to a variety of factors, the need to replace this outdated bridge has not changed – and delaying action only increases risk and expense. With the news of the Coast Guard's recent approval of a fixed-span bridge, the momentum to move forward and begin construction on the first, core set of projects that will allow for a safer, more earthquake-ready bridge, connect the bridge to Interstate 5, and extend light rail service to Vancouver. This approach allows available federal and state funds to invest into the local economies, deliver the core components of this

critical bistate infrastructure program quickly, and create thousands of good paying jobs to get Oregonians and Washingtonians to work delivering a project decades in the making. This approach also allows for future completion of the additional projects in the five-mile project corridor when funding is identified. This core set of projects is substantially funded and final federal approval is expected shortly.

Source: Washington Office of the Governor

## USDA, Columbia River Gorge Commission support disaster recover following wildfires

In response to wildfires that burned nearly 15,000 acres and destroyed more than 200 homes and structures in 2025, the Columbia River Gorge Commission and USDA Forest Service have revised the Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area to allow for expedited permitting processes and critical infrastructure repair while protecting natural resources within the Columbia River Gorge. A major milestone in relief efforts was reached Feb. 24, when USDA announced its concurrence with the revised management plan approved by the Columbia River Gorge Commission. Counties can immediately begin implementing the Management Plan amendment while working to revise their own ordinances. "Wasco County is excited to support disaster recovery with a new expedited permitting path and options for temporary storage and recreational vehicle living," stated Kelly Howsley Glover, Wasco County community development director said in a

press statement. "We appreciate the teamwork with the Gorge Commission and Forest Service and the effort that went into this pioneering amendment to the Management Plan." The revised Management Plan allows for temporary RV living and expedited landowner storage solutions. Amending the current management plan works to provide longer-term solutions for landowners while balancing the need to protect Gorge resources. Current Management Plan amendments were submitted to the four Treaty Tribes for consultation and underwent a public review process. The Gorge Commission unanimously voted to adopt the Plan amendment on Jan. 13 and submitted the approved Plan amendment to the Secretary of Agriculture for concurrence. "This amendment reflects the kind of collaborative work that defines the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. In the wake of last summer's devastating fires, counties and landowners now have additional clarity to

rebuild. We're committed to being responsive to the changes the Gorge experiences while protecting the resources that make this place special," said Casey Gatz, acting forest supervisor for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Amending the Management Plan marks a pivotal step toward revitalizing the impacted areas and ensuring the community emerges stronger from this hardship. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area encompasses 292,500 acres of Washington and Oregon, where the Columbia River cuts a river canyon through the Cascade Mountains. The USDA Forest Service manages National Forest lands in the National Scenic Area and works together with the Columbia River Gorge Commission to protect and enhance scenic, natural, cultural and recreational resources of the Columbia River Gorge while encouraging local economic development consistent with that protection.

Source: Columbia River Gorge Commission

## With recall efforts resolved, Stevenson council member Lucy Lauser resigns

By Emily Harris  
Courtesy of UpLift Local

said this was a "necessary" decision.

Stevenson City Council member Lucy Lauser is resigning at the end of this month, after a year of turbulence stemming from two instances where she took off her top and displayed her breasts in public in support of transgender rights.

"My mental and physical health have suffered almost as much this past year as they did when I was homeless," she said. "For the last several months, the only reason I have remained on council is because resigning too early would have resulted in dismissal of my recall appeal."



Lucy Lauser

Those incidents led to two recall petitions against her, both now dismissed, and a criminal indecent exposure charge, which is still pending. Lauser is a transgender woman and maintains that her actions were constitutionally protected political speech, a position the Washington Supreme Court upheld in its ruling on one of the recall petitions.

She said it was important to allow the state supreme court to rule on her case.

Lauser also said she can now be more effective outside of a political role.

Lauser, who was elected in November 2023, told Uplift Local that she had anticipated resigning for months, as the culmination to her series of demonstrations. "Shortly after the 2024 election, I went out on the courthouse lawn dressed as the character V from the movie 'V for Vendetta,' with a sign that said 'body autonomy or rebellion,'" she said. "And then I did my topless protests. I took a case to the state Supreme Court. And the conclusion of that series of protests was going to be resigning from city council."

"I've been able to do more to feed the hungry outside this position than in it. I've done more to provide shelter for the homeless outside this position than in it. And I've done far more to defend the constitutional rights of my constituents outside this position than in it," she read from her statement. "I have more important things to do, and holding political power is no longer necessary to get them done."

Lauser publicly announced her resignation at the end of the council's March 19 meeting, reading aloud a prepared statement that expressed "great sadness, and also relief," thanked her supporters, and

Lauser told Uplift Local she plans, among other things, to focus on strengthening Skamania's Pride celebrations, and providing safe spaces for gender diverse people.

Other Stevenson city council members and Mayor Jenny Taylor, who Lauser had told of her plans in advance, gave little visible reaction as Lauser read her resignation letter, thanking her for her service before continuing council business.

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## Poop! There it is ... talking about it could save a life

Your body is always changing. What feels typical at one stage of life may not feel the same later. For example, digestion, energy and bathroom habits change over time, and it's important to pay attention to those changes. Poop is one way your body communicates with you. Changes in your stool, bowel habits or digestion can be early signs that something needs attention. Many people ignore those signals or feel too uncomfortable to talk about them. But dismissing symptoms can delay care that could prevent colorectal cancer or catch it early. Many people are diagnosed late because they brush off their symptoms or don't mention them to their health care provider. Rates of colorectal cancer

are increasing, especially among younger adults. In 2024, this type of cancer was the third-leading cause of cancer deaths in the state, according to the Washington State Department of Health Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. In 2022, only 68 percent of adults were up-to-date with colorectal cancer screenings. Talking about poop may feel awkward or difficult at first. But listening to your body and addressing any issues with a health care provider can help make sure you stay healthy. The next time you have a doctor visit, have a discussion on poop, it may just be life-saving.

Source: Washington State Department of Health

## News Briefs

### Community breakfast in Carson on Saturday

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 137 is hosting a community breakfast, 8 to 10 a.m., Saturday, March 28 at 841 Wind River Road, Carson. A hearty, home-styled breakfast will be served with chicken fried steak, eggs, potatoes, fresh fruit and milk included. Cost is \$10 per person, \$7 for children ages 3-10, children under 2 eat free.

Source: American Legion Auxiliary Unit 137

### Columbia Land Trust sites provide recreational opportunities

Columbia Land Trust recently debuted a new website feature – an interactive map of featured lands that were conserved by Columbia Land Trust and offer recreational opportunities. Access to nature is one of the organization's conservation priorities, and they hope the public enjoys exploring these places that they have protected for future generations. A map on the groups' website online at [www.columbialandtrust.org/visit/](http://www.columbialandtrust.org/visit/) shows the locations.

The sites on this map span a wide range of ecosystems, terrain and convenience. A few have maintained trails, but most are wild and remote, so bring a healthy sense of adventure.

Land Trust staff regularly visit and work on the lands they have conserved.

Each site has a page with important details about the landscape, guidelines, and tips for visiting. The public is welcome and encouraged to email [landaccess@columbialandtrust.org](mailto:landaccess@columbialandtrust.org) with questions, or to share a photo or story from a visit.

Source: Columbia Land Trust

### PitchFest looking to invest in some good ideas

Entrepreneurs have an opportunity to jump start an idea, as Mid-Columbia Innovation Hub hosts Gorge PitchFest 2026.

The PitchFest is open for applications featuring the next generation of entrepreneurs from across the Columbia Gorge who are ready to share their ideas. Whether launching something new, growing

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**Celebrate the retirement of Skamania County Treasurer Vickie Clelland, 2 to 4 p.m., Thursday, March 26 at the Hegewald Center.**

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## This day in history

- 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire kills 146 in New York City.
- 1957 U.S. Customs seizes copies of Allen Ginsberg's "Howl."
- 1967 Martin Luther King Jr. leads march against the Vietnam War.
- 1969 John Lennon and Yoko Ono hold their first "bed-in" for peace.