

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CITY OF NEWPORT  
DEDICATES THE SAFE HAVEN HILL  
TSUNAMI EVACUATION ASSEMBLY PROJECT**

The City of Newport and other coastal Oregon communities are well aware that the cities they call home are at risk of a significant Cascadia earthquake that would generate a large tsunami. This means that everyone in tsunami inundation zones will need to get to high ground within 15 to 20 minutes.

Areas of Newport, particularly the South Beach Peninsula, have a great deal of property within the inundation zones. This area includes the Oregon Coast Aquarium, NOAA, the Hatfield Marine Science Center, Rogue Brewery, and OMSI's Camp Gray. Additional properties located in the immediate area include private residences, campgrounds, lodging establishments, and other businesses.

To address the evacuation needs of people in this area, the city joined with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Oregon Emergency Management (OEM), and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to develop a forested hill at the south end of the Yaquina Bay Bridge as a tsunami evacuation assembly area. The assembly area, now known as Safe Haven Hill, is capable of accommodating up to 2,300 people.

This project is an example of a successful partnership between the City of Newport, FEMA, and ODOT. ODOT owns the property, but the project was made possible through funding from FEMA in the amount of \$663,273, and the city's South Beach Urban Renewal District in the amount of \$221,091.

Before the project could move forward, the city hired a geotechnical engineering firm to evaluate Safe Haven Hill to determine if it is expected to survive the earthquake and subsequent tsunami. The report determined that the hill was sound, and the planning for the assembly area began. Once the planning phase was complete, work began in earnest with the creation of three trails to the hilltop from the north, east, and south sides of the hill. The trail on the south side of the hill is paved to allow easier access for people with mobility needs and emergency vehicular access. Stairs were constructed at this location

as well. Interpretative signage was created and donated by the Hatfield Marine Science Center.

The hill is already well-used by children attending OMSI's Camp Gray walk to the top of the hill and learn about tsunamis and tsunami evacuation on their first day of camp. The trails are also used recreationally by walkers to access a serene hilltop with amazing views of Yaquina Bay.

The ribbon-cutting and dedication of the project took place on Friday, April 29, 2016. This was an opportunity for the community to utilize the trails, check out the emergency supply cache, and visit with stakeholders and neighbors. Attendees came from throughout the area and included Senator Arnie Roblan, Representative David Gomberg, Newport City Councilors, Commander Brian Parker and other members of NOAA's Pacific Marine Operations Center, Bob Cowen and other members of the Hatfield Marine Science Center staff, Dr. Althea Rizzo of the Oregon Office of Emergency Management, Carrie Lewis, President of the Oregon Coast Aquarium, representatives from FEMA, City of Newport staff, and Dr. Richard Beemer, former City Council member and long-time promoter of the project.

The city encourages everyone to visit this unique project which is a wonderful partnership.

For additional information, contact Peggy Hawker, at [p.hawker@newportoregon.gov](mailto:p.hawker@newportoregon.gov), or 541.574.0613. Additional photographs are available on request.

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