

# Girl dies in fall over cliff 1962

PACIFIC CITY, Ore. (AP) — Gayla Beth Greenwood, 14, Vancouver, Wash., fell to her death in the Pacific Ocean Saturday from 130-foot high Cape Kiwanda on the Oregon Coast.

Authorities said the girl went near the edge of the cliff, and the ground crumbled under her feet.

She apparently was killed outright. Her body was retrieved by two boatmen who put out into the surf.

Gayla, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mike Greenwood, Vancou-

ver, Wash., was visiting the coast with a group of teenagers, led by Jack Potts, Portland.

Potts, who saw the girl fall, made his way down the cliff in a rescue attempt. Potts was picked up by the boatmen.

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**They are still  
talking about  
that drawing**

# Anguished letter prompts McCall to order 'death area' fenced off

SALEM (UPI) — In an unprecedented move the state is going to spend several thousand dollars fencing and posting signs on private property at Cape Kiwanda on the coast, where 11 persons have fallen to their death in the past 12 years.

Cape Kiwanda is just north of Pacific City in Tillamook County.

Gov. Tom McCall has ordered the State Highway Division to

make the installations, after receipt of an anguished letter from the father of a boy who, with a companion, fell to his death at the cape in June, 1969.

B. A. McPhillips, who owns the 300 acres surrounding the cape, said he cannot afford to fence it. McPhillips, who lives in McMinnville, is chairman of the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission.

David Talbot, director of state

parks, said temporary signs are now in place on the cape. About 300-400 feet of fencing will be put up. He said he hopes in a month or so. He estimated the entire project will cost "less than \$5,000."

Robert Davis, executive assistant to McCall, said there is no precedent for this type of expenditure on private property.

William J. McNicholas, business representative of Steam-

Fitters Union Local 235, Portland, said 11 young persons have died on the Cape Kiwanda cliffs in the past dozen years, including his young son and the boy's friend.

In 1969 McNicholas said he contacted McPhillips, the property owner, and asked him to place warning signs. McNicholas said the signs were never put up, so he wrote the governor.

McNicholas asked the governor to have the state buy the land, or to arrange to have it fenced and signs posted.

McCall immediately ordered the State Highway Division to obtain McPhillips' approval to place warning signs along the cliff.

McNicholas told the governor, "The untimely death of my son

has been ever present on my mind, and my great love for him prompts me to appeal to you as our governor and state leader to set in motion an activity that will prevent other people from being killed at Cape Kiwanda.

Since that letter, last September, an 18-year-old girl has fallen to her death at the same spot.

Feb 1972

# Airman drowns

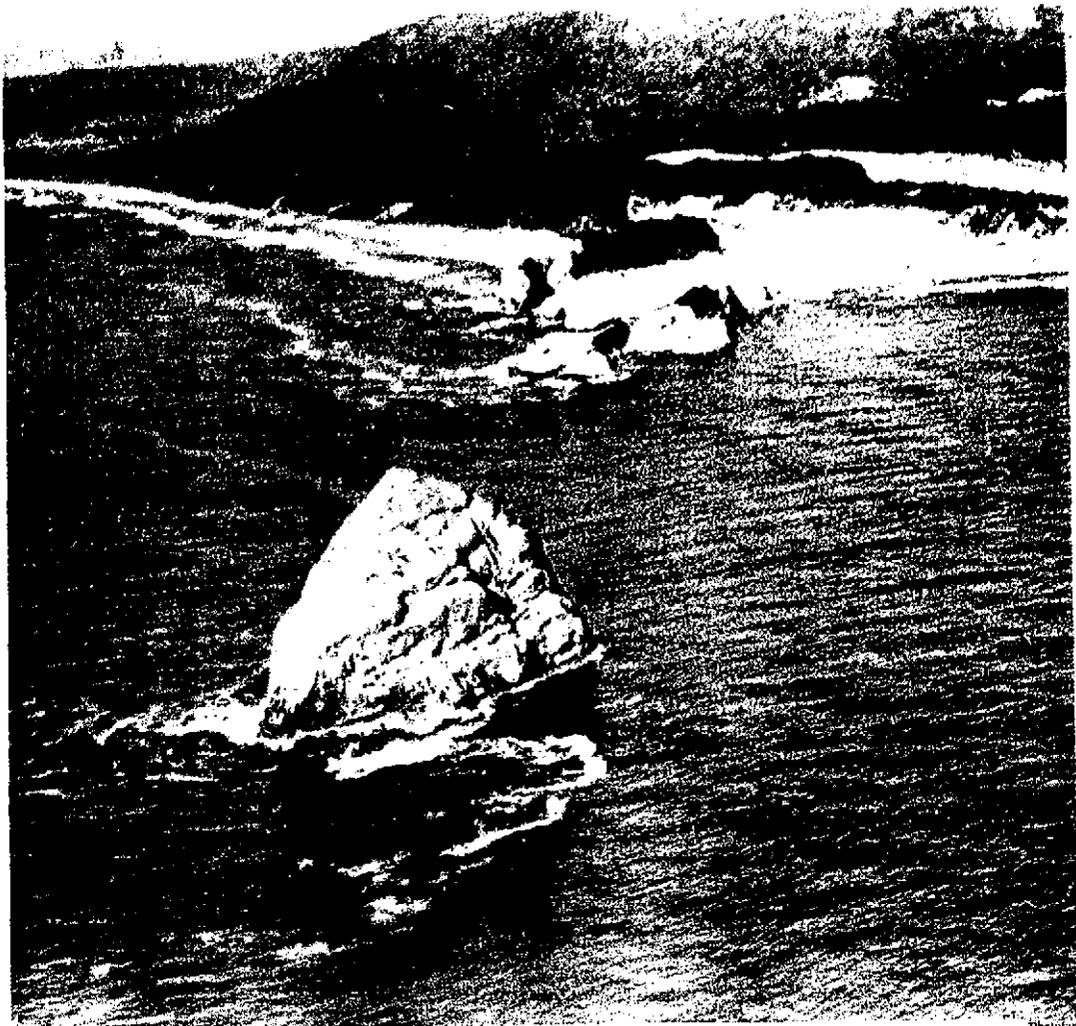
**CAPE KIWANDA, Ore.**

A 21-year-old airman stationed at Mt. Hebo air station was missing and presumed drowned in the Pacific Ocean Friday after he fell from Cape Kiwanda.

Tillamook County sheriff's deputies identified the missing man as George W. Johnson of Gladewater, Texas.

Officers said Johnson fell from Cape Kiwanda at approximately the same spot where several other persons have lost their footing and fallen to their deaths in the past year.

1973



Photofax

## ***Oregon scenic area spared***

Portland General Electric Co. announced it has decided not to buy the 702-acre Miles Lake site near Cape Kiwanda, Ore. Officials

said seismic tests indicated geological uncertainties canceled plans for nuclear plant consideration.

# State to buy Cape Kiwanda

May  
1973

**SALEM (AP)** - Cape Kiwanda, a nationally known landmark on the Oregon Coast, will be purchased by the state along with an adjacent two miles of beach frontage.

The announcement Tuesday ended two years of sporadic negotiations between the state and B. A. "Barney" McPhillips of McMinnville, whose family has owned the property for generations.

Federal funds from the Bureau of Recreation will be used to acquire the property for \$793,000.

Gov. Tom McCall said after learning of the purchase agreement, "This is the kind of solution we've been working for - one that . . . preserves for all time a magnificent piece of a precious heritage."

**THE CAPE**, a rugged headland in Tillamook County, often is described as the most photogenic spot on the coast.

Sen. William Holmstrom, D-Gearhart, and Rep. Phil Lang, D-Portland, co-chairmen of the Oregon Legislature's Joint Ways and Means Committee, said they will submit the pro-

posal to the full committee for approval.

McPhillips owns 302 acres in the area north of Pacific City. He is selling one mile of beach frontage to the state and donating the cape and another mile of beach, a total of 127 acres.

He will retain the remaining heavily-timbered acreage on the east side of McPhillips Drive, a county road.

**BY DONATING** the portion of the land to the state, McPhillips, a retired banker, will get a substantial tax break.

Lang and Holmstrom said the two miles of beach had been appraised for the state at \$1.5 million.

"The state secures two miles of magnificent beach front and . . . keeps the scenic and majestic cape in public ownership," they said.

McPhillips, who is also chairman of the State Environmental Quality Commission, has had the land for sale in recent years because of increased property taxes.

**McPHILLIPS** negotiated with the highway commission

last year, but the agency decided against the purchase, saying the cape was too dangerous.

Fourteen persons have been killed at the cape by falling or being swept into the sea. Although the land is privately owned, the McPhillips family has left it undeveloped and open to the public.

Glenn Jackson, chairman of the highway commission, told the co-chairmen of Ways and Means that fences would be erected at dangerous spots.

After negotiations ended last year, Portland General Electric Co. took out options on the property for consideration as a nuclear power plant site.

**THIS PROMPTED** the introduction of several bills directing state acquisition of the property and prohibiting construction of such plants on the coast.

One of the measures was defeated, then revived and sent back to committee in the House. The other measures are still in committee.

PGE dropped its options on the property two weeks ago after drilling showed it was

unsuitable for a nuclear plant site.

Gov. McCall urged the reopening of negotiations between Jackson and McPhillips. The negotiations took place in the past 10 days.

**REP. NANCIE Fadelcy**, D-Eugene, chairman of the House Environmental Committee, said she received more mail and telephone calls urging purchase of the cape than on any other environmental issue.

A leading proponent of state acquisition was Ray Atkeson, a nationally known Portland photographer, whose pictures of the cape have appeared on the cover of Life Magazine and other publications.

Atkeson describes the cape as the most photogenic spot on the continent.

Opposition to state acquisition came from Tillamook County officials, who fear further erosion of the county's small tax base.

## World's largest

**SAN JUAN, P.R. (UPI)** - The world's largest radio-telescope is located near Aracibo, west of San Juan.

# Cameraman hits fencing at Kiwanda

**GLENEDEN BEACH (UPI)** — An Oregon photographer who popularized Cape Kiwanda pictorially has urged action to correct what he charges are over-reactive measures by the State Highway Department in "fencing off the cape's most outstanding study and beauty areas."

Ray Atkeson, a member of the Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition Cape Kiwanda Committee, issued the statement Monday after visiting the cape Sunday to survey the fencing operation.

He had appeared for the coalition at legislative hearings in Salem to seek state acquisition of the cape, where a number of persons have fallen to their deaths in recent years.

"What is left for public view is a very unsightly and all-encompassing cyclone fence supposedly constructed to protect visitors from danger," he said.

"Equal results could have been achieved with limited and inconspicuous fencing and posting," he said.

"What has occurred is an indiscriminate over-reaction by the Highway Commission following recent accidents at the cape. This is the same commission that might have prevented some accidents if it had acquired the property when it became available instead of deliberately stalling acquisition until finally forced to act by public demand."

The coalition was to consider the fencing of the cape at its annual meeting Saturday here, said Kenneth Fitzgerald, OSCC president.

Apparently because of jawboning by Governor Tom McCall, a way has been found to get scenic Cape Kiwanda into public hands. The governor, the highway commission, the leadership of the joint Ways and Means Committee, and the owner of the land have come up with a solution that should remove most objections.

Using money from the Federal Bureau of Recreation, the state will pay \$793,000 for 127 of the 302 acres owned by Barney McPhillips, a retired McMinnville banker. The land has been in his family for many years, but he wants to sell because of the \$10,000 annual property tax bill and also because he is genuinely interested in environmental questions. But he had wanted to sell all 302 acres in one chunk.

The part the state acquires includes the cape itself, south of Tillamook, and two miles of beach. Mr. McPhillips will keep the timbered eastern section. This should help to satisfy Tillamook County residents who objected to having the land removed from the tax rolls.

Still in the legislative pipeline is House Joint Resolution 21, which directs the highway commission to buy the cape. It has one joker in it. It directs development of the land as a state park site, with the proviso that the cape itself be left in "as nearly natural state as possible."

A "natural state" at Cape Kiwanda is what we don't want. That is one of the most dangerous headlands on the Oregon coast. Made of soft sandstone, it is the constant victim of wind and water which scoop out the dirt under tufts of grass. Handholds on the cliff give way easily. In 10 years, the cape has claimed 13 lives. It will be essential to post the area with warning signs and in many cases to build guard rails to keep the gullible from the edge of the cliffs. That's not keeping the park in a natural state. But it's sensible.

# Sneaker waves sweep two off Oregon coast; 1 rescued

By The Associated Press

Erratic waves coming ashore after a storm that hit the Oregon Coast earlier this week swept a 17-year-old boy to his death near Pacific City, but a minister caught in the surf at Big Creek was rescued by bridge inspectors.

The boy and his friends were trying to cross some rocks near Cape Kiwanda on Wednesday when a wave hit him and swept him out to sea, said Lt. Matt Pocock of the Coast Guard station at Astoria.

The Coast Guard used two helicopters, a jet and three boats to search for the boy until nightfall, but they spotted nothing, Pocock said.

The boy's name was not released Wednesday night.

A day earlier, the Rev. Susan Nelson, 61, was swept off the shore next to Big Creek, which empties into the Pacific between Florence and Yachats, as she was beachcombing with a friend, the Rev. Adele Hustis of Eugene.

Nelson said she saw the wave, but didn't think it would hit her.

"I thought I could just back up, but it knocked me off my feet," Nelson said. A second wave hit her, then a third, which washed her into Big Creek, swollen with rain. The creek carried her into the surf, where she was tossed "over and under and out of sight and back up again."

She screamed and struggled, and then remembers nothing.

Nelson's cries for help were heard by Ivan Silbernagel, Mike Kieffer and Bill Brimhall, three Oregon Department of Transportation workers who were inspecting the Big Creek Bridge.

"We heard a yell for help, and we looked up and saw a lady in the water, yelling and screaming," Kieffer said. The men ran to the beach.

"All I could see was a pink coat," Silbernagel said. "It looked like a rag out there floating, she was coming in and out with the waves."

# Man drowns in surf

By The Associated Press

May 1994

**ASTORIA** Authorities abandoned efforts Monday to recover the body of a man who drowned Sunday in the surf at Cape Kiwanda. Authorities identified the victim as James Harvey, 41, who recently moved to the north coast area. He is the son of Jim Harvey, a retired head of the Portland police training division. Harvey apparently climbed outside a protective fence above Cape Kiwanda and a wave swept him into the ocean.

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# Police identify missing teen who fell 50-feet at Cape Kiwanda



By **Lori Tobias** | [For The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

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on April 07, 2009 at 8:00 AM, updated April 07, 2009 at 8:28 AM

A teen who went missing in the ocean after falling 50-feet from a sand dune at Cape Kiwanda in Pacific City Monday has been identified as Tyler Robertson, 18, according to Tillamook Sheriff Todd Anderson.

Robertson is the grandson of retired McMinnville Police Chief Ken Gudeman.

A witness told deputies a group of men were playing on the dune when Robertson got too close to the edge and fell, landing on the barnacle-covered rocks below.

Moments later, the surf washed him out to sea.

The U.S. Coast Guard and local rescue agencies searched for Robertson for much of the afternoon and evening, and are continuing the recovery efforts today, Anderson said.

Alcohol may have been a factor in the accident, Anderson said. "We know other people in the party had been drinking. We have not been able to determine if Mr. Robertson was drinking."



## Body found on beach identified as Portland man swept into ocean

Posted: May 05, 2014 4:40 PM PDT

Updated: Jun 02, 2014 4:44 PM PDT

By FOX 12 Staff **CONNECT**

TILLAMOOK COUNTY, OR (KPTV) - A body found on the beach on the Oregon coast has been identified as a man who was swept into the ocean while rock climbing.

A person called 911 after spotting the body two miles south of Cape Lookout in Tillamook County at 6 p.m. on Sunday.

Deputies recovered the body and identified the man as James Alejandro, 25, of Portland.

Alejandro had been missing since April 24. That afternoon, he was using a rope climbing system to scale a section of Cape Kiwanda near Pacific City.

A large wave came crashing in and knocked him into the water.

Witnesses said he was not using any additional safety lines or equipment.

Helicopters and a ship from the U.S. Coast Guard searched the area, but he was never found.

Friends told Fox 12 that Alejandro was slacklining too close to the ocean. They said he was new to the hobby, but he was good at it. Still, they said once he was swept in, there was nothing they could do.

"It's still difficult to put into words what we saw, what we experienced," said friend Matthew Marino in April. "We'll just try to remember him for who he was."

Alejandro was originally from the Chicago area, but had lived in Portland for about three years.

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Possible sighting of missing

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# 16-year-old Salem boy dies in fall from Cape Kiwanda cliff





A 16-year-old Salem boy, Rick Nelson, died when he fell from the cliffs above Cape Kiwanda on the Oregon coast Sunday night. (Stuart Tomlinson/The Oregonian/OregonLive)



By **Stuart Tomlinson | The Oregonian/OregonLive**

on June 29, 2015 at 2:18 PM, updated June 29, 2015 at 2:26 PM

A 16-year-old Salem boy died after falling off a steep cliff onto rocks below Cape Kiwanda on the north Oregon coast late Sunday night, Tillamook County authorities said Monday.

Tillamook County Sheriff Andy Long said deputies and emergency medical personnel were dispatched to the **Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area** at Pacific City at 11:45 p.m.

The boy was identified as Rick Nelson, a student at **Sprague High School** in Salem.

Long said Nelson was part of a group of five people who hiked past a safety fence on the cape. A caller to 911 was unsure if Nelson had fallen into the water or onto the rocks below.

A rope rescue team from the Netarts Fire Department located Nelson's body on the south side of the cape on the rocks near the water's edge, Long said; he was dead of traumatic injuries.

"There are some indications that alcohol may have been involved," Long said.

Long said the incident remains under investigation.

-- Stuart Tomlinson

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# Cape Kiwanda tragedy came as free-spirited Corvallis teen, 18, was finding her way

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By [Carli Brosseau | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

[Follow on Twitter](#)

on August 14, 2015 at 6:27 PM, updated August 14, 2015 at 7:38 PM

Elise "Ellie" Dickey loved the wild Oregon coast, especially [Cape Kiwanda](#).

She loved running up the big sand hill, wading in the icy surf and climbing along the cliffs, her parents said.

"It was one of her favorite places," said Dickey's mother, Jennifer Wright. "She was adventurous. As beautiful as it is, it is also dangerous."

"We were all 18 once," Wright said.

Dickey turned 18 in May and was excited to launch her adult life. She graduated from Crescent Valley High School in Corvallis, moved into her first house, got a part-time job at Arby's and began a new relationship.

Dickey and her boyfriend, [Sean Yamaguchi](#), 22, took a trip to the coast the afternoon of July 25. They were reported missing four days later.

Their bodies were **recovered this week**. The Tillamook County medical examiner ruled that both had drowned.

"I don't think she was reckless," said her father, Nathan Dickey. "She just wasn't scared."

Both Dickey and Yamaguchi are remembered as free spirits. They'd been dating for about a month, and both their families said they seemed happy.

Dickey loved to draw, paint and sculpt. She would prowl thrift shops and yard sales to put together a unique wardrobe. She even hand-painted some clothes.

"She had a real strong sense of herself and who she was," Wright said.

She loved the freedom of the outdoors and savored pushing her physical limits.

"She would climb a tree, and we would say, "Come down, Ellie," and she would just go higher and wave at us," said Lynn Kanaya, Dickey's grandmother.

"She would say, "I'm here, world. I'm free. Let's see what's in store for me."

Dickey loved life, especially animals, but she also looked upon death with clear eyes, her family said.

She had an interest in taxidermy and mortuary science, in part for their combination of art and science.

As a child, Dickey sometimes went to the pathology lab where her mother worked. She looked at skin and brain tissue with curiosity, not fear.

Dickey had a collection of four rats, which began with a gift from her mother on her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. She named the hairless one Baby Raisin.

She was planning to enroll at Linn-Benton Community College in the fall.

Just before their trip to the coast, Dickey and Yamaguchi picked blackberries and shopped for groceries together.

Chips and avocados were left out on the counter.

"It was such a hopeful gesture," Nathan Dickey said. "An accident can happen so fast."

-- Carli Brosseau

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# Coast Guard suspends search for missing girl, 17



The view of Cape Kiwanda from Cape Lookout. The U.S. Coast Guard said it suspended the search for a missing 17-year-old girl who fell off a cliff and into the water on Feb. 1, 2016. (Terry Richard/Staff)



By **[Tony Hernandez | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)**

**[Follow on Twitter](#)**

on February 02, 2016 at 11:16 AM, updated February 02, 2016 at 6:22 PM

**Updated at 1:20 p.m.:** Oregon State Police resumed the search for the missing teenager, identified as Megan Owens of Marysville, Washington. She was with three other people when she fell in an area commonly known as the Punch Bowl, according to state police.

The U.S. Coast Guard is suspending the search for a missing 17-year-old girl who **[fell off a cliff](#)** and into the water at Cape Kiwanda, an official said Tuesday.

Rescue crews received a report Monday afternoon after a 16-year-old called for help and reported that she and a friend had been hiking and the 17-year-old had fallen. Rescue crews faced 8- to 10-foot swells and wind speeds of 5 to 10 mph when the first 911 call was reported, Coast Guard officials said Monday.

"Despite our best efforts and an exhaustive multi-agency search, we were unable to locate the missing girl," Greg Merten, operations unit controller at Coast Guard Sector Columbia River, said in a news release Tuesday. "Our deepest condolences go out to the loved ones affected by this terrible tragedy."

Helicopter and boat crews searched for 19 hours and traveled 426 miles within a 72-square-mile area, officials said.

A Coast Guard lifeboat crew from Tillamook Bay and Coast Guard helicopter crews from Astoria and Newport assisted local fire and rescue crews in the search for the girl.

-- Tony Hernandez

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# 19-year-old dies after fall at Cape Kiwanda; friends swim to safety



By [Jim Ryan | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

[Email the author](#) | [Follow on Twitter](#)

on February 29, 2016 at 4:16 PM, updated March 02, 2016 at 4:18 PM

A teenager from Woodburn became the fifth person to die in eight months at Cape Kiwanda after [he fell into the water while climbing the dunes there](#), authorities said Monday.

David Lopez, 19, drowned Sunday. Two of his companions who also fell made it safely to shore, the Tillamook County Sheriff's Office said in a news release.

The chain-reaction accident began when one of the friends tumbled into the water and Lopez and the other friend fell in while trying to help him, deputies said.

The other two men had minor cuts and scratches and were treated at the scene, said James Oeder, division chief for the [Nestucca Rural Fire Protection District](#).

A U.S. Coast Guard crew hoisted Lopez to the beach, but emergency crews pronounced him dead at the scene, Oeder said.

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## NORTHWEST NEWS

The three friends were part of a group of about five people climbing in an area known as the Punch Bowl, deputies said.

Earlier this month, [17-year-old Megan Owens of Marysville, Washington, also fell into the water](#) at Cape Kiwanda. She has yet to be found. [Elise "Ellie" Dickey](#), 18, and her boyfriend, [Sean Yamaguchi](#), 22, both drowned during a day trip to the coast last summer.

Both Owens and Lopez went around a wire fence to climb in the area, deputies said.

Tillamook County Sheriff Andy Long said the people who have died or fallen into the water at Cape Kiwanda are generally in the same age group — teens and 20s — and that they're generally not locals.

"In our opinion, no matter what kind of fence you put up, they'll probably go around it," he said.

For a while, he said, people were trying to go beyond the fence to reach dead trees and place beer cans on dead branches. Fire and rescue crews picked up the trash and cut down the trees in hopes of keeping people from crossing the fence. That project ended last week, Long said.

Mike Stein, north coast district manager for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, said it's challenging to keep people safe in "a place that can be treacherous but attractive at the same time."

The department plans to place a seasonal ranger at Cape Kiwanda to help control crowds and deliver safety messages, he said. That ranger will work during warmer periods, possibly beginning May 1, but hasn't been hired yet.

— Jim Ryan and Tony Hernandez

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# Seven deaths at Cape Kiwanda spark inquiry



**Zach Urness, Statesman Journal** 9:58 p.m. PST March 3, 2016



(Photo: Photo courtesy of OPRD)

**PACIFIC CITY** — How do you get 19-year-olds to pay attention to warning signs?

That's the question, in a nutshell, that state parks officials, lawmakers and community members face as they attempt to reduce the troubling number of deaths at Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area ([http://oregonstateparks.org/index.cfm?do=parkPage.dsp\\_parkPage&parkId=130](http://oregonstateparks.org/index.cfm?do=parkPage.dsp_parkPage&parkId=130)).

Seven people have died at the popular Oregon Coast destination (</search/Oregon%20Coast/>) since 2009, including five during the past eight months. The average age of the victims is 19.

Most of the time, the victims hiked up a sand dune, disregarded fencing and signs, climbed onto a hazardous sandstone bluff and fell into the ocean.

"It's a beautiful place, it's easy to reach, and there are lots of people that climb up there," said Chris Havel (</search/Chris%20Havel/>), a spokesman for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. "It's one of those places that draws people in and, even when they're confronted by signs and fences, they stop thinking about safety."



STATESMAN JOURNAL

Teen dies after fall at Cape Kiwanda; 5th death in 8 months

(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2016/03/01/teen-dies-after-fall-cape-kiwanda-5th-death-8-months/81155808/>)

In response to the most recent incidents — two fatal accidents in Februar (</story/news/2016/03/01/teen-dies-after-fall-cape-kiwanda-5th-death-8-months/81155808/>)y — state and county officials, along with Sen. Arnie Roblan (</story/news/politics/2014/12/11/legislative-committee-members/20278061/>), are taking part in a town hall meeting March 17 in Pacific City to discuss how to prevent future incidents.

There have been fencing and signs warning people to stay off the bluff since 1996. The fencing was extended to 1,275 feet long following a fatal accident

in 2009.

Parks officials are hoping for more input from the community on what things they could try to dissuade people from climbing to the dangerous location.

"More fencing and signs — along with devoting more staff time through park rangers — are the things we know how to do, and that's where we'll start at the meeting," Havel said. "But we want to hear from the community and listen to other suggestions."

One of the tragedies hit close to home for Salem and Kezler residents.

Slick Rick Nelson, a 17-year-old football player from Sprague High School, fell backward off the cliff at Cape Kiwanda in June 2015 and died from traumatic injuries.

"We were just hanging out, having a bonfire, and some people went up to the top (of the dune)," Brendan Hassler, 16, who was present at the time of the accident, told the Statesman Journal this past June. "It was dark, and he tried to sit down and there was nothing there (to sit down on), and he was just gone."



STATESMAN JOURNAL

Sprague grieves for athlete who died in fall from cliff

(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2015/06/29/salem-teen-dead-falling-cliff-oregon-coast/29488459/>)

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Havel said most accidents follow a familiar pattern.

People begin at the popular parking area near the Pelican Pub and Brewery. They climb the large sandy dune — a popular hike — but then walk around or through the fencing and warning signs toward the sandstone bluff.



**Signs at Cape Kiwanda are set to keep people from falling off the cliffs above the ocean. However, many disregard them, leading to fatal accidents. (Photo: Photo courtesy of OPRD)**

“In terms of what makes that specific area so dangerous, a big part is that the sandstone bluff is not strong, especially being so exposed to wind, rain and the ocean,” Havel said. “It looks safe, but it really is not stable.”

In February, David Lopez, 19, of Woodburn and Megan Owens, 17, of Marysville, Washington, fell from the cliffs into the ocean. Both went around the fencing and past the signs.

The problem, officials said, is trying to come up with ways to keep people — and specifically risk-taking teenagers — from going past the fencing.

The “signs and fences are not designed to stop a determined person from putting themselves at risk,” Havel said.

“In our opinion, no matter what kind of fence you put up, they’ll probably go around it,” Tillamook County Sheriff Andy Long told the Oregonian.

Not all fatal accidents occur in the same way, however. In 2014, James Alejandro, 25, was swept out to sea and drowned after setting up a slack line — or tightrope — in a cove near a cliff.

*Zach Urness has been an outdoors writer, photographer and videographer in Oregon for eight years. He is the author of the book “Hiking Southern Oregon” and can be reached at [zurness@StatesmanJournal.com](mailto:zurness@StatesmanJournal.com) (<mailto:zurness@StatesmanJournal.com>) or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Zach Urness or [@ZachsORoutdoors](https://twitter.com/zachsoroutdoors) (<https://twitter.com/zachsoroutdoors>) on Twitter.*

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STATESMAN JOURNAL

Top 13: Best Oregon outdoor adventures of 2015

(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/travel/outdoors/2016/01/02/top-13-best-oregon-outdoor-adventures-2015/78021782/>)

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### **Fatal accidents at Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area**

**Feb. 28, 2016:** David Lopez, 19, Woodburn. Fell from cliffs into ocean.

**Feb. 2, 2016:** Megan Owens, 17, Marysville, Wash. Fell from cliffs into ocean.

**July 25, 2015:** Elise Dickey, 18, Corvallis. Drowning, but cause unclear.

**July 25, 2015:** Sean Yamaguchi, 22, Corvallis, 2015. Drowning, but cause unclear.

**June 28, 2015:** Slick Rick Nelson, 17, Salem. Fell from cliffs above ocean.

**April 2014:** James Alejandro, 25. Swept out to sea.

**April 2009:** Tyler Robertson, 18, McMinnville. Fell from cliffs into ocean.

### **Meeting at Cape Kiwanda**

**What:** Meeting to discuss safety at Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area

**When:** 11:15 a.m., March 17



# A safer Cape Kiwanda: Does 'Danger' deter or invite?

Statesman Journal Editorial Board

9:33 p.m. PDT March 13, 2016



(Photo: Photo courtesy of OPRD)

**WARNING!!**

*Three Bicyclists have died here.*

*Dismount Now and walk.*

That sign emphatically tells the dangers of riding the infamous Portal trail in one of America's most-popular mountain biking areas – Moab, Utah.

Compare that with the more-typical warning signs that dot Cape Kiwanda and other inviting-but-capricious

spots in Oregon's outdoors:

**DANGER**

*Do not go beyond this point.*

Five people have died at the Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area since June. Since 2009, the average age of victims is 19. As [the Statesman Journal's Zach Urness reported on March 4, \(/story/news/2016/03/03/seven-deaths-cape-kiwanda-spark-inquiry/81280180/\)](#) "Most of the time, the victims hiked up a sand dune, disregarded fencing and signs, climbed onto a hazardous sandstone bluff and fell into the ocean."

What deters sensible people apparently attracts others.

It's not unusual for people to act as if the laws of physics, geology and geography – let alone the laws of government – do not apply to them. Motorists speed on dangerous curves. Oregon beachgoers play on logs ensconced in the sand, not realizing the timbers' potential to suddenly shift and crush people. Tourists disregard warning fences to get stunning views of canyons – or selfies of themselves against those beautiful waterfalls.

People might not consciously think they are invincible but they act as if they are, sometimes with tragic results. This has become such a global phenomenon that it has spawned the term "death by selfie," and the website [Priceoneconomics has begun tracking the data. \(http://priceconomics.com/the-tragic-data-behind-selfie-fatalities/\)](#)

An analysis of 49 selfie-related fatalities around the world found these commonalities: The victims were between ages 14 and 32, and the average age was 21. Nearly three-fourths were male. Falls from heights were the No. 1 cause of death, followed by drownings.

Authorities and social scientists are seeking solutions. In [Mumbai, India, authorities have now banned selfies](http://observer.com/2016/01/police-declare-mumbai-beach-a-no-selfie-zone-following-two-deaths/) (<http://observer.com/2016/01/police-declare-mumbai-beach-a-no-selfie-zone-following-two-deaths/>) at some popular spots. [Russian police issued a brochure](http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/11/health/death-by-selfie/) (<http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/11/health/death-by-selfie/>) on the dangers of taking selfies in certain situations.

Ohio State University researchers studied 800 men who posted a lot of selfies on social media. The research found the men had higher-than-average scores for traits associated with narcissism and psychopathy, which can include feelings that the person is smarter than others, has a lack of regard for others and engages in impulsive behavior.

Fatal falls are not connected only to photography. And the risk-taking behavior, whether intentionally or inadvertently, is the culprit; not photography per se.

However, the commonalities among such deaths suggest that authorities, from municipalities to the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation, must rethink their warning signs. ([/story/news/2016/03/04/cape-kiwanda-deaths-spark-conversation-safety-signs/81327794/](http://story/news/2016/03/04/cape-kiwanda-deaths-spark-conversation-safety-signs/81327794/)) So that government is not constantly seen as “crying wolf,” that might include revising the wording on “Danger” signs in areas that are not as dangerous. In truly dangerous areas, that might involve being straightforward about the toll on individuals and the public. Equally important: A social media campaign might be targeted at specific age groups and interests.

In Utah, the federal Bureau of Land Management turned to graphic warnings such as [the one on the Portal trail.](http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/photo/warning-sign-on-portal-trail-above-moab-high-res-stock-photography/535614749) (<http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/photo/warning-sign-on-portal-trail-above-moab-high-res-stock-photography/535614749>) Mountain-biking enthusiasts echo those warnings in their writings about the trail.

Mere fences and "Danger" signs are inadequate to deter human nature, especially among some young men. But it is not enough to wring our hands, shake our heads and ask, “What were they thinking?” Park managers, and society at large, must find the answers.

### Looking for answers

**What:** Meeting to discuss safety at Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area

**When:** 11:15 a.m. Thursday

**Where:** Cape Kiwanda Community Center, 34600 Cape Kiwanda Drive, Pacific City, OR 97135

# Town Hall addresses safety concerns at Cape

By **TIM HIRSCH**  
of the Sun

A room full of concerned citizens shared their ideas, frustrations and concerns over the recent loss of life at Cape Kiwanda during a March 17 town hall put on by Oregon Sen. Arnie Roblan and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Six individuals have lost their life at the Cape over the past two years.

The town hall was organized as a way for officials to hear ideas on possible solutions to not only the loss of life, but the willingness of many to cross past fences and danger signs — thereby putting themselves in harms way. Recounting his own behavior as a youth, Roblan himself said he doesn't believe there was any barricade you could put up that would stop kids from going past.

For her part, Lisa Sumption, director of OPRD, started her comments with a moment of silence in respect of those lost. Noting how beautiful and attractive the area is, she said she understood what causes people to go beyond the fences and into marked danger areas.

Additional opening remarks by Nesuttuca Rural Fire Protection District Fire Chief Kris Weiland and Tillamook County Sheriff Andy Long outlined some of the safety challenges of Cape Kiwanda.

"We're seeing history repeat itself," Weiland said. "The loss of life is a horrible situation for us to face. A lot of people come and they aren't even aware of what the situation is and they come in all different shapes and sizes. Last year we did 25 responses that were related to not just the Cape, but the coast. We're down at the beach a lot."

He said that he believes education is a big key to getting visitors to understand the dangers here.

"We need to teach them before they're here," he said.

Long added that challenges include visitors knowing there isn't a lot of enforcement efforts here, as well as the difficulty in reaching the target audience, which is in the 16-26 age group.

Following Weiland and Long's comments, many from the packed great room at Kiawanda Community Center gave a wide range of ideas on how to address the issue.

Sarah Kingsborough, treasurer of both Sandlake Grange and Oregon State Grange and manager of Umpqua Bank in Tillamook said that the Sandlake Grange adopted a Cape Kiwanda Safety resolution on March 1 that supports "a new or extended fence, barrier, or blockade that will prevent people from going around to



Photo by Tim Hirsch

**TILLAMOOK COUNTY SHERIFF Andy Long addresses citizens at a town hall on safety concerns at Cape Kiwanda while Oregon Parks & Recreation Department director Lisa Sumption and Oregon Sen. Arnie Roblan look on.**

the dangerous points on Cape Kiwanda" as well as "signage in the Cape Kiwanda State Recreation Area that more appropriately reflect the significant dangers of the cliffs including a memorial for those who have lost their lives on the cape."

Perhaps the idea that hit the biggest chord was that of erecting a memorial at the site both to honor those who have died and to drive home a point of just how dangerous the area is to visitors.

Relaying suggestions from community members not able to be there, Pacific City resident Marie Heimburg suggested a memorial that would, with the permission of the family of those that have died in an accident at the Cape, include a picture and some saying at that area along the fence.

But other ideas, too, resonated with concerned citizens in attendance. Some suggested signs that were more specific about the dangers beyond the restricted areas and others encouraged parking fees and passes that could help fund more enforcement and education.

"I want to echo the recommendation that we start charging people year round who park on our beaches, not just here but all of our beaches," said Neskowin resident Dan Sheridan. "It seems that because the beach is the beach, we can't charge for parking because we don't have white lines on the beach. A lot of people will pay for the privilege of parking on the beach. That will give us some money to have some sustainable resources."

One example of a suggested sign came from Pacific City resident Bonnie Matson, who recalling her days working in hazardous material sites, said that what might be needed is signs that are jarring. She suggested a sign that said "someone expects you to come home safe tonight."

"That could be something that a young person would get because their parents love them, their friends love them," she said. "It doesn't have to be anything more than that, but they don't read signs so if it has to be a sign make it something that will totally reach their heart."

Another idea came courtesy of Pacific City resident Walter Kostrikin, who suggested forming a group comprised of volunteers that could serve as safety and interpretive guides to those visiting — especially during peak tourist season and high risk days.

"This program I'm proposing would involve kids in our community who are already well versed on the dangers of the Cape," he said, adding that the group could coordinate with parks, fire and rescue and the chamber of commerce.

"It would be a great way to promote the fun opportunities available in our area and educate people at the same time of the real dangers on the Cape," he said.

Some family and friends also spoke up during the town hall. Alyna Desmond, a senior at Sprague High School in Salem, was a close friend of Slick Nelson, who died on the Cape last June.

"I am 17, almost 18, so I am the youth," she said. "I do know that we do what we want. I don't think a fence or any type of border is going to help restrict us, the youth, from going past it."

That said, she did give her support for the idea of a memorial, saying it could "make them understand what they're risking by passing the fence."

Slick's sister, Carisa also spoke during the town hall.

"Cape Kiwanda is a beautiful place," she said. "Kids look for adventure. Even with a big sign, even with a warning sign they're going to look at it and it's just going to push them more."

She suggested putting up pictures of the those who died — together with their age and description of the accident — next to the warning signs so that those going up there can "see their faces so they can feel an attachment there."

Sumption closed the meeting promising that OPRD will make some improvements to the signage right away as well as some possible temporary fencing.

"We heard over and over again the signs are not explicit enough," she said.

She also added that they will also work on a long-range plan to address the problem.

"There's a lot of ideas, but we need to vet them thoroughly to make sure they meet everyone's need," she said.