

Photo courtesy of Tillamook County Visitors Association

SALLY RISSEL brought several signs to Cloverdale. This one tells the human history story as the town developed along the Nestucca River. Several historical photos are used on the interpretive plaques and pictorial murals.

WHAT IS WAYFINDING? BESIDES DIRECTIONS, AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE COMMUNITY VALUES

By Nan Devlin,
Executive Director,
Tillamook County
Visitors Association

In late 2014, the Tillamook County commissioners – at that time Mark Labhart, Tim Josi and Bill Baertlein – conveyed to our tourism organization that wayfinding was a priority. The reasons were to direct traffic off Highway 101 and encourage visitors to explore our towns, support local businesses, and create more economic growth.

Signage can certainly do that. It can guide people to trails, lodging, restaurants, shopping districts, restrooms, parks, parking lots, libraries, beach access points. The list is endless. Gateway signs welcome people and thank them for visiting – a community customer service gesture. Pedestrian signs direct people to safe street crossings, local businesses or heritage sites. Kiosks can provide street maps, community events, histories.

Electronic signs, such as the one installed at Nestucca Rural Fire District, share messages about burn bans, flooded roads, “volunteers needed,” road closures, and community events.

The most valuable service wayfinding can provide is an opportunity to share stories of what the community cares about. That’s done with interpretive signs. In Nehalem, the most recent town to get wayfinding installed, chose to tell three stories: why the swimming pool at the school (now North County Recreation District) was built (to save childrens’ lives by teaching them all to swim); the impact the Nehalem River had on the development of the town; and the need to protect the Nehalem River Watershed.

Tillamook used interpretive signs to share the story of the Hoquarton Slough and migrating birds. Tillamook Estuaries Partnership has a series of interpretive signs about Tillamook Bay—estuaries, fish habitats and water quality. Port of Garibaldi installed interpretive signs about the Coast Guard, fishing in Tillamook Bay, the historic

boathouse, and the types of fish that make the bay their home.

The interpretive signs and pictorial murals in Cloverdale, a project headed up by Sally Rissel, provide a history of the town and a way to remember its cultural roots.

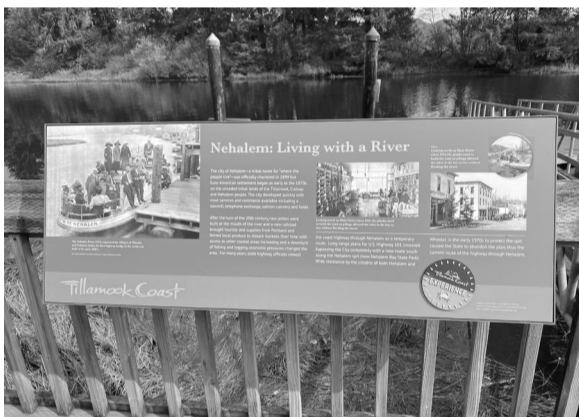


Photo courtesy of Tillamook County Visitors Association

THE TOWN OF NEHALEM was also born and built along a river, and this interpretive plaque is about the influence of the river on the development of the town.

Why do this? It’s one of the most significant ways to convey to visitors and locals your community values.

The first two interpretive signs that will be installed in Pacific City feature the PC Airport and the Dory Fleet. Working with Sally Rissel and Robyn Holdman of Friends of Pacific City Airport, the story of the airfield will be located on a plaque on the bridge railing that borders Pacific Street. The second sign will share the history of the Dory Fleet, thanks to stories shared by board members of the Pacific City Dorymen’s Association. It will also be mounted on the bridge railing.

As a signage plan is developed for the Cape Kiwanda area, there will be more opportunities to share community stories.

A master county wayfinding plan was developed and approved in 2017, and since then plans have been developed for Tillamook, Nehalem, Wheeler, Rockaway Beach, and Pacific City-Brooklyn Road section. They are all connected by design and materials, with each area choosing their own logo. Rockaway Beach and Pacific City signage are close to starting the fabrication process. A plan is now in development for Bay City. You can find the plans at tillamookcoast.com/wayfinding.