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# Wayfinding in Tillamook County: Connecting People to Place

## New county tourism organization installs signage to inspire visits to coastal towns

BY NAN DEVLIN

“Welcome,” “parking,” “one way,” “tourist office,” ... When directing visitors to our towns, we focus on guiding their cars to entrances and services, and rightly so. Communities use wayfinding to create safe, smooth visitor experiences that enhance the local tourism economy.

But wayfinding can be more than that. It has the power to increase local and visitor understanding of the places in which they live and travel. A memorable visitor experience connects people to place. It creates a journey that involves both tangible and intangible factors.

Many places, especially popular destinations, offer kiosks with printed or digital maps, transportation routes, QR codes or even a visitor center hotline. Historical sites will often feature informational placards about associated figures or events.

Less commonly found, especially in rural areas, are interpretive signs that share stories about wildlife, natural resources, stewardship, local history and native peoples.

In 2014, when Tillamook County implemented a transient lodging tax, it issued a directive to the new county-wide tourism organization, Visit Tillamook Coast: Develop a comprehensive wayfinding system. The county commissioners aimed

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CHARLES LENNOX OF LENNOX INSITES.

to direct visitors to small towns across the 72-mile-long county in order to ease traffic on Highway 101, the ribbon of road that connects the entire Oregon Coast, and bring economic vitality to businesses not on that highway.

Visit Tillamook Coast worked with Lennox Insites, a well-known wayfinding and interpretive firm that previously worked with Nehalem Bay State Park and Partners

### A BOAT FOR THE AGES

Open-hulled and flat-bottomed, the Pacific dory is pushed or rowed into the surf until deep enough to drop the outboard motor.

Pacific City and dory boats are closely linked. These special boats have been used here for commercial fishing since the early 1900's. That tradition continues today with additional uses for recreation, sports fishing, and touring.

Dorymen are particularly skilled seamen, capable of handling these distinctive surf-launched boats. Unlike older dories, today's newer flat-bottomed boats are stable—loaded or unloaded. Once launched, the dories are minutes away from fishing. When done catching, dorymen bring the boats back onto the beach, sliding in on the sand. Pacific City is one of a few places in the world where this is done.

Travel down Cape Kiwanda Drive to the beach access to see dory boats in action! For more information on dory boats, contact the Pacific City Dorymen's Association at [www.pcdorymen.com](http://www.pcdorymen.com)

Pacific City dories fish the waters for salmon, tuna, rock fish and Dungeness crab (left); a dory heading out at Cape Kiwanda (right)

in Design, which specializes in design and fabrication specifications. Community meetings were held throughout the county to determine the types of signs residents and agencies wanted and to develop a style that reflects a comprehensive sense of place and allows each town its own identity.

The county plan, completed in late 2016, has informed the individual city plans.

First up was the city of Tillamook, which worked with the Oregon Department of Transportation on an alternative traffic pattern in the center of town. Tillamook used its “The Dairylands” cow logo and cheddar-orange color palette for four gateway signs located at each town entrance.

Nehalem, a small town in north Tillamook County, was eager to share the story of its connection to the Nehalem River. In addition to gateway signs and directionals, four interpretive signs were developed: native peoples’ history, connecting mountains to ocean, living with a river and the history of the North County Recreation District swimming pool, which was built during the Great Depression to teach every child in the community to swim in response to a tragic drowning accident.

“These four stories were important to the legacy and values of the Nehalem community,” says Charles Lennox of Lennox Insites. “Interpretive signs are key to educating both residents and visitors about history, culture and stewardship, and with the intent of inspiring respect for the place they live and visit.”

Pacific City wayfinding is being done in two phases, with Phase One focusing on the east side of the Nestucca River and Bay. During planning, community members

chose to share stories of the beloved Pacific City airport and the historic Dory Fleet, the only dory boat fleet in the lower 48 states.

Phase Two will focus on Kiwanda Drive, the road along the beach, and will commence when planned infrastructure is closer to completion. These stories will include native peoples’ history, and stewardship of land, water, recreation and the Cape Kiwanda headland.

The two most recent wayfinding projects took place in Rockaway Beach and Bay City. The Old Growth Cedar Trail in Rockaway Beach has several interpretive signs about stewardship, wildlife, flora and fauna. Along the beach, signs highlight Twin Rocks (sandstone rocks offshore) and the Emily G Reed shipwreck.

Bay City, nestled on Tillamook Bay, will soon share its history of fishing and oyster harvesting through an interpretive sign about farming the sea.

The bay also features multiple signs that Visit Tillamook Coast developed in collaboration with Tillamook Estuaries Partnership. They share stories of ocean stewardship, fish, shellfish, shoreline habitats, ocean wildlife and birds. You can find them at waysides south of Garibaldi and on the waterfront decks at Port of Garibaldi.

For more information, visit [tillamookcoast.com/wayfinding](http://tillamookcoast.com/wayfinding)

## Connecting Mountains to Ocean

### The Nehalem River Watershed



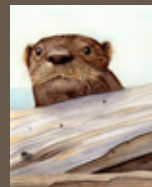
Below you flows the Nehalem River—part of the Greater Nehalem Watershed that stretches from Vernonia on the east side of the Oregon Coast Range, combining the waters of Salmonberry River, North Fork of the Nehalem and Cook Creek.

One of Oregon's longest free-flowing rivers, the Nehalem runs 120 miles (193 kilometers) from its headwaters to the Pacific Ocean. Along the way, the river supports vital habitat for wild steelhead, Coho and Chinook salmon, which in turn provides food for people and wildlife, recreational fishing and nutrients for the land and the ocean.

Check with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for specific regulations at [www.fw.state.or.us](http://www.fw.state.or.us)



right: Osprey  
below: River Otter



hatchery Coho with clipped fins also inhabit the river.

As you paddle along the river or view from the banks, look for these fish and other wildlife such as river otter, beaver, osprey, black-tailed deer or elk.

Catch and release only fishing for wild winter steelhead is popular in the Nehalem River during February and March.

The river provides one of the few remaining Wild Coho salmon seasons in Oregon. Runs of hatchery Coho with clipped fins also inhabit the river.



Starting with the first fall rains, Chinook salmon travel into the North and South Forks of the Nehalem River. The April-July early returning summer-run portion for Chinook in the Nehalem River Basin is unique to the Oregon coast. Fall-run Chinook season is August-December.

Tillamook Coast



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