

Whale carcass buried; Oregon beach, viewpoint reopened

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

FLORENCE, Ore. -- The fin whale carcass that washed ashore at Heceta Head State Scenic Viewpoint Sunday after being monitored in shallow water Friday was successfully buried at the same beach Monday.

Leisure Excavating and state park staff successfully buried the fin whale above the high-tide line in an 11-foot deep hole -- Oregon Parks & Recreation photo Florence-based Leisure Excavating, working with state park staff, buried the 55-foot long, 30-ton carcass above the high tide line at the park in an 11-foot deep hole. The corpse will decompose naturally, officials said. Oregon Parks & Recreation said the park will return to normal operating hours today, and be open from 7 a.m. to dusk. The viewpoint and Devil's Elbow Beach north of Florence were closed on Sunday due to concerns for traffic safety and protection of the carcass.

Marine Mammal Stranding Network biologist Jim Rice completed his work to attempt to determine the cause of death (a necropsy), but has not yet released any findings. The true cause may remain a mystery. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's Whale Watching week arrives during spring break, from March 21-28. Volunteers will staff 26 watching stations from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. each day. Gray whales are the species seen most often.

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