

THE DALLESPORT/MURDOCK NEWS

*SERVING THE PENINSULA COMMUNITIES
OF DALLESPORT AND MURDOCK*

STATE OF THE COUNTY: WHERE KLICKITAT STANDS AS WE HEAD INTO 2026

HOW LAND USE, WATER, ENERGY, AND GOVERNANCE SHIFTS ARE SHAPING THE YEAR AHEAD

As 2025 winds down, Klickitat County finds itself at an important crossroads. Growth pressures, energy proposals, land-use policies, and changes within county administration have all taken shape over the past year. For our Dallesport/Murdock community where infrastructure capacity, development limits, and rural quality of life remain top of mind—these shifts offer a clear reminder of how important it is for us as residents to stay informed and engaged.

Energy & Land Use: A County Balancing Act

One of the biggest themes of the year has been the ongoing debate over renewable-energy development. Large scale solar and battery storage proposals continue to surface across the county, offering potential tax revenue and clean energy generation, but also raising questions about land use, scenic impact, cultural resources, and long-term stewardship.

At the same time, the County Planning Department has proposed new ordinances that would significantly restrict where solar and energy storage projects can be built. With the state level clean energy goals and timeline that are set by the Clean Energy Transformation Act, the coming year will surely see continued discussion about how Klickitat County will grow and what kinds of projects are right for our rural communities.

Water & Development: Capacity Strains Come Into Focus

Water emerged as a central issue in 2025, particularly for Dallesport. The Dallesport Water District remains under a hookup moratorium as it works to secure system capacity that meets fire-flow requirements for new development. A new well at the airport is part of the long term solution, but disputes over water rights and inter-agency responsibilities have slowed progress.

For current residents, this means no immediate changes in service, but for our community's long term planning and economic development, 2026 will be a defining year. Once the well project advances and legal questions are resolved, the District may finally be able to lift the moratorium and move forward with long delayed growth.

County Administration: Process Changes That Affect Public Voice

This fall, the Board of County Commissioners implemented internal changes shifting more day to day decision making to administrative departments with the goal of increased efficiency. Residents should be aware this may result in fewer agenda items that require full Commissioner votes which has historically been the opportunity for public comment. For residents paying attention to zoning, energy, infrastructure, or development matters, it will be important to follow how agendas change over the next year and what new channels exist for public participation.

How Our Community Can Stay Engaged in 2026

- Attend or review meetings and minutes from our local government and infrastructure agencies. The calendar on the back page lists upcoming dates and times, and many agencies offer video access and post past meeting minutes online.
- Volunteer in our schools, support our seniors, or lend a hand in maintaining our public outdoor spaces.
- Stay connected through the Dallesport/Murdock Community Council. Share the issues that matter to you by attending our monthly meetings or emailing us anytime at dallesportcouncil@gmail.com.
- Be a good neighbor by looking out for those around you and taking pride in caring for our homes and properties.

By staying informed and showing up where we can, our community will help shape the evolution of Klickitat County in 2026 and beyond.

WINTER PREPAREDNESS

As winter settles into the Gorge, quick shifts in temperature, wind, and ice make basic preparation important for every household.

Insulate outdoor spigots and exposed pipes, clear gutters, and secure anything the east winds might move. Indoors, test your heating system early, replace filters, confirm your wood stove or fireplace is safe to use, and make sure flashlights, batteries, and backup power are ready in case of an outage.

To be ready for sudden storms or power disruptions, it helps to keep a small emergency kit stocked with essentials:

- Bottled water (1 gallon per person per day for at least 3 days)
- A week's supply of medications
- Non-perishable food and a manual can opener
- Flashlights or headlamps with spare batteries
- First-aid kit
- Phone chargers and a backup power bank
- Battery-powered radio
- Gloves, hats, hand warmers, and an emergency blanket
- Copies of important documents in a waterproof folder

Stay warm, stay safe, and look out for neighbors who may need an extra hand this season!

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

The Opening of The Dalles Bridge

On December 18th, 1953, the Mid-Columbia region entered a new era of connection when The Dalles Bridge officially opened, linking Dallesport, Washington with The Dalles, Oregon. Spanning the mighty Columbia River, the bridge replaced a ferry system that had served travelers for nearly a century and became one of the area's most significant pieces of post-war infrastructure.

From Ferries to a Fixed Crossing

Before the bridge, ferries were the only way to cross the river at this point. The earliest recorded service began around 1854, operating near what was then known as Rockland — today's Dallesport. Early crossings were often perilous, with wind, current, and seasonal water levels dictating whether passengers could make the trip.

By the late 1800s, ferries had become more reliable, using cable systems and small steam power to move wagons, livestock, and later automobiles across the river. Still, as automobile travel and regional trade grew in the first half of the 20th century, ferry service became an increasingly frustrating bottleneck. Calls for a bridge intensified as both states recognized the need for a permanent crossing.

Design, Cost, and Construction

Though bridge proposals had circulated since the 1860s, serious planning began only after World War II, when economic growth and highway development reshaped the Gorge. The structure was designed as a steel cantilever truss, stretching 3,339 feet across the Columbia and carrying U.S. Route 197 between the two states.

Construction took several years and cost approximately \$2.4 million — a substantial sum for the time. Wasco County, Oregon, issued bonds to fund the project, with the understanding that tolls collected from bridge traffic would repay the debt. When it opened on December 18, 1953, motorists paid a small fee to cross; the toll remained in place until it was officially removed on November 1, 1974.

A Bridge to the Future

The Dalles Bridge quickly became a vital regional link, offering reliable, all-weather access between Oregon and Washington and facilitating the movement of goods and people across the river. Its completion coincided with the construction of The Dalles Dam, begun just a few miles upstream in the same decade, marking a transformative chapter in the Columbia River's modern history.

More than seventy years later, the bridge remains a defining landmark for the communities it connects — a testament to vision, persistence, and the enduring importance of the Columbia as both a boundary and a bridge.



HOLIDAY PERFORMING ARTS AROUND THE GORGE

The holiday season is the perfect time to gather with friends and neighbors and experience the magic of live performance. From heartfelt plays and festive concerts to lively local bands, supporting the arts in our own communities keeps creativity thriving and brings us together in celebration.

Show	Date & Time	Location	Ticket Price
FIELD TRIP: Junie B in Jingle Bells, Batman Smells	Fri, Dec 5 2025 10:00 AM	Columbia Center for the Arts	\$10
It's A Wonderful Life: Live Radio Play	Dec 5-6, 12-13, 19-20 7:00 PM	The Bingen Theater	\$23 (senior/student) \$25 (adult)
On This Shining Night by the Voci Community Choir	Sat, Dec 13 2025 7:00 PM	The Dalles Civic Auditorium	\$15
A Holiday Spectacular with Mitch & the Melody Makers	Sun, Dec 14 2025 2:00 PM	Trout Lake Hall	\$25, students free with ID

KEY CONTACTS

Dallesport-Murdock Fire Dept - KCFD # 6

630 Central Ave. PO Box 215
509-767-1252

Dallesport Water District

302 Sixth Ave, Dallesport, PO Box 131
541-980-6514
dwdclerk@dallesportwater.org
dallesportwater.org

Dallesport Post Office

Monday-Friday 8:00am-2:00pm
Saturday 7:30 am-11:00 am (package pickup only) 509-767-1577

Dallesport/Murdock Community Council

136 Sixth Ave, PO Box 8
dallesportcouncil@gmail.com
dallesportcouncil.com

If you have ideas for this newsletter, would like to contribute content, or would like to be added to the email distribution list, contact Editor Colton Smith at dallesportcouncil@gmail.com.

THE RIVER BENEATH OUR FEET

When most of us think of the Columbia River, we picture the wide, windswept stretch we see from the bluff — but another river, quieter and unseen, flows directly beneath our feet. This underground world is made of sand, gravel, and volcanic rock that holds and moves water beneath the surface, feeding our wells, vineyards, orchards, gardens, and homes.

Layers of Time, Layers of Water

Long before there was a Dallesport Road or The Dalles Dam, this region was carved by ice, flood, and fire. Massive lava flows from ancient volcanoes stacked up in layers — what we now call Columbia River Basalt — and between those layers, floodwaters left behind sand and silt that act like natural reservoirs. These are our aquifers: underground “rivers” that slowly carry water through cracks, pores, and old stream channels.

Here in Dallesport, most wells draw from what’s called the Columbia Plateau Aquifer System, a series of water-bearing layers that stretch from the foothills of Mount Adams all the way to the Columbia River itself. The water you drink or use to irrigate may have begun as snowmelt in the Cascades decades — or even centuries ago.

How the Water Moves

The water underground doesn’t flow fast like a stream; it moves slowly, measured in feet per year, seeping through spaces in the rock. In some places, it rises closer to the surface, feeding natural springs and seeps. In others, it’s trapped deep under layers of basalt that act like watertight lids. Wells tap into these confined layers, releasing water that’s been under natural pressure — sometimes for thousands of years. Because we live so close to the river, groundwater here is closely connected to the Columbia itself. In some seasons, river water actually seeps into the aquifer; in others, groundwater feeds back into the river. It’s a delicate, two way relationship that makes the Dallesport area unique — a meeting point of surface and subterranean waters.

Why It Matters

Every drop of water drawn from a well is part of a much larger cycle — a living system shaped by geology, rainfall, and time. Understanding this helps us protect it. Limiting contamination, managing irrigation wisely, and keeping natural vegetation along drainage areas all help maintain the health of our underground water.

Local agencies like Klickitat County’s Natural Resource Department and the Washington Department of Ecology monitor groundwater levels throughout the Gorge. Their data show that our aquifer levels here have remained generally stable, but in dry years, they can dip significantly — a reminder that what we do on the surface always affects the river beneath us.

A Hidden River Worth Respecting

Beneath the basalt, under our wells and roots and roads, lies an ancient waterway still at work —carrying the memory of ice, mountains, and floods. The next time you draw water from your tap, take a moment to think about the journey it’s made to get there. It’s not just groundwater. It’s the quiet pulse of Dallesport itself.

Did You Know?

- The Columbia Plateau Aquifer System holds more than 100 trillion gallons of water beneath Eastern Washington.
- Groundwater from Dallesport typically takes 10–50 years to travel from the Cascades to the Columbia.
- Wells here often reach depths between 150 and 400 feet, tapping layers deposited millions of years apart.

DALLESPORT/MURDOCK COMMUNITY COUNCIL CORNER

The Dallesport/Murdock Community Council held its annual elections at the November meeting, officially filling several open seats and welcoming five council members to serve:

Colton Smith
Howard Johnston
Judy Ware
Regena Carrico
Samantha Smith

Following the elections, the Council also appointed officers for the upcoming year. The new leadership team is:

Chair: Anthony Rizzi
Vice Chair: Keith Hutton
Secretary: Regena Carrico
Treasurer: Theresa Hutton
Newsletter: Colton Smith
Webmaster: Samantha Smith

The next regular Council meeting will be held on Thursday, December 11th at 7:00pm at the Dallesport Community Center. All residents are encouraged to attend. The Council will also meet for a work session on Monday, December 15th to review proposed updates to the bylaws. These revisions will be presented and voted on at the January 2026 regular meeting.

LYLE SCHOOL NEWS



Important Dates

December 10th – Elementary Winter Concert
December 22nd thru January 2nd – Winter Break

Here are some of the great things that are happening in Lyle School District!

October Students of the Month – October was all about ***responsibility!*** The following students were named student of the month by their teachers:

Adilee Johnson, Harper Fischer, Kade Moore, Alexa Rodriguez, Jack Rasmussen, Raeann Spino, Aryah Mills, TJ Hearn, Tristan Hearn, Analia Flores, Jazzie Comstock, and George Lacefield.

Bookmobile – The FVRL Bookmobile will be on campus on December 3rd and 17th. Please help your kids remember to bring their books back to school!

Cereal Drive – Our school cereal drive has been extended until December 12th! Please consider sending a box of cereal to school with your student! All cereal will go to the Lyle Lion's Club and will be added to their holiday food boxes.

Secondary Concert – On Wednesday, 11/12/2025, Mr. Dempsey and our secondary band students put on a wonderful Fall Concert. They all sounded great and it was a full house for their performance. We are incredibly proud of these students!

Become a Volunteer – Your Support Makes a Difference! We are always looking for dedicated individuals to help enhance the student experience at Lyle School District! We are continuously accepting volunteer applications from parents and community members alike. Volunteering on campus during the school day (8:30-3:30) requires a volunteer application and background check. Your support is incredibly valued, and to get started, you just need to follow one simple step. Send an email to marci.ramsay@lyleschools.org requesting a volunteer application (or stop by the office and we can print one for you). Once your application and background check are on file, you can arrange your volunteer time:

- Parents: If you wish to volunteer in your student's classroom, please coordinate directly with the classroom teacher to arrange a time.
- Community Members: If you would like to contribute in another capacity, please reach out to Principal Smith to discuss your interests and arrange a time to visit the school.

Sub Openings – We are still looking for kitchen and custodial substitutes.

Bus Drivers Needed – Mid-Columbia Transportation Cooperative is looking for sub bus drivers for the Lyle Hub. Training is paid for. If interested, please call the Transportation Department at 509-493-1590.

PTO Meetings – Meetings are typically held on the first Tuesday of each month at 5:00 PM in the school library.

COUGAR ATHLETICS

High School Football – Our high school football team advanced to the first round of the OSAA State Playoffs! Our local fire departments sent them off in style. They ended up losing to North Douglas, 36-30, but we couldn't be prouder of the heart and grit they showed on the field and the way they represented their communities. Way to play, Cougars!

High School Basketball – Home Basketball against games:

12/8 Against Dufur: JV @ 4:30, Varsity @ 6:00 PM

12/15 Against Cornerstone Christian: JV @ 4:30, Varsity @ 6:00 PM

12/16 Against Irrigon: JV @ 4:30, Varsity @ 6:00 PM


12/22 Against Vernonia/Jewell: JV @ 1:00, Varsity @ 2:30 PM

12/15 Against Griswold: JV @ 12:30, Varsity @ 2:30 PM

Middle School Basketball – Homes games begin in January.

2025

December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
AA Meetings Wednesdays and Sundays 7pm Lyle School Library 625 Keasey 360-870-3321	1 Lyle Lions Club Meeting 6:00pm	2 Board of County Commissioners Meeting 9:30am	3 Bookmobile @ Dallesport Community Center 1:30pm-3pm	4 WAGAP Mobile Food Bank @ Dallesport Community Center 12pm-2pm	5 Winter Market at the Ruins (Hood River) 5:00pm Winter Wonderland Bazaar (White Salmon) 5:00pm	6 Festival of Trees Open House (TD) 9:00am-12:00pm Hood River Farmers Market 10am-1:00pm
7 Winter Wonderland Bazaar (White Salmon) 11:00am-3:00pm	8	9 Board of County Commissioners Meeting 9:30am KPUD Board of Commissioners Meeting 2:00pm	10	11 Dallesport/Murdock Community Council Meeting 7:00pm	12	13 Holiday Bazaar (Goldendale) 9:00am-3:00pm Candy Cane Lane Parade (Goldendale) 5:00pm Holiday Spectacular at Trout Lake Hall 6:00pm
14	15 Lyle Lions Club Meeting 6:00pm	16 Board of County Commissioners Meeting 9:30am	17 Dallesport Water District Meeting 2:30pm Bookmobile @ Dallesport Community Center 1:30pm-3pm	18	19 Airport Board Meeting 7:30am	20 Hood River Farmers Market 10am-1:00pm
21	22	23 Board of County Commissioners Meeting 9:30am KPUD Board of Commissioners Meeting 2:00pm	24	25  CHRISTMAS	26	27
28	29	30 Board of County Commissioners Meeting 9:30am	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE	Lyle Schools Winter Break: December 22 - January 2		