Portland: Swan Island Beach

Walk on the beach...on Swan Island? It’s true. Swan Island beaches offer close-ups of resident geese and osprey and the occasional bald eagle, beaver and even river otter. And where else can you find great views of a real working harbor: active docks and shipbuilding, all with Portland’s downtown skyline as backdrop?

Begin this 2.2-mile (one-way) walk at the Prescott Street MAX Station on N Interstate Avenue. Walk one block north on Interstate, cross to the north side of Going Street and head west, downhill. Pass under Greeley Avenue, then over the Union Pacific train tracks.

Cross Basin Avenue on the marked crosswalk and pass signs welcoming you to “Port of Portland’s Swan Island Industrial Park.” Swan Island was once a true island, with the Willamette’s main channel on its east side. Its S curve as the river hit the bluff was a navigation hazard, so the current channel was dredged in the 1920s. Adjoining wetlands disappeared under fill and the island became a peninsula joined to the mainland with a causeway.

Cross Port Center Way and Going Street at the light, by a McDonald’s; head straight toward the river via the sidewalk and then right on the access trail adjacent the Swan Island Pump Station, the heart of Portland’s $1.4 billion effort to keep untreated sewage out of the river.

At the river, turn left, walking upriver on the North Portland Greenway Trail, planned to ultimately connect the St. Johns Bridge with... (continued on page 72)