

From the Office of Lynn Coker, Curry County Commissioner, Position 1

Harbor Cleanup Removes a Health and Safety Hazard at Highway 101 and Sunshine Cove Lane

Neighbors, county leadership, and two state agencies clear months of accumulated trash and waste — and the work to fix the underlying problem continues

GOLD BEACH, OR — Trash and human waste that had been building up for months near the intersection of Highway 101 and Sunshine Cove Lane in Harbor has been cleaned up. The before-and-after photos below show the difference.

For months, commercial and residential property owners in that area reported a growing problem. Garbage, discarded property, and human waste collected in the public right-of-way and on nearby private land. This was not only an eyesore. It was a health and safety matter, and neighbors said so clearly and repeatedly.

Those reports did not get resolved at the neighborhood level. So neighbors brought their concerns to county and state officials, who worked together to get the site cleared.

Commissioner Lynn Coker thanked the Oregon State Police (OSP) and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) for the crews and the funding they committed to the work. Their effort addressed a real risk to the health and safety of neighboring residents, renters, and business owners. The cleanup also improved conditions for the people served by the Peer House, the navigation center for unsheltered individuals, located at the center of the transient camp site.

“This cleanup is a good day for Harbor, and I want to be straight with people about what it is and what it isn’t,” Coker said. “It is proof that this county can respond to a hard, complicated problem in a way that is both effective and humane. It is not a permanent fix. The trash and waste will come back unless we close the gaps that let it pile up in the first place. I would rather tell you the truth than take a victory lap.”

What made the difference

The cleanup happened because Harbor’s commercial and residential neighborhoods stayed on it. Residents and business owners documented what they were seeing, reported it, and kept reporting it when nothing changed. Local leaders carried those reports forward to the agencies with the authority and the equipment to act.

That pattern — residents reporting, leaders elevating, agencies responding — is what Curry County needs to strengthen. When trash and waste are mishandled anywhere in the county and public health or safety is at risk, county and state officials need to hear about it. Reports should include:

- The exact location, including the nearest cross street or mile marker
- What is being reported, such as garbage, human waste, needles, or abandoned vehicles

- Dated photographs, when it is safe to take them
- Whether the location is on private property, city property, county property, or a state highway right-of-way

Reports can be made to: 541-247-3296.

The gap this cleanup exposed

A cleanup crew can clear a site. It cannot answer the question of who is responsible for the next one. Right now, responsibility for waste on public land, in and around unsheltered camps, is split among several agencies, and the seams between them are where problems sit unresolved for months.

There is also a gap closer to home. In many Oregon counties, a community resource deputy is the first point of contact for a complaint like this one. That deputy responds, documents the site, and brings in whichever agency has the authority to act. Our Curry County Sheriff has decided not to hire or assign a deputy to that work. The position is funded. It has sat unfilled since 2025 and remains unfilled today.

“When a Harbor resident called about this site, there was no local deputy whose job it was to take that call and run it down,” Coker said. “That is why it took months and two state agencies to do something a community resource deputy could have started in week one. This is not a money problem. It is a decision about how the Sheriff’s Office hires and assigns its people, and under Oregon law that decision belongs to the Sheriff, who is elected separately from the Board of Commissioners. I have raised this in public Budget Committee sessions and in Board of Commissioners business meetings across two full budget cycles. Residents cannot fix a structural problem they cannot see, and they deserve to see this one.”

Curry County is developing a homeless and transient waste management policy that defines inter-agency responsibilities, sets a realistic budget, and identifies what state law needs to change. That package is being prepared for the 2027 legislative session. Harbor is a reason this matters.

Photographs

BEFORE CLEANUP PHOTO



Before: Site near Highway 101 and Sunshine Cove Lane in Harbor, COMPOSIT PHOTO. Photo credit: LYNN COKER

AFTER CLEANUP PHOTO



After: Highway 101 and Sunshine Cove Lane following the cleanup. Photo credit: LYNN COKER

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About Commissioner Lynn Coker

Lynn Coker serves as Curry County Commissioner, Position 1, on the Curry County Board of Commissioners (BOC), the elected governing body of Curry County, Oregon. His work focuses on county fiscal oversight, public safety governance, and coastal and energy policy. This release is issued by Commissioner Coker and reflects his own views. It does not represent a position adopted by the Board of Commissioners.