

**Embargoed until 03/22/19**



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## **Oso Slide Five Year Observance March 22**

*Five Year Observance of the SR530 "Oso" Mudslide Friday, March 22 at 10:00 a.m.*

**OSO, Wash., March 22, 2019** - In honor of the five year observance of the SR530 "Oso" Mudslide, the families of the victims will be hosting a Remembrance Ceremony at 10:00 a.m. on March 22, 2019 at the site of the Slide on Steelhead Drive, home of the future Slide Memorial. Directly following the ceremony there will be: a site blessing; WSDOT sign dedication for the brand new Oso Slide Memorial Highway; mailbox sculpture dedication; and briefing on status of the Slide Memorial and fundraising efforts.

Snohomish County Parks, Recreation & Tourism along with the family fundraising team will be revealing one of the first iterations of the permanent Slide Memorial, the mailbox sculpture. The cluster of mailboxes was a foundational marker for the community of Steelhead Haven often used as a location indicator and to announce birthday parties and community happenings. Artist Louise McDowell was commissioned to create the mailbox sculpture piece in likeness of the original mailboxes that stood near Steelhead Drive. The sculpture, titled "It was a Home," is made of bronze and steel and displays addresses of the homes destroyed by the slide.

"'It was a Home' is a beautifully simple and striking representation of the community that was lost during the slide," said Snohomish County Parks, Recreation & Tourism Director, Tom Teigen. "The sculpture will be one of the first things you see when approaching the permanent Slide Memorial just as the actual mailbox cluster was for families who lived there. The sculpture in a powerful way shows the gravity of what was lost; this was a home full of life and love."

On February 20, 2019, the Washington State Transportation Commission unanimously approved a resolution renaming a section of highway between Darrington and Arlington the "Oso Slide Memorial Highway." The new highway signs will be dedicated at the five year commemoration and unveiled along the highway the same day.

"The tragedy that struck the community of Steelhead Haven, near the town of Oso on March 22, 2014, was a tragedy for our entire state," said commission Chairman, Jerry Litt. "The loss of 43 precious lives will forever be felt and this memorial rightfully honors them as well as their families, the community, and the first responders and volunteers who worked tirelessly in the days, weeks and years since that fateful day five years ago. It was truly an honor for the Transportation Commission to name a portion of SR 530 the Oso Slide Memorial Highway."

The highway renaming and sculpture dedication mark the beginning of the permanent Slide Memorial. To honor this, Stillaguamish Tribal Chairman, Shawn Yanity, will be singing a song of blessing during the five year commemoration, and a prayer will be offered by Joel Johnson, Chaplain for Oso/Arlington/Darrington Fire and Executive Director of Hope Unlimited, the non-profit managing the donations made for the Slide Memorial.

Fundraising efforts are underway for the Slide Memorial. Monetary and in-kind donations are needed to complete the project. The Slide Memorial team hopes to raise \$6Million to complete the memorial which also includes a maintenance endowment.

The families of the victims, first responders, and community members will be hosting a gala benefit at the Seattle Marriot Waterfront Ballroom on June 22, 2019 to help with fundraising efforts. Tickets are available at [www.SlideMemorial.com](http://www.SlideMemorial.com). The families are also asking for donations and sponsorships for the gala event itself - contact: Amy Lucas: [Amy.Lucas3@snoco.org](mailto:Amy.Lucas3@snoco.org).

More information can be found at [SlideMemorial.com](http://SlideMemorial.com)

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**Background:**

On March 22, 2014 at 10:37am, the single deadliest landslide in United States history -- the SR530, or "Oso", slide -- engulfed the community around Steelhead Haven in Washington State. The mud and debris from the adjacent mountainside destroyed 49 homes and ended the lives of 43 people.

The response was massive and search efforts lasted four months until, on July 22, the last of the 43 victims was located. Recovery efforts to restore the vibrant Stilly Valley continue today.

Shortly following the March 22, 2014 mudslide, discussions began circulating about creation of a memorial to commemorate the Oso mudslide. The intent of the memorial was to remember the lives of the 43 individuals who lost their lives, recognize the unprecedented response effort that followed the event, honor the community that was lost and provide information about the slide itself.

On March 22, 2018, the Snohomish County Department of Parks announced plans to construct a permanent memorial located at the Oso slide site on behalf of the family members of the 43 victims of the 2014 SR 530 Slide.