

Willapa Hemp Festival on hold until next year

Timeline too tight for event planned for September

By KATIE WILSON
EO Media Group

RAYMOND, Wash. — Now that marijuana is legal in four states and the District of Columbia and is on the verge of becoming legal in more, “hemp fests” are popping up everywhere — and one could eventually be coming to Pacific County.

HJ Norris of Mr. Doo-bees, a recreational marijuana dispensary in Raymond, Wash., planned to hold the first-ever Willapa Hemp Festival this September, a three-day outdoor celebration. But now, citing hurdles in getting a required permit from Pacific County and worried that organizers wouldn't have enough time to advertise the festival, Norris says the event is on hold until next year.

Still, he believes it as an important event for the community — a way to bring the public and the cannabis industry together in what he envisions will be an entertaining but also educational event.

“I think there's not enough positive information out there for any of the communities,” he said. “... We wanted it to enlighten the people that come.”

Cannabis-centric businesses blossom

In general, the many cannabis-centric businesses that have blossomed in north Pacific County since Washington Initiative 502 was approved in the November 2012 ballot have been welcomed by the community — and most importantly by city government and local law enforcement. However, Norris and others believe there is still a lot of work to be done to help residents understand and accept the industry.

“We can't really get out like we'd like to get out,” he said of those in the industry, most of whom are still in the “startup” phases of their business plans.

Norris says a local hemp fest could dispel any lingering mysteries around the many ways recreational pot is now available to those

of legal age. The event, which he hopes to hold next spring, would feature several bands, a variety of vendors and around 30 representatives from the cannabis industry. No smoking or ingesting of marijuana or marijuana-infused products would be allowed, but businesses would be able to showcase their products, distribute brochures, answer questions and give mock demonstrations.

The money raised by selling admission tickets would go back to cover the costs of putting the event on. Norris said he hopes to feed any leftover money into the community, through donations to the Port of Willapa Harbor or toward needed police equipment.

Expected 2,500 to 5,000 people

According to an assembly application Norris submitted to the Pacific County Department of Community Development in July, event organizers expected 2,500 to 5,000 people to attend the three-day festival at the port's Willapa Harbor Airport in Raymond.

The Board of Pacific County Commissioners planned to hold a public hearing on the assembly permit Tuesday, just over a month before the days when Norris hoped to hold the festival. It might have taken another week, or even several weeks, after the public hearing before the commissioners handed down a decision on the permit. The port, while supportive of the festival, asked Norris that he and others not advertise it until they had a permit from the county in-hand.

It was just too much uncertainty and not enough time, Norris concluded. But, he said, they are now in a good place for next year. Other than the permit, everything else is in place and it should be easy to pull together in the spring, weather depending.

“We have everything all set up. We have the budget and we have all the vendors set up,” he said.

He thinks the festival will bring a lot of people from outside of the area to Raymond, and give them a reason to come back.

“It's going to be beneficial for the whole area,” he said.

Warrenton to request state funding for levee inspection

Grant or loan would help city's levee system get certified

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — The city of Warrenton could receive up to \$50,000 in grant money from the Oregon Infrastructure Finance Authority to help get levees inspected, and a zero-interest or low-interest loan of up to approximately \$1 million to finance an inspection.

The inspection would be a critical first step toward proving the city's levee system can withstand the 100-year-flood risk posed by Warrenton's proximity to the Columbia River. And it could finally get the Federal Emergency Management Agency to acknowledge that the city's roughly 80-year-old, 14-foot-high levees can do what they have always done: protect property owners and residents.

This new funding opportunity springs from a state law backed by state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, designed to help coastal communities, like Warrenton, get their levees of-



Mayor Mark Kujala



City Manager Kurt Fritsch

'I think we've made a strong case.'

— Mike Kujala
mayor

officially certified and, in turn, accredited by FEMA. The state Legislature set aside \$7 million for levee projects essential to the use and development of farm, industrial or commercial land.

Once Warrenton's levees are accredited — once they meet FEMA's standards for flood protection — the land behind the levees is no longer considered in the flood plain. This means that homeowners and business

owners in the area may no longer have to pay FEMA's soaring flood insurance rates.

“I think we've made a strong case,” Mayor Mark Kujala said. “We've been on the forefront of this issue.”

'Huge benefit'

Certifying the city's levee system is a pricey proposition.

It could cost at least \$1 million just to hire a geotech con-

sultant to inspect the levees, City Manager Kurt Fritsch said. The city may have to kick in some of its own money depending on how much state assistance the city receives.

Although a loan in the neighborhood of \$1 million is not a large handout, “it would certainly allow us to spread those costs out a number of years to be able to move forward with that (inspection) project,” he said.

The language outlining the rules for the levee funding program has been finalized but not yet filed with the secretary of state, said Melanie Olson, the Infrastructure Finance Authority's regional coordinator, who will be the city's primary contact.

Once the rules are in place and the state invites Warrenton to apply, “we'll file (the proposal) as quickly as we can,” Fritsch said, adding that other communities are competing for a slice of the \$7 million allocation.

“It's important for us to try to make a big pitch here and get some sort of funding,” Kujala said, adding that the city doesn't have many funds to draw from for an inspection. “If we can get a portion of (the levee inspection) paid, that would be a huge benefit for us and to the taxpayers of Warrenton.”

Grower: Pot prices have declined in recent years

Continued from Page 1A

are required to get state and city licenses in the coming months.

The growing process

Saucedo's workshop has three rooms for flowering. The cultivation process starts with cloning. The growers take a cut from an established plant they have identified and acquired from a quality source.

It takes about 14 days for the cuts to root, and then they can be transported to a 5-inch pot. In about a week, the plants move to a 1- or 2-gallon pot, and then a 25-gallon pot. Saucedo uses a coco coir fiber for his potting mix.

Once the plants have moved to the large pots, they are given two or three weeks to vegetate. Growers have to fabricate an artificial light cycle that mimics and expedites the natural cycle cannabis plants are exposed to outdoors. Once the plants are ready to flower, they are exposed to light only 12 hours a day instead of 24, which will trigger that effect.

Saucedo tries to keep the ratio at one plant per light so “we can stay within the legal limit and grow optimal-sized plants.” Growers are restricted to six plants per patient.

“We try to get the plants as big as possible,” he said. “One pound a light is our goal.”

Any extra is just a bonus, he added. That means each month, they harvest about 4 to 6 pounds per room.

The whole process — from cloning to having the product ready for use — takes about three to four months. In addition to the light, growers also control humidity levels and temperature, which should be 45 to 50 percent and between 70 and 80 degrees, respectively.

When it comes to choosing nutrients for the plants, some

growers opt for synthetic materials and others for organic products. Saucedo and his partners start with a synthetic feeding method known as Lucas Formula and incorporate proteins by adding in different organic materials.

Who gets the product

Saucedo is licensed to grow medical marijuana for himself and three patients, and his partners are, as well. Growers may legally produce marijuana for no more than four patients concurrently, as per state law. Growers may possess up to six mature plants and up to 24 ounces of usable marijuana for each patient for whom marijuana is being produced and up to 18 marijuana seedlings or starts for each patient.

Saucedo carries his own patient card, as well as grow cards for each of his patients. Any excess he has after providing the product to his patients at little or no cost, he is able to sell to dispensaries. Selling to dispensaries is often what subsidizes a grower's operation.

If a grower is selling to a dispensary, a product sample of 2 grams must first be tested at a specialty lab, which can take one day or more, depending on how much the grower is willing to pay for expediency. The labs, which are designated solely for testing marijuana, do a potency analysis and check for mold and mildew.

Where growers will see more oversight in the coming months from the state and local levels is regarding their facilities. The city of Seaside is considering legislation that would require growers to obtain a business license and a license to have a grow operation. If the ordinance passes, grow sites would be subject to inspections from the city's building official and fire department.

The ordinance would re-

strict grow sites to the city's industrial zones, which wouldn't affect Saucedo's operation as it already is located in an industrial zone. However, he said, “it's not really leaving the market very wide open.”

A couple of months ago, he asked the city to consider allowing operations in some commercial zones, as long as they met other regulations. The city has not discussed that option at a City Council meeting since starting the process to pass the proposed marijuana grow operation ordinance.

An awkward time for growers

The Oregon Health Authority reported in April there were 439 growers and 370 grow sites in the county. There were 674 registered medical marijuana patients in Clatsop County as of July. The legalization of recreational marijuana with the passage of Measure 91 last year has created a changing legal environment for growers.

Overall market prices for marijuana have seen a decline in recent years, particularly for black market growers, Saucedo said. They used to get about \$3,000 to \$4,000 per pound depending on the variety. Now, the price ranges from about \$1,600 to \$2,400 per pound, which means some growers, who have been growing for a decade or so, are experiencing profit loss.

“Before about a year and a half ago, legal growers weren't allowed to make profit, only recoup for costs associated for growing but not charge for time or labor,” he said.

While the lower prices may be good for patients and dispensaries, “a small guy may just get pushed out and the profit-margins may not be high enough for up-and-comers,” when it comes to growers, Saucedo said.

“The solid craftsmen will rise to the top,” he said.

Large-scale operations producing high-quality product also should make it, he said.

Consumers have to educate themselves on what counts toward quality for marijuana and decide what they are willing to accept.

“The marketplace will determine what's good and what's bad — what's an acceptable end product,” Saucedo said. “It's just like beer. You could get a Coors or go to Fort George Brewery. A lot more time and love will go into one and the others are mass-produced.”

Saucedo is trying to cultivate quality varieties of cannabis that will thrive in the product's new market environment. As a landscaper, he is around plants all day so he is able to identify and treat any problems his marijuana plants might have. Almost any growing question he has can be answered by a quick Internet search.

“There shouldn't be much of a learning curve for growers if they seek out the information,” he said.

Saucedo sells his product in leaf or smokable form, but there are many other different niches in the industry, among them concentrates, oils, edibles, marijuana-infused items and other products.

“There are many positions in this industry we haven't figured out yet,” he said.

Saucedo said he hopes to see his business grow to the point it can be his sole occupation and he can provide employment for others. “We'd like to, if the state allows it, have a real breeding program and come out with our own varieties,” he said, adding, “we would like to put a strain throughout the world that represents Seaside, Oregon.”

Boater education class to be held Saturday

The Daily Astorian

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 62 and the Oregon State Marine Board will teach a boater education class this weekend, mandatory for a boater to receive an education card.

The class will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday in the second floor conference room at Englund Marine & Industrial Supply in Astoria. Class registration starts at 7:30 a.m. The cost for the class, which includes the class manual, will be \$10.

The course covers practical boating safety information and local boating rules and regulations, as well as tips and techniques for making boating more enjoyable. In addition, a section on cold-water survival will be shared.

Students who pass the course can apply for their boater education card that is required by Oregon's and Washington's mandatory

boater education programs.

All Oregon boaters 12 and older must carry their boater education card when operating power boats greater than 10 horsepower.

Children 12 to 15 must have a card to operate a boat under 10 horsepower and must also be supervised by a card-holding adult (16 years of age; 18 years of age for personal watercraft operators) when operating power boats greater than 10 horsepower. Boaters can be cited a hefty fine for not having a card.

The Boater Education Card will also save money on boat insurance.

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators approves the course, which will be taught by qualified instructors in a classroom environment.

To pre-register for this mandatory boater education course or obtain further information, contact Dave Phillips at 503-440-9130.

The AHS Class of 1970 will hold it's 45th reunion beginning Thursday, August 6 through Sunday, August 9.

There will be several activities in which to participate. The classes between 1968 and 1972 are invited to join us in some of our activities.

For details, or more information, please contact Cheryl Lockett
cheryllockett1@me.com

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