

Industry Spotlight:

Pandemic impacting the Columbia Pacific region

Local businesses navigate rough landscape amid the COVID-19 outbreak

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Washington Gov. Jay Inslee announced a “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order for two weeks on Monday, March 23 — now extended until at least May 4.

This proclamation included:

- Requiring every Washingtonian to stay

home unless they need to pursue an essential activity.

- Banning all gatherings for social, spiritual and recreational purposes.

- Closing all businesses except essential businesses.

“The less time we spend in public, the more lives we will save,”

Inslee said.

Coupled with substantially parallel orders from Gov. Kate Brown in Oregon, the restrictions have rippled through local communities as businesses and retailers grapple with the new reality and way of life.

The Chowder Stop & Barella's Barbershop

Casey Barella was ready to celebrate, but instead had to close his business.

On March 18, The Chowder Stop was awarded ‘Best Clam Chowder’ by Coast Weekend, but less than a week later, Inslee joined the nationwide effort to slow transmission of coronavirus by keeping people away from each other.

“I didn’t even have time to celebrate. I had my biggest week right before this hit. We were finally making a little bit of money,” Casey said as he sat in the dark and empty restaurant next to his wife Gail.

Gail was also remorseful over the shut down, which meant the on-going closure her for barbershop business a few blocks away. Both had opened their businesses in 2019 only a few months apart, first Gail in March and then Casey in October.

The closure meant immediate layoffs for Casey’s six employees.

“We support those families and now they’re hurting too,” he said.

Casey said the decision to close was easy given the current health risk posed by the COVID-19 outbreak.

“It sucks but I understand. I care more about community than any money. Without them I wouldn’t be able to make any money at all,” he said.

Relying on takeout or delivery, as many restaurants are attempting, wasn’t an option.

“The takeout thing can only go so far. It would cost me more to stay open with the propane, electricity and one employee alone,” Casey said.

Protecting employees and customers was his biggest concern.

“I was worried that the tourists would be coming and going. I didn’t want my crew members to get sick and pass it on to their



The dining room at The Cove Restaurant has been empty ever since Gov. Jay Inslee issued a “Stay Home, Stay Healthy,” order in March. The Cove has since committed to carry out and delivery service to help combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

families,” Casey said.

Long Beach is one of the few remaining counties in Washington without a confirmed case of COVID-19.

“We’re one of last counties (in Washington) that don’t have it right now and it’s really scary. I don’t know if we missed it or if it’s enclosing on us. It’s scary because there’s so much uncertainty,” Gail said.

“It’s been hard. Luckily my landlord at the barbershop has been supportive. We have great people here.”

The couple are optimistic that their businesses can survive until customers can return, but the biggest question remains to be when that date will be.

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