

RIVER TRIPS PROVIDE HISTORY

A Harrisburg business owner is providing jet boat tours of the Willamette River from a perspective only a local could provide. Mike Hurd is the owner of Scenic Jet Boat Tours and Hurd's Hardware and Custom Machinery in Harrisburg, just 30 minutes north of Eugene.

"I grew up just a mile from the river and always enjoyed fishing and hunting around the river," he says.

Now Hurd gives tours of the Willamette on his 22-foot-long aluminum North River sled.

Along the way he points to properties and shares their history, identifies wildlife and gives insight on the environmental history of the river.

At one point on the three-hour tour, Hurd stops the boat and points to a crop farm once owned by his uncle, and shares the history of filbert and peppermint farming along the waterway.

"It's a huge part of the community and of huge value to the state," Hurd says. "Not just for recreation; for some people it's their livelihood."

He says the jet boat allows him to "cover more areas of interest in a timely fashion and allows me to take people out that otherwise couldn't or don't feel comfortable getting out on the water by other means."

Hurd adds: "I try to relate some of the history when paddle boats ran the river."

He says that at Harrisburg you can see the old dock pilings from the 1907 ferry crossing and railroad bridges south of town from the turn of the 19th century. "But probably the one thing that almost everyone loves is the squirrel bridge on the McKenzie. But you have to book a trip to hear the whole story."

Hurd also stops to point out four bald eagles, a couple of deer and two osprey nests.

To help with the heat of a hot summer day, Hurd makes sure to throw in a few spins on the boat, splashing everyone on board with the cool Willamette water.

"I think it's a great way for people to get out there," Hurd says. "Or maybe they want to go out but don't feel comfortable. It's a great way for them to get out and experience it."

Some question using a jet boat for the tour, and Hurd says that some complain about the wake a motorized boat makes. "It is true a boat going slow or a lot of lake boats do make a big wave," he says, "a river sled doesn't because their bottoms are much smoother and straighter."

Hurd is on the Harrisburg Volunteer Fire Department, he says, and he helped get its rescue boats and does the boat operator training for the water rescue team.

"Almost every year and sometimes a couple times a year I help paddle boats along the river," he says, "whether it be to retrieve their boats they have tipped or maybe their belongings they lost and are floating down stream. One trip I helped a nice lady caught in an eddy trying to rescue her dog. We got both of them to their boat safely."

The tour aboard the "Kimmy-Jo," named in honor of Hurd's wife who came along for the ride, begins along the banks of Harrisburg and ends at Armitage Park in Eugene.

Between the spins and brief stops to share his narrative of the each spot, "Captain Mike" navigates the river bends and shallow points like a veteran.

"I just love doing it," Hurd says of his tours that range from one to three hours long. ■

Find more information at scenicjetboats.com or call 541-912-9107.

SLANT

- Our Congressman Peter DeFazio says he is **not going to the Democratic Convention in Philadelphia** this month because he is a superdelegate and he doesn't believe in superdelegates. Superdelegates are unelected delegates who are free to support any candidate for the presidential nomination at the DNC, regardless of how their state votes. We don't believe in superdelegates either, but we do want Congressman Pete representing us in Philly, injecting his progressivism as much as possible into the big national show.

- At 5:30 pm on Thursday July 14 in Harris Hall, there will be a joint meeting of the Lane County Commission and the Eugene City Council to discuss **downtown planning and issues like the juggernaut that is City Hall**. The current price on building a new City Hall is now up to \$18.2 million, about \$3 million more than what the city estimated in April, after first upping, then reducing the price tag by millions with back and forth decisions over seismic improvements. That number doesn't include tearing down the old City Hall. Between design, demolition and a new build, the number creeps closer to \$28 million. The city says the latest price hike is due to "a very busy construction market, construction cost inflation and the uniqueness of the design." Ironically, we had a unique design (and a lower price tag), before the City Council bumbled forward in tearing down the old City Hall. Let's face it, Eugene tore down its City Hall with no real plan in place for what to do next. We suggest the city turn to local architects and planners who actually care about the city before we move forward with the next scheme.



- Wolves are back in action, legally speaking. It's a little convoluted, but stay with us through the legal jargon. Back in April, the Oregon Department of Justice threw out a lawsuit from enviro groups challenging the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission's decision to take wolves off the state endangered species list. Last week, the **Oregon Court of Appeals reinstated the legal challenge regarding the status of wolves**. Environmental advocates, including Cascadia Wildlands, have been critical of the process by which the state delisted wolves. And if you think about it, how can only 120 members of a species constitute a stable, healthy population? It's bad science, and it's bad stewardship of Oregon's biodiversity. We hope to see wolves gain back the protections they need to once again thrive in Oregon.

- Not exactly France vs. Portugal or Argentina vs. Chile, but **still good soccer**. On Friday, July 15, Lane United will play the last match of this season, starting 7 pm at Papé Field (2727 Leo Harris Parkway in Eugene) against the Washington Crossfire. LUFC matches are a fun two hours on a summer evening, complete with the noise, music, food, drink of the soccer scene.

- Please, **not one more robocall from Hillary Clinton**. Her robot calls our Eugene landline almost every day, months away from the November election. Maybe the solution is to cut the landline. Better yet, if you're having the same problem, tell the Clinton campaign to call off the robocalls. It's a bad strategy.

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