

# Pacific County makes a splash in the pot biz

EO Media Group

RAYMOND, Wash. — The newly legal recreational marijuana industry is off to a smokin' fast start in Pacific County, but a single retail store isn't gaining much traction so far, according to sales figures released by the Washington State Liquor Control Board.

In all, legal marijuana generated \$1.66 million in economic activity in the county between August and December 2014, the liquor board said in a statistical report. Legal marijuana in the county has generated more than \$415,000 in taxes, thus far.

A liquor board spokesman told Oregon Public Broadcasting that total sales statewide surpassed \$63 million in



2014, supplying \$15 million in taxes. Legal recreational marijuana sales began July 8.

Pacific County is expected to play an increasing role in producing and processing the drug, largely due to the availability of inexpensive industrial property at the Port of Willapa Harbor in Raymond. So far, two production and two processing licenses have

been granted in the Raymond area — one of each to BMF Washington Corp. and Green Labs Inc. Large-scale construction is actively underway on other production and processing facilities on port property, but they have not yet been granted licenses.

Raymond's BMF Washington is the largest production/processing operation

in the state, finishing 2014 with more than \$1.5 million in sales. The state's second-place firm, Spokane Valley-based Farmer J's, reported \$1.25 million in sales.

BMF Washington reported \$820,373 in August sales, \$89,135 in September, \$301,533 in October, \$300,392 in November and \$15,230 in December. Green Labs reported \$1,275 in production excise taxes in October, but then apparently obtained its processing license and reported \$40,028 in September, \$49,726 in October and \$28,768 in November.

Because of BMF's dual licenses, it pays just a single 25 excise tax on the product it produces. This also is true of Green Labs. Companies that only do production must pay

a 25 percent excise tax, with another 25 percent in tax imposed on whoever does the processing. Yet another 25 percent tax is added at the retail level, plus applicable B&O and sales taxes.

Marijuana produced in Pacific County can be sold anywhere in the state.

The county was initially allocated two retail licenses, both in the Raymond area. However, only one — Mr. Doobee's — is up and running. Liquor board statistics show only \$13,322 in reported sales in November and just \$533 in December. However, other numbers in the state report were also low for December due to a lag between sales and data processing.

State law mandates that more than 80 percent of mari-

juana excise taxes help pay for healthcare, substance abuse, public health and related programs. Marijuana taxes do not go into the General Fund.

Brian Smith, a spokesman for the Liquor Control Board, said initially there was a limited supply that quickly drove up the price of retail weed.

"What we're hearing today ... is that the market is flush with marijuana and prices dropped so low that many of the producers and processors are concerned about the price," he told OPB.

Smith said about 100 stores are operating in 27 of Washington's 39 counties.

The latest forecast shows Washington's retail marijuana industry is projected to bring in nearly \$700 million in revenue for the state by 2019.

## Mediators keep union dispute from escalating

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

Federal intervention in a labor contract dispute between longshoremen and container terminal operators will stop the conflict from escalating but won't immediately end port disruptions, experts say.

The longshoremen's union and their employers recently allowed federal mediators to participate in contract negotiations, which will probably prevent a strike or lockout, said Michael LeRoy, a law professor at the University of Illinois who specializes in labor relations.

While the mediators can keep the parties from going over the brink, persuading them to hammer out a resolution usually involves a longer process. LeRoy said.

"It's a bit like untying a knot that's tied very tightly," he said. "I would not expect a quick outcome."

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union's prior labor contract expired in July 2014, and in recent months terminal operators represented by the Pacific Maritime Association accused it of deliberately staging work slowdowns to gain leverage in negotiations.

The ILWU was initially undecided about PMA's request for federal intervention but agreed to let mediators participate in early January after thinking over the option for two weeks.

Federal mediators are able to settle more than 80 percent of collective bargaining disputes, according to government statistics.

"It's an encouraging sign," said Peter Friedmann, executive director of the Agriculture



MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI — EO Media Group

**A view of a cargo container ship at the Port of Portland is seen in this file photo taken in April 2011. Experts say federal intervention in a labor contract dispute between longshoremen and container terminal operators will stop the conflict from escalating but won't immediately end port disruptions.**

Transportation Coalition. "It's better than the two of them not talking to each other."

Even so, agricultural exporters continue to face a "dire" situation at ports along the West Coast as congestion impedes the shipping of perishable crops, meat and dairy products while overseas buyers secure alternate sources of farm goods, he said.

"Foreign customers are looking elsewhere for dependable suppliers," Friedmann said.

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service's engagement in the talks is a relief for shippers, as the public vitriol between ILWU and PMA over the reasons for port congestion had grown worse in late 2014, said Eric Schinfeld, president of the Washington Council on International Trade.

"It was pretty clear they were not on the same page at all," he said. "That was sort of the 'darkest before the dawn' moment."

However, even under the

most optimistic timeline, the parties probably will not reach a tentative agreement before the end of January, Schinfeld said.

After that, it will still take many months to clear the backlog of cargo that has accumulated at container yards, he said.

Until they strike a deal, it's unlikely that the longshoremen and terminal operators will resume the public sniping seen in late 2014, said LeRoy.

Parties are discouraged from speaking to the media to avoid aggravating tensions and but are allowed to vent their frustration to mediators, he said.

"These mediators are like giant shock absorbers," LeRoy said. "They absorb a lot of negative energy."

Mediators often speak sep-

arately to negotiators from opposing camps to focus on the fundamental issues and avoid confrontational tactics, he said.

This process provides the mediators with insights about points of possible compromise and allows them to spot "horse trading" opportunities, LeRoy said.

Mediators have an "encyclopedic knowledge" of the problems facing the ILWU and PMA — like increased automation aimed at relieving high labor costs — and can float proposals that allow the parties to save face and not appear to be backing down, he said.

"It's a way of resetting the conversation," LeRoy said. "It's a good way of injecting some new energy into the talks."

## Food Pantry plans to open Jan. 28

CANNON BEACH — The Cannon Beach Food Pantry plans to open in its new location, the former library portable at the Cannon Beach Elementary School property, Jan. 28.

The pantry will operate at its usual hours of 3 to 5 p.m., said Molly Edison, food pantry manager.

Moving day is Jan. 24, and volunteers are welcome to help the pantry move its food, shelving, tables, rolling carts, freezers, refrigerators and other items into their "new digs." The volunteer movers — including the Cannon Beach police and fire departments, as well as Coaster Construction — will meet at the Cannon Beach Bible Church, 264 Hills Lane, at 9 a.m. that day, Edison said.

"Anybody who wants to help us, we're more than happy to accept them," she said.

"I think it's going to be a good move for us, so, hopefully, we will be in business on the 28th," she added.

## No school in Astoria Monday

The Astoria School District schools will not be in session Monday for a teacher workday. The end of the first semester for ASD is Jan. 23. School will resume Jan. 27.

## Water Safety Expo teaches parents to keep kids safe

A Water Safety Expo, presented by Astoria Parks and Recreation, Northwest Parenting, and the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office, is 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday at Port of Play, 785 Alameda Ave.

Parents can learn how to keep their children safe in and around the water, and receive lifesaving

tips and strategies taught by professional instructor Pam Pearce, manager of the Astoria Aquatic Center, and two deputies from the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office Marine Patrol.

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