

# Ilwaco port watches for furry invaders

Will driving sea lions from Astoria send them to Ilwaco?

By KATIE WILSON  
EO Media Group

ILWACO, Wash. — Boat owners and marina staff at the Port of Ilwaco have invasion on their minds.

What will happen, they wonder, if the sea lions taking over docks and piling up under piers in Astoria begin to feel crowded? Will they come to Ilwaco?

"At this point, we're monitoring any activity," said Guy Glenn Jr., manager for the Port of Ilwaco. "Our primary concern is trying to keep any fish waste out of the water that would potentially attract them to the port."

"We're a pretty active port here," he added. "From my understanding, they don't like a lot of activity. Hopefully, it doesn't become a problem."

Daily counts of sea lions at the Port of Astoria's East Mooring Basin have recorded well over 2,000 animals on certain days — a mix of California sea lions and stellar sea lions. The noise they make is deafening. Until this year, average counts had been closer to 100 to 300 animals. Last year was the first hint that something was about to change when a count recorded more than 1,000 sea lions at the mooring basin.

Massive runs of smelt in the past two months have also attracted large numbers of harbor seals as well as more sea lions, state fish and wildlife biologists said. Elsewhere on the West Coast, warmer waters in California and crashing sardine populations have made the Lower Columbia River region even more attractive to sea lions.

The Port of Astoria has



Sea lions and seals rest on the docks of the East Mooring Basin.

JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

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tested various ways of hazing the animals off the docks, but with little success. The huge sea lions — male California sea lions can weigh over 1,000 pounds, male stellar sea lions over 2,000 pounds — are protected: California sea lions under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and stellar sea lions under the federal Endangered Species Act.

This limits what ports can do to keep them at bay.

Also, said Jim Knight, executive director for the Port of Astoria, there is a real concern about where the sea lions would go if they were successfully hazed out of the East Mooring Basin.

Sea lions do occasionally explore the marina at the Port of Ilwaco. One adventurous

animal was actually photographed contentedly scooting down a city street near the port one day. One could be heard barking last Saturday morning somewhere near the mooring basin. At the Cape Disappointment Coast Guard station, Coast Guardsmen on duty see sea lions every now and then near their dock. But, in all these cases, the sea lions

don't stick around for long.

The port has been careful to emphasize rules that forbid fishermen from tossing fish remains into the marina; all things that foul up the marina and could attract hungry sea lions, Glenn said.

A recent bill co-sponsored by Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler, R-Wash., the Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Preda-

tion Prevention Act, would change the Marine Mammal Protection Act and allow tribal members to kill sea lions and harbor seals. Currently, state officials are permitted to identify and kill trouble sea lions at Bonneville Dam.

Fish and wildlife managers are waiting to see how many animals stick around for the return run of spring salmon.



AP Photo/The Oregonian, Stephanie Yao Long

Rob Saxton, then the Tigard-Tualatin School District superintendent, visited a school on his way into work in Tigard in 2006. Saxton, who was chosen by former Gov. John Kitzhaber to head Oregon's public school system, announced his resignation Wednesday.

## State education head resigns to go to district job

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

Rob Saxton, the second-highest ranking education official in Oregon, will leave the Oregon Department of Education to replace James Sager as superintendent of the Northwest Regional Education Service District.

Saxton, the deputy superintendent of public instruction, announced the job change in an email Wednesday morning, stating that his last day with ODE would be June 30.

"Last night, the board of the Northwest Regional Education Service District approved a two-year contract hiring me as superintendent there, and I have accepted their offer," Saxton wrote today. "I look forward to continuing to support our students and schools in this new role, as I have for the past 33 years."

The NWRESD covers 20 school districts in Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook and Washington counties, including Astoria, Warrenton-Hammond, Seaside, Knappa and Jewell school districts. It provides various supports for special education, instruction, information technology, pro-

fessional development, administration and other areas. Sager, for instance, stood in as an interim superintendent in Jewell in 2013.

The NWRESD board in February decided to suspend its superintendent search and instead select an interim to start July 1. Saxton will work with the board, staff and district superintendents to assess the ESD's strengths, challenges and to make recommendations that will inform the search for a permanent replacement.

Sager, who's led the NWRESD since 2011, announced his retirement late last year. He's been in education for more than 30 years.

Saxton was appointed Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction by then-Gov. John Kitzhaber in July of 2012. He was confirmed by the Oregon Senate on Sept. 14. Saxton was Oregon's first appointed head of ODE, following 2011 legislation that made the governor the superintendent of schools, with the authority to appoint a deputy to run the department.

Gov. Kate Brown, Saxton said, will soon start the process of replacing Saxton.

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