

Pot: The black market is 'not some sinister thing'

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"I think the Oct. 1 start is good," he said, as it gives time for outdoor crops to be harvested and avoids depleting the medical supply. "July 1 would have been reckless."

John Harper, who owns smoke shops in Astoria, Seaside, Scappoose and Rainier, said he provided a loan to help start Sweet Relief, along with financial advice. He said medical dispensaries are the best available avenue to roll out recreational marijuana, as they have already been tried, tested and inspected.

"You have to approach this as if it was any other business," Harper said. He is an investor in six to eight dispensaries in Oregon. Harper said he doesn't see a rush of new dispensaries, but an increase across Clatsop County as moratoriums are lifted.

One of the approved dispensary applications is for Highway 420 in Seaside, which owner Steve Geiger said he has been trying to open for nearly three years.

"I'm hoping we're going to get started here in the next few weeks," Geiger said. He needs an inspection by the Oregon Health Authority to get his license renewed before the city of Seaside will complete his background check. He, like every other medical dispensary owner, hopes to sell recreationally starting Oct. 1.

"There are 600 medical cards in Clatsop County, and you would never be able to sur-



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Nick Clark, owner of Nature's Choice Alternative Medicine, shows different strains of medical marijuana including raspberry kush, and a homegrown mango strain.

live here without this place being a destination," Geiger said. "If you're a medical marijuana dispensary owner, and you have no plans to go recreational, you have a pretty short life in this business."

Dispensary owners say prices at dispensaries will be comparable to the black market, and that people will be willing to go to the shops and pay a little more for the increased variety and quality.

Police perspective

Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis was a staunch opponent of Measure 91, speaking on behalf of law enforcement

all over the state in opposition. But for Marquis, the legalization of marijuana inspires a sigh.

"It's not like this is going to change things for prosecution or cops very much," he said.

Marquis said maybe three out of more than 1,000 recent cases in the county were related to marijuana.

Astoria Police Chief Brad Johnston said marijuana has and will continue to be a low priority for police, adding there are issues with trivialization of possession in the law and vagaries on the implications of legal marijuana.

Johnston said police are waiting for the Legislature to do its

job by making the rules, adding he supports a legal path to buy what is now a legal substance.

"It seems that the rules should have been clear prior to the law change," Johnston said. "These are things that were brought up before Ballot Measure 91 passed and the day that Ballot Measure 91 was passed."

A big question for law enforcement, Marquis said, is when edibles will be allowed for sale, as a concern is they will be marketed to children. The edibles market is awash with products modeled after popular candies and chocolates.

"I'm very upset with what



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A marijuana plant sits on a shelf in The Pharmacy.

'The black market is largely people's friends and neighbors.'

— Josh Marquis
Clatsop County district attorney

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the (Oregon) Legislature is doing," Marquis said of Senate Bill 460, adding it is going back on Measure 91's promises to tax, regulate and protect children from marijuana, in order to get it out faster.

Marquis has long been a critic of dispensaries and medical marijuana, which he said are relatively unregulated compared to

drinking establishments.

"This idea of 'where are they going to find marijuana?' is ludicrous," Marquis said, adding marijuana has been grown and used by Oregonians since decriminalization in 1973.

"The black market is largely people's friends and neighbors," he said. "It's not some sinister thing."

Ilwaco: August reservations for slips at the Port are sold out

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already seeing a lot of coho and Chinook along the coast," said Doug Milward, ocean salmon manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in a recent report.

During the week of June 15, sport fishermen in Oregon and Washington landed a total of 599 Chinook in an all-species salmon fishery in the Columbia River ocean area.

Gudgell said most of the salmon he's seen have been coming in at 18 to 20 pounds, though one sportfisherman

landed a 25-pounder earlier in June.

"It's turning out pretty good," said Butch Smith of Coho Charters in Ilwaco. "It always starts out a little slow before school gets out and graduation, but it's been a pretty good season."

And then comes August

August is when things will really get busy.

Already, August reservations for slips at the Port of Ilwaco are sold out. Last year, people started reserving later in the season when they realized the fishing was

going to be good. This year, with the last summer on their minds, people began calling to reserve boat slips the minute the port began taking summer reservations on March 1.

In that first month, port staff scheduled more than 250 reservations for the summer, said Port Manager Guy Glenn Jr.

"And they've been trickling in ever since then," he said.

Last August, boats loaded with sportfishermen were front to back for miles up and down the Columbia Riv-

er, and in Ilwaco, charter boat businesses and small seafood processors were kept hopping. Some captains reported it took longer to get to fishing grounds than it took for their passengers to land their daily limit in fish. Boats were going out early in the morning and returning just several hours later.

Last year was so good, in fact, that Gudgell bought a new boat for his charter business and hired another captain and deckhand to run it. The last time he'd bought a boat was about five years earlier. It's not the sort of

purchase he makes on a whim.

"Boats are pretty darned expensive when you only operate six months out of the year," he said. But, then, he's also been getting more and more people booking trips a year in advance.

Smith didn't buy a boat, but he did stock up on necessary equipment like leaders. He'd expected they would use 4,000 last year and instead they ended up using about 7,000.

"Everybody's going to be slammed in August," Gudgell said. "Everybody."

Still no sturgeon

One thing that is disappointing this year is that, yet again, sturgeon will be off limits.

"That hurts us really bad at the coast," Smith said.

Among the people making those year-in-advance reservations, were sportfishermen hoping that rumors of a sturgeon fishery would prove true. But, by mid-April, it was clear that the Oregon and Washington fish and wildlife departments and the Pacific Fishery Management Council would not be opening a sturgeon season.

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