

BAYWATCH

Tokeland marina smokin' busy

\$564,000 state grant sets stage for new era in little town

By **KATIE WILSON**
EO Media Group

TOKELAND, Wash. — The Tokeland marina on Willapa Bay is quiet for now, but the parking lot is full of pickup trucks and boat trailers baking in the heat of a midday, midweek July sun.

All of the marina's existing 42 slips are spoken for, with roughly half rented out long term to commercial boats and half to recreational boats. Visitors to the marina — and during the summer there are a lot of visitors — must haul in and haul out each day they go fishing. There are only two boat launch ramps. So when the 50 plus boats in the water off nearby Washaway Beach hit their limit in salmon and head back to the marina, they will have to take turns to haul out while everyone else drives in circles, waiting.

It is not uncommon for more than 200 boats to launch from the marina in a single day when the summer Columbia River and ocean salmon seasons are going strong. Located near State Route 105 at the northern side of the bay's entryway, the marina is the closest ocean access for boaters in north Pacific County, also drawing users from elsewhere around southwest Washington.

During salmon season, says one angler who is dock-bound thanks to some expensive boat repairs, it is complete chaos.

But all of this is in the process of changing.

Big renovations

This summer, the Port of Willapa Harbor, which owns and operates the marina, learned it will receive \$563,780 from the state Recreation and Conservation Office to redevelop the Tokeland Marina. Work already in motion or set to begin this year includes:

- Replacing a dilapidated floating dock (used, for now, primarily by birds and, in the winter, by the port as a sort of breakwater) with a new dock that can double as summer moorage and winter breakwater;
- Building new bathrooms to take the place of a row of green porta-potties;
- Generally cleaning up the marina frontage;
- Driving piling for a future floating dock that will add approximately 40 more slips; and
- Other work to protect the south shoreline from erosion.

Community vision

This, and other grants the port has landed in recent years, are thanks in part to the energetic work of Tokeland and area residents.

About five years ago, a loose organization of area citizens and local government formed Sustainable Tokeland



Natalie St. John/EO Media Group

The Tokeland marina on Willapa Bay's north shore, like ports in Chinook and Ilwaco, Wash., is abuzz with recreational fishing boats this summer as an outstanding salmon season nears its peak. The marina will soon benefit from state-financed renovations intended to reverse decades of deterioration exemplified by the weather pilings pictured here.



Natalie St. John/EO Media Group

Commercial and recreational vessels jockey for space at Tokeland's marina, which is fully booked this time of year.

to develop a master plan for the area. They asked the community questions like: If you could build one business here, and the only goal was to serve the community, what business would you build? They prioritized a list of improvements, development ideas and projects. Improving the Tokeland marina was near the top of this list, said Rebecca Chaffee, manager for the Port of Willapa Harbor.

The face of the marina has already changed dramatically since then. The port has taken down (or had building owners take down) several run-down structures such as an abandoned, boarded-up building — the fire department burned that one down. Now, Nelson Crab is building what will eventually be a commercial

seafood market. Meanwhile, the old Nelson Crab building, a rusted-out potential safety hazard sitting out on an old pier to the far side of the marina, is also gone, torn down in late July. The pier itself is considered a failed structure and will be dismantled — work that is set to begin soon.

"Right in the middle of fishing season," said Chaffee,

sighing a little.

Still, Chaffee is excited about the work and the future in store for the Tokeland Marina. She envisions a much more useful facility, one that can handle its growing popularity with local and out-of-town anglers.

Busy, but not rich

Garth Gerber, the Toke-



Natalie St. John/EO Media Group

Salmon like these are the big attraction for fishermen utilizing a Willapa Bay marina with convenient access to the Pacific Ocean.

land marina harbor master, walks into her office brandishing a thick sheaf of pink-colored receipts. The stack is thick: all the launch receipts from the recent weekend, representing hundreds and hundreds of fishing boats. But despite how well-used the marina is during the summer, it makes the port almost no money. The slips are rented long-term and there is not a lot of turnover. The port doesn't charge for parking, only for use of the launch.

"In a perfect world, with lots of money, we might have done bigger and better things," she said. The vision

Sustainable Tokeland had for marina improvements will be met, in part.

"We haven't been able to do them all, and probably never will, but we'll be able to do some of them," Chaffee said.

And every little bit helps. Chaffee believes the marina is well on its way to having its busiest season ever this summer. Those new docks for recreational boats can't come soon enough.

"The word seems to really travel fast among fishermen if the fishing is good," Chaffee said. "And the fishing has been very good."

LOWER COLUMBIA BOWL
FALL LEAGUES
NOW FORMING

503-325-3321
Cosmic Bowl
Friday & Saturdays 9:30 to midnight

Individuals & Teams Wanted
Stop by or call today!

10th - 10:30th MON-TH
10th - 12:00th FRI - SAT
12th - 10:30th SUNDAY

Call Anytime
Free Fast Estimates

Jeff Hale Painting

- Residential
- Commercial
- Cedar Roof Treatments
- Interior & Exterior

Over 20 years local experience

503-440-2169
Jeff Hale, Contractor

LICENSED BONDED INSURED
CC#8179131

WANTED

Alder and Maple Saw Logs & Standing Timber

Northwest Hardwoods • Longview, WA
Contact: Steve Axtell • 360-430-0885 or John Anderson • 360-269-2500

VOLUNTEER PICK OF THE WEEK

McCloud
1 1/2 year old neutered male Siamese --
With sapphire eyes and velvet tread, Royalty Purrsonified.

See profile on petfinder.com

Sponsored by
Clatsop County Animal Shelter
1315 SE 19th St., Warrenton • 861- PETS
www.dogscats.org Noon to 4pm, Tues-Sat

DISMAL NITCH, WASHINGTON TO ASTORIA, OREGON

the **GREAT Columbia CROSSING**

ASTORIA WARRENTON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

10K Run/Walk Across the Astoria Bridge
October 11, 2015

Registration Fee - Chip-Timed: \$45 / Non-timed: \$40
Long-sleeved T-shirts are available to purchase.
Don't delay! T-shirt is limited to 3,500 participants.

Register online at
GreatColumbiaCrossing.com

ASTORIA WARRENTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
COLUMBIA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
CARDIOLOGY CLINIC
A CMBH/CHSII Collaboration
event sponsor

Presented by Astoria Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce
(503) 325-6311 • oldoregon.com • Facebook.com/TravelAstoria

PELICAN BREWING COMPANY

Phil the Pelican is coming to Cannon Beach!

HIRING NOW
Kitchen & Restaurant Managers

Start training NOW in Pacific City and open our new Brew Pub in Cannon Beach in 2016.
Competitive Wages, 401K, Benefits, Vacation

Pelican Brewing Company
Pacific City, Oregon
503-965-7779 ext. 307
www.yourlittlebeachtown.com/jobs
employment@pelicanbrewing.com