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ONE DOLLAR

Port tries dancing the sea lions away

Inflatable air dancers latest bid to get sea lions to skedaddle

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria has tried surveying tape, beach balls, electrified mats and fake orcas to scare away sea lions. Why not inflatable air dancers?

The Port Commission has approved buying two air dancers to act like dockside scarecrows in the agency's latest endeavor to shoo sea lions out of the East End Mooring Basin.

The suggestion came from Port Commissioner James Campbell, who said the "bogeymen" had successfully scared away sea lions in California. A staple at car dealerships, bargain stores, halftime shows and concerts, the nylon, tube-shaped

caricatures flail around in the sky as they fill with air.

Moss Landing Harbor in Monterey Bay, California, bought several air dancers and spread them along docks to discourage about 600 sea lions that had taken up residence. Harbormaster Linda McIntyre said the air dancers, an idea she gleaned from farmers trying to scare away birds, provided an effective deterrent to sea lions, at least initially.

"Almost everything works for a

day or two," she said. "It's too bad they're so smart."

The sea lions eventually learn the game, she said, so her staff has turned to paintball guns, a hazing method allowed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in combination with the air dancers.

"And when you come into the harbor and see those air dancers, they put a smile on your face," she said. "They're hilarious little clowns."

West Coast issue

Campbell's suggestion of the air dancers came amid a larger discussion Tuesday about forming a sea lion committee to lobby the federal government for more options to control the animal's population and predation on endangered fish runs. Commissioner Bill Hunsinger, a commercial fisherman, has made the new committee his pet project.

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Gearhart party barn takes a break

No commercial events this winter at Neacoxie Barn in Gearhart

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — There won't be any weddings or special events at Neacoxie Barn in Gearhart, at least until March.

Clatsop County Circuit Court Judge Cindee Matyas signed a temporary injunction Tuesday prohibiting owner Shannon Smith from using the barn for commercial events. The injunction provides an opportunity for a "cooling-off period" after years of rancor and legal disputes between Smith and the city.

According to the agreement, Smith is subject to a temporary injunction pledging not to use the barn for future events without the necessary permits, Gearhart City Manager Chad Sweet said.

"We're doing our best to help it out in any way, in terms of conversations," Sweet said Tuesday. "There are still things she needs to do that we can't bend on having to do with public safety."

"This agreement was a way to secure a February mediation type of sit-down with the city with all experts — something that I have asked for multiple times over the years," Smith said via email Wednesday. "The property is not used in winter anyway."

The barn, at 774 Pacific Way by Neacoxie Creek, is used for weddings, family reunions and other commercial events, according to city officials. But without a conditional use permit and a building occupancy permit, the owners are putting the health and safety of guests and residents at risk.

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Shannon Smith

Text-to-911 coming to Astoria

New system could be ready in three to six months, also for Warrenton

By KYLE SPURR
The Daily Astorian

Astoria Dispatch will be one of the first emergency call centers in the state to receive text messages, opening an alternative lifeline during domestic violence, home invasions or other critical situations when making a phone call is difficult.

The local dispatch center is part of a partnership that includes Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington, Columbia and Clark counties along with the city of Woodburn.

The Portland Dispatch Center Consortium plans to have a Web-based system set up in about three to six months to receive text messages from cellphones.

Unveiling a statewide move toward text messages was not feasible. Instead, the state has agreed to fund a pilot project and begin rolling out the program regionally with the hope of being border-to-border by 2018.

Jeff Rusiecki, Astoria 911 communications manager, said it makes sense that the Portland-metro area be the first in the state since the centers border Washington state, which has already started using text-to-911. Astoria Dispatch regularly receives calls from Pacific, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz and Clark counties in Washington.

"Up and down the Columbia River, we work very closely with them, so it just makes sense that we should adopt the technology to move forward," Rusiecki said.

The Web-based system will be a Windows application operated by a third-party provider, TeleCommunication Systems. The system will be compatible with what is used in Washington state.

The third-party system will route text messages and send them to the correct 911 center. Any attachments such as pictures and videos will be stripped off.

Eventually, the state will develop its own system for the 43 dispatch centers and will be able to accept texts without a third-party connector.

Meanwhile, the contract with TeleCommunication Systems is still being coordinated.

Costs are being covered by the state and by the 75-cent surcharge fee paid by cellphone users.

Astoria Dispatch's only cost would be buying another monitor. The center already has the additional capability so no local funds will be spent.

"We were very careful to make sure everyone was on the same platform," Rusiecki said. "If I get a call that needs to go across to Pacific or Washington County, we can send it over to them just like we can with a voice call."

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Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian
Jeff Rusiecki, 911 communications Manager, shows the current message that appears when you text 911.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian
Jeff Rusiecki, 911 communications manager, shows the monitor system used in the dispatch center at the Astoria Police Department.

'If I get a call that needs to go across to Pacific or Washington County, we can send it over to them just like we can with a voice call.'

Jeff Rusiecki
Astoria 911 communications manager

'No such thing as a seagull'

Wildlife expert talks about northern fulmars and other birds

By ANDREW R. TONRY
For EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — "There's no such thing as a seagull," said Josh Saranpaa with a wry smile. "If you hear anyone say that, slap them across the face."

The room burst into laughter, and a cheeky member of the audience joined in the joke.

"But I saw a seagull eating a starfish," the man offered.

While there may be no such thing as a "seagull," there are, however, many different



Andrew R. Tonry/For EO Media Group

Common murre, one of many seabirds found on Haystack Rock. The murre lays their eggs directly on the rock, not in a nest.

species of gulls — laughing gulls, ivory gulls, California gulls, slaty-backed gulls and so on. Those found most often in Cannon Beach are known as northern fulmars.

One of them was in the Cannon Beach Library last week, along with three other species. They were brought by

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Enter your baby in The Daily Astorian's Cutest Baby Contest for 2015

If your baby was born between Jan 1st & Dec 31st of 2015, you can submit your newborn's picture either via email at classifieds@dailyastorian.com or drop by one of our offices in Astoria or Seaside and we can scan in the photo for you.

Deadline to enter is Tuesday, January 26th at 5:00 pm. Entries will be printed in The Daily Astorian on January 29th.

