

New barriers, inflatable air dancers deployed against sea lions

Pesky pinnipeds may stay until food runs out

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria will partner with students in Knappa High School's welding program to create barriers to sea lions on docks at the East End Mooring Basin. The inflatable air dancers could also go up next week.

Robert Evert, the Port's permit and project manager, said the Port met last week with officials from the state Department of Fish and Wildlife and National Marine Fisheries Service, which oversees the Marine Mammal Protection Act covering sea lions. Executive Director Jim Knight said officials with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which oversees the fisheries service, said the pipe barriers are effective and widely used along the West Coast.

Evert said the Port then contacted Topper industries, which quoted the agency about \$500,000 for installation. Through the deal with Knappa, he said the Port will spend about \$13,000 on materials, along with a \$2,000 donation to the school from Tim Hill, co-owner of J&H Boatworks and Columbia



Sea lions and harbor seals lay on the docks at the East End Mooring Basin.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Steel Supply in Astoria and a Port tenant.

Tim Kamppi, a welding instructor at Knappa, recently mentioned students would fabricate about 2 miles worth of railing for the Port. Port staff will install the 2-inch pipes 18 to 24 inches above the docks' surface, with a cable in between to prevent sea lions from slipping underneath the pipes.

Knight said the Port can amend the 2015-16 budget to include the additional expense and should probably budget the same for the West End Mooring Basin, in case sea lions move there.

Sea lions back

"That's just a Band-Aid on a massive gash," Commissioner James Campbell said, pointing to the larger issue of

sea lion predation.

After mostly emptying out, the pinnipeds are once again packing the docks at the East End Mooring Basin, where Port officials claim they have caused more than \$100,000 in damage. State wildlife officials are already on-site trapping and branding the animals, part of a 19-year study of their movement, feeding habits and migration patterns,

amid protests by groups like the Sea Lion Defense Brigade.

An increasing number of sea lions have been venturing into the Columbia River in recent years foraging for smelt, salmon and any other available prey, as their traditional food web along the California coastline has collapsed amid warm El Niño water conditions. With rookeries in Southern California and off

the Baja Peninsula, the animals migrate as far north as Alaska in search of food.

Favorite haunt

The Port's East End Mooring Basin has become a favorite haul-out and flash point for the issue, with more than 2,300 sea lions counted in one day at the basin in March by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Port has tried myriad ways to scare the animals off and prevent damage to the docks — from surveying tape and beach balls to a fake orca and soon the inflatable air dancers — but to little avail.

Port Commissioner Bill Hunsinger, a commercial fisherman, has championed the formation of a committee to address sea lion predation on endangered salmon runs. Hunsinger had wanted the Port to lead the effort, but other commissioners pulled back, saying the agency should focus on getting sea lions off the docks while supporting efforts on predation.

Knight said state officials told him there are no state or federal resources to put toward the sea lion issue, adding the only way they will ultimately leave is through the loss of the food source. "Until that point, the agencies have no expectations that the sea lions will ever go away," he said.

Local pot tax heads to November ballot

City Council also approves gift to Oregon Fallen Badge Foundation

whether to add the local tax on top of a 17 percent state tax that will be imposed once the state licenses retail marijuana outlets.

Consumers are now paying a temporary 25 percent tax on recreational pot sold at medical marijuana dispensaries through the end of the year.

Astoria Police Chief Brad Johnston has estimated that the local tax could bring in roughly \$100,000 annually.

The Astoria City Council voted unanimously Tuesday night to place the tax question on the ballot after clarifying

that the local tax would not be applied to medical marijuana.

Medical marijuana is tax free under state law.

In other business Tuesday night, the City Council:

- Held a moment of silence for Seaside Police Sgt. Jason Goodding, who was shot and killed while trying to make an arrest on a felony assault warrant this month.

- Issued a \$1,000 gift to the Oregon Fallen Badge Foundation, which organized a memorial service for Goodding at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center last Friday.

Razor clam digs on at Copalis, Mocrocks

EO Media Group

LONG BEACH, Wash. — Razor clam diggers can count on openings beginning Friday at Copalis and Mocrocks beaches, Washington state shellfish managers announced. Long Beach also remains open to clam digging on afternoon or evening tides through March 10.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife approved a two-day opening on

Friday and Saturday at Copalis and three days of digging from Friday through Sunday at Mocrocks on evening tides after marine toxin tests showed the clams are safe to eat.

Dan Ayres, a state coastal shellfish manager, recommends that diggers arrive at the beach an hour or two before low tide for best results. However, digging is not allowed on any beach before noon.

The upcoming dig at is

scheduled on the following dates, beaches and low tides:

- Friday: 4:33 p.m., 0.0 feet, Copalis, Mocrocks, Long Beach

- Saturday: 5:17 p.m., -0.1 feet, Copalis, Mocrocks, Long Beach

- Sunday: 5:56 p.m., -0.2 feet, Mocrocks, Long Beach

For additional information about low tides at Long Beach, go to <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/shellfish/razorclams/current.html>

A 3 percent local tax on recreational marijuana will be on the November ballot. Voters will get to decide



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