

Port: Animosity between private shippers, longshoremen

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Representatives from the union and Astoria Forest Products were mum on the disagreements when contacted by phone.

"I don't know that I want to deal with this issue in the paper," said Chris Connaway, president of the union's local chapter. "This is an internal issue."

Dave Daggett, the general manager for Astoria Forest Products, said he couldn't make any comments either way, but added, "I think everybody in the community knows what Longshore in ports mean."

Clear jurisdiction, unclear contract

The animosity between private shippers and longshoremen is well-chronicled, most recently by the nine-month standoff between the union and the Pacific Maritime Association that backed up trade along the entire West Coast. Movement of cargo along the West Coast is governed by a labor contract ratified for another five years in May.

"I had to get an attorney who specialized on ILWU contract negotiations to give me a clear understanding of who is right in this case," Knight said, adding the lawyer confirmed the union has jurisdiction over



Crews unload a log truck at Pier 1.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

ocean-going cargo moving between the piers.

What's not clear is the contract the Port signed with Westerlund Log Handlers in 2010, when the agency re-entered the log export market.

Knight said the original contract, which the Port Commission voted to transfer to Murphy Overseas USA and its subsidiary Astoria Forest Products nearly two years

ago, doesn't contain language obligating the company to use ghost riders.

But Westerlund used the union longshoremen in the past, he said, setting a precedent that favors longshoremen.

Knight is also worried about how once issues with the longshoreman and Astoria Forest Products flared up, the company stopped working with the Port on a stormwater

collection system the agency is planning for the entire central waterfront. With the company not wanting to work with longshoremen or help on stormwater treatment, he said, "that's not comporting with their long-term goal of developing Pier 3."

Buy the trucks?

Developing Pier 3 into a dedicated operation for pro-

cessing and exporting logs has long been the goal for Westerlund and Astoria Forest Products since it took over.

"I think it would resolve the issue in a heartbeat," said Port Commissioner Bill Hunsinger, who was a longshoreman for 43 years, drove log trucks and is close enough to Astoria Forest Products owner Dennis Murphy Jr. to have watched Super Bowl 50 with him.

But the goal of developing Pier 3 remains expensive and far-off. During Westerlund's time at the Port, the company used a log yard in Lewis and Clark and drove logs directly to Pier 1 for export, eliminating the need for ghost riders. Westerlund also had a separate trucking company.

When Astoria Forest Products took over, it moved storage and processing to property it leases on Pier 3, creating the need for ghost riders to move ocean-going cargo across Port property. Hunsinger said either the Port or Astoria Forest Products should buy or lease a few log trucks and have longshoremen drive them.

Knight also said the Port or company buying the trucks could be an answer, albeit one that should have been found when the Port first signed a contract with Westerlund. He said the Port is also looking into whether so-called "yard hustlers" — an abbreviated version of a truck used for moving cargo around docks — would be legal to drive down streets.

"In the Port of Olympia, we were the operator," Knight said of his former employer. "We made it clear the port would provide equipment to move cargo and hire labor to move the cargo, so the tenant knew that. Astoria didn't do any of that, they said, 'We want your business and we'll figure out the details later.'"

July 4: Close to 100,000 visited for holiday last year

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"We want the people to come down here, respect what's here and build a tradition and keep on coming back," said Magen Michaud, one of the group's leaders.

Fourth of July 2015

Nearly 100,000 people visited the peninsula during the Fourth of July last year, according to state Department of Transportation estimates.

Even if the crowds are smaller in 2016, that won't be enough to do away with the problems that presented themselves a year ago, Michaud said. Problems like illegal beach camping, thousands of pounds of litter and raucous behavior were all in full force during the 2015 holiday.

"The same issues are there every year, it (was) just exacerbated last year by how many more people there were, but the same things happen," she said.

Communication is key

For the time being, one of the group's most important goals is communication to potential visitors. Those efforts include offering a unified message throughout the peninsula, Michaud said.

"When visitors come here, they don't think of us as Seaview, Ocean Park, Long Beach — they think of it as the beach and so if they're hearing one thing here and another thing here, they get confused and they tend not to do anything," said Bonnie Lou Cozby, one of the group's leaders.

The group is partnering with personnel within Washington State Parks' communication department to help spread the word to visitors, Cozby said.

"That's a huge investment on their part just right there, to help get signage and posters out," she said.

Messaging efforts extend well beyond the peninsula and its residents — the group is reaching into media markets in Seattle and Portland to set expectations for what will and won't be allowed on the peninsula during the holiday weekend, said group member Vicki Vanneman.

"We need to change the expectations and let people know that the existing regulations are going to be enforced, but do it in a positive way that's still welcoming," Michaud added.

Fireworks planning

The group's long-term goals including trimming down the days when fireworks are allowed to be sold and shot off, Cozby said.

The current regulations in Pacific County allow the maximum time to buy and set off fireworks, Vanneman said.

Part of the group's efforts have gone to examining what other communities in the state have done, she said.

Cutting the days when fireworks are available would be a gradual process, Vanneman said.

"We would ease into this, we would try it on for size and it would strictly be a proposal from our standpoint that would be presented to the county commissioners for their consideration," she said.



EO Media Group/File Photo

A young woman watches fireworks from the top of a vehicle at dusk. Typically, safety conditions deteriorate after darkness falls and levels of inebriation rise.



Visitors and residents from all age groups regard Fourth of July on the Long Beach Peninsula as a fun time. After last year's particularly chaotic nighttime revelry, locals began looking for better ways to ensure safety.

EO Media Group
File Photo



Bob Duke/For EO Media Group

An aerial photo looking north from the city of Long Beach, Wash. shows a long encampment stretching into the far distance during 2015 Independence Day celebrations. Local organizers hope to instill a culture of better awareness and compliance with fireworks and camping laws.