



Photos by Joshua Bessix/The Daily Astorian

Crews from logging company J.M. Browning stack timber harvested from the Beneke Basin, as part of a more than \$3 million sale in the Clatsop State Forest to Hampton Affiliates. The Astoria district of the state Department of Forestry produces about \$23 million in local revenue each fiscal year, harvesting about 73 million board feet of timber.

Gearhart Grocery makes way for a brew pub

Challenge likely as councilors OK switch

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — City councilors in Gearhart opened the way for a new brew pub Tuesday night, approving a conditional use permit for Gearhart Station at 599 Pacific Way.

In a three-hour hearing at the Gearhart firehouse, owner Terry Lowenberg of Sum Properties in Seaside told councilors the Gearhart Grocery could not compete with Fred Meyer, Safeway and Costco.

“We sell raw food now,” Lowenberg said. “Raw food is not a sustainable thing in this community.”

Lowenberg said alternative food choices, such as organic vegetables or specialty products, had not been successful with customers.

“People say they wanted it, we bought it, and we ended up eating it ourself,” he said. “We thought about what we could do to make it better, to make it a profitable business.”



Terry Lowenberg

See GROCERY, Page 10A

Time for a trim or buzz cut?

73 million timber board feet auctioned each year

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Each year, the state Department of Forestry’s Astoria District sells 73 million board feet of timber out of nearly 137,000 acres in the Clatsop State Forest, providing \$23 million in net revenue, two-thirds of it going to local governments and school districts.

The district is planning 12 sales across 2,200 acres of state forestlands in the fiscal year ahead. Public comment on the sales is open through June.

With pressures on the state Board of Forestry, the harvest may be in flux.

Feeding local mills

Deep in the heart of the Clatsop State Forest above Beneke Creek late last month rose a tall yarder, its guylines spreading out to tree stump supports in all directions like the metal skeleton of a teepee.

A gas-powered sky car attached to a skyline stretching 5,000 feet down the hillside towed two or three tree trunks at a time to a forest road landing. A crew from logging firm J.M. Browning snatched the trunks with a log grabber, sent them through a delimeter and stacked the timber to be put on trucks and taken to regional sawmills.

“You’re probably looking at 10 guys just here,” said Jewell Unit Forester Ty Williams, who helps plan timber sales for the state Department of Forestry in the heart of the county. “And you’re not counting the log truck drivers.”

See TIMBER, Page 10A



Trees are shown in a buffer near the Homesteader timber area. On the other side of the buffer is the Nehalem River.

MORE INFO

To see the full 2017 Annual Operations Plan for the state Department of Forestry, visit <http://tinyurl.com/zpar7kz>



Crews stack logs

‘You’re probably looking at 10 guys just here. And you’re not counting the log truck drivers.’

Ty Williams

Jewell Unit forester who helps plan timber sales for the state Department of Forestry in the heart of the county

Riverwalk Inn hoteliers off the hook

Judge removes Astoria Hospitality Ventures from lawsuit

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County Circuit Court Judge Phillip Nelson agreed to remove Astoria Hospitality Ventures, William Orr and Chester Trabucco as co-defendants in the lawsuit brought by Param Hotel Group over the Astoria Riverwalk Inn.

Param, a Portland-based hotel operator, sued the Port of Astoria in November on claims of fraud and breach of contract after the agency chose Hospitality Ventures to take over operation of the hotel from indebted operator Brad Smithart and his company, Hospitality Masters. The company added Trabucco and Orr, the locally connected representatives of Hospitality Ventures, as co-defendants, claiming they intentionally interfered with a previous agreement between the Port and Param.

“I do not think all the elements have been

See HOTELIERS, Page 10A

Peninsula clamming ends Sunday to protect rare birds

EO Media Group

LONG BEACH, Wash. — After a unique season that jammed 97 days of digging into four months, the Long Beach-Ocean Park razor clam season will end after this weekend’s opener.

The decision to end the season here while it continues elsewhere on the Washington coast until at least May 22 was driven in part by avoiding human impacts to two rare birds species that nest at Leadbetter Point, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife said.

Local business leaders advocated extending clam digs here, engaging state Sen. Dean Takko and others in probing Fish and

Wildlife’s decision. However, after additional internal discussions, the agency decided to stick with its Sunday ending date, Coastal Shellfish Manager Dan Ayres said Saturday.

“It’s no surprise that protection of nesting snowy plovers remains important on the north end, so any additional digging on Long Beach would require additional measures to ensure protection in the area adjacent to nesting activities,” Ayres said. Streaked horned larks also nest in the soft, dry sand at Leadbetter. Both species are listed as “endangered” in the state and as “threatened” under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Great season anyway

Clam season traditionally starts in October and runs through May. However, a bloom of a marine algae that creates the toxin domoic acid ended the 2014-15 season a little early and delayed start of this season until early January on the Long Beach Peninsula.

A survey of the clam population on the peninsula estimated the allowable harvest at nearly 4.8 million for 2015-16. Clams are unaffected by domoic acid, and once digging began this January, diggers commonly harvested their daily limits of 15 within a half hour or so whenever the weather permitted.

Even with the early ending, Ayres said, “It is important to keep in perspective the fact

that we’ve offered a total of 97 days of digging on Long Beach (even with the late start) which is by far the most of any beach this season. Mocrocks has had 26 days and Copalis 18 days — while Twin Harbors remains closed.” A local harvest total for 2016 is not yet available.

Despite the toxin problem, the 2014-15 season produced 104 days of digging — the most in modern times. A little more than 2.4 million clams were harvested.

Toxin persists in places

Latest tests show domoic acid in clams is no more than 7 parts per million on the

See CLAMMING, Page 10A



EO Media Group/File Photo
More clamming starts Sunday on Washington’s Long Beach Peninsula.