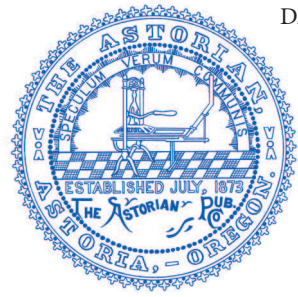


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## OUR VIEW

# Salmon return amid changing water conditions

*Temps, birds and sea lions continue to pose obstacles*

Late summer's influx of returning salmon has finally started in earnest thanks to recent rainfall, a natural phenomenon that coincides this year with much interesting fisheries news of a legal and regulatory nature.

For the many around the Columbia estuary who pay attention to such matters, this week's good rain was cause for thanksgiving, as the pulse of fresh water signaled to salmon that the time has come to rush toward spawning beds and hatcheries. Tuesday's count of fall Chinook passing Bonneville Dam reached 32,446, nearly three times as many as the day before.

Coho, too, noticed the switch to more autumn-like conditions. This Tuesday, 3,120 adults passed Bonneville, up from 368 just a week before. The total for the year through Tuesday was 10,876, a few more than last year on the same date, but far below the 10-year average of 26,907.

Clearly, salmon are an exquisitely fine-tuned gauge of conditions in the river and ocean — moving, reproducing and dying in a carefully choreographed dance with the seasons.

### Water temperatures

As the planet marches toward another record-setting year for heat, warming temperatures in the Columbia River watershed are ratcheting upward in terms of public concern and agency attention. Dealing with the issue will become an extremely active new front in the battle over competing uses for the Columbia/Snake system.

The always informative Columbia Basin Bulletin reported this week that five conservation groups are edging toward a lawsuit against the federal Environmental Protection Agency over the EPA's lack of action. Last year, water temps were sometimes far more above the 68 degree F danger zone for salmon, hot enough to decimate an endangered run of Snake River sockeye salmon. Only 1 percent of the run survived as far as their spawning grounds.

Though litigation is undesirable way of achieving environmental ends, in this instance the EPA stalled out on finalizing temperature pollution rules it was on the verge of implementing in 2003. At times, only a federal court order provides EPA with the backbone to overcome counter-veiling political pressures.

"We need a comprehensive plan to deal with dams' impacts on water temperature, or we may be telling our kids stories about salmon instead of teaching them to fish," an attorney for Columbia Riverkeeper said.

### Habitat alternative

In the competition between economic interests and salmon-recovery goals on the Columbia, most residents would agree it's best when everyone comes away a winner. NOAA Fisheries is helping achieve this by experimenting with a new variety of mitigation bank in the Kelso area.

Long familiar as a tool to make up for filling wetlands, this first-in-the-region habitat bank allows private developers to buy credits that Habitat Bank LLC will turn into funds to pay for a restoration project on the Coweeman River, Columbia Basin Bulletin reports.

This complex multi-agency deal is an admirable way to rebuild a nice, solid piece of habitat of sufficient size to make a noticeable difference. While developers still have to minimize construction impacts, in some cases these habitat-bank credits will allow development that would otherwise have been unable to overcome habitat-loss objections.

### Fish birds, sea lions

Also noteworthy is news that a federal judge will allow continuation of efforts to bring double-crested cormorant numbers into closer alignment with the Columbia River's carrying capacity. In addition, problem individuals of another salmon-eating species, California sea lions, can continue to be killed for another five years by the states of Oregon, Washington and Idaho, according to a new decision by NOAA Fisheries.

Both decisions will dismay those who wish wildlife could live in perfect harmony in the modern world without human intervention. But most local residents consider predator control to be a responsible and pragmatic way of keeping the environmental scales in balance, while safeguarding salmon runs that are nurtured at great expense.

### Those tough chum

Finally, it is worth briefly noting the inherent durability of our region's least appreciated salmon, the chum. Washington State University research recently found young chum were completely unaffected by a toxic stew of urban runoff that quickly kills coho.

With white flesh that was unappealing to our ancestors who liked their salmon the redder the better, chum were deliberately driven toward extinction in Willapa Bay, but continue to endure both there and in the Columbia estuary. Their presence is good for the environment — and they're good to eat, particularly smoked.

We should appreciate them more.



## SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

# New motel plans cut close to home

By R.J. MARX  
*The Daily Astorian*

Antoine Simmons and his wife Rocio want to build a 48-room hotel on the Prom.

The neighbors think it's too big and intrusive.

At the end of an August Seaside City Council meeting, Councilor Jay Barber made a plea for conciliation.

"I'd like to hear everyone come together to find ways to make these plans work," Barber said. "You are good neighbors, clearly. I challenge you to work toward a solution."



From all accounts, the neighbors — Susan and Dan Calef, Avrel Nudelman, Antoine and Rocio Simmons — are good friends, and spent many a sunset together enjoying the bounty of a great view and a beachfront property. They came through for each other in a pinch.

"I am friends with my neighbors," Simmons told councilors. "We watch each others' homes."

But neighbors do sometimes go against neighbors, and friends against friends, especially in the world of real estate development.

What seems to have started as a cozy corner of Seaside residents near the beach and the Prom in now a matter occupying the agendas of the Planning Commission, which approved a variance for the 48-room Pearl of Seaside, and the City Council.

Simmons and neighbors laid out their cases at the council's appeal hearing.

For Simmons, it was an opportunity to share his vision for the Pearl of Seaside, a 48-room motel to be built at 341 South Prom.

For many in the audience, it was a chance to vent about a process they see as far from a done deal.

### Hard work pays off

Simmons told councilors he and his wife, Rocio, "followed a dream" in 2000 by moving to Cannon Beach. They purchased and managed the Blue Gull Inn on South Hemlock. "We worked there 24 hours a day, seven days a week, doing everything. It was a labor of love."

Their hard work paid off. In 2003, the Simmonses acquired the neighboring nine-unit Inn at Haystack Rock and the couple formed Haystack Lodging.

They acquired the Edgewater Inn in Seaside in 2011, transforming it into the 15-room Inn at the Prom, Simmons said.

"It was in disrepair," he said. "We took it apart, put it back together and in six months opened."

In 2014, the Simmonses acquired the neighboring Gilbert Inn.

"We were lucky to get it — just an amazing piece of history," Simmons said.

The former home of Seaside founding father Alexandre Gilbert — built in 1885 and expanded in 1892 — was turned into a romantic getaway, a bed-and-breakfast for adults. Today it is lovingly maintained by the Simmonses.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Front yard of Inn at the Prom. The building would be replaced with the Pearl of Seaside.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Seaside City Councilors are tasked with resolving a planning appeal. Mayor Don Larson, Council President Don Johnson and Jay Barber listen to testimony Aug. 22.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Hotel owner Antoine Simmons addresses the Seaside City Council.

### Pearl of Seaside

The Pearl of Seaside, as developed by David Vonada of Tolovana Architects, will feature three floors of lodging with a penthouse capped by a tower roof and spire.

The need for 51 parking spaces "is really the nut of all of this," Simmons said. "If I could build the property 8 feet from Avrel's property, we wouldn't be here today," he said.

And that's the problem. "I'm not opposed to a development," Nudelman said. "I'm opposed to it being 3 feet from my property line. I don't know why we have this zoning ordinance if we're going to go against it."

Dan Calef said his grandfather inherited their duplex home in the 1930s from the photographer William Montag, who built the duplex as a companion property to a larger 1912 home.

"My sister and I have lived here

every summer of our lives," Calef, 62, said. "We are concerned about the size. It will dwarf our property, completely shade our property, and be much taller than our house and put us in a dark, dank hole."

"I agree, Mr. Simmons does an outstanding job on his motels and his properties," Eldon Wexler, a builder, said. "But that doesn't preclude him from doing things under city ordinance to protect the small person."

Some in the audience pointed to an obvious answer: negotiation.

"There's a win here," Seaside's Pat Golding said. "It takes a little bit more money. You have to plan a little better. The extraordinary circumstances are, there's not enough property. You either get enough property, or you look for property elsewhere."

"Either scale down the project or pay Mr. Nudelman for the land," Marc Golding said.

"I don't think either Avrel or I are particularly interested in selling," Dan Calef said after the August meeting.

"We realize we are a small residential unit in a resort residential area, and can expect to have expect to have motels around us, but something smaller we can live with, that doesn't tower over us," Calef said.

Regardless of what happens at the next City Council hearing on Monday, "I know we're going to remain friends," Simmons said of his neighbors. "That's just the way it is."

R.J. Marx is *The Daily Astorian's* South County reporter and editor of the *Seaside Signal* and *Cannon Beach Gazette*.