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ONE DOLLAR



Vessels parked near Rice Island in August on the Columbia River. Columbia River Pilots are testing new anchorages near Tongue Point, Port Westward and Mayger. Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

PARKING TIGHT ON COLUMBIA RIVER

More spots could spur commerce

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

On any given day, up to 10 ships can be found at anchor in the Columbia River along the Astoria waterfront, waiting for berths to open upriver.

The river includes 11 federally designated anchorages with more than 40 parking spots between Astoria and Vancouver, Washington.

Faced with seasonal shortages to anchor larger Panamax-sized vessels, the Columbia River Pilots are testing new anchorages near Tongue Point, Port Westward and Mayger. The group is responsible for helping pilot ships safely up the narrow shipping channel.

"There's not a whole lot of room for (anchored) ships," said Rick Gill, president of the group.

Gill said getting more anchorages has been an ongoing issue, driven largely by the Columbia River Steamship Operators' Association, which represents ship owners, operators, agents, towers and fuelers along the Columbia and Snake rivers.

Efficiency

Kate Mickelson, director of the association, said adding anchorages adds efficiency and makes regional ports more marketable.

When ships can't anchor in the Columbia, they will sometimes steam in circles offshore while waiting, or be forced to go to lay berth,

with little access to land-side services. In addition, Mickelson said, there are only four anchorage spots near Astoria — the only on the entire lower Columbia — that can take a vessel longer than 650 feet without use of an additional stern buoy to prevent the ship from swinging into the channel, or a tug on standby.

Mickelson said all those options, caused by congestion and lack of parking, increase costs and make the Columbia less attractive to shippers.

"On occasions when anchorages are unavailable or vessels are forced to stay at berth longer than necessary, terminals along the river system become congested and barge and train schedules become delayed," Mickelson said. "While this may seem insignificant, it can disrupt the movement of goods all the way to the Midwest."

Rice Island

Overseeing the anchoring of ships on the Columbia is the U.S. Coast Guard.

"The pilots came to us with a proposal last year for three new anchorages," said Lt. Cmdr. Laura Springer, chief of waterway management for the Coast Guard's Marine Safety Unit.

The first of the new proposed anchorages being tested is just south of Rice Island, a dredge spoil deposit north of Tongue Point on the Oregon-Washington border. Gill said the site provides a wide, off-channel area with room for three vessels. The pilots started placing vessels there in August.

Springer stressed that there is no law prohibiting vessels from anchoring anywhere outside the main channel, and that none of the anchorages proposed by the pilots have been des-

igned with the Coast Guard. If the anchorages were to become official, she said, they would have to go through a public rule-making process.

Springer said the Coast Guard would revisit in the spring whether to start that process. Gill said the pilots haven't even started testing the proposed anchorages at Port Westward or Mayger.

River of commerce

Much of the increased need for anchorages on the Columbia is driven by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' \$200 million channel-deepening project, completed in 2010. The project, which lowered the Columbia's depth from 40 to 43 feet, was largely meant to accommodate the growing sizes of ships. Panamax ships, cargo carriers capable of passing through the Panama Canal's locks, can run 1,000 feet long, 110 feet wide and draft more than 40 feet when loaded.

Since the project's completion in 2010, according to the Army Corps, the deepened channel has led to more than \$900 million in capital investments to the Columbia. Billions more are in the works, largely driven by bulk commodities such as grain, oil, coal and methanol.

"Our purpose is to make the Columbia River region increasingly popular for commercial ships and shipper(s) to come and do business," Mickelson said. "Additional anchorages lines up with this purpose and would aid in improving efficiencies within our system and help our regional ports become more marketable, enable more cargo volumes to transit our system, and bring growth and jobs to our ports and regional economies."

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Kate Mickelson

director of the Columbia River Steamship Operators' Association

Port loses budget committee chairman

Walked out after being called a stooge

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The chairman of the Port of Astoria's budget committee was replaced on Tuesday when he walked out of a meeting after being called a stooge by Port Commissioner Stephen Fulton.

John Lansing has served on the budget committee since 2003, shortly after he moved to the North Coast as a manager for the local Wells Fargo branch.

During a presentation on state budget law by Port auditor Jim Lanzarotta from the accounting firm Moss Adams, Lansing appeared to have a disagreement with Fulton and Port Commissioner Bill Hunsinger regarding the voting rights of alternates on a budget committee. Fulton called Lansing a stooge of Jim Knight, the Port's executive director, which Lansing denied before walking out. Knight, who was out sick, was not at the meeting.

See PORT, Page 10A



Stephen Fulton

Warrenton wants a deputy dog

\$15,000 is the goal to restart K-9 program

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — The Warrenton Police Department is raising money to purchase a drug-detection dog.

Within the next six months, the department hopes to have a K-9 officer trained and certified to sniff out cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine.

The dog would be used in search warrants, traffic stops, random checks for illegal narcotics in schools, and other occasions where law enforcement suspects drugs are present.

See DEPUTY DOG, Page 10A

HOW TO HELP

Donors can visit the GoFundMe page ("WarrentonK9"), drop off contributions at the police department, or send checks to the department: Attn. Officer Robert Wirt at P.O. Box 250 Warrenton, OR.

Willapa gillnetters losing grip

Fishermen lament season closures, waste of hatchery runs

By LUKE WHITTAKER
EO Media Group

LONG BEACH, Wash. — It's been a tough two years for gillnetters on Willapa Bay.

Battered by increasing costs, stifled by stricter regulation and furious over fewer fishing days, commercial gillnetters have been gritting their teeth since 2015 when a new management plan was instituted by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

As some in the industry were forced to sell their boats and find new work, others remain steadfast and galvanized in their resolve in calling for change in what they say has been mis-

management by state officials in Olympia.

Gillnetting gradually fading

Approximately 40 commercial gillnetters currently work on Willapa, a small fraction of what used to be there.

"There isn't a fleet here anymore," said gillnetter Gary Walters, 59, in between drags on his cigarette. "There used to be 100 boats, now you're lucky if there's 10." In 2016, 23 different gillnetters made deliveries at the Port of Peninsula during a season fragmented by frequent closures.

"It's gotten worse and worse," said Warren Cowell, a shellfish farmer and gillnetter who's "losing hope."

"Most of the gillnetters these days have other jobs," Cowell said. "You can't make a living as a gillnetter anymore."

See GILLNETTERS, Page 10A



Luke Whittaker/EO Media Group

Warren Cowell unloads a late-run coho caught in November. "I think they're the best salmon that come into the bay, the late run silvers. They come in on the big moons, the big tides, when the water's cold," Cowell said.

