

Gillnetters: ‘Unless something changes, there’s no future in this’

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Walters estimates that 30 percent of his income comes from gillnetting, while the remainder is made hauling in crab pots during Dungeness season. He said the smaller share of income from gillnetting is a direct result of increasing regulations, some of which are meant to protect Chinook (also called kings) and chum salmon (also called dogs) in the bay.

“We basically don’t even get to fish for Chinook anymore. That’s a big part of our season gone. Now we’re losing part of our silver fishing because of the kings, and dogs, too. We’ve got nothing left,” Walters said. A gillnetter for past 35 years, Walters feels that the future is dim for the industry. Frequent rule-driven closures, increasing costs for fuel, gear and repairs have further distanced a new generation from getting into the gillnetter occupation.

“Unless something changes, there’s no future in this,” he said.

Finding a new profession isn’t a consideration for Cowell, who feels he has found his true calling.

“We’ve been here our whole lives. This is more than just a job. This is our culture, a way of life. It’s a calling for very small share of people who are independent and are willing to take chances. Commercial fishing has always been risky business financially and physically. We’re ambitious and hardworking men, it’s not like we can’t make a living another way, but we would like to make a living the way we always have and want to. This is a renewable, sustainable resource and always has been until recently,” he said.

Economic impacts

The dwindling number of gillnetters has been alarming to others dependent on the industry. The impact of new 2015 regulation combined with fewer gillnetters has had a domino effect on other Pacific County industries from processors to wholesalers.

“On a good year on the Willapa, there was easily 60 boats fishing,” said Dean Antich, general manager at South Bend Products, a sea-

food wholesaler in South Bend.

“But this year it might have been 40. With the new policy in place along with the gear and date restrictions, I’ve seen guys sell their boats. There’s less guys fishing now,” he said.

“Last year was devastating,” Antich said.

“It was a disaster. We had no fishing in November at all. It was the first year of the policy. The fishery was closed because of a very poor return of coho, there just wasn’t a big return.”

“Not only is there an economic impact on the fishermen, there’s also an impact on my employees. I have fewer employees now than I would normally have and they’re getting a lot less hours. It impacts the industry, the wholesalers and processors, not just the gillnetters.”

Antich has about 25 employees on call for when the fish come in, but while fishing is closed, their phones won’t ring with available work. “Right now I’ve got 55 employees. We’re not a Monday through Friday 9 to 5. We work when we have fish. On the days they don’t fish, they don’t work.”

Tough two years

In April 2015, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission released a revised Willapa Bay salmon management plan centered largely around conserving and restoring naturally spawning Chinook — the descendants of hatchery fish that now are laying eggs without human intervention. Recent genetic testing found these “natural” salmon are identical to Willapa hatchery stock.

For fall Chinook, the plan called for stricter limits on mortality rates for natural-origin Chinook salmon by adding new restrictions to the fishing schedule, location and gear for gillnetters, the only commercial fishermen permitted on the bay. This included a 14 percent limit on mortality rates for Naselle and Willapa River natural-origin Chinook salmon and a 10 percent rate for chum.

“The policy is written primarily to support Chinook salmon. We don’t get a lot of fishing time — we don’t get any in August. We don’t get

fishing time until mid-September. Then we get our coho-directed fishery, which can be impacted by the chum run. We’re allowed 10 percent impact on the chum run, we exceed that and they close the fishery down,” Walters said.

The past two years have been particularly bad, according to Cowell.

“That’s when they initiated their new management plan. Right off the bat, 30,000 Chinook salmon died in the streams and hatcheries because of the new plan. It’s not that we could have caught them all, but we could have maybe caught half. But we didn’t get a chance to even go. The fishermen can deal when there’s years with not good returns, that’s part of fishing,” Cowell said. “But when there’s a lot of fish and you can’t fish, that’s a hard pill to swallow.”

Gillnetting nearly gutted

Over the past three years, the commercial gillnetting industry on Willapa Bay has gone through a gauntlet of highs and lows. Record catches were celebrated during 2014 only to be followed by the devastating 2015 season that was largely stifled under new regulation.

“We had 50,000 pounds of mostly silvers in one day,” Cowell said referring to one unforgettable afternoon 2014. “Compare that to 80,000 pounds of silvers and Chinook combined this year.” The drastic drop wasn’t the direct result of poor runs, but more to blame on flawed regulations, according to Cowell.

“In 2014, our gross income on this dock was over \$70,000. In 2015, the first year of the new management plan, I made about \$6,000 — about 8 percent of what I made the year before. I went in the hole severely. I lost 92 percent of my income, as did the fishermen,” Cowell said.

“Last year, I didn’t break even,” Walters said.

So far, the 2016 season has been better, but closures continue to limit the momentum and curb optimism.

“This year, because of the silvers, it’s been better,” Cowell said. “On this late season, it’s wide open for silvers, but if they catch 110 dog salmon we’ll get shut off.”

Deputy dog: ‘A good drug dog is a good deterrent’

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In addition, a K-9 officer could serve as a department mascot, educational tool and public-relations asset.

So far, the department has raised about \$1,100 of the \$15,000 target, according to Warrenton Police Officer Robert Wirt, who will be the K-9’s handler.

Donations will pay for the animal, training fees, K-9 equipment and other accoutrements. The department plans to outfit an old Tahoe with K-9 travel gear, but next year’s budget may include a new K-9-ready vehicle once the older vehicle is taken out of service.

Bayshore Animal Hospital in Warrenton will provide veterinary care and has offered to give the dog free annual check-ups and shots; nonroutine services, like surgeries, will be 50 percent off.

The K-9 will live at Wirt’s residence in Warrenton, and the

officer will receive a contractual 5-percent pay increase for taking care of the animal on and off duty.

The right K-9 hasn’t been found yet, but the trainer, John Eckhart, who retired from the Portland Police Bureau, is actively looking for one. Wirt said the department wants a Dutch shepherd or a “good old-fashioned German shepherd.”

Eckhart, who also trained K-9 officers for the Clatsop County Sheriff’s Office and the Cannon Beach Police Department, will work with the chosen dog independently, then do a multiweek course with Wirt. The K-9 would become certified at a conference in another city.

“We’re hoping to be certified by the end of May,” Wirt said.

At a recent City Commission meeting, Wirt said that Eckhart may do “bite work” with the dog — that is, not to

train the animal how to bite but when to bite. The dog would learn to bite only on command; to avoid biting, the handler simply doesn’t give the command. This gives the officer more control over the K-9 and makes the dog less likely to bite, Wirt said.

Once the dog is trained on narcotics, the department may explore whether to train the dog in search and rescue. This skill would be valuable, Wirt said, for when autistic children or people with dementia get lost, and could dramatically reduce the time it takes to find them.

The Warrenton Police Department has had drug-sniffing dogs before but not a search-and-rescue dog, Wirt said.

Commissioner Tom Dyer, a retired trooper with Oregon State Police, said “a good drug dog is a good deterrent.”

When students are tempted to store drugs in their lockers, for example, “the chance of getting caught makes them think twice,” Dyer said.

Port: Lee replaces Lansing

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Reached by phone afterward, Lansing confirmed he has left the budget committee.

“I have a lot of emotional equity in the Port,” he said, adding that while there is a lot of opportunity at the agency, there also needs to be a change in how commissioners are chosen.

Lansing echoed the calls of the former Committee to Restore, Revitalize and Reorganize the Port of Astoria, which wanted Port commissioners to be state-appointed instead of elected, like in Coos Bay and Portland.

The quality of people serving on the Port Commission and their conflicts of interest are disheartening, Lansing said, and impeding the Port’s opportunities.

Fulton has been accused of conflicts of interest in the past by Clatsop County Board of Commissioners Chairman Scott Lee, who questioned whether the Fulton serves the Port or his employer, Warrenton Fiber.

Lee replaces Lansing

The budget committee is composed of the five Port commissioners and five community

members, including Lansing, Mary Iverson, Richard Lee, Frank Spence and Chris Conaway. After Lansing’s departure, the community members voted 3-1 to have Lee fill Lansing’s remaining term as chairman, which runs through February.

Lee said he had never seen a chairman of a committee walk out of a meeting like Lansing. “He said, ‘I’m out of here.’ I think that is a resignation,” Lee said.

Spence, the lone “no” vote, said the budget committee should have the Port’s administration make sure Lansing had resigned. Port commissioners Robert Mushen and James Campbell agreed.

“I think we have to move to replace him at this time ... so we can continue on with our budget,” Hunsinger said.

Hunsinger called for a vote among fellow Port commissioners to announce an opening on the budget committee. The motion was voted down 2-3, with John Raichl, Mushen and Campbell in opposition.

Pensions and pollution

After voting to replace Lansing as chairman, the budget

committee heard a review of the Port’s first-quarter financials.

The Port had budgeted a net loss of \$775,403 for July through September, but only lost \$252,915. The Port also suffered a loss in net position of \$1.2 million last fiscal year, which ended in June.

Todd Kimball, an accountant for the Port through financial consultants CFO Selections, said the losses are driven by new requirements to account for the cost of potential pollution cleanup and future pension obligations. Pollution remediation costs took \$920,000 in revenue out of the budget this year, he said, while obligations for the Public Employees Retirement System cost just under \$500,000 starting last year.

In the first three months of the new fiscal year, the Port earned \$124,000 less than budgeted on pier operations, one of the agency’s main sources of revenue, while it earned nearly \$69,000 more than expected from marina operations.

On expenses, the Port spent \$3.1 million less on capital projects than budgeted, nearly \$63,000 less on salary and wages and more than \$72,000 less on fuel and related costs.

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

TV LISTINGS

Evening listings THURSDAY

THURSDAY EVENING												DECEMBER 1	
A	L	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
2	KATU	(2) KATU News at 6		Jeopardy!	Wheel of Fortune	A Charlie Brown Christmas		The Great American Baking Show "Cake Week/ Cookie Week" (SP) (N)		KATU News at 11	(35) Jimmy Kimmel		
3	KOMO	(4) KOMO 4 News		Wheel of Fortune	Jeopardy!	A Charlie Brown Christmas		The Great American Baking Show "Cake Week/ Cookie Week" (SP) (N)		KOMO 4 News	(35) Jimmy Kimmel		
5	KING	(5) (5:20) NFL Football Dallas Cowboys at Minnesota Vikings Site: U.S. Bank Stadium -- Minneapolis, Minn. (L) 5th Quarter		Evening	Evening	Dateline NBC		Evening	Evening	KING 5 News	(35) Tonight Show		
6	KOIN	(7) KOIN Local 6 at 6	CBS Evening News	Extra	Ent. Tonight	Big Bang Theory	Great Indoors (N)	Mom (N)	Life in Pieces (N)	Pure Genius (N)		KOIN 6 News @ 11	(35) S. Colbert
7	KIRO	(7) KIRO 7 News	CBS Evening News	The Insider	Ent. Tonight	Big Bang Theory	Great Indoors (N)	Mom (N)	Life in Pieces (N)	Pure Genius (N)		KIRO News	(35) S. Colbert
8	KGW	(3) (5:20) NFL Football Dallas Cowboys at Minnesota Vikings Site: U.S. Bank Stadium -- Minneapolis, Minn. (L) Paid Program		Modern Family	Modern Family	Legends Tomorrow	Invasion" 4/4 (N)	Supernatural	Rock Never Dies" (N)	KGW News at 10	Two and a Half	KGW News at 11	(35) Tonight Show
10	KOPB	(10) Painting the Town	Business (N)	PBS NewsHour	Modern Family	Legends Tomorrow	Invasion" 4/4 (N)	Supernatural	Rock Never Dies" (N)	KGW News at 10	Two and a Half	KGW News at 11	Met Your Mother
12	KPTV	(12) 6 O'Clock News		Family Feud	Family Feud	Rosewood (N)		Pitch "Scratched" (N)		10 O'Clock News		11 O'Clock News	2 Broke Girls
13	KPDx	(13) Mike & Molly	Mike & Molly	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	FOX 12's 8 O'Clock News on PDX-TV		FOX 12's 9 O'Clock News on PDX-TV		The Simpsons	Family Guy	American Dad	Cleveland Show
13	KCPQ	(13) Modern Family	Modern Family	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Rosewood (N)		Pitch "Scratched" (N)		Q13 News at 10		Q13 News	The Simpsons
20	TBS	(20) Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	2 Broke Girls	2 Broke Girls	2 Broke Girls	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Conan (N)	
22	KZJL	(22) Two and a Half	Two and a Half	Last Man Standing	Last Man Standing	Modern Family	Modern Family	Q13 News at 9		Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Friends	Friends
29	ESPN	(29) NCAA Basketball Cincinnati at Iowa State (L)		SportsCenter	SportsCenter	SportsCenter		SportsCenter		SportsCenter		SportsCenter	SportsCenter
30	ESPN2	(30) H.S. Basketball (L)		SportsCenter	SportsCenter	E:60 Profile	E:60 Pictures	30 for 30 "Hit It Hard"		Jalen & Jacoby (N)	30 for 30 "Phi Slama Jama"		
31	NICK	(31) Henry Danger	Henry Danger	Paradise Run	The Thundermans	*** Ice Age '02, Animated) Voices of John Leguizamo, Denis Leary, Ray Romano.		Full House		Full House		Friends	Friends
32	DISN	(32) Cali Style	Liv Maddie Cali	C'mas Light Fight Pt. 1 of 2		** Good Luck Charlie, It's Christmas! Bridgit Mendler.		Stuck in Middle		The Lodge	Stuck in Middle	Liv and Maddie	Austin & Ally
34	FAM	(34) The Year Without a Santa Claus		(:05) *** National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (89) Chevy Chase.		(:15) *** The Santa Clause (94) Judge Reinhold, Wendy Crewson, Tim Allen.		Won't Back Down (2012, Drama) Viola Davis, Maggie Gyllenhaal.		PR Start "They're Ripping You Off" (N)		PR Startup	
35	FMC	(35) We Bought a Zoo Matt Damon.		(:20) *** We Bought a Zoo ("11, Com/Dra) Scarlett Johansson, Thomas Haden Church, Matt Damon.		(:40) FXM Presents		PR Start "They're Ripping You Off" (N)		PR Startup			
36	LIFE	(36) Project Runway "Project Pop Up"		Runway "Life is Full of Surprises"		Project Runway		Project Runway (N)					
38	ROOT	(38) NCAA Basketball Mississippi Valley State University at Gonzaga (L)		Champions Tennis Legends PowerShares Series		AMA Supercross		Skip and Shannon: Undisputed Opinions on the biggest sports topics of the day.		*** The Shawshank Redemption (94) Morgan Freeman, Tim Robbins.			
39	FST	(39) Main Event "178: Johnson vs. Cariaso"		UFUC Tonight		FOX Sports Live	TMZ Sports (N)	Speak for Yourself					
43	SPIKE	(43) Movie	*** The Shawshank Redemption (1994, Drama) Morgan Freeman, James Whitmore, Tim Robbins.			*** The Shawshank Redemption (94) Morgan Freeman, Tim Robbins.		Drunk History	South Park	The Daily Show (N) @midnight (N)			
44	COM	(44) Futurama	(:25) Futurama	(:55) Futurama	Futurama	Comedy...Roast "Rob Lowe" The dais tries to take down an ageless heartthrob.		Drunk History	South Park	The Daily Show (N) @midnight (N)			
45	HIST	(45) Pawn Stars	Pawn Stars	Pawn Stars	Pawn Stars	Pawn Stars	Pawn Stars	Pawn Stars	Pawn Stars	Pawn Stars	(:05) Pawn Stars	(:35) Pawn Stars	
46	A&E	(46) The First 48 "Bad Love"		The First 48 "Bad Tempered/ The Bully"		The First 48 "Deadly Premonition" (N)		Nightwatch "New Beginnings" (SP) (N)		Angland Under. (:45) The First 48	(:45) The First 48	"Knock Knock"	
47	TLC	(47) Married Mom Dad "Meet My Family"		My 600-lb Life "Penny's Story"		My 600-lb Life "Tara's Story"		My 600-lb Life "Milla's Story"		Extreme Weight Loss "Georganna"		My 600-lb Life "Penny's Story"	
48	DISC	(48) Street Outlaws "Ready, Set, Crow..."		Street Outlaws		Street Outlaws "OH-HI-NO"		Street Outlaws		Street Outlaws "I Will Follow"		Street Outlaws "Down From Chi-Town"	
49	NGEO	(49) Hippos vs. Gator		Python vs. Gator		Cobra Mafia		Anacanda: Silent Killer		Croc Invasion		Dark Side of Crocs	
50	TNT	(50) (5:00) NBA Basketball L.A. Clippers vs Cleveland (L)		NBA Basketball Houston Rockets at Golden State Warriors Site: The Oracle -- Oakland, Calif. (L)		Inside the NBA		Inside the NBA		NBA Basketball L.A. C./Cle.			
51	AMC	(51) (4:30) Monster-in-Law Jennifer Lopez.		*** Back to the Future (1985, Comedy) Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson, Michael J. Fox.		*** Back to the Future II (1989, Sci-Fi) Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson, Michael J. Fox.		Falling Water (N)		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit	
52	USA	(52) Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Beat Bobby Flay		Beat Bobby Flay	Beat Bobby Flay
53	FOOD	(53) Chopped "Wasted!"		Chopped "Love Bites"		Chopped "Chopped Gastropub"		Chopped "Jump For Bok Choy" (N)		Beat Bobby Flay		Beat Bobby Flay	Beat Bobby Flay
54	HGTV	(54) Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop	Flip or Flop (N)	Flip or Flop	House Hunters (N)	House Hunters (N)	House Hunters	House Hunters
56	FX	(56) ** Neighbors (2014, Comedy) Zac Efron, Rose Byrne, Seth Rogen.		** Sex Tape (2014, Comedy) Jason Segel, Rob Lowe, Cameron Diaz.		** Sex Tape (2014, Comedy) Jason Segel, Rob Lowe, Cameron Diaz.		** Sex Tape (2014, Comedy) Jason Segel, Rob Lowe, Cameron Diaz.		Anderson Cooper 360		CNN Newsroom	
57	CNN	(57) Enlighten Us: The Rise and Fall of James Arthur Ray (2016, Documentary)		Enlighten Us: The Rise and Fall of James Arthur Ray (2016, Documentary)		Enlighten Us: The Rise and Fall of James Arthur Ray (2016, Documentary)		Anderson Cooper 360		Anderson Cooper 360		CNN Newsroom	
58	FNC	(58) The Kelly File With Megyn Kelly		Hannity		The O'Reilly Factor		The Kelly File With Megyn Kelly		Hannity		On the Record	
61	CNBC	(61) Shark Tank		Make Me a Millionaire Inventor (N)		Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Inventor "Just What the Doctor Ordered"		Paid Program	Paid Program
63	BRV	(63) Top Chef "Finale"		Million Listing "White Wedding Day"		Million Listing "Zeppo Marx the Spot"		Million Dollar Listing Los Angeles (N)		T Chef "Something Old, Something New"		(:15) Watch (N)	(:45) Million Listing
64	TCM	(64) (5:00) The Man Who Came to Dinner		*** It Happened on Fifth Avenue (47) Ann Harding, Don DeFore.		*** O. Henry's Full House ('52, Biography) Anne Baxter, Jeanne Crain, Fred Allen.		Meet John Doe (41) Gary Cooper.		Final Destination 3 (06) Mary Elizabeth Winstead.			
65	SYFY	(65) ** Jurassic Park III (2001, Sci-Fi) William B. Macy, Téa Leoni, Sam Neill.		** Galaxy Quest (1999, Comedy) Sigourney Weaver, Alan Rickman, Tim Allen.		** Galaxy Quest (1999, Comedy) Sigourney Weaver, Alan Rickman, Tim Allen.		** Galaxy Quest (1999, Comedy) Sigourney Weaver, Alan Rickman, Tim Allen.		** Final Destination 3 (06) Mary Elizabeth Winstead.			
162	RFD	(162) SF Machinery	Small Town (N)	Rural America "Live"		Steve Lantvit	Rural Eve. News	Market Journal	GA Farm Monitor	SF Machinery	Small Town	Time Life Library	

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