

# Leaders: Many items on the docket for change in 2017

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Another challenge will be to address the water pipes, some of which are pretty old. The city wants to set up a redundant system that will avoid the known landslide areas.

"That's going to be a big project," LaMear said.

And, of course, the city must decide the Astoria Library's future — whether to construct a new facility or renovate the existing building.

## Warrenton Mayor Mark Kujala

Warrenton Mayor Mark Kujala said that Warrenton's to-do list for the new year includes establishing improved maintenance programs for public facilities — such as levees, tide gates and ditches — to protect residents from flooding and increased insurance costs.

This includes attending to the ongoing property dispute with the Skipanon Water Control District over the Eighth Street Dam.

In addition, the city plans to order a geotechnical study of Warrenton's levees, the first step to getting the levees certified for flood control. Along with other agencies, the city is challenging the Federal Emergency Management Agency's data that seems to show the city's levees cannot protect against the 100-year flood.

"Since we are such a large geographic area with very little elevation, it's something that we consistently have to be on top of," Kujala said.

To address the housing scarcity, the City Commission plans to meet with the Planning Commission to launch a comprehensive plan review. The goal is to see if the city can tweak the development code to make residential building more feasible, particularly for low-income families.

The city also needs to continue improvements to the Warrenton Marina's commercial docks, update the Hammond Marina master plan and relocate the Warrenton Community Library to the downtown corridor.

## Seaside Mayor Jay Barber

"We have a City Council that works well together and gets things done. One of the significant challenges will be swearing in two new councilors in the new year, one newly elected and one that the council will appoint to fill the now vacant councilor seat from Ward 1 and getting them on board and working well with the other four councilors and the mayor.

"With the approval of the bond issue for the Seaside School District, it will be incumbent upon the Planning Commission and the council to address the expansion of the urban growth boundary in the new year to bring the new campus into the city and work to provide proper access to the new location.

"Affordable housing in Clatsop County is a major issue that all cities and the county will need to work together to provide workable solutions.

"This is an issue that will require input from the county, cities, local businesses, developers and concerned citizens. We can learn from other cities and regions where workable solutions are being implemented. This issue is rising to the top of my concerns.

"Tsunami preparedness continues to be a major issue of significant importance. The highest priority is to seek funding for the retrofitting of all of our bridges to assist citizens to be able to move to safe ground in the case of a major incident.

"In addition we need to continue our thinking about resilience. How will we continue to be a city in the case of a major earthquake and tsunami?"

"Finally, annexation to the south of the city to address blight, vacant and sub-standard housing as well as the need to address access to city water and sewerage."

## Gearhart Mayor Matt Brown

"As you know Gearhart has gone through a handful of contentious issues the last few years, so I hope 2017 brings a sense of calmness and cooperation, working together with our citizens and other cities in Clatsop County to solve common problems, such as affordable housing.

I'm looking forward to having work sessions with our fellow councilors in the months to come to work on strategic planning for the next four years and prioritizing what is important to our residents. I hope this includes working on a new fire station plan, emergency preparedness and a transportation master plan.

"Also, looking forward to working with city staff to find better ways to communicate with our citizens including building a new city of Gearhart interactive website, scheduling town hall meetings and getting folks more involved in the process and decision making.

"It's great to work with our amazing city staff and department heads and I look forward to a very positive and constructive 2017 for Gearhart!"

## Cannon Beach Mayor Sam Steidel

Mayor Sam Steidel, Cannon Beach said the biggest challenge the city will face in 2017 is looking at how various projects might affect one another.

"My concern is that as a council we have a comprehensive view of all the problems so they can interact as they need to be. I have a feeling we do not have a lot of big problems, but lots of projects that intertwine a little.

The council will have a goal-setting session early this year to reach a consensus on city priorities, using the city's strategic plan as a guide.

Steidel said his personal areas of focus include seeing how the former Cannon Beach Elementary property could be used and expanding NeCus Park.

Steidel's longer-term goal is for the council to work on developing the city-owned South Wind property. The 58 acres located east of U.S. Highway 101, largely outside of the tsunami zone, needs infrastructure in place before it can be the site of the city's essential services, such as an emergency shelter, school and police and fire stations.

Steidel said he hopes to get discussion about city priorities done before the spring budgeting process, when things tend to get "bogged down."

"I'm looking forward to some energy from the council, and new voices always bring that."

# Unknowns: More questions moving forward

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For example, producers who ship wheat, blueberries, Christmas trees and other goods to Asia favored the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the trade agreement Trump vowed to cancel.

And if Trump's campaign bad-mouthing of major trade partner China are an indication of what's ahead, "Holy cow," said Hayden-Smith.

"We are not a food system in isolation," she said. "If we have poor relations with China and the World Trade Organization, it could throw the global food system into crisis."

## Immigration issues

Then there's Trump's "build that wall" rhetoric regarding immigration. It worries producers who rely on manual labor to tend and harvest fruits, nuts, vegetables and berries, because they already have a hard time finding and retaining enough workers.

The second largest Washington state apple crop on record this past fall, for example, stretched seasonal workers ever thinner, and employers are still scrambling to find packing shed workers.

Reggie Collins, general manager of Chelan Fruit Cooperative in Chelan, Washington, said a bigger crop means more people are needed for more shifts, and he didn't know of any packer who wasn't in the same fix.

"We're not gaining on it," he said in December. "As many as we hire, we lose about the same number. We're still short 80 to 100. People move or go to California or Mexico. We're trying every method we can to hire people."

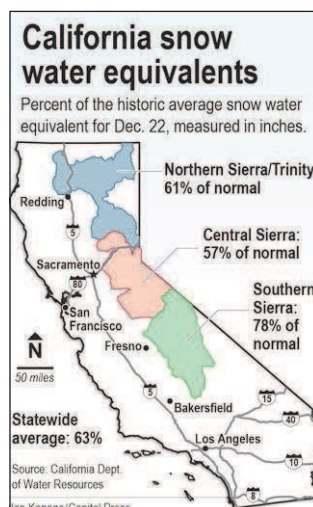
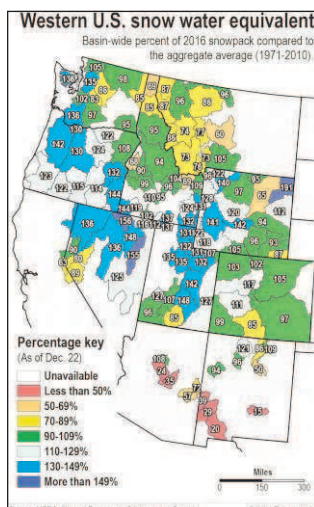
The Washington Employment Security Department says there were an average of 54,124 seasonal ag workers per month in the state in 2015 with a low of 28,584 in January and a high of 90,782 in June. It won't have 2016 numbers until next fall.

## H-2A questions

Washington state growers have turned increasingly to H-2A visa foreign guest-workers in recent years, hiring 13,641 in 2016. California, Oregon and Idaho use far fewer but are beginning to use more.

"There is an absolute shortage and as the economy picks up it will only get worse," said Kerry Scott, program manager of masLabor in Lovington, Virginia, the largest provider of H-2A (agricultural) and H-2B (nonagricultural) workers in the nation.

Answers to the labor shortage include mechanization and immigration reform. With



the latter, growers want work authorization for illegal immigrants but the greater need, they say, is improvement or replacement of the H-2A program.

Frank Gasperini Jr., executive vice president of the National Council for Agricultural Employers, said producers who grow, pick and ship labor-intensive crops are concerned the new administration and Congress will move aggressively on border enforcement and electronic verification of employment eligibility, called E-Verify, without addressing the need for farmworkers.

"If that happens, it will be disastrous," he said.

## Regulatory relief

Labor shortages and trade disputes may be helpful — "The TPP is obviously dead" — but some changes accompanying a new administration could have "really big benefits" for producers, said Gail Greenman, national affairs director for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

"I expect a lot of change in the regulatory burden imposed on Oregon producers for many, many years," she said. "Regulatory relief is a big one."

Producers could wave goodbye to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's onerous "Waters of the U.S." regulatory gambit, and might see some "honest to goodness" tax reform, including helpful adjustments to the estate tax, she said.

Conventional wisdom holds that a Trump administration will provide "more good opportunities than bad for ag," Greenman said.

Zippy Duvall, the president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, was particularly pleased with the selection of Oklahoma Attorney

General Scott Pruitt to head the EPA. In a prepared statement, Duvall said it was welcome news to all who are "threatened by EPA's regulatory overreach — and should help provide a new degree of fairness for U.S. agriculture."

Still, it's unclear whether the president-elect is paying attention to agriculture. Into the last week of December he still hadn't nominated an ag secretary to replace Tom Vilsack, who held the post for eight years in the Obama administration.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's funding focus may get wrenched. During Vilsack's tenure, USDA provided money for non-traditional endeavors such as organic research and production programs, small farms, urban farming, school nutrition, specialty crops and programs for women, minority, veteran and beginning farmers.

Vilsack said the department wanted to reconnect people with their food and where it comes from, strengthen local and regional food systems and bring new people to replace America's

aging farmers. Then there's the 2018 Farm Bill. Some observers wonder if Trump realizes it's about more than commodities, but includes programs ranging from farmland conservation payments to school lunches and SNAP food stamps.

## Price outlook

The outlook for specific ag sectors is mixed. A November article in CropLife magazine said ag retailers believed 2017 would be "another in the current string of down years, with low commodity prices" depressing grower income. But an updated round of conver-

sations showed some retailers now believe 2016 will prove to be the bottom of the down cycle and the coming year will be flat at worst and maybe up a little.

Analysts at Northwest Farm Credit Services expect headwinds in international markets due to a strong U.S. dollar and uncertainty of how the new administration's scrutiny of trade will affect ag exports.

Michael Stolp, vice president of customer insights at FCS, said things are looking up for dairy farmers but several commodities are currently selling for less than the cost of production.

Global milk production is down but U.S. production is up 2 percent and prices are strengthening, Stolp said. Class III milk prices are in the high \$16s per hundred-weight, with futures prices out to August nearing \$18, he said.

The cattle industry, however, is in about year two of a six-year down cycle, he said, and prices are below the break-even point for most cow-calf producers.

Hay markets are showing regional differences in supply and prices: Low supplies in the Southwest but ample supplies of low- to mid-quality alfalfa in the Northwest, Stolp said.

Wheat prices also remain depressed, due to strong U.S. and global supplies and a projected record harvest in Australia. Strong production in potatoes and onions across the Northwest depressed prices, but the sugar beet and nursery-greenhouse industries are seeing positive returns.

## Pot-pourri

At least one edgy ag sector — marijuana growers — apparently believes it has little to fear from a Trump administration. Writing at cnbc.com, Grow Solutions Holdings Inc. President Jeff Beverly noted Trump has already endorsed medical cannabis use and said recreational pot use is a matter of state's rights.

In addition, several states that provided him critical electoral votes also passed measures legalizing various forms of cannabis use.

"For Trump to spend substantial political capital battling the legalization trend, when such crucial states to Republican victory as Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania all passed measures approving cannabis use this year, seems unlikely given the administration's priorities on huge issues including repealing Obamacare, improving border security and revisiting international trade agreements," Beverly wrote.

# Whales: Higher elevations make better spots

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In winter, the whales are swimming a bit farther from shore. That makes the best locations those higher in elevation, where you can see farther out into the ocean.

A few places with the highest success rates include Cape Meares (near Tillamook), Neahkahnie Mountain (Tillamook), The Inn at Spanish Head (Lincoln City), Cape Foulweather (Depoe Bay) and Shore Acres (Coos Bay).

"The whales stay farther out in winter because it's a little easier for them to navigate in the deeper water," Parsons said. "They're in a hurry. They're headed down to Baja to either breed or give birth, and don't want to miss the party."

## Clear and sunny

The second major factor in spotting whales is weather. A clear and sunny morning with low winds is best, Parsons said.

"The number of whales that people see really spikes on clear days," he said. "But in the end, it's just about having binoculars and staying with it. Patience is often rewarded."

## Favorite locations

Best hike-in view spot: A combination of one of the Oregon Coast's best hikes and whale-watching spots comes together at Cape Lookout State Park. A trek of 2.5 miles (5 miles round-trip) takes you to the point of the cape, where you can see landmarks 40 miles away and whales sometimes swim by quite close. The hike begins at Cape Lookout State Park's main trailhead south of Tillamook.

If you don't want to look for whales in the sometimes chilly outdoor air, set up shop at the Inn at Spanish Head Lobby on the 10th floor. Coffee and snacks can be enjoyed while keeping your eyes peeled on the ocean.

Fresh air and whale

watching takes place at Boiler Bay Scenic Viewpoint in Depoe Bay. Just step out of your car and look across the ocean. No luck? Continue just south to the Whale Watching Center in Depoe Bay, where experts can help guide your search.

## Top 10 places to spot whales

Each year, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department keeps track of the number of whales spotted at each of

the 24 locations where volunteers are located during Whale Watch Week. The results from Dec. 27-31 in 2015 can help visitors pick locations with the best chances for a sighting.

- Cape Meares: 187
- Spanish Head: 139
- Shore Acres: 135
- Neahkahnie Mountain: 112
- Cape Foulweather: 97
- Cape Ferrello: 93
- Cape Lookout: 89
- Ecola State Park: 81
- Face Rock: 78
- Don Davis: 73

# Bell: "We want visitors to share in this celebration ..."

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Bell said part of marketing Pier 39 is letting people know about the experiences there, from kayak rentals at Astoria Scuba to the live crab tank at Hanthorn Crab Co., which is building a commer-

cial kitchen and preparing to open Pier 39 Seafoods restaurant offering grab-and-go seasonal seafoods.

"We want visitors to share in this celebration of our history while also enjoying the numerous other experiences available around Pier 39," she said.

Bell and her husband, Grant, who works for WorldMark Seaside, first visited Astoria in 2009 on a weekend getaway, during which she said they made a pact to move to the North Coast. They went house hunting in 2011, and relocated in 2012 with their

two daughters, now 4 and 6. "The girls enjoy coming with me to Pier 39," Bell said. "They love wandering through the cannery museum and visiting Coffee Girl, chatting up customers in between bites of grilled cheese sandwiches."

— Edward Stratton

**THE DAILY ASTORIAN'S**  
**CUTEST BABY CONTEST**  
 is Back!

If your baby was born between **January 1st** & **December 31st, 2016**, you can submit your newborn's picture either via email at:

**CLASSIFIEDS@DAILYASTORIAN.COM**  
 or drop by one of our offices in Astoria or Seaside and we can scan in the photo for you.

**Deadline to enter is**  
**Wednesday, January 25th at 5pm**  
 Entries will be printed in The Daily Astorian on January 31st.

**\*Human babies only please!\***

