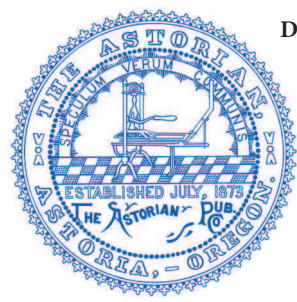


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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OUR VIEW

Deliberate planning needed to preserve our waterfronts

Portland's decision last week to consider adding swimming sites and other recreational opportunities along the Willamette River (see tinyurl.com/Willamette-renewal) deserves to spark additional discussions in Astoria and Warrenton about the future of our own splendid waterfront.

Much thought already has gone into Astoria's vision for our miles of shoreline along the Columbia River and Youngs Bay. It's fair to say city government and citizens share a consensus that lands along the river and bay are a precious asset in diverse ways — as a venue for vital heavy industrial activity, a community commons managed for views and recreation, and a stellar tourist attraction. This realization puts us far ahead of many communities that still fail to understand how water access enhances quality of life and economic prospects.

Disagreements arise when development blocks views within neighborhoods or when one use seems to be getting an upper hand. Overall, however, there's been impressive cooperation that's resulted in a vibrant interface between Astoria and its waters. This success is a fundamental reason why in the past two decades the city has gone from a place people drive through to a destination in its own right.

Warrenton and Hammond have much more shoreline to manage, with the added factor that Fort Stevens State Park and lands managed with the South Jetty comprise one of Oregon's most popular playgrounds. Warrenton has tended over the decades to focus somewhat more on its other shorelines' industrial potential than on recreational attributes. But incredible unpublicized assets like the Warrenton Waterfront Trail, Lagoon Trail, Airport Dike Trail, Seafarer's Park and Carruthers Memorial Park deserve to put the city high on the list of places where people can commune with the Great River of the West.

Reasons for concern

There are numerous reasons to be concerned about north Clatsop County shorelines. For one thing, it's generally expected that rising sea level will overtake our region's slow seismic uplift as the century moves forward, resulting in more tidal flooding and coastal erosion. Eventually, this seismic uplift will all be undone a few seconds whenever the Cascadia Subduction Zone pops — which might be today, or not for many decades.

Less dramatically, increasing population pressure will make Clatsop shorelines more popular among residents and visitors alike. Although we certainly don't face anything close to the congestion in Portland, we nevertheless need to constantly reexamine old assumptions and make new plans for how our waterfront can best be put to a variety of beneficial uses. None of it is disposable; it all is valuable and requires careful thought and stewardship. This entails protecting private property rights where they exist, but also engaging in the same kinds of processes underway in Portland.

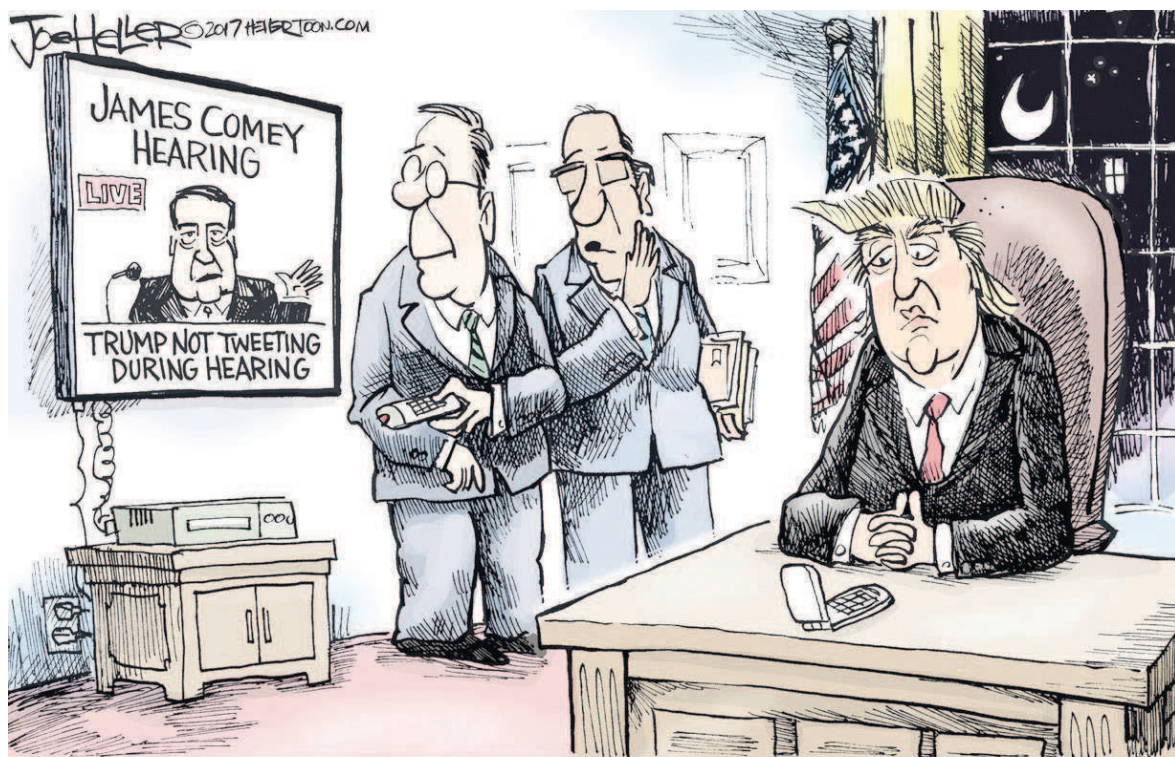
On the private end of the spectrum, exciting shoreline development is underway or planned. The new Mo's Restaurant and chowder kitchen on the Astoria Riverwalk will soon bring more business downtown. Though located a distance from the modern shoreline, the greatly expanded Astoria Co-op Grocery facility in the Mill Pond area will be an exciting addition, if funding and permits come through. A new hotel between Astoria and Uniontown has the potential of upping the city's profile a notch, while creating more jobs. And the list goes on ...

Tempered with understanding

But enthusiasm about new investments must be tempered with an understanding that everyone has an interest in the shoreline. As the Oregonian reported about Portland, "People are drawn to rivers, all living creatures are drawn to rivers." We should look for more ways to get people down to the water-side, facilitating a variety of uses. In Warrenton, this may simply be a matter of letting more know about its wonderful shoreline. In Astoria, shorelines might require significant structural alterations to let people dip toes, rowboats and fishing lines in the Columbia.

Enhancing our connections with the Columbia and other rivers and bays will require deliberate planning and actions. But the dividends will be amazing. If we do things right, these old river towns will be models of 21st century success and livability.

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"RECORDING THIS WAS A STROKE OF GENIUS! HIT REPLAY AGAIN!"

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE



IN SEASIDE, A SEAL OF APPROVAL

Seaside Aquarium/Submitted Photo

Aquarium staff urge visitors to respect the habitat of baby seals.

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

The Seaside Aquarium celebrates its 80th anniversary this year. The May 30, 1937, Memorial Day weekend opening — “unmarred by any accident or difficulty” — was described by the Seaside Signal “far above the level of the corresponding weekend of the previous years.” The aquarium’s “unusual attractions” included “an electric ray fish capable of



gathering enough electricity to provide a shock.”

Keith Chandler, the fourth general manager of the aquarium, is a Seaside native who started his career at the aquarium in 1978 at the age of 21. The aquarium has been attracting visitors to Seaside since the time founder George Smith and others expanded their aquarium business from Depoe Bay to Seaside.

Smith bought the former swimming pool on the Prom, remodeled it and reopened it as an aquarium.

Entry was priced at an admission families could afford at 10 and 15 cents. It was a time before television and most Americans had little acquaintance with marine life. Local fishermen brought in deep sea creatures as exotic as the magical worlds of Jules Verne and adventure novelists. There was no Jacques Cousteau or his underwater cameras. The octopus, wolf eel and anemones were among the aquarium’s first attractions.

But it is the seals people remember most, so popular “Feed the seals!” is the motto of the aquarium on a billboard on the south side of town.

“We don’t train our seals, the public does,” Chandler said. “The seals train the public to feed them.”

Although baby seals don’t live with their parents after being weaned, they stay with the same colony, up to 250 or 300 seals. “We have 11,” Chandler said. “They all have different personalities. Some are more friendly, some are more aggressive, some are timid. It’s just like having 11 cats.”

The life span of a seal in the wild is about 15 years; in captivity about 20. He admits he likes some seals more than others — “but I’ve liked them all.”

One named Jenny, who lived to a venerable 27 years, came to mind as a special bond. Jenny was expert at taking and hiding things from Chandler.

Four generations of seals have been born and raised in the aquarium. And, of course, they all have names: today’s cast includes Casey, Pinni, Damian, Frankie, Shireen, Vivian, Reagan, Lewis, Cosmo, Scully and Greta.



Seaside Aquarium/Submitted Photo

Visitors come to the aquarium and love to feed the seals.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian
 Administrative Assistant Tiffany Boothe and General Manager Keith Chandler at the Seaside Aquarium.

Brotula and greenlings

Along with the seals, the aquarium is home to a veritable encyclopedia of Pacific Coast marine life.

As recited by aquarium staff member Tiffany Boothe, the list includes, to name only a few, blue perch, vermilion rockfish, wolf eels, New England lobster, brown rockfish, copper rockfish, red-tail perch, white perch, urchins, key-hole limpets, sand sole, English sole, kelp greenling (“She’s a ‘meanling.’” Boothe said.) and brotula (“He’s the coolest.”)

As otherworldly as these animals appear, Chandler is an expert at identification.

In his first years Chandler acknowledged he was baffled a few times, but with experience and the internet as a tool, he was able to determine even the most exotic marine life, like the fish brought to the aquarium by local fishermen in the wake of the Japanese tsunami.

Chandler is the go-to guy for marine life identification, Boothe said.

“There was a time visitors reported this huge, long, flat fish,” she said. “I had no idea what it was. I called Keith and said they’re right, this is a very strange fish. Even now I don’t know how to describe it.”

She told Chandler the fish “is really long and has a big eye.”

Chandler identified it as a “king of the salmon,” a 6-foot ribbon fish, so named by Native Americans for the way they “led” salmon heading into rivers to spawn.

Stranding network

Aquarium staff play a critical role in the health and protection of vulnerable sea creatures.

The aquarium’s range with the Marine Mammal Stranding Network stretches from Arch Cape to Long Beach, Washington.

These include high-profile whale rescues, rare turtles and seals.

When a whale washed ashore in Cape Falcon this year, aquarium staff were there.

When olive ridleys were stranded along the coast last year the team helped arrange transport for specialized medical care at Sea World in San Diego.

In February, when a loggerhead turtle was swept onto the beach near Chapman Point, Boothe hiked a mile-and-a-half before wading into water and with the help of a volunteer, Mollie Schmidt, carried the turtle down the beach and over the dunes. When the tide came in, Boothe found herself swimming with the turtle through the icy cold winter sea water.

“Swimming through the cave was not part of the original plan,” Boothe laughed in the aftermath. “A lot of times you can walk around Chapman Point. That was what we were planning on doing.”

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