



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

A limited sturgeon fishing season was open for three days last week and is also open this week on Wednesday and Saturday.

STURGEON BONANZA

FISHERMEN FLOCK TO THE COLUMBIA RIVER TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AN INCREASINGLY RARE, SHORT SEASON

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

What fights like a salmon, looks like a shark and has the dense meat of a chicken?

White sturgeon, apparently.

The fishery opened June 5 and for the first time in three years fishermen could keep what they caught. Anglers turned out in droves. But catch and effort — the number of fishermen out on the Columbia River trying to land sturgeon — was so high last Saturday and Monday that fishery managers are now considering closing the fishery early. It was scheduled to continue on Wednesday and Saturday. Now, fishery managers say retention sturgeon fishing will likely be canceled for Saturday. They expect to announce their decision before the end of fishing Wednesday.

They can't risk going over the number of sturgeon that fishermen in Oregon and Washington are allowed to catch, said Ron Roler, Columbia River fishery manager with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The retention fishery was already set to be extremely conservative this year, he said. Of the approximately 165,600 legal-size fish in the river, only 3,000 were up for grabs.

Fishermen in both states landed an estimated 400 sturgeon on opening day June 5 — about 100 fish more than the agencies had thought would be caught that day, but within what they had hoped for, said Roler.

In a flight over the fishery last Wednesday, state employees counted 722 private boats — including smaller guide boats — and approximately 10 charter boats on the Columbia River. This count didn't include the fishermen who fished from the East Mooring Basin's breakwater or off the shore. On Saturday, the number of boats on the water was even higher.

The states knew there was a lot of pent-up demand for the fish, said Tucker Jones, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's ocean salmon and Colum-



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Ken Pearl prepares to set out last week to fish for sturgeon on the Columbia River near Astoria. Find more photos online at DailyAstorian.com

'A lot of people that don't like fish will eat sturgeon.'

Brad Hadfield
Guide Service Northwest

bia River program manager. So the fishery managers chose to ease into it. They opened the fishery in June, traditionally a month when sturgeon landings have not been high, and opened the fishery for only a limited time. Fishermen were limited to one sturgeon per day, two total for the year, and given only six days of fishing over a two-week period. They could fish for keeps from the early morning hours until 2 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

"What we are doing here is a purposely conservative approach to reopening the sturgeon fishery," Jones had said in May.

"It's been very well-received," said

Jones Monday. It's been popular." The number of fishermen out on the water attempting to catch fish — the "effort" in state management terms — was much higher than expected, he said.

Three long years

It has been three years since fishermen were allowed to keep sturgeon.

In 2014, Oregon and Washington state fishery managers closed the Columbia River to any sturgeon retention over concerns about the population status of the large, prehistoric-looking fish. Then, after surveys showed more and more legal-sized fish below Bonneville Dam each year since 2014, the states announced the opening of a retention fishery this spring on the Columbia River, from the Wauna power lines to Buoy 10, nearly 40 miles downstream.

Fishermen joke that they'd almost forgotten what it was like to land one. Seaside's Pat Hull and Caleb Fackerell, who

See STURGEON, Page 4A

Seaside inks tax deal with Airbnb

Vacation rental firm to collect lodging taxes

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Few companies come to the city asking to pay taxes.

But that's what Airbnb did, presenting a voluntary agreement to collect thousands of dollars of lodging taxes on Seaside vacation rentals.

"Right now, unless the host is going to collect from the individual staying at the property individually, there's really no other way to collect bed tax from Airbnb stays in Seaside," said Jon Rahl, the city's assistant general manager and tourism marketing director.

According to the agreement, City Manager Mark Winstanley said, Airbnb will act as agent for the properties they represent. Airbnb will send collections to the city — money previously untapped.

"Up until now they've kind of flown under the radar screen," Winstanley said. "Now they're saying they're willing to identify themselves and that's certainly advantageous to us."

See AIRBNB, Page 4A

Seaside graduates look to the future

Ninety seniors reach major milestone

By KAELIA NEAL
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Ninety graduates dressed in red caps and gowns walked the stage Monday night while proud families, friends and educators filled the Seaside Civic and Convention Center to greet them.

Among the graduates at the 101st Seaside High School commencement, five were valedictorians and 22 were members of National Honor Society.

The valedictorians each gave an address highlighting the impact Seaside High School had on them, what they are looking forward to in the future, and advice for their fellow classmates.

Summer Spell's speech acknowledged that the labels each one of them had do not define them anymore, whether that be a positive one like "successful" or a negative one like "lazy."

Dania Nolzco Luna, the first member of her family to graduate high school, said: "Whatever it is you do from here on out, you only get back what you put in."

See GRADUATES, Page 4A

Butane broker seeks distance from lawsuit

Investor sued after explosion in pot shop last year

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

John Harper, an investor in local marijuana and tobacco stores whose companies are being sued over the butane provided to Higher Level Concentrates that allegedly caused an explosion and fire last year, is looking to insulate himself from liability for any defect in the product.

Jacob Magley, a contractor for Higher Level Concentrates who was burned during the explosion and fire in October, filed suit last year against

Higher Level owners Jason Oei and William "Chris" West and three of their companies. The lawsuit also names property owner Richard Delphia and several other local businesses associated with the marijuana extractor in some way. The suit seeks more than \$8.9 million in damages.

Magley's lawsuit claims Harper's companies, Under the Bridge Cigarettes and UTB Investments, helped finance the build-out of Higher Level Concentrates and sold the unodorized, defective butane gas used in the THC extraction process that built up and exploded on ignition.

Harper's attorney, Stephan Lopez, wrote in his complaint that Harper was only a retailer of

Whip-It! Butane gas distributed by Portland company Rich & Rhine Inc. and supplied or manufactured by United Brands Products Design Development and Marketing Inc.

"They made no changes to the product," Lopez said of Harper's companies. "To the extent that the product is found to be defective, Rich & Rhine and United Brands are potentially liable parties."

Delphia remains a defendant in the case, although a judge recently dismissed claims against all five of his companies included in the original lawsuit.

The parties in the lawsuit will meet later this month regarding an effort by Delphia to have the case

See LAWSUIT, Page 4A



Jeff Ter Har/For The Daily Astorian

Seaside High School graduates Lizzy Barnes and Bradley Rzewnicki take the walk for their diplomas.

