



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The Oscar B ferry approaches the Oregon side of the Columbia River.

Ferry: Last dredging project was in 2014

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company will use the clamshell dredge Heidi Renee, finishing up another coastal maintenance dredging contract with the Army Corps this weekend in Chinook, Washington.

The company's dredging project manager, Darrell Jamieson, said he has dredged the ferry channel several times before and expects the job to take about a week.

"There's a sandbar on the Oregon side, and it seems to just build up right there and start working its way over to their approach" to the Westport Slough, Jamieson said. "On the Washington side, it's a little more finer material."

Jeffrey Henon, a spokesman for the Army Corps, said the sediment buildup can come from the riverbed upstream and surrounding shorelines. "Higher water flows on the Columbia River, such as those we experienced in spring 2017, cause more sediment to settle in the channel," he said.

Last interstate ferry

The ferry route, the only Columbia crossing between the Lewis and Clark Bridge 26 miles upstream and the Astoria Bridge 43 miles downstream,



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Eric Ferguson pilots the Oscar B ferry away from the dock at Puget Island, Wash., on the way toward the Oregon side of the Columbia River.

has been operating since 1925, when Walter Coates brought the wooden boat Cathlamet to Puget Island.

The ferry originally ran from Cathlamet, around Puget Island and across the Columbia to Westport. Coates brought a second ferry, the Westport, later in 1925 and started making runs from Puget Island to Westport, with foot passen-

gers shuttled across the island between the two landings.

In 1938, Wahkiakum County voted to build a bridge from Cathlamet to Puget Island. In the 1960s, county residents voted to take over operation of the ferry from Puget Island to Westport when the existing operator decided to cease passage.

By 1969, the state of Wash-

ington accepted the ferry as an extension of State Route 409, connecting via the ferry to Westport Ferry Road and eventually Oregon's U.S. Highway 30.

The Army Corps has overseen maintenance of the channel since 1994. The last dredging project was in 2014, when the Oscar B replaced the ferry Wahkiakum.

Cougar: Network of trail cameras recommended

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"A couple of the tenants were out this weekend and actually witnessed a cougar grab a cat," added Paluch, a mother of a 2-year-old and owner of two large dogs.

Paluch was told the animal had been spotted and "snagged a few pets from the complex," she said.

Creekside Village Apartments manager Joelle Breazier said she reported the incidents to Fish and Wildlife and state police.

"We've had several animals go missing in the last several months," Breazier said.

Costa Kenenounis, who lives at an end unit bordering the woods, said other pet owners had come by recently searching for missing pets.

He was called Monday by a neighbor sitting outside who witnessed a fight between her cat and a large animal.

"She thought it was a bobcat, but described it as a light-tan, knee-high cat attacking a neighbor cat and dragging it off in the woods," Kenenounis said.

Kenenounis joined the search. "I was kind of skeptical, but I found where it happened," he said.

He found signs of an animal struggle and remnants of the cat's fur, he said. As a hunter, he recognized what he described as cougar tracks, "like a big dog print,

but a cat print."

Naturalist Neal Maine said the reports were "credible," but coyotes were more likely to snatch house cats than cougars.

An estimated 6,493 cougars lived in Oregon in 2015, a healthy population, according to the state. This summer, people reported multiple cougar sightings near downtown Tigard, a city of more than 48,000 outside of Portland, The Daily Astorian reported last week.

Maine recommended a network of trail cameras to monitor wildlife.

"Even at night, they do a great job," he said. "With infrared, it's enough to ID stuff, so if people see things, it provides a slick way to test the theory."

'We've had several animals go missing.'

Joelle Breazier
Creekside Village Apartments manager

Bear sighting
The owner of a Maltese dog, Kenenounis said he used to let his dog walk ahead of him off leash.

"Now I don't do it," he said. "There's no way I could keep up with any animal that would snatch him and run."

Paluch is "a little frightful" that there might be a cougar nearby, she said.

On Tuesday night, Seaside police received a report of a bear sighting in the same area, near Cooper Drive and Alder Drive.

While the bear was not witnessed by police, officers told residents they would increase patrols.

Catch: Oregon fishermen landed 1.8 million pounds

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Westport with 92 million pounds, but the Washington state fishing city sailed ahead in 2016 with 108 million pounds landed. Still, Astoria stayed ahead of Newport. Landings at Astoria's near neighbors, Ilwaco and Chinook, Washington, dropped slightly in 2016, but the value went up.

When it came to the value of commercial landings, Astoria was further down the list, contributing only \$42 million as compared to Newport's \$48 million. New Bedford, Massachusetts, was at the top of the list with \$327 million.

The Pacific Coast area that includes Washington, Oregon and California accounts for 10 percent of the United States' total commercial landings and 13 percent of the value.

The report, released Tuesday, notes that total landings were down slightly from 2015, coming in at 9.6 billion pounds — of which Alaska contributed 5.6 billion pounds, topping the list for the 20th consecutive year — but value was up at \$5.3 billion dollars. East Coast ports led the nation with 39 percent of the total value, closely followed by Alaska's Dutch Harbor.

Average ex-vessel prices — the amount paid to fishermen — was up, at 55 cents per pound as compared to 2015's 54 cents per pound.

The major domestic species landed included Alaska pollock at the top of the list in terms of pounds landed followed by menhaden, an oily forage fish in the Atlantic Ocean. Hake, salmon and crab

all came in around the middle of the list.

Salmon, an important species economically and culturally in Oregon, had a rocky year. Commercial salmon landings in 2016, overall, were down significantly from 2015, at 561,036 pounds as compared to more than 1 million pounds the previous year. The average from 2011 to 2015 has been 854,242 pounds.

In 2015, salmon was ranked third in volume of landings and fourth in terms of value. In 2016, the species also dropped slightly in value.

In Oregon, fishermen landed 1.8 million pounds valued at almost \$8.3 million, a decrease of pounds and value as compared to 2015.

Crabs retained their second-place rank, valued at \$704,288, just under lobsters but ahead of scallops and shrimp. Albacore tuna, an important species for Oregon fishermen, remained about the same in landings and value as compared to 2015.

The report noted that though recreational fishing landings make up a much smaller percentage of the overall weight of finfish harvested in the U.S. in the regions the report covers, "the fishing activities of millions of anglers are important to monitor because marine recreational fishing significantly impacts the stocks of many finfish species, and recreational catches surpass commercial landings of some species."

In the Pacific region, marine recreational fishermen took 3.8 million trips and caught nearly 13 million fish. The majority of the trips — 92 percent — occurred in California.

Moore: 'We follow up on all employee concerns'

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"To ensure that there are no fears of retaliation from the county manager among any staff that come forward with concerns, I am resigning as Clatsop County manager effective March 31, 2018 or at another date mutually agreeable to the Clatsop County Board of County Commissioners," Moore wrote in the Sept. 15 email.

But with direct support from Board Chairman Scott Lee as well as commissioners Sarah Nebeker and Lisa Clement, Moore decided against resigning. Weeks after the email, Lee asked Moore to stay longer.

"It think he's a capable manager," Lee said. "I would like him to stay on through the budget process."

Moore said he does not plan to resign and that he simply wanted to give commissioners enough time to potentially search for a new county manager, which is why he listed the specific date.

"Sometimes when you're in leadership roles you have to say, 'Hey, I'm willing to step aside for the betterment of the county,'" Moore said.

One day before the email was sent, The Daily Astorian published a story that included comments from Thompson.

"Several staff have raised issues about county government with me," Thompson wrote in a July email to the newspaper. "They said they feared retaliation if they went public. I now understand their fears of retaliation."

Investigations

Thompson's email referred to an internal investigation regarding her behavior toward a county employee at a public meeting in June. The incident centered on a discussion about Moore. Despite the report's finding that Thompson had "crossed the boundary of decorum" by placing her hands on and speaking loudly to the employee, the county does not intend to take disciplinary measures.

At a Sept. 27 Board of Commissioners meeting, nearly two weeks after his email to commissioners, Moore called for an investigation into Thompson's claims. He had notified commissioners in the Sept. 15 email of his

intention to make the public request.

"We follow up on all employee concerns. This one sort of came to us in a little bit different way than we might typically hear about it," Moore said. "It's a little bit vague to me about what the concerns are, and I was particularly concerned about anybody having any fear of retaliation. I don't think it's the kind of thing we can afford not to follow up on."

He also said, without specifying his personal intentions, that the investigation should be conducted by an outside party, presuming that the retaliation fears stemmed from county management.

"If you feel it's appropriate for me as county manager to step aside temporarily or — frankly — permanently, I think you need to know I'm willing to do that," Moore said. "Obviously, that's your decision ultimately."

'Ridiculous statement'

Since the September meeting, County Counsel Heather Reynolds reached out to Thompson's lawyer to ask about specific instances of county employees' fears of retaliation. No specifics were given, Reynolds said.

"As far as I know, that was just a ridiculous statement," Lee said.

The county has retained Jill Goldsmith of Workplace Solutions Northwest, a Portland mediation service, to investigate Thompson's claims and interview county employees. She also conducted the investigation into Thompson's behavior in June.

Lee has called on Thompson to resign over her conduct and expenses. Thompson has said she plans to remain and run for re-election next year.

Thompson declined to say whether or not she would prefer that Moore resign. Both Thompson and Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan have questioned in the past whether Moore and county staff hold too much power in county decision-making relative to the board.

Sullivan said she wished to remain neutral about Moore's future.

"When I got the email, I was confused and dismayed," Sullivan said. "I would like us all to be working well together."

Co-op: Paying for about half of its new location at Mill Pond

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is also looking into possibly trading shares for contracting work as the new store is built.

Leveraging the fundraising with financing and other internal revenue sources, the co-op is paying for about half of its new location at Mill Pond, estimated to cost \$8 million. It's four times larger than the current store at 14th and Exchange streets. The store signed a 20-year lease with landowner Astor Venture. The company will pay for the other half and oversee the design, permitting and construction.

Don Vallaster, a Portland architect and partner in Astor Venture with Tom Tucker, said Wickiup Consulting

recently submitted an application to change the zoning of the site, currently zoned Attached Housing-Mill Pond.

"We may not need a conditional use permit if we do a rezone ... which probably looks like it would be the best approach," Vallaster said.

There will also be a geotechnical study of the site to figure out what sort of pilings are needed under the new store's foundation, Vallaster said.

"Initially the ground level was 15 feet lower from where it is now," he said. "With the mill, they produced a lot of sawdust and wood shavings. They put it down on the old tidal basin" and topped it with other soil.



Astoria Co-op Grocery

The Astoria Co-op Grocery has raised \$1.5 million to open a new store in the Mill Pond neighborhood.