

WORK TO BEGIN ON WEST END MOORING BASIN

Ilwaco lends Astoria a hand, and a dredge

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria's West End Mooring Basin was extra busy Monday. Crews from Bergerson Construction pulled out old pilings and drove new ones from a barge parked amid rows of pleasure craft.

Meanwhile, crew members on the Port of Ilwaco's dredge hooked up pipes and prepared to start the first interstate dredging partnership on the Columbia River.

Perpetually strapped for cash, the Port of Astoria has not dredged its western marina, a main local mooring space for personal craft, in more than a decade, despite long waiting lists. At low tide, slips on the north end of the marina turn into sandbars, damaging docks and leaving any wayward boats on their sides.

The Port's dredge, the Felkins, was at work Monday on the face of Pier 1, where the agency docks cruise and log ships. But the Felkins is too large to come into the western marina.

Port of Astoria Operations Manager Matt McGrath estimated the total cost of dredging the western marina at between \$500,000 and \$600,000.

The partnership with Ilwaco allows the Port to spread the project out over two to three years with minimal mobilization costs, McGrath said. The agency has dedicated \$273,000 this fiscal year to dredging. That work will open 35 additional slips and bring in an estimated \$40,000 in additional annual revenue.

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Workers at the West End Mooring Basin in Astoria prepare pipe Monday for a dredging operation.
Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian



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Workers connect a pipe Monday that will be used for a dredging operation at the West End Mooring Basin in Astoria.



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Portions of the Port of Astoria's West End Mooring Basin would turn into sand bars and leave boats leaning in the mud at low tide.



Guy Glenn Jr.

Oil-containment booms were placed around the Lihue II to contain leaking hydrocarbons.

Ship sinks in Ilwaco port basin

Vessel last registered to Astoria company

By NATALIE ST. JOHN
For The Daily Astorian

ILWACO — It was there, and then it wasn't.

Friday night, the 79-year-old Lihue II looked perfectly sound as it sat in the Port of Ilwaco slip where it had been moored for a few days. By Saturday morning, it was sitting on the bottom of the port basin.

Now, Port of Ilwaco staff are confronting the possibility that they may be stuck cleaning up the 55-ton mess.

While it appears that the sinking did not cause a serious oil spill, there are plenty of other complications when a 61-foot-long boat sinks in a small port.

"We've been dealing with other derelict vessels for years, but we've never had one of this size," Port Manager Guy Glenn Jr. said Monday.

Staff acted quickly to minimize damage and alert authorities, Glenn said. It's always worrisome when a derelict vessel sinks, because many of them leak environmentally

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Astoria mayor swears in new police officers

Both have fire training backgrounds

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

The Astoria Police Department is close to being fully staffed for patrols again.

Mayor Arline LaMear swore in the department's two newest officers at a City Council meeting Monday night.

Andrew Murray and Levi Winfrey bring the total number of officers up to 15. The department is authorized for up to 16 officers and Interim Police Chief Geoff Spalding plans to begin recruiting for the sixteenth officer soon.

Murray and Winfrey still have months of police academy and field training with other Astoria police officers ahead of them before they will begin patrolling the city on their own. Spalding estimates it will be summer before the men can work solo.

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Once a student, later a teacher, now a lifeboat school chief

School attracts aspiring 'surfman' boat drivers

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Fresh out of basic training, Ryan O'Meara's first assignment in the Coast Guard in 1997 was as a replacement on a 44-foot lifeboat crew in La Push, Washington, where three of the four crew members died during an attempted rescue of a sailboat crew in distress.

"I was younger," O'Meara, now 43, said. "They asked me how I felt about going there, and I said, 'Absolutely.' I wanted to drive the boats in the worse conditions as possible."

Twenty years later, O'Meara is the head of the Coast Guard's National Motor Lifeboat School, training the Coast Guard's next generation of surfmen. He replaced Kevin Clark, who

retired after 30 years in the service.

O'Meara grew up near a Coast Guard boat base in Chicago. His father published boating magazines, and he often heard about the Coast Guard in mariner circles.

Raising himself since 16, he lacked the personality traits needed to be successful, and saw the Coast Guard as a path to maturity, he said.

A year into his watch in La Push, O'Meara attended a course at the lifeboat school. Established in 1968 next to the Graveyard of the Pacific, the school is the only place in the U.S. to learn rough weather surf rescue.

It attracts aspiring surfmen from around the country, who then return to their stations to use what they've learned.

At 26, O'Meara started his second stint at the school, this time as an instructor.



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Ryan O'Meara is the new commander of the National Motor Lifeboat School at Cape Disappointment, Washington.

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