

County needle exchange program continues past six-month pilot

More than 73,000 needles collected

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County’s needle exchange program is expanding and will extend beyond its originally scheduled six-month pilot stage.

The county Public Health Department and Kerry Strickland, founder of Jordan’s Hope for Recovery, started hosting the weekly exchanges in October. Since then, 73,638 needles were collected by the county, while 71,713 were handed out.

The number of needles exchanged is nearly double the county’s total population.

“That’s a big pile of needles,” Public Health Director Michael McNickle told county commissioners during a presentation Wednesday. “Anecdotally, anyway, we don’t hear the same stories about finding needles all over the place on the (Astoria Riverwalk) or out



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian
Sarah Mitchell, left, Sheri Salber and Kerri Strickland hold a needle exchange in Astoria.

in the schoolyard.”

Since October, 65 people — commonly referred to as “messengers” — have collected and exchanged all of the needles. Heroin users were the most common, followed by those who use methamphetamine, according to the county’s findings. Homeless people were a small minority of those who have utilized the program.

doses, McNickle said.

“That means, technically, we’ve probably saved 14 lives,” he said.

Commissioners approved the \$50,000 pilot program — funded entirely through a grant from Friends of Columbia Community Health — in August. The state Public Health Division has agreed to pitch in \$95,000 a year for the program through 2019, and Multnomah County has offered \$60,000 from its federal grant money.

The county has also reached a handshake agreement with Helping Hands to secure four beds at the soon-to-be homeless shelter and re-entry program at a former Uniontown boarding house. Beds will be available for those who wish to begin nonmedical detox.

The weekly exchanges take place in Astoria, Seaside and Warrenton each Thursday. Starting in June, exchanges will be available at the health department’s office each Friday. Exact times and locations are available on the health department’s Facebook page.

Seaside man gets probation for child porn

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

A Seaside man admitted Wednesday to downloading numerous images of child pornography and was sentenced to five years of probation and 30 days in jail.

Daniel Conan McKenna, 60, pleaded guilty to 10 counts of first-degree encouraging child sex abuse. He was arrested in December and charged with 20 counts after investigators allegedly found that he had downloaded 270 images of child pornography onto his cellphone between 2012 and last year.

The Clatsop County District Attorney’s Office sought a nearly 11-year sentence in the case during Wednesday’s hearing. Circuit Court Judge Cindee Matyas instead gave him probation, but McKenna will be subject to the prison sen-



Daniel Conan McKenna

tence if he violates terms.

Deputy District Attorney Ron Brown said downloading child porn fosters a market that proliferates child sex abuse. He said perpetrators like McKenna sometimes make physical contact once the addiction worsens.

“I would submit that he has always been sexually attracted to children because you don’t just start doing that at age 50,” Brown said. “He does indicate he’s lost his moral compass. That’s for darn sure.”

McKenna apologized and pointed to sex abuse during his childhood and deaths in the family in the years prior to the crimes. He said he experienced depression and anx-

‘He does indicate he’s lost his moral compass. That’s for darn sure.’

Deputy District Attorney Ron Brown

iety that caused him to completely withdraw from society as he began downloading the images.

“It was depression, the horrible exhaustion,” McKenna said. “I really lost my sense of identity.”

Kirk Wintermute, McKenna’s court-appointed attorney, asked that Matyas issue the probation sentence with the potential for prison time, cit-

ing in part that his client has no prior criminal history.

Before issuing the sentence, Matyas called a recess to review some of the evidence and the 14 letters of support submitted on behalf of McKenna. She said she wanted to see whether McKenna can be honest with probation officers, not commit further crimes and overcome any addiction issues.

“To me, there’s a certain preference for supervision than a prison system where you will get no treatment most likely, no improvement, no redirection, no ability to transition safely. So I’m disinclined to go that route first,” Matyas said. “That’s not to say these convictions don’t deserve a prison sentence because they do, but I’m willing to allow an opportunity for supervision to see whether or not these things are true.”

Trump administration won’t sell BPA transmission lines

By COURTNEY FLATT
Northwest Public Broadcasting

The Trump administration has abandoned its bid to sell off the Pacific Northwest’s publicly owned utility transmission lines, according to Republicans in Congress who were briefed on the decision.

The plan to privatize the Bonneville Power Administration’s lines had been decried by critics as a move that could also have raised rates for customers.

The Trump administration has suggested selling off BPA’s transmission lines twice. Both times the proposal has been met with strong pushback from Northwest lawmakers. They expressed some relief this spring when Energy Secretary Rick Perry said he would not sell off BPA’s assets without congressional approval.

This idea has been considered off and on for decades — and it’s never set well with BPA’s customer groups or politicians.

Last year, a bipartisan group of 15 Northwest House lawmakers sent a let-

ter opposing the proposal, four days before the Trump administration released its plans.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, called the most recent proposal a “misguided scheme.”

In a statement Thursday, Washington state Republican U.S. Reps. Jaime Herrera Beutler, Dan Newhouse, Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Dave Reichert thanked the administration for listening to their concerns.

“We have voiced our strong opposition to this proposal and are grateful to Secretary Perry for continuing to study the impact a sell-off would have on our region and recognizing BPA’s unique and vital role in maintain-

ing economic vitality for our Northwest communities. It’s a big relief to know that this

harmful proposal will not be pursued,” the representatives wrote.

Astoria man pleads not guilty to attempted murder

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

An Astoria man accused of walking into a Westport woman’s house and chasing her with a chainsaw pleaded not guilty Wednesday to attempted murder.

The woman was changing in her bedroom on the 91710 block of Taylorville Road earlier this month when she allegedly saw Loren Shaun Knapp, 56, approaching the room. Knapp, whom the woman said she does not know, then started the chainsaw and threatened to kill her, according to an affidavit.

He allegedly then chased the woman around the home and sawed through the bedroom door, a couch and kitchen cabinet. The damage was estimated at \$650 by the Clatsop County Sheriff’s Office.

A neighbor called police upon seeing Knapp in the

street — chainsaw in hand — after he left the house. Deputies arrested him in the area about two hours later.

A grand jury indicted Knapp earlier this week on charges of attempted murder, attempt to commit a class A felony, first-degree burglary, unlawful use of a weapon and first-degree criminal mischief.

Knapp’s more than 25 arrests in Clatsop County include charges of burglary, criminal mischief, menacing, assault, animal abuse and stalking. Court records in the latest charge list his address on Fern Hill Road, but several other addresses were listed in previous cases.

His next court date has been scheduled for June.



Loren Shaun Knapp

Oregon wetlands survey raises regulatory concerns

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

An inventory of Oregon’s wetlands is intended as an early warning system to prevent regulatory conflicts, but some lawmakers worry it effectively expands government jurisdiction over farmland.

The Department of State Lands is developing a statewide wetlands inventory map using multiple sources of information to show where wetlands are located.

The question is significant for farmers, who must obtain fill-removal permits from the state before starting major ground-disturbing projects within wetlands.

However, inventories maintained by the federal government and local governments are incomplete, raising the possibility that landowners may not know they’re filling or removing material from a wetland.

A statewide wetland

inventory would reduce the likelihood of such “false negatives,” said Bill Ryan, deputy director of operations for the Department of State Lands.

In 2016, for example, a Willamette Valley farmer began replacing hay barns destroyed in a fire with local government permission, only to have the state claim he was building in a wetland.

One of the criteria to determine the existence of a wetland is whether the property contains hydric soils, which form when ground is regularly inundated with water for lengthy periods, Ryan said during a Monday hearing before the House Agriculture Committee.

State Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem, said he was concerned about the state going beyond what’s considered a wetland by the federal government, particularly since development on farmland is already restricted under Oregon’s land use system.

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