

Sea lions: Shootings difficult to prosecute

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Between 1998 and 2017, nearly 700 California sea lions were found with gunshot and stab wounds in California, Oregon and Washington state, according to a National Geographic report citing NOAA Fisheries data.

Milstein says prior to the Marine Mammal Protection Act, states placed bounties on sea lions to reduce pressure on fisheries. The sea lion population made a huge recovery as a result of that law, increasing from less than 90,000 in 1975 to more than 250,000 in 2014.

The law also prohibits the harassment of marine mammals, but NOAA Fisheries has outlined a list of potential methods for deterring marine mammals, including creating barriers, using noisemakers and visual repellents.

Milstein says NOAA has autho-

rized some states to remove sea lions in areas where they are significantly impacting endangered salmon stocks. An amendment to the law passed by the U.S. House of Representatives this year would allow fisheries to kill up to 100 sea lions each year to help protect salmon.

Marine mammal shootings are difficult to prosecute because carcasses often decompose before investigators can examine them, Milstein says. Since 1998, only a handful of perpetrators have been charged, according to National Geographic. All of them were fishermen.

"One of the disconcerting things about these recent shootings is that they've been close to populated areas in Seattle, and that's disturbing from a public safety standpoint," Milstein says. "But we're hoping that somebody will hear or see something that will give us some leads to go on."



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Roller skating enthusiasts make their way around the course at the Astoria Armory during a community skate night.

Smith: 'I feel blessed'

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From a young age, he knew he loved music, writing his first song at 12 and dipping out of church to play guitar with his friend.

Music was part of his family's soul, with his mom and many of his siblings also playing instruments. But being a rock musician? No, that wasn't considered a career.

Smith wasn't sure what he wanted to do, but knew he needed to leave to pursue his dreams. In 1977, he first came to Seaside on a mission trip through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and fell in love with the coast.

After his trip ended, life unfolded as it does — he got married and moved around — until the two decided their hearts are in Seaside and moved back permanently in 1980.

Smith bounced around different jobs before deciding to open Bruce Smith Automobiles on a whim. Over the following 25 years, Smith juggled running an auto dealership with his music career, quietly heading out over weekends or for weeks at a time to produce albums, play gigs and go on tour.

"I just felt compelled," Smith said. But in 2011, life stalled. Issues between him and his bank forced Smith

to close the dealership, he said, as well as sell his home and other property.

"That was my 401(k)," he said.

For the next year, he was in a daze. Eventually, through the encouragement of his wife, he used the major life change to finally make music his sole priority. In 2012, he pulled together a band and made music and sound editing his full-time career.

The work is steady, but two integral aspects of his life — his religious faith and his music — still quietly conflict. As a member of the LDS church, his choice to pursue rock music has been met with confusion and judgment.

"Making a living doing rock 'n' roll just 'doesn't fit,'" Smith said.

There also is prejudice in reverse. To avoid friction, he keeps his religion relatively private within the music community.

"My agent of 11 years, when we met ... she found out I was LDS and said she wasn't interested," he said. "We just talked yesterday, we're great. But even she carried that prejudice within her."

But for Smith, walking the cultural tightrope is a small price to pay for the chance to live his dream.

"I feel blessed," he said. "If you told me as a kid from Texas this would be my life, I'd think it was impossible."

Armory: Seven years to pay back loan

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Koustik also organizes several anti-bullying, youth volunteering and other community service programs in the space, along with the Just Ask program that feeds about 60 young people each Friday and Saturday.

But the group had been waiting for the sale to go through before starting major renovations and a fundraising campaign to modernize the Armory.

"Having the sound taken care of is going to significantly change the course of the Armory, where we're going to be able to offer more programming," Koustik said.

The sale and improvement loan was ready to go through in 2016, Zimmerman said. But the partnership began discovering unsavory vestiges of the 76-year-old building's past, including buried heating oil tanks, asbestos on a boiler and lead contamination from an underground firing range for the Oregon Army National Guard.

"We didn't want to turn over a building to them that had various and sundry issues," Zimmerman said.

Just when it seemed everything was cleaned up, a storm rolled in last year and tore off part of the building's roof. Volunteers walked in on an indoor waterfall cascading down onto the vintage gym floor and through the ceiling of the lobby.

Things at the Armory have since settled down, with a newly remodeled lobby, a repaired floor and a host of events and private parties.

"We still have 1,000 projects, but hopefully no more surprises," Davies said.

With the building's problems laid to rest, Craft3 last week executed the loan to the Friends using money received from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's rural development program meant for higher-risk, higher-reward community projects.

"We lend it into projects that have community or economic impact," said Scott Huddleston, a loan officer with Craft3 who oversaw the transaction.

The Friends have seven years to pay back the loan.

Davies is confident in the Friends' ability to raise donations and make money from events at the Armory. Dan Stein, a board mem-

ber with the Friends, recently won Fort George Brewery's Magnanimous Mug fundraising competition, gathering more than \$29,000 and a \$10,000 match from the brewery.

The Armory once hosted thousands of people seeing mainstream acts from Bob Hope to rock groups like Deep Purple, Buffalo Springfield and The Zombies. Then-Vice President Richard Nixon spoke at the Armory in the late 1950s.

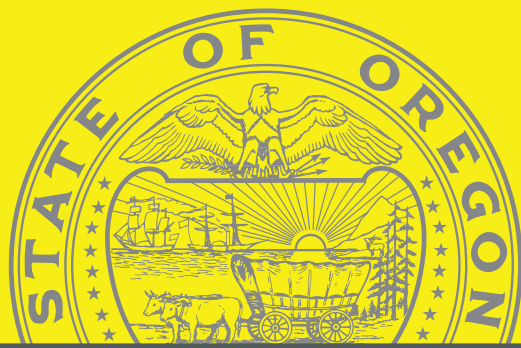
A \$45,000 pass-through grant from the Northwest Area Foundation will fund a marketing position for the Friends to focus on developing a fundraising plan and ensuring a steady rotation of concerts.

Craft3 took on a similar project in north Portland, taking over a former strip club and helping a community nonprofit over three years start developing it into a mixed-use community center and low-income housing complex.

There's risk in taking on an old building with hidden ghosts like the Armory, and in making sure the community is ready to take ownership. "We use this building as an example of a community's vision, and how we can help," Zimmerman said.

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