

CHARTER FLEET FACES EXTINCTION



Photos by Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

Local marine repair shops have felt the impact of fewer charter boats on the water. 'It was a slow winter,' said John Kalander, right, the owner of West Coast Propeller Service.

Strange weather, shorter fishing seasons to blame

By LUKE WHITTAKER
Chinook Observer

WARRENTON — In the 20th-century heyday of recreational salmon fishing on the Columbia River, marinas were jammed with bustling charter fishing vessels. Today, you're lucky to count more than 20.

The extinction of the charter fishing fleet has played out over the past 30 years, punctuated by strange weather and increasingly shorter fishing seasons.

"We're a dying breed," said Gene Kane, owner of Tackle Time Bait and Charters. "It's a dying thing."

Since opening in 1983, the Warrenton-based bait and charter business has had a front-row seat to the industry's ebb and flow.

"Over the past 36 years, we've seen the good, the bad and the ugly," Kane said. "After the first El Niño in 1994, we had to borrow money just to stay here. Most everyone else went down."

Limited seasons on sturgeon and salmon — two of the most popular fisheries on the river — have left a painful scar.

"Our sturgeon used to be a year-around fishery," Kane said.

"It went to several years with no fishing, then catch and release only," he said. "It's only been the last couple years that we've been able to get 10 days spread out. Something is better than nothing, but it puts pressure on fishermen."

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Linda and Gene Kane have operated Tackle Time Bait and Charters in Warrenton since 1983.



Sea Breeze Charters owner Pat Schenk has watched the Ilwaco charter fleet dwindle from 150 boats to less than 20 today.

Port could get state help, but with strings

Agency looks to update strategic plan

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria may get more help from the state to fix its crumbling infrastructure, but only with close state oversight, according to the agency's strategic planner.

The state has loaned the Port nearly \$19.7 million through Business Oregon's Infrastructure Finance Authority since 2001. The Port began updating its 2010 strategic business plan nearly two years ago after hearing the state was unlikely to loan any more money without an update.

Mary McArthur, the executive director of the Columbia-Pacific Economic Development District, expects to have a draft in May.

The Port has been criticized for not focusing enough on maintenance or sticking to strategic plans. There is lack of confidence and trust in the Port, McArthur told Port commissioners during a Tuesday meeting.

"I'm going to recommend some relatively significant strings in terms of oversight of the Port for the next two to four years," she said. "What I'm thinking there is that this will give you that muscle, that leverage to say, 'We are just going to focus on what comes out of that strategic plan. We're going to commit to it. If things come up that want to steer us off course ... we know that Business Oregon's going to yank our chain and pull us back.'"

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Seaside planners back construction of Grocery Outlet

A 'turn pocket' will help with traffic

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — With a new plan to widen and restripe the roadway, the Seaside Planning Commission gave its unanimous OK Tuesday night for a new 18,000-square-foot Grocery Outlet.

A 175-foot-long "turn pocket" along U.S. Highway 101 southbound into Avenue N will satisfy the state Department of Transportation and the Planning Commission's requirement for a left-turn lane, representatives of Main & Main Capital Group said on behalf of Grocery Outlet.

The turn pocket will be developed before the new store opens.

"What we've done over the last month is worked with ODOT to come up with something that will work," Main & Main's Dan Dover said.

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Legislature to pay \$1 million for harassment at Capitol

Settlement of labor complaint

By AUBREY WIEBER and
CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The state Legislature will pay \$1 million to nine victims of harassment at the Capitol, settling a harassment by state labor officials that has put a cloud over the session.

In a deal announced Tuesday afternoon, legislative leaders also agreed to push harder and by certain deadlines to reform work behavior at the Capitol.

The settlement followed private talks between top legislators

and representatives from the state Bureau of Labor and Industries.

The bureau said in January that it found substantial evidence that not only were employees and legislators themselves harassed, but that state Senate President Peter Courtney and House Speaker Tina Kotek, as well as administrators responsible for responding to harassment allegations, were ineffective in handling their complaints.

"We sincerely apologize to the women who suffered harm during their time in the Capitol," Kotek and Courtney said in a joint statement.

Eight women, who were not identified in the settlement, will share in noneconomic damages of amounts ranging up to \$415,000. State Sen. Sara Gelsler, D-Corvallis,



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Former state Sen. Jeff Kruse, R-Roseburg, resigned amid sexual harassment allegations.

will get \$26,000 for legal fees and other expenses but didn't seek damages, according to the labor bureau.

The settlement was announced hours after Courtney, a Salem Dem-

ocrat, said he was taking medical leave for 10 days, which his staff said wasn't connected to the harassment settlement.

The scope of harassment was put into full public view in early January when then-Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian released the results of his monthslong investigation.

But the settlement also required the labor bureau, now led by former legislator Val Hoyle, to acknowledge its own investigation was flawed. In a statement Tuesday, the bureau said its process "was politicized in a manner that inhibited both sides from participating thoroughly in the investigation."

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