

IN BRIEF

Halibut fishing closes on North Coast

The Pacific halibut all-depth sport fishery on the North Coast closed a day early after fishermen hit their quota.

The fishery in the Columbia River subarea, which was supposed to remain open through Thursday, is now closed for the rest of the year. Fishery managers say both effort and catch during the first two sets of open days this month were high.

Rep. Mitchell to hold town hall

State Rep. Tiffany Mitchell, D-Astoria, will hold a town hall at 10 a.m. Sunday in the Warrenton High School gymnasium at 1700 S. Main Ave.

— *The Astorian*

DEATH

May 25, 2019

MOORE, Colin Eugene, 64, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIAL

Saturday, June 1

WILLIAMS, Daniel Brian — Memorial at 2 p.m., Camp Rilea Log Conference Center, 33168 Patriot Way in Warrenton.

ON THE RECORD

Assault

Warrenton police arrested Kenneth Standring, 22, of Warrenton, on Saturday for two counts of fourth-degree assault, third-degree criminal mischief, harassment and strangulation. According to police, Standring assaulted his sister, grabbing her by the neck and throwing her to the ground.

Warrenton police arrested Cody Atkins, 24, of Astoria, on Friday for fourth-degree assault, first-degree burglary, second-degree criminal mischief and first-degree criminal trespassing. According to police, Atkins broke into a camper trailer parked on Birch Court and attacked the owner.

DUII

Astoria police arrested Joshua Ryan Hudak, 21, of Astoria, on Tuesday for driving under the influence of intoxicants. Hudak, carrying two passengers, drove his vehicle down an embankment, missing multiple trees and vehicles, according to police. He and the passengers, all with facial and head injuries, initially fled the scene after the car came to a stop but were later contacted, after which police arrested Hudak.

Warrenton police arrested Shawn Driggers, 30, of Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Sunday for DUII and reckless endangerment. According to police, Driggers, who had three passengers in his vehicle, was observed by an officer speeding southbound on U.S. Highway 101 and unable to maintain lanes. He was pulled over on the Fort Stevens Highway Spur and recorded a blood alcohol content of 0.10%.

State police arrested Eduardo Vazquez, 21, of Beaverton, on Sunday for DUII, failure to carry a license, providing

false information and reckless driving. Vazquez was stopped for going 100 mph in a 55-mph zone. Vazquez denied having ID, provided a false name and refused a breath test. Police later identified Vazquez and took him to the Clatsop County Jail, where he recorded a blood alcohol content of 0.03% and agreed to provide a urine sample and meet with a drug recognition expert.

State police arrested James Willott, 33, of Vancouver, Washington, on Saturday for DUII, reckless driving, attempting to elude, offensive littering and failure to present an operator's license. According to police, Willott was observed by other drivers, and later an officer, eastbound on U.S. Highway 26 speeding and making dangerous passes. He allegedly fled from police after being pulled over. He pulled off on a logging road and approached someone's house asking for gas. State troopers and members of the Washington County Sheriff's Office arrived and found Willott in a garage. They arrested him after a short pursuit on foot.

State police arrested Danny Parker III, 36, of Portland, on Saturday for two counts of second-degree assault, attempting to elude police, DUII, hit-and-run and two counts of reckless endangerment. Police responded to a two-vehicle crash on the Washington end of the Astoria Bridge. Parker's vehicle left the scene of the crash and traveled southbound. After briefly failing to yield, Parker surrendered to police and recorded a blood alcohol content of 0.20%.

The Clatsop County Sheriff's Office arrested Thomas Moor, 51, of Astoria, around 2 p.m. Saturday near the Buoy 9 Restaurant in Hammond for DUII.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Clatsop County Recreational Lands Planning and Advisory Committee, 1 to 3 p.m., fourth floor, 800 Exchange St.
Youngs River Lewis & Clark Water District, 3 p.m., 34583 U.S. Highway 101 Business.
Warrenton Planning Commission, 5 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.

the Astorian

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Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

Deckhand Steven Perkins pulled a keeper sturgeon from the ice box as fellow deckhand Ryan Hung carried another sturgeon down the dock for a customer after a successful trip for the Sea Breeze Charter fleet.

Sturgeon start biting as season's end nears

By LUKE WHITTAKER
Chinook Observer

ILWACO — Eli Jamieson couldn't help but smile as a small crowd gathered to admire his catch.

It was the first keeper sturgeon the Tygh Valley, Oregon, resident had caught in nearly a decade and at 49 inches and 43 pounds

among the biggest brought to the Ilwaco dock this season.

"It's the first keeper I've had in eight years," Jamieson said. "This baby was just shy of 50 inches."

The fish was soon whisked away by Sea Breeze Charter deckhand Ryan Hung and delivered to Sportsmen's Cannery,

where Kevin Ward began a familiar routine of removing the fins and delicately cutting away thick fillets.

After a relatively slow start to the season, sturgeon fishing has heated up in recent weeks with more keepers being caught.

The fishery has been open Monday, Wednesday and Saturday since May 13

and will continue through Wednesday, from the Wauna power lines downriver to Buoy 10 and adjacent Washington tributaries.

The fishery closes at 2 p.m. each of those days. Only white sturgeon measuring 44 to 50 inches from the tip of their nose to the fork in their tale ("fork length") may be retained.

Fight is on to save salmon from toothy invader

By COURTNEY FLATT
Northwest Public Broadcasting

The fight to save Columbia River salmon could hinge on a major battle taking place in the basin's biggest reservoir. It pits biologists against a fish: The invasive northern pike.

Northern pike are aggressive. They eat anything in their path — they've even been spotted chomping on ducks and bats. That's bad news for soft-bellied fish, like rainbow trout. "These pike here, they can really prey on a lot of fishes that these other fish in the reservoir right now can't," said Travis Rehm, a fisheries biologist with the Spokane Tribe of Indians.

Rehm is one of the anglers standing in their way as the Spokane Tribe and other fisheries managers launch a counterattack. Biologists are catching as many northern pike as they can in Lake Roosevelt, the reservoir held back by the Grand Coulee Dam. If the fish make it past Grand Coulee and the next dam downriver — Chief Joseph Dam — it could be game over for the Columbia's threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead populations.

These native fish populate the 545-mile section of the Columbia River below the Chief Joseph Dam, plus thousands of miles of tributary rivers and streams.

"Native species here haven't evolved to deal with a predator that's quite like pike," Rehm said.

To push back the northern pike's steady progression, biologists will be on the water for much of the summer, setting and checking about 15 gillnets each day. The goal: snagging as many northern pike as possible.

Rehm and two other biologists, Andy Miller and Joe Cronrath, check the gillnets within 24 hours after they've set them in place.

These biologists know where to place the gillnets: near channels, in shallower areas, where the northern pike — apex predators in these waters — like to ambush prey. Tribal biologists also set gillnets for northern pike last year.

"The hotspots haven't changed. The densities within those have, and they're just increasing," Rehm said.

Gillnets are controversial

Gillnets are controversial because fish that aren't being



Courtney Flatt/Northwest Public Broadcasting

Travis Rehm holds up the largest northern pike biologists caught on May 21. The female fish was about 34 inches long.

targeted — like smallmouth bass, walleye and northern pikeminnow — get tangled in the nets. But Rehm said they're trying to be careful.

"We're doing our best to minimize bycatch and be as cognizant of everything as possible," he said.

All of the nonnative fish the team catch are gutted. If people will eat the fish, the biologists deftly file it — along with the northern pike — and take it to the Spokane Tribe's food bank. They keep the heads of the larger northern pike. Tiny bones in the head can tell them how old the northern pike is and where it's been. They clip its fin to collect DNA, which can help biologists track northern pike spawning.

Recently, biologists for six different agencies took an "all hands on deck" approach to netting northern pike. The cadre saturated known hotspots with gillnets for a week. In the end, they caught 439 northern pike.

They especially want to catch female northern pike before they spawn. Each fish can have somewhere around 10,000 eggs. Fewer eggs mean fewer pike in the future.

"We stopped at least 2,160,000 eggs from being released into the water during this one week survey," said Holly McLellan, the lead biologist with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

In a different area of Lake Roosevelt called the Sanpoil Arm, Colville biologists netted a whopping 28-pound female northern pike. McLel-

lan said the eggs from that fish alone weighed 4 pounds.

In this vast reservoir, the presence of these predatory outsiders means other fish could be in trouble. In California and Alaska, northern pike ate all the types of fish anglers like to catch.

"The (hatchery) rainbow trout are getting hammered," Rehm said.

All day long, biologists find hatchery rainbow trout inside northern pike stomachs. One fish had recently eaten three rainbow trout.

Illegally introduced

Northern pike didn't just all-of-a-sudden show up in Lake Roosevelt. They were illegally introduced into Montana as early as the 1950s — thanks to outdoorsmen who took it upon themselves to bring these game fish from the Midwest by the bucketful to stock Western waters. Nowadays, conservation scientists refer to these folks as "bucket biologists."

Since then, the northern pike have been relentlessly swimming, reproducing and eating their way down the tributaries and lakes of Montana, Idaho, and Washington state — all connected waters that are part of the Columbia Basin.

Tony Grover is the fish and wildlife director for the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, which can direct money toward the northern pike eradication. Grover said the only times these fish have been completely stopped is in isolated waters.

"Any time they've shown up in larger, interconnected systems, it's been impossible to eradicate them. So now that they're in the system, they're here to stay, almost certainly," Grover said.

Once fisheries managers recognized the threat these invaders posed to native species, they tried to stop it. The Kalispel Tribe of Indians knocked back the northern pike population in Washington's Box Canyon Reservoir on the Pend Oreille River.

But some fish made it past their nets and on toward the Columbia.

Northern pike entered Lake Roosevelt around 2011 and kept moving. They've nearly covered the lake's 150-mile length and have been spotted within 17 miles of Grand Coulee Dam, where the Colville Tribe recently caught the large female northern pike.

Grover worries smaller northern pike could one day slip through the Grand Coulee Dam's turbines. He said it could be just a few more years before that happens. To help with the fight, managers are paying anglers \$10-a-head for any northern pike they catch. Back at the lake, Rehm said he's "cautiously optimistic" they can slow the pike's progress.

"If we can get a handle on them and be able to manageably net them, it'll be a lot easier go," Rehm said.

On this day, Rehm and the other biologists catch 21 northern pike.

"We'll give them hell," he said. "That's the plan."