

IN BRIEF

What would you call new elementary school?

Come the fall of 2020, two separate elementary schools will be merged into one when Gearhart Elementary School students join students from The Heights Elementary School on the hill.

In preparation for the transition, the Bringing Our Elementary Schools Together, or BEST, committee wants to guide the community through a process of selecting a new name, mascot and school colors.

The purpose, committee member and Gearhart instructor Jessica Garrigues said during the Seaside School Board's meeting May 21, is to represent "a merge and true new start."

— *The Astorian*

Local sheriff's deputies graduate from corrections academy

Clatsop County Sheriff's Office deputies Daniel Raymer and Ian McNabb were among the most recent crop of graduates from the Oregon Public Safety Academy in Salem.

The two will be honored at 2 p.m. June 14 at the academy, 4190 Aumsville Highway S.E. in Salem, with a reception to follow. Lt. Joshua Aldrich, jail commander for the Jackson County Sheriff's Office, will be the guest speaker.

— *The Astorian*

AARP offers retirement workshop

AARP is offering a free workshop, "Ready, Set, Retire," from 4 to 7 p.m. Thursday at Clatsop Community College.

The event offers an opportunity to help people get the tools and information they need to make a smart decision before they retire.

The topics covered include some basics of Social Security, Medicare 101, tips on fraud prevention, getting ahead with OregonSaves and how to open a small business. A light meal and water will be served.

The workshop is free and open to the public, but pre-registration is required. Go to bit.ly/2XgMoTD to register.

— *The Astorian*

Stimson Lumber to lay off 60 workers in Forest Grove

Stimson Lumber Co. announced Friday that it is cutting 60 jobs at its Forest Grove location. That's about 40% of the mill's workforce.

CEO Andrew Miller attributes the job losses to a changing business environment in Oregon, specifically rising costs of operation.

"It's an overall, what I would call, regulatory and tax creep," he said, "and it's been underway for many years."

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

DEATHS

June 3, 2019

ALLISON, Carol R., 82, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary in Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

May 30, 2019

PHILLIPS, William "Bill," 67, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

May 4, 2019

HESS, Dale Charles, 71, of Tucson, Arizona, formerly of Astoria, died in Tucson. Oasis Cremation and Funeral Care of Tucson is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIAL

Wednesday, June 5

Thursday, June 6

RAMON GUZMAN, Magdalena Blandina — Funeral at 11 a.m. Wednesday at St. Mary, Star of the Sea Catholic Church, 1465 Grand Ave. Visitation is from 1 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, and from noon to 8 p.m. Thursday, at Hughes-Ransom Mortuary, 576 12th St. Ramon Guzman, 63, of Seaside, Washington, died Thursday, May 30, 2019, in Portland. Burial will be held in Veracruz, Mexico.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY

Seaside Community Center Commission, 10:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Center, 1225 Avenue A.
Port of Astoria Commission, 4 p.m. workshop, Port offices, 10 Pier 1 Suite 209.
Clatsop Care Health District Board, 5 p.m., Clatsop Care Health and Rehabilitation, 646 16th St.
Miles Crossing Sanitary Sewer District Board, 6 p.m., 34583 U.S. Highway 101 Business.
Seaside Planning Com-

mission, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

WEDNESDAY

Warrenton Urban Renewal Advisory Committee, 3:30 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.
Seaside Improvement Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

THURSDAY

Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Feds to probe spike in gray whale deaths

About 70 whales found dead

By GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press

SEATTLE — U.S. scientists will investigate why an unusual number of gray whales are washing up dead on West Coast beaches.

About 70 whales have been found dead so far this year on the coasts of California, Oregon, Washington state and Alaska, the most since 2000. About five more have been discovered on British Columbia beaches. That's a very small fraction of the total number of whales believed to have died, because most simply sink and others wash up in such remote areas they're not recorded.

NOAA Fisheries on Friday declared the die-off an "unusual mortality event," providing additional resources to respond to the deaths and triggering the investigation.

"Many of the whales have been skinny and malnourished, and that suggests they may not have gotten enough to eat during their last feeding season in the Arctic," agency spokesman Michael Milstein told reporters during a conference call.

The eastern North Pacific gray whales were removed from the endangered species list in 1994, after recovering from the whaling era.

The population has grown significantly in the last decade and is now estimated



AP Photo/Gene Johnson

Teachers and students from Northwest Montessori School in Seattle examine the carcass of a gray whale after it washed up on the coast of Washington's Olympic Peninsula, just north of Kalaloch Campground in Olympic National Park, in May.

at 27,000 — the highest since surveys began in 1967. That has raised questions about whether their population has reached the limit of what the environment can sustain. Another theory suggests that the loss of Arctic sea ice due to global warming is a culprit.

The whales spend their summers feeding in the Arctic before migrating 10,000 miles to winter off Mexico. Though they eat all along their route, they are typically thinning by the time they return north along the West Coast each spring.

They eat many things, but especially amphipods, tiny shrimp-like creatures that live in sediment on the ocean floor in the Arctic. For many years, researchers noted that fewer calves tended to be born following years when the ice in the Chukchi Sea, north of the Bering Strait between Alaska and Russia, was late

to melt. The whales had less time to feast because they couldn't access the feeding area, and thus had less blubber to sustain them on their next migration.

Last year, though, the Arctic was unusually warm. The whales weren't blocked from the feeding area, and yet are still struggling this year. That has scientists wondering if the loss of sea ice has led to a loss of algae that feed the amphipods. Surveys show the amphipod beds moving farther north, said Sue Moore, a biological oceanographer at the University of Washington.

"The sea ice has been changing very quickly over the last decade or so," she said. "The whales may have to shift to other prey, such as krill or other things they eat."

In an average year, about 35 whales wash up in the U.S.

In 2000, more than 100 did, prompting NOAA to

declare an "unusual mortality event" then as well. The resulting investigation failed to identify a cause. The die-off followed strong changes in ocean conditions in the mid-1990s, suggesting that warmer water patterns affected the availability of prey, but scientists were often unable to perform necropsies, Moore said.

"It's sometimes very difficult to get to these whales in a timely fashion," she said. "You can't always get the kind of samples you would need for diagnostic reasons."

Since then, researchers have built up an improved network of volunteers and have better educated the public to help report and respond to whale deaths, said Deborah Fauquier, veterinary medical officer at NOAA's Office of Protected Resources. This time around, scientists have been able to perform necropsies on 20 of the whales, she said.

John Calambokidis, a research biologist with the Cascadia Research Collective, noted that as the whales search farther afield for food, they've entered areas where they're not normally seen so often, including San Francisco Bay and Puget Sound. That puts them at higher risk of being struck by ships or entangled in fishing gear.

Four of the 10 gray whales found dead near San Francisco this year were struck by ships, and a number of shipping companies have slowed their vessels in the area to avoid collisions.

Grain ship runs aground in Columbia River

The Astorian

A grain ship ran aground on a sandbar east of Tongue Point on Sunday before freeing itself during high tide Monday.

The Gorgoypikoos, outbound on the Columbia River with a load of grain, grounded out on the Miller Sands north of Knappa because of a steering malfunction. The vessel also carried 21 crew members and more than 300,000 gallons of fuel. The stern of the ship poked into the main channel of the Columbia River, partially obstructing the shipping channel.

The Coast Guard dispatched an investigator on



Coast Guard

The grain ship Gorgoypikoos ran aground in the Miller Sands on Sunday before the ship's crew refloated Monday morning.

a 47-foot motor lifeboat from Station Cape Disappointment to ensure the ship wasn't leaking, along with an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter from Air Station Astoria.

Three tugboats arrived to assist the Gorgoypikoos, but the crew piloted the vessel off the sandbar Monday morning without pollution or any injuries. The

investigator stayed on board the Gorgoypikoos, which was ordered back to its last port of call in Longview, Washington, to ensure its seaworthiness.

Bill would open door for electric co-ops to receive aid

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

An Oregon congressman is urging lawmakers to pass a bill that would allow rural electric co-ops to receive government grants for disaster relief and broadband internet service, without losing tax-exempt status.

In a letter sent Thursday to members of the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance committees, U.S. Rep. Grag Walden expressed his support for the Revital-

izing Underdeveloped Rural Areas and Lands Act of 2019.

The bill aims to fix what the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association described as an unintended consequence of the sweeping GOP tax reforms in 2017.

To be considered tax-exempt, rural electric co-ops — many of which serve farm and ranch communities — cannot receive more than 15% of income from non-member sources. However, the tax law contains a provision that counts federal, state

and local grants as income rather than capital.

That means if a utility applies for money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to restore power following a natural disaster, it might exceed the threshold for tax exemption and result in higher rates for consumers.

The RURAL Act calls for changing the code, allowing co-ops to receive emergency aid and funding for rural broadband without counting toward income.

Walden, a Republican

whose district covers nearly all of central and Eastern Oregon, is co-sponsoring the legislation.

"Rural electric cooperatives and other consumer-owned utilities are at the center of efforts to grow Oregon's communities and rebuilding when disaster strikes," Walden wrote. "The utilities and their members should not be penalized with long-term tax costs for keeping the lights and keeping power affordable for rural Oregonians."



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Astoria Vacation Bible School

"SHIPWRECKED: Rescued by Jesus"

Monday – Thursday, June 24th – 28th

10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

A cooperative effort of several downtown churches

Register at www.fpcastoria.org

Deadline to register online is June 14th

Registration in person will be allowed June 24th

Friday Beach party June 28th at 5:00 p.m.

Police suspect suicide after vehicle abandoned on Astoria Bridge

The Astorian

Police believe the driver who abandoned a vehicle on the Astoria Bridge on Friday committed suicide.

Capt. Timothy Fox, a spokesman for the Oregon State Police, said authorities identified the driver of the vehicle but have been unable to locate him. Police declined to publicly name the driver, who was not the owner of the vehicle. The vehicle was not stolen.

"It appears to be a suicide however no body has been recovered and it was not wit-

nessed," Fox said.

Astoria dispatch received a report of the abandoned vehicle near the center span about 3 p.m. Friday. Authorities checked above and below the bridge but found no body. The vehicle was operable.

Authorities ask anyone who saw the vehicle between 2:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. to contact the Oregon State Police at 503-325-2231.

The apparent suicide comes a week after a Warrenton man jumped off the bridge after parking his car near the center span.

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