

IN BRIEF

State allows barbed hooks in salmon fishery

State fishery managers are allowing anglers to use barbed hooks when fishing for salmon, steelhead and trout in the Columbia River.

Fishermen had been required to use barbless hooks since 2013, but the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted a temporary rule change this year to allow barbed hooks so that policies and rules would remain concurrent with Washington state. The two states jointly manage fisheries on the river and, in past years, had diverged on what to allow.

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission will consider a permanent rule change at a future meeting. The temporary rule went into effect Saturday.

Single-point barbless hooks are still required by both states when fishing for sturgeon on the Columbia River. — *The Astorian*

Cape Disappointment hosts first ever ‘Orca Day’

Washington State Parks and the Whale Trail are hosting the first ever “Orca Day” to educate people about the endangered southern resident orca population.

The free, family-friendly event will be held at Cape Disappointment State Park on the Long Beach Peninsula in Washington on June 15. The event will include daytime kids’ activities from 1 to 4 p.m. and an evening presentation at 7 p.m. at the park’s Waikiki Amphitheater, 244 Robert Gray Drive, Ilwaco.

John Calambokidis, of Cascadia Research, and Donna Sandstrom, of the Whale Trail, an interpretive trail that spans from California to British Columbia, will speak at the evening event.

The southern resident orcas comprise just 76 individuals and are in danger of extinction. Last year, Gov. Jay Inslee convened a task force to develop long-term action recommendations for orca recovery and sustainability. — *The Astorian*

Lawmakers move to keep some inmates from Oregon State Hospital

State lawmakers say they’re going to amend legislation and make it more difficult for judges to send people to the Oregon State Hospital for psychological evaluation and treatment.

The hope, lawmakers said, is that they can secure funding to treat people charged with low-level crimes through community-based mental health programs, reserving the state hospital for defendants with more severe crimes and mental illnesses.

The decision comes after a Washington County Circuit Court judge found the state hospital “willfully violated” court orders for not transporting people from the Washington County Jail to the state hospital for treatment within seven days. — *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

DEATHS

June 5, 2019

FORNEY, Norman, 90, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

June 3, 2019

KOPPEN, Evelyn M., 99, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIAL

Saturday, June 8

HUDSON, Sigrid Camilla Knudsen — Celebration of life at 2 p.m., Cannon Beach Community Church, 132 E. Washington St. in Cannon Beach.

CORRECTION

Names incorrect — Jaxson Brim, a sixth-grader at Astoria Middle School, was incorrectly identified as Jackson Brown in an A1 story and photo caption on Tuesday.

ON THE RECORD

Trespass

• Astoria police on Monday trespassed Gail Griffey, 72, a transient in Astoria, from the Astoria Mini Mart East on Marine Drive at the request of the owner. A video shared on social media showed Griffey assaulting the owner after being asked to leave. Griffey was previously trespassed from Reach Break Brewing on Duane Street in Astoria for loitering, according to police.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

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

Former Knappa assistant coach pleads guilty to sex abuse

The Astorian

Nathaniel Truax, the former volunteer assistant wrestling coach at Knappa High School accused of having sex with a 15-year-old student, pleaded guilty last week to

one count of second-degree sexual abuse.

Circuit Court Judge Paula Brownhill sentenced Truax to 30 days in jail and three years of probation. Truax also registered as a sex offender.

Truax, 21, was charged

in January with second-degree sex abuse, third-degree rape and third-degree sodomy after allegedly having sex with the girl, a member of the school’s wrestling team, during a trip to Redmond, Washington.

The sex abuse charge was based on Truax being her coach and the underage victim being unable to consent. The incident led to the resignation of Dan Owings, the longtime wrestling coach, and two of his assistants.

Audit finds foster kids still at risk

State system is dysfunctional

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — A year and a half ago, state watchdogs said the system overseeing care for foster kids was in dire need of improvement.

They urged immediate improvements, but a new report released by state auditors Wednesday said the state is still risking children’s safety in a system so dysfunctional it will take years to fix.

On any given day, the state is responsible for about 7,600 kids, from babies to teens, most of whom have been removed from their homes because they were abused or neglected.

But the workers assigned to manage the state’s treatment of foster kids still have too much on their plates, according to an audit report released by Secretary of State Bev Clarno.

Progress will take time because of the extensive work needed to improve the system.

“In our view, it will take several years of consistent focus by DHS leadership, likely combined with increased staffing and legislative and community support, to lock in improvements,” auditors wrote.

Less than a month before state lawmakers must pass a budget, management at the state Department of Human Services hasn’t even clearly told legislators how many workers it needs to make things better for the thousands of kids in its care, auditors said.

And it’s far from clear at this point that legislators will set aside money for more workers.

Meanwhile, there still aren’t enough foster homes or other safe places for high-needs kids and youth. The total number of foster homes hasn’t changed since auditors released their report last year.

The agency isn’t collecting what auditors say is critical information on staffing and placements. And a new statewide hotline for reporting child abuse — which was supposed to centralize the process — has had significant problems getting started.

In their earlier report in January 2018, auditors said that shortages of foster parents, casework-

ers and safe placements posed a threat to kids’ well-being and that the way the agency had been managed was deeply problematic.

Managers allowed a “work culture of blame and distrust” to foment. The agency’s leaders didn’t plan enough for expensive initiatives, target the cause of problems, or push long-term changes.

Over the past year and a half, the child welfare program’s management has seen significant turnover. New managers have boosted training and help for workers, and “is making stronger efforts to identify and address the con-



Bev Clarno

cerns” of workers in the field, the new audit said.

for children in its custody. Citing state budget officials, auditors said Wednesday that the agency still has “significant vacancies and high turnover,” so even if the

Legislature provided money to add workers, there’s a significant risk they could remain empty.

The agency has cut down on overtime by lowering the amount of time that foster kids spend in hotels — which prompted a public outcry several years ago — but the agency hasn’t clearly told the Legislature what it lacks, isn’t keeping track of turnover or worker use of family

ter homes available.

In mid-April, Brown established her own oversight board for child welfare, including high-profile state executives and experts in various fields, to try to turn the system around. Since then, the board has met three times.

In an effort to address public concerns about access to its information, the board approved a new public records process and has been directing a crisis management team brought on to spearhead changes at the agency, according to the governor’s office.

“The governor is pleased with progress of the board and the crisis management team,” spokeswoman Lisa Morawski said in an email.

The budget for the Department of Human Services has not been finalized, so it’s not clear how much money legislators will approve for the state’s largest agency.

Last year, Brown proposed a \$56 million increase in funding for the child welfare program for the next two years, auditors said in their Wednesday report.

Auditors said that to serve kids better, the agency should get more workers and support.

“Additional staff and program support, while costly, would likely reduce staff workloads and improve child safety and family stability,” auditors wrote.

Boost funding

The governor’s office is urging lawmakers to boost funding for the child welfare system through two bills.

The governor’s office said in an email that those proposals would improve services for kids with special needs and provide the agency more money for staff to help lower caseloads and improve staff culture and child safety.

Other factors have complicated reforms over the years. While agency leaders have struggled to implement policies, the Legislature and federal government passed new laws and regulations in a seeming constant stream.

Some advocates, meanwhile, stress the state should be looking at the underlying causes that lead children to enter foster care in the first place, such as addiction, poverty and lack of access to mental and behavioral health services.

The Oregon Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group, Pamplin Media Group and Salem Reporter.

‘IN OUR VIEW, IT WILL TAKE SEVERAL YEARS OF CONSISTENT FOCUS BY DHS LEADERSHIP, LIKELY COMBINED WITH INCREASED STAFFING AND LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT, TO LOCK IN IMPROVEMENTS.’

an excerpt from a report released by state auditors

Red flags

The 2018 audit, sought by the late Secretary of State Dennis Richardson — himself a foster parent — was hardly the first report on conditions in the long-troubled foster care system.

Auditors have looked at overarching bureaucratic problems, such as flagging morale over resources and compensation at the Department of Human Services in 2016, and two years before that, at a technical system for processing payments.

In 2012, in a report on barriers to reunifying foster kids with their biological parents, auditors raised red flags about caseworkers’ high workloads.

In turn, they pointed to issues that had already been brought up four years before that, in a study of workloads.

That report found that the state had about 24% to 37% fewer caseworkers than it needed for high-quality work.

And more than a decade later, it appears that the agency still doesn’t have enough workers to care

leave, and doesn’t have staff to send multiple people out to calls that could be dangerous, the audit said.

Previous efforts to implement changes to the system have fallen short.

Three years ago, in the wake of a scandal at a Portland foster care provider, lawmakers created a special child foster care advisory commission designed to turn the many reports on how to improve the system into policies.

But as previous reporting by the Oregon Capital Bureau has shown, the commission struggled to get off the ground and has not had any discernible effect on the state’s foster kids.

Gov. Kate Brown is under pressure to make changes.

She took office in February 2015, and her tenure has been punctuated by problems in the child welfare system. They seem to come to a head every few months — whether it has been the state’s practice of shipping kids to out-of-state facilities, the state’s handling of problematic providers, or housing foster children in hotels and state offices because there are so few fos-

Legislature endorses Oregon’s move to national popular vote

By **AUBREY WIEBER**
Oregon Capital Bureau



‘IT IS TRULY DISENFRANCHISING TO KNOW THAT YOUR VOTE WON’T MEAN ANYTHING ON A NATIONAL STAGE.’

Rep. Tiffany Mitchell, D-Astoria

Oregon is on its way to joining a movement to ignore the Electoral College in favor of the popular vote in presidential elections.

Senate Bill 870 passed the House 37-22 on Wednesday after passing the Senate nearly two months ago. The bill joins Oregon in a group of 15 states supporting the effort to have the popular vote reflected in ballots cast

in the Electoral College. The bill now goes to Gov. Kate Brown, who has supported the popular vote since her time as secretary of state. She will sign it, a spokeswoman said.

The compact would only

go into effect if enough states joined to reach the 270 electoral college votes needed to decide an election.

Opponents of the popular vote movement say the current system has worked well for more than 200 years and ensures rural parts of the country aren’t ignored in deciding the president. But the Electoral College has become a target after Donald Trump and George W.

Bush were elected without winning the popular vote.

The bill was carried on the floor Wednesday by Rep. Tiffany Mitchell, D-Astoria. She said she first voted in a presidential election in 2004 as a Utah Democrat, knowing her vote wouldn’t matter.

“It is truly disenfranchising to know that your vote won’t mean anything on a national stage,” she said.

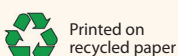
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NEW & GENTLY USED SALE

June 7th and 8th
9am to 4pm

Clatsop Care Center
646 16th Street, Astoria

Proceeds from the sale will be used to support a variety of resident activities.

WANTED

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