

IN BRIEF

School construction in Seaside underway

SEASIDE — With the final day of school Thursday at The Heights Elementary School, Hoffman Construction began construction for upgrades and a new gym at the elementary school.

The Heights will be shut down the entire summer with no public access.

The school will be closed to staff except for critical access, Seaside School District Superintendent Sheila Roley said during a site visit last week.

As part of the \$100 million bond project approved by voters in 2016, students from Gearhart Elementary School and Seaside Heights will merge in the renovated and expanded building.

In addition, the school district is working with the city for a new reservoir and pump station to provide water for the school and nearby residents.

— *The Astorian*

Hazen exonerated on all charges

SOUTH BEND, Wash. — Former Ilwaco wastewater treatment plant manager Warren Hazen was found not guilty of all charges on Wednesday after a trial in Pacific County Superior Court.

Superior Court Judge J. Andrew Toyne ruled that Hazen is innocent of nine counts of “offering a false instrument for filing or record” between January and September 2015. The charges stemmed from allegations that Hazen falsified records about operations at Ilwaco’s sewer treatment facility.

Hazen’s acquittal clears his name more than a year and a half after charges were brought in November 2017.

The charges came after the state investigated allegations of mismanagement at the plant.

— *Chinook Observer*

Chinook host first salmon ceremony at Fort Columbia

CHINOOK, Wash. — The Chinook Indian Nation held its First Salmon Ceremony on Friday, carrying on a longtime tradition of marking the return of the salmon.

The Chinook Nation reconstructs practices and mythology of the old ceremonies at the annual event, which also brings in other tribes from the region.

After catching the year’s first salmon from a canoe off Fort Columbia State Park, they prepared the salmon as Chinook chairman Tony Johnson recounted legends and cosmology surrounding the creature.

— *Chinook Observer*

Firefighters to train at Camp Rilea

The Northwest Oregon Wildland School, a yearly training for firefighters in Clatsop and Columbia counties, will take place Saturday and Sunday at Camp Rilea.

The training is designed to prepare for wildfires, as well as support other statewide emergencies.

Residents and visitors should expect to see plumes of smoke coming from the National Guard training facility in Warrenton, west of U.S. Highway 101 near milepost 11.

— *The Astorian*

MEMORIAL

Saturday, June 22

PETERSEN, James Ernest — Gathering at noon, pilot boat Peacock in front of the Columbia River Maritime Museum, 1792 Marine Drive.

ON THE RECORD

DUII

• Oregon State Police arrested Jeana Okeson, 51, of Seaside, on Sunday on U.S. Highway 101 near Rippet Lane for driving under the influence of intoxicants and reckless driving. Her blood alcohol content was 0.09%.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY

Port of Astoria Commission, 4 p.m., Port offices, 10 Pier 1 Suite 209.

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, 5:15 p.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Seaside School District Board of Directors, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin.

Shoreline Sanitary District Board, 7 p.m., Gearhart

Hertig Station, 33496 West Lake Lane, Warrenton.

Seaside Planning Commission, 7 p.m., work session, City Hall, 989 Broadway.

WEDNESDAY

Seaside Tourism Advisory Committee, 3 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

THURSDAY

Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

GRAY WHALE WASHES UP AT SUNSET BEACH



Tiffany Boothe/Seaside Aquarium

A spate of strandings

The Astorian

A 23-foot female gray whale washed ashore on Friday afternoon just south of the Sunset Beach approach near Warrenton, the Seaside Aquarium reported.

The whale is the sixth to wash ashore this year in the region. All six have

been female. Four were adults, one subadult and one yearling.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, more than 60 gray whales have stranded on the coasts of California, Oregon, Washington state and Alaska this year, the most since 2000, when more than 100 whales stranded throughout the

year.

NOAA Fisheries has declared an unusual mortality event. The Marine Mammal Protection Act defines an unusual mortality event as strandings that are unexpected, involve a significant die-off and demand immediate response.

NOAA Fisheries also declared an unusual mortality event in 2000, but the

investigation did not identify a specific cause.

The population of eastern North Pacific gray whales has recovered from the whaling era. The whales were removed from the endangered list in 1994. The population remains protected under federal law act and has grown considerably in the last decade, now numbering about 27,000.

Washington state waterfront owners asked to take dead whales

Associated Press

PORT HADLOCK, Wash. — At least one Washington state waterfront landowner has said “yes” to a request to allow dead gray whales to decompose on their property.

So many gray whale carcasses have washed up this year that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries says it has run out of places to take them.

In response, the agency has asked landowners to

volunteer property as a disposal site for the carcasses. By doing so, landowners can support the natural process of the marine environment, and skeletons left behind can be used for educational purposes, officials said.

But the carcasses can be up to 40 feet long. That’s a lot to decay, and it could take months. Landowner Mario Rivera, of Port Hadlock, Washington, told KING5-TV that the smell is intermittent and “isn’t that bad.”

“It is really a unique

opportunity to have this here on the beach and monitor it and see how fast it goes,” said his wife, Stefanie Worwag.

On the U.S. West coast, more than 60 whales have been found dead this year along California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska, the most since 2000. About five were found on British Columbia beaches. Still, that’s a small fraction of the total number because most sink or wash up in remote areas and are unrecorded.

“With the unusual mor-

tality event of these gray whales, we know more whales will be coming in, or there is a high likelihood that more whales will die within Puget Sound and out on the coast,” said Betsy Carlson, the citizen science coordinator at the Port Townsend Marine Science Center.

Lime is being used to help break down the whale carcass on the beach near where Rivera and Worwag live.

“The lime appears to be working,” Rivera said. “It is decomposing nicely. I think.”

Farmers market begins in Warrenton

The Astorian

Warrenton’s first ever farmers market launches Thursday.

The market, billed as a fishermen and farmers market, will be held every Thursday this summer from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Warrenton Marina, near the office on N.E. Harbor Place.

Harbormaster Jane Sweet and marina staff first floated the idea of holding the market during a City Commission meeting in May. Commissioners supported the proposal, though Mayor Henry Balensifer cautioned that the market’s business model needs to be self-sustaining so the city

is not losing money.

Marina staff consulted with market organizers in Clatsop County to figure out logistics and settled on Thursdays so that the Warrenton market does not conflict with any other existing markets.

Marina staff have a dozen vendors lined up. They will be selling kettle corn, shave ice, jewelry, smoked salmon chowder, fresh flowers and a lot of produce, Sweet said.

“Hopefully it will be fun,” she said. “We’ve never done it before so it’s a learning experience for us, too.”

“We’re starting off a little slow but hopefully it will pick up.”

Kalama methanol refinery can’t export for fuel

By MOLLY SOLOMON
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Port of Kalama commissioners unanimously passed a lease amendment with a controversial methanol facility Wednesday night that prohibits the company from exporting its product for fuel.

The commissioners voted 3-0 to approve new contract language with NW Innovation Works.

Port officials said the changes ensure the methanol from southwest Washington state will only go toward making plastics and other materials. At Wednesday’s meeting, port spokesperson Liz Newman told commissioners the amendment “affirms what has always been the intent of this project.” She said the port was doing its due diligence in response to concerns raised about the use of the methanol earlier this year.

In April, Oregon Public Broadcasting first reported that NW Innovation Works had shown a series of slide-shows to court possible investors in the project. PowerPoint presentations leaked to OPB emphasized a growing market for methanol as a transportation fuel, rather than for plastic.

“It’s a desperate attempt to get around a huge mess they’ve created for them-

selves by misleading regulators for about five years,” said Dan Serres, with Columbia Riverkeeper, an environmental group that’s challenging the company’s claim the plant would reduce greenhouse gas emissions. “I think it’s hard to imagine anyone taking this seriously when they got caught red-handed promoting this project as a fuel and energy depot to potential investors.”

NW Innovation Works said the slides were for educational purposes and maintains their methanol product is still on a pathway toward materials. The company’s general counsel, Kent Caputo, said they worked closely with the Port of Kalama on the amendment to “minimize any sense of confusion” on the use of the methanol.

“We have to live up to our word and we intend to,” Caputo said. “And what the port’s come up with, we think, is a powerful, solid tool toward that end.”

The \$1.8 billion refinery would convert natural gas into methanol, which NW Innovation Works says would be shipped to Asia for plastics and other materials. The company first signed a dock usage agreement in April 2014 to lease approximately 90 acres at the north end of the Port of Kalama.

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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.

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