

Dark Arts: Named best beer festival in state

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Fort George continually fine-tunes the event to keep it enjoyable in the constricted space. It began renting out the The Ruins at the Astor, an event space across Duane Street in former hotel lobby of the John Jacob Astor Hotel building, for a third concert venue and oyster bar. In 2020, the brewery plans to close Duane Street between its campus and the Astor building to provide a larger experience.

About 40% of the attendees at Dark Arts come from the Portland metro area, compared to about 10% from Astoria and a smattering of others from around the U.S. and Canada. But Fort George also recruits around 120 volunteers to help its staff put the festival on.

"A lot of the regulars and locals are volunteering," Harris said. "They're kind of going to the festival, but they're going to it as volunteers."

Fort George provides earlier volunteers entry, a tasting glass and several tokens for pours. Later in the day volunteers can't attend beforehand, but the brewery gives them a gift card and, for the



Fort George Brewery

Fort George Brewery's Festival of the Dark Arts brings more than 2,000 attendees to downtown Astoria each February.

closing shifts, a 32-ounce fill of any Dark Arts beer. As of Friday, later volunteer spots were still available at tinyurl.com/DarkArtsvolunteers

Other business owners like the surge of more than 2,000 winter visitors, Harris said.

"The streets are full all weekendlong in Astoria," he said. "It is a big bump for everybody at that time of the year."

Fort George developed an unticketed event the Sunday after Dark Arts called The

Aftermath, when the brewery releases variants of its bourbon barrel-aged stout series, Matryoshka, and sells stouts that didn't run out the day before. Crowds line up around the block at the Lovell Building, buying hundreds of cases of beer to go.

In addition to Dark Arts, Harris is an architect behind Stout Month, a dark beer appreciation running throughout February. The brewery releases three or four stouts a week throughout the month, the crescendo

being Dark Arts. Fort George plans to expand Stout Month with more events throughout the region.

Dark Arts has been named the best beer festival in the state the last several years in a row by Willamette Week's Oregon Beer Awards. The Oregon Brewers Guild recently named February Oregon Craft Beer Month.

"They even cited the Festival of Dark Arts and what we do with Stout Month as a reason," Bovenizer said.

Downtown: City Council will take up recommendations early next year

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The proposed zone changes in the downtown core included the conversion of nearly 14 acres of tourist-oriented zones to more general commercial. The city has argued the tourism-promoting zones were instituted during recessionary times and are no longer necessary.

Steve Fick, owner of Fishhawk Fisheries at the foot of Fourth Street, continued his argument Tuesday for more flexibility on his property. A brick building Fick is turning into a distillery at the foot of the pier would be rezoned into general commercial, not allowing him to process seafood there. Planning commissioners made a last-minute recommendation to allow fish processing on land north of the Astoria Riverfront Trolley tracks.

They decided to allow medical and professional offices in new and old buildings over water after receiving a letter from the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association calling for flexibility. An argument is that such uses would bring in higher-paying jobs downtown.

The proposed development rules would preserve an 80-foot-wide swath of land along the Astoria Riverwalk and a 70-foot view corridor along streets. Planning commissioners agreed on a 35-foot building height limit on land within 100 feet of the Riverwalk corridor and 45 feet farther inland, essentially nixing a recommendation for affordable housing in four-story buildings.

The City Council will take up the Planning Commission's recommendations in January.

New crab pot could help reduce whale entanglements

By CASSANDRA PROFITA

Oregon Public Broadcasting

Oregon's Dungeness crab season is coming up, but there's a problem looming over this fishery.

The ropes and buoys that allow crabbers to collect their crab pots from the sea-floor can injure and even kill whales when they swim into them.

Last year, 46 whale entanglements were reported off the West Coast, and crab gear was responsible for about a third of them.

According to Derek Orner, a bycatch reduction program coordinator with the National Marine Fisheries Service, this is a growing problem in the spiny lobster and Dungeness crab fisheries.

"We're seeing increases in whale entanglements with a number of species that are listed under the National Marine Mammal Protection Act, in particular with humpback whales, gray whales, and blue whales," he said.

His agency recently announced grants for several ropeless fishing gear projects, including a new kind of crab pot developed by Coastal Monitoring Associates of California.

Bart Chadwick, the company's president, said when crabbers drop their pots in the ocean, the ropes and buoys can remain in the water column for days.

"The entanglement risk becomes high as you have

'THE ADVANTAGE OF THIS SYSTEM IS REALLY THAT IT CAN SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCE THE RISK WITHOUT BEING SO EXPENSIVE AS A LOT OF THE SYSTEMS THAT HAVE BEEN TRIED IN THE PAST.'

Bart Chadwick | president of Coastal Monitoring Associates of California, developer of a new kind of crab pot

hundreds of these traps in the water," he said. "We feel like it's just really important both for the environment and for the fishermen, finding a way to solve this problem in a way that allows people to keep fishing and do their jobs."

His company is developing a crab pot that would keep the offending ropes out of the water column until the crabber is ready to pull the pot. The pot allows crabbers to set a timer for the release of the rope and buoy based on when they expect to be back to collect their catch.

The goal is to reduce the time the gear poses a risk to whales by 75%, Chadwick said.

Chadwick's company has developed retrieval systems for other types of equipment, and he said the challenge, in

this case, is keeping the cost down. Other ropeless technologies that have been developed cost thousands of dollars, he said.

"The advantage of this system is really that it can substantially reduce the risk without being so expensive as a lot of the systems that have been tried in the past," Chadwick said. "What we're trying to do is get the unit cost down into the range of a couple hundred dollars, which is in the range of fishing gear itself right now."

The company received a federal grant for \$119,746 to develop a prototype and work with fishermen to test it. Chadwick said the initial tests will be conducted in California, but then he plans to deploy some of the pots on boats in Oregon and Washington.

Orner said other projects his agency is funding are exploring geolocation and acoustic technologies, including a completely ropeless option that would use compressed air to send pots to the surface when the fishing boat arrives to collect them.

"We're looking at a number of different approaches," Orner said. "We're looking for technologies that are cost-effective and easily usable by the fishermen. If we can reduce the amount of time that those lines are in the water, obviously, that's going to reduce the entanglement possibilities."



Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

Stacks of crab pots fill the Port of Ilwaco parking lot. A new crab pot being developed by Coastal Monitoring Associates would allow crabbers to set a timer for the release of a rope and buoy that will allow them to collect the pot while reducing the risk of whale entanglements.

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