



WINTER WHALE WATCH WEEK
ON THE NORTH COAST **INSIDE**

Astorian

147TH YEAR, NO. 77

DailyAstorian.com // THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2019

\$1.50



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Astoria is looking into a chronic nuisance ordinance and an exclusion zone ordinance.

Astoria looks to address chronic bad behavior

Two proposals go before City Council

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Two ideas are expected to go before the Astoria City Council in the new year to target the small number of people who

make up a large portion of 911 calls.

A chronic nuisance ordinance and an exclusion zone ordinance would serve different purposes, Police Chief Geoff Spalding said, but both are designed to address repeated bad behavior.

“Our goal here on both of these is to gain compliance. It’s not to impose fines on people or try to put

people in jail,” the police chief said at a December work session.

City Manager Brett Estes said the city adopted a derelict building ordinance nearly a decade ago to deal with run-down properties, including several owned by the Flavel family that had been neglected for years.

See Astoria, Page A6

Population growth slows with economy

Jobs, housing costs are contributing factors

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Population growth in Clatsop County has slowed with the economy.

The county reached 39,330 people as of July 1, according to figures from Portland State University’s Population Research Center, up one-third of a percent from last year and 6.1% from a decade ago.

The state grew by about 1%, or 41,000 people, from last year, and nearly 400,000 people over the past decade, a growth rate of more than 10%. Migration of people into the state has accounted for the vast majority of growth.

Charles Rynerson, interim director of the Population Research Center, tied the slowing growth rate to a dampening economy and expensive housing market.

“Obviously, the economy is doing well,” he said. “But in terms of the number of jobs being added in Oregon, it’s down from a few years ago.”

Clatsop County’s growth rate was at 0.2% in July 2011, when unemployment peaked around 10%. The county’s growth rate grew with the number of jobs, peaking at nearly 1.6% between 2016 and 2017, when unemployment bottomed out around 4%. Unemployment has since leveled out around 4%, while the growth rate has dipped below 1% annually.

Much of the job growth on the North Coast has been in lower-paying, less-skilled jobs in the service sector and hospitality. Housing, meanwhile, has become more expensive, driven in large part by people from outside the county with more money to spend.

“If some of the job growth at the coast is in, say, the tourist economy, but people with second homes are driving up the cost of housing, then there’s a mismatch,” Rynerson said. “It’s a problem not only at the coast, but all over the state.”

More than half of the state’s population growth was in the Portland metro area in Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties. Deschutes County, home to the quickly growing city of Bend, was the fastest-growing county in the state over the past decade, increasing in population by 22%.

Coastal counties nearer to Portland have fared better economically and grown at a faster pace than their neighbors to the south. Clatsop County’s 6.1% growth rate was the fastest on the Oregon Coast over the past decade, compared to 4.9% in Tillamook County and 4.6% in Lincoln County. Coos and Curry counties grew by 0.4% and 2.9% over the past decade.

Astoria, at 9,690 people, continued slowly shrinking, down five people from the year prior and 80 from its peak of 9,770 in 2016. The city, bound by water and steep hills, has hovered just below 10,000 people since the 1990 census.

See Population, Page A6

Coastal towns confront rising sea levels

Flooding fears in Wheeler

By ERIN ROSS
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Scientists agree that sea levels are rising. The question is: How much and how fast? That’s an important question for communities along the Oregon Coast.

For marina owner Jim Nielson, occasional floods are the price you pay for shorefront property.

His shop, the Wheeler Marina,

sits in an estuary where the Nehalem River opens into the eponymous bay. It’s sheltered from Pacific waves by a narrow spit of sand dunes. Stacks of colorful kayaks border the dirt parking lot. An aging black Lab greets visitors’ pets before escorting them up the stairs to the boat rental and tackle shop, which takes up the second floor of the old wooden building.

Nielson has owned and operated the shop with his wife, Margie, for 40 years. He thinks it’s the most low-lying property in Wheeler, and for a long time, flooding was a way of life.



Erin Ross/Oregon Public Broadcasting

The Wheeler Marina used to flood a few times a year, until the shop owner raised the building 4 feet. Now, water laps at the retaining wall.



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See Sea levels, Page A6