

# County reports new coronavirus case

The Astorian

Clatsop County reported that a man living in the northern part of the county has tested positive for the coronavirus.

The man is in his 30s and was recovering at home.

The county said it learned of the new case on Sunday.

No other details were available.

A spokesman for the county said Monday that the Public Health Department will report if positive cases are employees of

local seafood processors, which have had outbreaks, but not if they are contacts of employees.

The county will also not report whether or not positive cases come from the county's drive-thru community testing program.

The Oregon Health Authority reported 3,687 cases and 138 deaths from the virus statewide as of Monday morning.

The health authority tracked 1,136 test results in Clatsop County, including 38 positive cases.

# Workers: 'We have to go back to work'

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a week off, unsure of what her coworkers might think of those who tested positive, but went back to work Monday.

"We share the same feeling ... going back to work, and getting infected and going through this again," Reyes said. "But we still have to go to work, because this is affecting us financially, and we just have to do it. We have to go back to work. We don't have a choice."

The vast majority of workers in local seafood plants are Latino. Across the nation, Latinos have been impacted by the coronavirus at disproportionate rates, in part because many work at jobs that are deemed essential.

The Lower Columbia Hispanic Council filed a complaint with the state Occupational Safety and Health Administration against Bornstein Seafoods shortly before the outbreak on behalf of workers who complained about a lack of social distancing and protective equipment.

Andrew Bornstein, the vice president and co-owner of Bornstein Seafoods, declined to comment for this article. His company reported the positive cases and shut down while the Public Health Department tested the workforce. He has previously described edu-



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

**Mirna Marin, back right, and Victor Reyes, front right, stand with their children on the back stairs of their home in Warrenton. Marin, a worker at Bornstein Seafoods, tested positive for coronavirus and spent two weeks in quarantine with her family.**

cating workers on federal protocols, increasing sanitation and staggering break times to avoid employees congregating.

Bornstein had also pre-

viously complained of difficulties in getting proper equipment, such as infrared thermometers to test employees as they come into work.

Michael McNickle, the

county's public health director, shared in Bornstein's frustration.

"We have a list of vetted vendors, and we go through that at least once a week and see if we can get more stuff," he said. "It's hit or miss, and we still don't have any digital thermometers on hand. I am completely sympathetic with their desire to get this stuff. I wish we could get it, too."

The county has offered to do another round of testing at Bornstein Seafoods. But McNickle said any enforcement falls to state and federal regulators because such workers are deemed essential.

Aaron Corvin, a spokesman for OSHA, confirmed the complaint against Bornstein Seafoods but said there has been no inspection by the state.

The state recently fined National Frozen Foods Corp. in Albany for not socially distancing employees, even after several tested positive for coronavirus. But the inspection in Albany came after multiple complaints, a similar benchmark for the state to become more involved elsewhere.

"By and large, we're communicating with employers, and we see them endeavoring to comply," Corvin said. "Employers aren't blowing us off."

# Seafood: Oregon seafood processors have easily lost at least 35% of their revenue

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seasonal hires, ready to put their heads down and slog through long 10 to 12 hour days.

Now there are the plexiglass dividers some seafood processors have installed to separate workers and prevent the spread of the coronavirus, temperature sensors and health screenings. But in the bigger picture painted by the pandemic, Steele said, the outbreaks at Bornstein Seafoods and Pacific Seafood are "just a blip."

Besides the additional costs of new safety measures and protective equipment, hand in hand with the pandemic come market issues, export problems and shipping delays and disruptions.

"The impacts of this whole pandemic over the last couple of months are much, much more significant than anything that's happening at these two facilities," Steele said. "This has just given the industry here, I guess, a reality check in a way."

## Backed up

As many counties in Oregon begin to reopen their economies, the fishing industry is feeling the effect of restaurant closures and restrictions. Freezers are backed up with crab, tuna and all kinds of products.

Some overseas markets are beginning to remerge, but many domestic markets remain in flux.

"That's a huge struggle and it's a huge impact, but everybody wants to stay in business," Steele said. "So the processors still want to buy fish. They still want to have fish to process and keep the fishermen working. It's a huge supply chain."

Impacts to one corner of the industry echo in another. For many fishermen, processors are among their first purchasers.

Nancy Fitzpatrick, the executive director of Oregon's salmon and albacore commissions, has heard some processors have held on to whole frozen albacore and frozen loins.

Normally the fish would have been distributed over the winter and spring, but some processors have struggled to move the product as different markets compressed or closed down because of the coronavirus.

"We haven't started albacore season yet ... so how that will impact purchase power when the season comes, I don't know," Fitzpatrick said.

The commercial albacore season off the Oregon Coast typically runs from June through October, with the majority of the tuna landed in August.

Beyond the markets, the spread of the coronavirus remains a major concern to crews on the water and impacts many of their decisions.

In April, whiting and groundfish fishery representatives pushed for — and received — a two-week temporary waiver from human, at-sea observer coverage require-

ments over concerns about exposing crews and plant workers to the coronavirus.

Ahead of the whiting fishery opener, the Midwater Trawlers Cooperative based in Newport partnered with state and local health officials to test all crew members associated with the cooperative.

For local salmon fishermen, concerns about the coronavirus means some are leaving for docks and fishing grounds in Alaska earlier than usual to comply with quarantine measures in that state.

## Leaving earlier

The full economic fallout remains unknown and stimulus and relief money, while welcome, will not cover the damage.

A federal stimulus package allocated \$300 million to fisheries, \$16 million of which is coming to Oregon as disaster relief funds. The money can go to commercial fishing businesses, charter and for-hire fishing businesses, certain aquaculture operations, processors and other related businesses.

The initial ask to Congress from the fishing industry was for \$1.5 billion for fishery disaster relief.

Oregon's seafood processors have easily lost at least 35% of their revenue — one of the benchmarks for possible funding — and more, Steele said.

Many fishermen and fishing guides are considered independent contractors and may not have been able to qualify for unemployment if their income has taken a hit because of the coronavirus.

All of these groups will be dipping from the same CARES Act pot.

"It's not going to be nearly enough," Steele said.

The HEROES Act, passed last week by the U.S. House but unlikely to clear the U.S. Senate, would provide an additional \$100 million for fishery relief funding — significant but ultimately just another drop in the bucket, industry groups say.

Oregon Sea Grant Fisheries Extension, associated with Oregon State University, hopes to track and document the impacts of the coronavirus on Oregon's seafood industry. A team has sent out a survey and plans to share the results with local, state and federal decision-makers.

"We obviously can't guarantee that better decisions will be made — but we hope that they will at least be informed decisions," the team wrote in an email to fishing communities.

For now, Steele expects safety measures at plants specific to the coronavirus will need to be in place for a while.

"Obviously it's changing the world," she said of the pandemic. "I don't think there are many businesses that after this is all over are going to go back to the way it was. I don't know where we're all going to end up in terms of permanent changes."

**THE VAST MAJORITY OF WORKERS IN LOCAL SEAFOOD PLANTS ARE LATINO. ACROSS THE NATION, LATINOS HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY THE CORONAVIRUS AT DISPROPORTIONATE RATES, IN PART BECAUSE MANY WORK AT JOBS THAT ARE DEEMED ESSENTIAL.**

# Business: 'I'm trying to keep my spirits up'

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"We are a small, family-owned business. We get maybe 50 people at a time in here, can easily social distance people. If we get lumped in with amusement parks, we are in deep trouble. We cannot wait until September. We have had zero help from any government agency — no loans, no nothing. This is very extreme for us right now. We have no income — none.

"We are floundering out here and we are trying to do the right thing ... but what are we supposed to do as a business that is just going down?"

Rath said she has been in communication with Mitchell and Seaside City Councilor Tita Montero since the town hall.

Montero requested a plan in writing for how Captain Kid plans to reopen safely. She said she feels reassured by the plan and believes the problem has to do with how the business is categorized by the state.

"And I'd be concerned that there is a 'no' coming out of Salem from people that don't have a full understand-

ing of the situation, the type of business and the type of controls that these people can put on their business," Montero said.

"It is wise to leave it to local control because we understand the business, we understand what the business owners are doing to maintain safe and sanitary areas. Because there's no businessperson who wants to either get the employees or their customers sick," she said.

Mitchell, D-Astoria, said she forwarded the Rath's plan to the governor's office so the state could potentially use some of the ideas in guidance for businesses like Captain Kid.

"I hope they can reopen soon, because I want for all of our small businesses to be able to come back and be successful," Mitchell said in an email.

"That said, I also know that we need to be cautious, and I would not want any of these businesses to rush to reopen in a way that would potentially put them at risk for violating the governor's orders and jeopardize safety. I appreciate their willingness to do what is right for the com-

munity to ensure that when we reopen, we do so in a way that promotes the health and safety of everyone."

The Rath's said they don't understand why box stores were allowed to stay open but small businesses were asked to close. They also feel like they have a disadvantage compared to larger corporations in receiving a loan.

Some recreational businesses in Seaside, including Funland Arcade, have already opened. But the Rath's are still waiting to hear when they can open. Bruce Rath said it feels unfair.

"They don't have time to fool with us," he said. "It just puts a hardship on us that we can't work for a year."

The financial crisis the Rath's are facing is not new to Tammi Rath.

She used to own a restaurant called Jebino's in Eatonville, Washington, with her late husband, John Bratholm.

They lost their restaurant and their home after the Great Recession and struggled for years to recover financially. She said the hardship led to her husband committing suicide in 2018.

"I'm very sensitive to what

can happen when people get desperate and depressed," she said. "We were in debt with the state, taxes — he was just done."

She married Bruce Rath, her longtime friend, in December.

Bruce Rath was also from Eatonville, but he moved to Seaside in 2008 after his late wife, Patty, encouraged him to buy the park and fulfill his dream of owning an amusement park. They had been married for 44 years when she died in 2015.

The couple supported each other through the loss of their spouses and began investing in the park.

They started building a new go-kart track and a new miniature golf course. The golf course was completed in time for spring break, but then the governor's stay-at-home order was put into effect. They put the construction of the new go-kart track and other projects on hold because of the loss of income since closing.

"I'm trying to keep my spirits up and do what's right, but I just don't know what they want us to do," Tammi Rath said.

# Family: 'We're going to kind of take it up a notch'

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will fill in and have been helping her set up plexiglass, acquire masks and lay down the social-distancing markers.

"There have been a lot of people stopping by, saying they're glad we're reopening," Denise Kinney said.

McDaniel, who took over the market in 2017, closed because of financial reasons. He recently won a prolonged legal battle with the federal government over the store's

inability to accept food stamps because of a prior drug conviction long before he took over the market.

The closure left few options for groceries downtown after the departure of the Astoria Co-op from the Shark Rock Building on Duane Street.

The Kinneys said they have been approved to take food stamps and hope to expand the market's offerings of produce, prepackaged deli items and other fresh food. They have discussed

partnering with Main Street Market in Warrenton to bring in meats and eventually hope to add an ice cream machine.

"Some day, I'd like to make it into a little deli," Denise Kinney said.

It will take a while for people to get used to having

a downtown market again, Steve Kinney said, but people have already been trying to stop by while they're refreshing the inside and adding new signage.

"We're going to kind of take it up another notch," he said.

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