

IN BRIEF

Coast Guard rescues fisherman after boat sinks at Cape Disappointment bar

A man was rescued Tuesday morning after his boat sank near the Cape Disappointment bar.

U.S. Coast Guard Sector Columbia River received a radio mayday call from the man at 1:30 a.m. reporting that the fishing boat was taking on water. They instructed the man to light flares and activate the vessel’s emergency position indicating radio beacon.

A Coast Guard lifeboat crew and helicopter crew responded. The crew of a Columbia River Bar Pilot boat in Astoria also went to assist in the rescue.

At about 2 a.m., the Coast Guard lifeboat crew arrived and passed a dewatering pump to the boat to help control the flooding, but the boat began to take on water at a faster rate and the man went into the water as the boat sank.

The Coast Guard lifeboat crew promptly recovered the man and took him to shore.

“The mariner was prepared for an emergency,” Petty Officer 3rd Class Caitlin Maronde, a crew member aboard the lifeboat, said in a statement. “Having the proper emergency equipment may have saved his life.”

The debris in the area may be hazardous to navigation so mariners are urged to use caution near the mouth of the river.

Astoria home damaged in fire

An Astoria home was severely damaged Monday evening in a fire.

Firefighters were called to the two-story home on James Street after 5:30 p.m. to a report that a barbecue fire spread to the house.

Officials say an occupant of the home was cooking on the barbecue when it caught fire, spread to a nearby hot tub and then into the home.

The fire was brought under control within 15 minutes, but firefighters remained on scene until 7:30 p.m. removing smoke from the structure, checking for fire extension and conducting an investigation.

The cause of the fire was accidental, officials say, and no injuries were reported.

The Astoria Fire Department estimated the fire damage to the home at \$170,000. Occupants also lost an estimated \$10,000 in contents. The home is insured, but the renters do not have renters insurance.

Warrenton extends virus emergency

WARRENTON — The City Commission on Tuesday extended a coronavirus emergency declaration into September, while wondering how to salvage the popular Halloween Fall Harvest Festival in October.

City Manager Linda Engbretson said it was in the city’s best interest to align the emergency declaration with Clatsop County’s, which runs through Sept. 4, as the city slowly reopens some services. Engbretson is planning to reopen City Hall to the public with limited hours in August.

The emergency declaration also helps Warrenton qualify for up to \$155,000 in reimbursements through the state for coronavirus-related expenses, she said. She waxed hopeful that the state Legislature might allow cities like Warrenton to use the money to backstop lost revenue from sources like lodging taxes.

The City Commission reached a consensus on telling Spruce Up Warrenton to proceed at its own risk in planning a fall festival.

— The Astorian

DEATH

July 27, 2020

BERNEY, Bruce R., 85, of Portland, formerly of Astoria, died in Portland. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary in Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

- Disorderly conduct**

 - Michael Edward Dilahunty, 53, was arrested Monday on 20th and Exchange streets in Astoria for disorderly conduct in the second degree.
- Harassment**

 - Brandon Ramsay, 46, of Astoria, was arrested Tuesday near Emerald Heights in Astoria for harassment.
- Reckless endangerment**

 - Susanne Christina Benthin, 55, of Astoria, was arrested Tuesday on Hillcrest Loop in Astoria for reckless endangerment, reckless driving, hit-and-run, animal abuse in the first degree and driving under the influence of intoxicants.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

- FRIDAY**
- Warrenton City Commission and Clatsop County Board of Commissioners**, 10 a.m., joint meeting on the dissolution of the Skipanon Water Control District, (electronic meeting).
- MONDAY**
- Astoria City Council**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

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Brown issues new virus rules for schools

Low threshold set for new cases

By JACKSON HOGAN
The Bulletin

In order to resume in-person school this fall, Oregon counties and the state as a whole must meet a low threshold of COVID-19 cases that only one county meets, according to a new mandate issued Tuesday by Gov. Kate Brown.

The county in which a school district is located must meet these standards for three weeks in a row: 10 or fewer COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents and 5% or less positive tests per week. The state must also have 5% or less positive tests as a whole.

The rule is slightly less strict for kindergarten-through-third grade classes or rural school districts with fewer than 100 students. Those grades and school districts can reopen in-person education if their home counties have 30 or fewer COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents over seven days.

Not only are younger children less likely to catch, show symptoms of or transmit COVID-19 to others, but in-person learning is more crucial at that age, said



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Gov. Kate Brown issued new standards for in-person classes to resume amid the coronavirus pandemic.

state health officer Dean Sidelinger.

“These younger students need access to in-person education to develop literacy and numeracy skills they need that are critical to their continued learning,” he said at a news conference.

However, an area that meets these standards at first but later has an uptick in COVID-19 cases could be forced to transition back to at-home distance learning.

School districts must make distance learning plans if the local county has 20 or more COVID-19 cases in a week or 7.5% or more of COVID-19 tests in the county are positive. Districts will immediately return to distance learning if the local county has 30 or

more COVID-19 cases in a week and 10% or more of local COVID-19 tests are positive.

“Let me be really clear: I am absolutely unwilling to lose an entire school year for any of our kids,” Brown said. “But it is also incumbent on all of us ... to take every measure to slow the spread of this disease so we can get our kids into school as quickly as possible.”

From April through the end of June, less than 5% of COVID-19 tests in Oregon returned positive, Sidelinger said. In July, the percentage of positive tests rose to close to 6%, he said, but it has been trending down again recently.

Only five Oregon counties had fewer than 10

Volunteers reimagine stewardship during pandemic

By MORGAN GRINDY
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — Every week, Marley MacDonald zips up her bright red rain jacket, loops her mask behind her ears and walks down the beach to volunteer at Haystack Rock.

The 13-year-old became a Haystack Rock Awareness Program junior volunteer in March. She educates visitors about what goes on below the surface of the tide pools, like how the sea anemones fight each other for the best spot on a rock.

Protecting marine and bird life is a hands-on job for environmental organizations. Volunteers are the backbone of their work.

Unlike businesses, Haystack Rock can’t close down amid the coronavirus pandemic. So volunteers are reimagining stewardship to fit social distancing.

MacDonald knows that social distancing is just as important as keeping visitors from getting too close to tide pool critters like sea stars. Part of her role as a volunteer is to make sure people aren’t touching or poking the creatures.

Several years ago, the sea stars had a pandemic of their own, MacDonald said, referring to a massive die-off.

“We’re working to protect them because it’s going to take a while for the population to grow back,” she said.

Volunteers not only



Morgan Grindy/The Astorian
Marley MacDonald, left, and Angela Whitlock educate visitors on marine and bird life at Haystack Rock.

emphasize distance in their work, but have found themselves enforcing social distancing on the beach as well.

Michelle Valigura joined the awareness program in January after leaving another volunteer position that she said wasn’t taking proper virus precautions.

Valigura’s role as an educator evolved into explaining to visitors about the importance of keeping their distance. She jokes about her calves being sore from having to constantly back away from people.

Volunteer Derek Coulter had a similar experience

when he joined the organization in April.

“There was a period where it seemed like there were no rules out there because we hadn’t had a presence on the rock,” he said.

The closeness of the tide pools and the difficulty of talking through a mask over the sounds of the ocean have been a challenge.

Coulter found himself standing in tide pools to allow distance from crowds, but said he’s noticed visitors have done a better job over the past several weeks of safely and respectfully navigating the shore.

new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents in the past week, according to state data. All five of these counties — Sherman, Tillamook, Union, Wallowa and Wheeler — are rural and relatively small in population.

When stretched out to the three-week requirement of fewer than 10 new cases per week, only Wheeler County — the state’s least populous county — qualifies to reopen classrooms for all students.

The larger Oregon counties with the fewest COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents were Benton and Lane counties, with about 10 and 16 cases per 100,000.

To help make distance learning more effective in Oregon schools that need to do so, Brown announced a release of \$28 million of emergency funds to go toward internet hot spots, internet-accessible computers, online curriculum and teacher training.

Brown and Sidelinger also urged Oregonians to keep wearing face coverings, practicing social distancing and washing hands to lower COVID-19 numbers so students can return to class.

“We can’t relent, especially if we all work together to reopen schools and get students back in desks,” Sidelinger said.

Emergency shelter secures funds for virus outreach

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

The Astoria Warming Center is receiving help from the state to provide coronavirus-related education and resources to Clatsop County’s homeless population.

The warming center was one of more than 170 community-based organizations across the state to receive a grant from the federal CARES Act funding package funneled through the Oregon Health Authority. The grants are intended to help organizations address health inequities in their communities with resources directed at underserved groups, such as people of color, people with disabilities and the homeless.

The warming center, which operates seasonally out of the basement of First United Methodist Church on 11th Street, received just over \$17,000 for education and outreach about the coro-

navirus. Around \$5,000 of the money is for startup costs and the remaining \$12,000 is meant to fund the outreach program for the next three months.

The warming center is free to determine how and where to spend the money within the education and outreach parameters, said Rick Bowers, president of the center’s board of directors.

“If it makes sense for us to hand out masks as a part of that outreach, then we hand out masks,” he said.

The warming center plans to focus the funds on the homeless, but will be coordinating with the Clatsop County Public Health Department. Bowers hopes to also work closely with other social service organizations, such as local food banks.

The center is applying for additional funding to include social services and wrap-around types of support.

This money could go to help someone without means if they need to quarantine.

In general, Bowers said, “it’s just a great idea to educate the homeless community and any other people we can contact.”

Also, he added, “the outreach sends a message that, ‘We care about you!’”

The warming center is pursuing other grants to double the number of paid staff as well.

With the expectation that concerns about the coronavirus will continue through this year and into the next, warming center leadership do not want to rely on volunteers exclusively this winter. Many long-term volunteers are older and considered high risk if exposed to the virus.

The center plans to work with a public health doctor ahead of opening to determine how many beds to provide and what other protocols to follow. The center is

allowed to begin offering overnight emergency shelter in mid-November depending on weather conditions.

“We’re just doing the best we can to make this a safe winter for everybody,” Bowers said.

The Astoria Planning Commission is discussing new codes that would allow other emergency shelters at churches throughout the city. But even if the codes pass at a meeting scheduled for the end of August, warming center leadership expect their center will remain the only low-barrier option this winter.

As a part of their conditional use permit to continue operating out of the basement of First United Methodist Church, center leaders are required to look at other building options. So far, they have not had any luck finding another church interested in operating or hosting an emergency shelter.