

IN BRIEF

County unemployment drops below 13%

Clatsop County’s seasonally adjusted unemployment continued its precipitous drop in July to 12.9% as tourist season ramped up despite the coronavirus pandemic. The county peaked at a 24.2% unemployment rate in April as restaurants, bars and lodging closed to prevent the spread of the virus. It was the second highest in the state after Lincoln County, an even more tourist-dependent economy where nearly 26% of people were unemployed in April. Statewide unemployment, a lower share of it tied to tourism, peaked at nearly 15% in April but dropped to 10.4% last month.

Business relief grants available

Clatsop Economic Development Resources has received \$230,000 as part of a second round of state relief for small businesses and nonprofits. A first round distributed nearly \$120,000. Grant amounts will range between \$2,500 and \$25,000 depending on the number of employees. Businesses with 25 or fewer employees, as well as those who have received prior federal support, are now eligible. Recipients must reduce any state award by the amount they have received in federal relief. The application is available at clatsopcc.edu/cedr. Applicants may apply online or by downloading and completing a PDF file. Applications are due before Sept. 12.

Virus study expands to Astoria, Seaside

Oregon State University announced Wednesday it received a \$1.2 million grant from the Oregon Health Authority to expand a coronavirus sewer surveillance project, which combs wastewater systems to search for presence of the virus. The TRACE-COVID-19 study, which has monitored wastewater systems in Bend, Newport, Hermiston and Boardman, will expand to treatment plants located outside of the Portland metro area that serve at least 6,000 people, including Astoria and Seaside. — *The Astorian*

DEATHS

Aug. 26, 2020
KRUGER, James David, 75, of Astoria, died in Portland. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Aug. 24, 2020
HEILMANN, William Lawrence, 85, of Vancouver, Washington, formerly of Astoria, died in Vancouver. Crown Memorial

Center is in charge of the arrangements.

Aug. 23, 2020
FERGUSON, Kelly, 48, of Warrenton, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

Aug. 20, 2020
ROSENBALM, Vincent, 60, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Assault
• Monica Judith Trevino-Apa, 46, of Seaside, was arrested Wednesday on 20th Street and Franklin Avenue in Astoria for assault in the fourth degree and strangulation.

Burglary
• Timothy Robert Halvorson, 35, of Portland, was arrested Monday on Marshall Lane in Arch Cape for burglary in the first degree.

DUII
• Alexander Martyn

Thompson, 29, of Astoria, was arrested Friday on Columbia Avenue and Alameda Avenue in Astoria for driving under the influence of intoxicants.

• Thomas Matthew Russell, 29, of Sacramento, California, was arrested Thursday on Burma Road in Fort Stevens State Park for DUII.

• Beth Michele Manion, 52, of Astoria, was arrested Thursday on 17th Street and Marine Drive in Astoria for DUII.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY
Astoria City Council, 1 p.m., work session, City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

TUESDAY
Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A.

Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, 12 p.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

Port of Astoria Commission, 4 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Seaside Library Board, 4:30 p.m., Seaside Public Library, 1131 Broadway.

Clatsop Care Health District Board, 5 p.m., (electronic meeting).

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

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Miles Crossing Sanitary Sewer District Board, 6 p.m., 34583 U.S. Highway 101 Business.

theAstorian

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The tuna boat Tommy John.

Photos by Adam Hall

Tuna boat throws curveballs to owners

By JEFF CLEMENS
For the Chinook Observer

The last thing any fisherman ever wants to do is place a mayday call because their boat is sinking. But for Capt. Adam Hall and the F/V Tommy John, that’s exactly what happened late one night in July, about a 20-hour voyage off the south Washington state coast. Hall and boat co-owner, Greg Surgener, of Southern California-based Surgener Fisheries, sank big dollars in purchasing the Tommy John. The duo wanted to find a boat to tuna and crab fish and felt the 50-footer, moored at the time in San Diego, was the right fit. The vessel was built for tuna fishing 40 years ago and was named for retired four-time all-star Major League Baseball pitcher Tommy John. But like the aging pitcher in the twilight innings of his storied 26-season career, the vessel requires a good deal of care.



Capt. Adam Hall helms the Tommy John.



After a troubled initial trip that ended in a tortuous 20-hour slog into Warrenton for emergency repairs, the Tommy John brought in a full load of albacore.

“I went down there about four months ago to go start fixing things and do maintenance and everything to get ready to bring it up to Oregon,” Hall said. “I hired a couple of guys in Newport, Oregon, to fly down there with me and get it. We brought it back up here.” “The main engine pretty much needed to be (completely) rebuilt,” Hall said. “We knew that when we left. It blew, but we made it all the way home to Westport with the boat before it went completely. So that was good.” “It’s been a big process just going through things and trying to not go bald at the same time,” he said. After Hall and his crew completed the projects, they did a sea trial out of Westport on July 23. The trial went well. So the boat set out the following day for a multi-day journey to tuna grounds some 60 miles off the Washington coast.

‘We were dead in the water’

Late in the night on July 25 in near-complete darkness, the boat began taking on water with a list to the stern. Hall and his crew rushed around to find the cause. “Our lazarette (store-room) decided it wanted to leak and then there were actually holes in the hull of the boat we didn’t even know about,” Hall said. “Somewhere in the stern, (small little rust holes) came through and (were) slowly filling up the lazarette in about three different places. It was slow leaks, but it added up after being out at

sea for a day and a half.” “All of a sudden, the laz alarm went off and I was like ‘What in the hell, this is not good,’” Hall said. “We had all the bait on the boat, all the water we were putting on the boat for bait to live in. It was definitely scary.” Hall knew several of the captains who had run the Tommy John before and began calling them to get advice on what to do. “I was like ‘Hey, the boat doesn’t really act like it wants to sink like this,’” Hall said. “The guy who ran it before me filled up the laz three or four times I guess and he knew it wouldn’t sink with the laz full. So it’s a tough boat and can take a lot of weight.” “We did get into a really bad spot, though, where maybe the boat wasn’t going to sink right away because of the water weight back there,” Hall said. “We ended up having holes in the boat. We lost the steering and had a full laz. We were dead in the water.”

Mayday

After the boat lost its steering, it also lost its pumps, so it was no longer able to stay ahead of the water coming in. This prompted Hall to

make the tough decision to issue a distress call to the U.S. Coast Guard that the boat was going down. “We were very liable to sink at (this) point,” Hall said. “The deck was getting swamped and we were about 3 inches from the bottom of the door. I knew then this could turn into something.” Other captains fishing near Hall recommended he dump \$2,000 in bait he had on board to help lighten the vessel. Soon after, a Coast Guard helicopter arrived on scene and lowered down a gas-powered water pump to aid the boat. “All of us (on the boat) had to work as a team all night to get the water out and save the boat ourselves, and we did,” Hall said. “I’m glad they brought us (the pump) and we really appreciate the Coast Guard like no other.” “I’ve been doing this for 20 years right here in Oregon and Washington and I know some of the Coast Guard guys, too, and it just touches home when they help us out,” he said.

Not out of danger yet
The battered crew and captain were around 20 hours from the nearest port. While the boat was righted and they were able to remove excess water, the hydraulics weren’t working. Hall had to man the helm wheel and hand-steer the boat toward port. “I had just replaced the helm and a lot of crabbers take the steering wheels out because they like having their jog levers,” Hall said. “Well, I am a crabber too, so I put a giant lever in, but I insisted because that’s how I have my boat setup in Newport — that I have a helm and a jog lever — because when everything else fails, you can hand steer yourself.” Hall and his crew were able to limp the boat into Warrenton for emergency repairs. The boat headed back to sea a few days later with renewed hope and a new crew. “(The previous crew members) got scared for their lives and they had never been on the ocean,” Hall said. “It was like a no-brainer for them after the emergency. They were like ‘Man, we just wanna go home.’” “One of the guys has kids and a wife and had never even done any of this stuff before,” Hall said. “Even I was scared and I’ve been doing this for 20 years.”

Redemption

The second trip went much better. Hall was happy to report a successful trip that caught a massive amount of tuna. “We completely plugged the boat. We couldn’t have fit another fish on the boat. We did it in 14 days and got 23 tons,” Hall said. “I’m really happy about it and it’s exactly what we needed from everything we’ve been through as a company and as a whole. We really needed it.” “It feels amazing. You know like we did everything right finally. I’m happy. I’m sad. It’s all of the emotions,” Hall said. “It hits home, it really does because this is my career, this is my life. I’ve been working at this since the day I stepped on another guy’s boat as a crew guy.” Three days after offloading last week, the Tommy John and its crew departed for tuna grounds, hoping for another 23-ton trip.

Volunteer

Pick of the Week

Maya

6 year old Terrier Blend

Maya is ready to get on the road to fun and games. Won't you come out to play?

(Read about the pet of the week on Facebook)

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