

IN BRIEF

Commercial Dungeness crab season delayed until mid-January

The opening of the commercial Dungeness crab season north of Cape Falcon has been further delayed until at least mid-January.

The area will remain closed to commercial crabbing to coordinate an orderly start with the Washington state coastal Dungeness crab fishery.

Domoic acid testing of crab viscera continues to show elevated levels. Washington state has delayed its coastal fishery until further testing is conducted.

The rest of the Oregon Coast opened to commercial crabbing on Wednesday.

Results from the crab tested in all the state's harvest areas have been below alert levels, according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

— *The Astorian*

Ocean Beach Hospital administers first doses of virus vaccine

ILWACO, Wash. — Hope has come to Pacific County in the battle against the coronavirus, as Ocean Beach Hospital received and administered the first doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine to several of the hospital's employees on Friday morning.

The hospital received a shipment of 975 doses of the vaccine on Thursday, the first doses to arrive in Pacific County. The hospital administered the first of the received doses to several health care workers, including a nurse, physician's assistant and physical therapist.

Health care workers as well as staff and residents of long-term care facilities will be the first to be vaccinated across the U.S.

In conjunction with county health officials, the hospital is developing a vaccine distribution plan for how it will administer doses of the vaccine it receives, according to Blair Oman, a spokesman for the hospital.

— *Chinook Observer*

Brown extends state of emergency for coronavirus

Gov. Kate Brown announced on Thursday she is extending a state of emergency for the coronavirus until at least March.

"These are the darkest days of this pandemic. And yet, hope has arrived," she said in a statement. "Beginning this week, each time another Oregonian is vaccinated against COVID-19, we are one step closer to the day when we can return to normal life. In the meantime, we must keep up our guard."

The state of emergency gives the governor authority to issue executive orders to protect public safety and requires renewal every 60 days. Her decision to renew it had been expected, as she plans to keep counties under a four-tiered risk level guiding localized restrictions on gatherings and businesses.

— *The Oregonian*

Chinook spawn in Columbia River for first time in many years

SPOKANE, Wash. — For the first time in more than a generation, Chinook salmon have spawned in the upper Columbia River system.

Colville Tribal biologists counted 36 redds, a gravelly nest where female salmon lay eggs, along an 8-mile stretch of the Sanpoil River, a tributary of the Columbia, in September, the Spokesman-Review reported.

— *Associated Press*

DEATH

Dec. 15, 2020

PHILLIPS, Carolyn Pauline, 77, of Hammond, died in Warrenton. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIAL

Monday, Dec. 21

MORRIS, Robert Allan — Graveside service at 1 p.m., Prairie Cemetery, 92924 Knappa Dock Road. Reception follows at 3 p.m., Astoria Golf & Country Club, 33445 Sunset Beach Lane in Warrenton.

ON THE RECORD

Assault

• Margaret Katerina Wilski, 21, of Long Beach, Washington, was arraigned Wednesday for assault in the fourth degree and strangulation.

Theft

• Marla A. Boettcher,

74, of Astoria, was arrested Thursday at Walmart in Warrenton for theft in the second degree.

• Shauna M. Cox, 22, of Seaside, was arrested on Dec. 12 at Fred Meyer in Warrenton for theft in the second degree.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Astoria City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

TUESDAY

Gearhart City Council, 6 p.m., special meeting, (electronic meeting).

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WARRIORS

LEFT: Debbie Morrow, the Warrenton school board chairwoman, writes 'Go Warriors!' on the final beam of the new middle school building.

BELOW: Skanska workers place the final beam of the new Warrenton Middle School building on Wednesday morning. The new 45,000-square-foot building is the first development of the Warrenton-Hammond School District's new campus on a 58-acre plot of land off of Dolphin Avenue.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian



Brown proposes \$15M cut to Coos Bay port project

By SIERRA DAWN
McCLAIN
Capital Press

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown has proposed a \$15 million budget cut to the Port of Coos Bay's channel modification, a project that would allow the port to take its place among the international shipping giants on the West Coast.

Brown released her proposed \$25.6 billion two-year budget earlier this month. The next fiscal year begins July 1.

On page 310, the proposal has one line stating the port's project will no longer be slated to receive lottery dollars.

"It was absolutely a surprise. We had no advance warning," said Margaret Barber, director of external affairs at the port. "It's tremendously disappointing."

The project's advocates say expanding the channel to 45 feet deep and 450 feet wide would open new avenues for international trade of agricultural goods and transform southern Oregon's economy. But without sufficient funding, port leaders say the project could stall.

This isn't the project's first disruption.

John Burns, the port's CEO, told the Capital Press earlier this fall the project has faced other interruptions, including when invest-



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

Gov. Kate Brown this month proposed a \$15 million budget cut to the Port of Coos Bay's channel modification project. Advocates and legislators say they will fight to get funding back during the legislative session in January.

tors withdrew support during the Great Recession.

The governor's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but observers speculate Brown slashed the funding for two main reasons: lottery dollars are fewer this year and the project is controversial. Most other lottery funding for statewide projects was retained in the budget.

When restaurants and other venues were closed because of the coronavirus pandemic, fewer people have played the lottery, resulting in less state revenue.

Policy experts suggest the governor may have cut channel modification funding because it's environmentally unpopular. Earlier this year, about a dozen environmental agencies told the Capital Press the project could disrupt marine and fish habitats and reduce water quality.

But advocates say the project has wide bipartisan support despite the controversy.

Funding for the channel modification was approved by Oregon legislators in 2006. Dollars were meant to be dished out in installments. Now, longtime sup-

porters say they won't let go of that funding without a fight.

Barber said her team is "ramping up" to work with the Legislature in the 2021 session.

"I'm confident we'll get at least some portion of that money back," she said.

Sen. Arnie Roblan, D-Coos Bay, who has advocated for the project for 16 years, said he didn't get advance notice of the budget cut, either.

"I had not caught this particular issue," Roblan told the Capital Press. "I'm really glad you (the Capital Press) had your eye on the ball here and pointed this out. I think I might have missed it completely."

Roblan said he will fight to get funding for the project in the final budget before he retires at the end of the legislative session.

Roblan said he hopes Boomer Wright and Dick Anderson, both Republicans and soon-to-be Coos Bay's new representative and senator, will shepherd the project forward. But, Roblan said, Wright and Anderson will need to work harder to get their voices heard as members of the minority party.

The budget proposal's next stop is the Legislature when it convenes in January. The lottery bonds will be put into a bill and sent through the legislative process.

Pacific County sees population growth, changing demographics

By BRANDON CLINE
Chinook Observer

A new federal survey released last week found that Pacific County's population in Washington state continued to grow in the latter half of the 2010s, led by an influx of older, out-of-state residents.

The data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau, which released its American Community Survey five-year estimates for 2015 to 2019. An estimated 21,668 people resided in Pacific County during the most recent five-year period, up 4.9% from the 20,665 projected to have resided in the county on average from 2010 to 2014.

In the last five years, the estimates also show an already older-skewing population getting older, while county residents continued to recover economically from the Great Recession that hit the area especially hard in the first half of the decade.

From 2010 to 2014, an estimated narrow plural-

ity — 47% — of Pacific County residents consisted of people born in Washington state, while 46.2% were born in another state. The tables turned in the latter half of the decade, with a plurality of county residents — 46.9% — now consisting of non-Washington natives, and just 45.1% of the county's population comprised of people born in the state.

The county's number of people who weren't born in the United States also increased notably between the two periods. In the first half of the decade, 0.7% of people living in Pacific County were born in another country, but that figure grew to 1.3% in the latter half of the 2010s — nearly doubling.

In the most recent five-year period, 30.3% of Pacific County residents were at least 65 years or older, up from 26.3% over the previous five years. Just an estimated 16.2% of the population are 17 years or younger, down from 17.6%.

While seemingly subtle, these notable differences add up, as the county's median age rose from 51.2 years old in the first half of the decade to 53.6 years old in the second half. Among native Washingtonians living in Pacific County, the median age shrank slightly from 48.2 years to 47.4 years. But the age of out-of-state residents rose markedly, from 55.7 years to 59 years — suggesting that these formerly out-of-state residents largely consist of older people who have moved to the area to retire.

The median age also shrank among residents born outside of the country, from 48.6 years to 43.9 years. An estimated 20% of county residents not born in the U.S. were under the age of 18, and only 12.4% were age 65 and older — compared to 26.3% for those 65 and older for native Washingtonians and 36.6% for those born in other states.

The county population also became more edu-

cated in the previous five years, with 18.9% of residents 25 years and older having obtained a bachelor's degree or higher level of education, up from an average of 16.5% from 2010 to 2014. In that same span, high school graduates and those who didn't graduate high school accounted for 44.4% of Pacific County's population. In this recent five-year period, that figure was down to 41.6%.

In line with years of improving local employment numbers following the worst stretch of the Great Recession, economic fortunes in the county rose notably compared to the first half of the decade. The median income in Pacific County rose by 15.8% between the two periods, from \$20,926 in 2010 to 2014 to \$24,234 in 2015 to 2019. In accordance with better pay, the share of county residents that were below 150% of the poverty level dropped from 31.9% in the first half of the decade to 26.3% in the second half.