

IN BRIEF

State whale watching program on hold because of virus

Gray whales are beginning their spring migration up the Oregon Coast, but volunteers will not be on hand at state parks to educate visitors and help people spot the passing cetaceans.

Due to the pandemic, the state has opted not to station volunteers at whale watching sites as part of its annual Whale Watch Week program and the Whale Watching Center in Depoe Bay is closed.

Instead, Lisa Sumption, the director of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, encouraged visitors to enjoy the spring tradition on their own while exploring parks close to their homes.

Visitors are asked to continue to wear face coverings and observe social distancing guidelines.

"If a park is crowded, consider visiting another whale watching site or returning later," Sumption said in a statement.

On the North Coast, Ecola State Park and Oswald West State Park are popular sites for whale watching. On the Long Beach Peninsula in Washington state, volunteers usually set up scopes at Cape Disappointment State Park's Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center.

A map of sites and other information about gray whales is available online at the state parks department's website.

— *The Astorian*

Timber group, counties challenge delay of spotted owl decision

Federal protections for the northern spotted owl are again heading to court.

The American Forest Resource Council, a timber industry group, along with counties in Oregon, Washington state and California, are challenging the Biden administration's decision to delay removing millions of acres of critical habitat for the threatened species.

The lawsuit was filed March 5, and includes the Association of O&C Counties, representing local governments that benefit from timber revenues generated from Oregon and California Railroad Revested Lands sprawled across western Oregon.

Several other counties, including Douglas County in Oregon, Siskiyou County in California, and Lewis and Skamania counties in Washington, also joined the lawsuit individually.

It is the latest twist in the saga over protections for the spotted owl, which was listed as a threatened species in 1990.

Initially, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service set aside 6.9 million acres of critical habitat in old growth forests along the Pacific Coast where the birds nest. That was reduced to 5.8 million acres in 2008, before increasing to 9.5 million acres under a new management plan for the species in 2012 — an area roughly twice the size of New Jersey.

— *Capital Press*

DEATH

March 10, 2021

HARLOW, Constance Wauneda, 88, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Caldwell's Funeral & Cremation Arrangement Center of Seaside is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

DUII

• Thomas James Moor, 52, of Warrenton, was arrested Sunday in Warrenton for driving under the influence of intoxicants.

• Rachel Dyer, 21, of Warrenton, was arrested Saturday on S.W. Cedar Avenue in Warrenton for DUII following a crash.

• Sara Cochran, 45,

was arrested Saturday on S. Main Avenue in Warrenton for DUII.

• Cory Corbin, 30, of Warrenton, was arrested on March 10 on W. Duane Street and Hume Avenue in Astoria for DUII.

• Alisha Rafini, 39, of Astoria, was arrested on March 8 on W. Marine Drive in Astoria for DUII.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY

Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, 10 a.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

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

Astoria Historic Landmarks Commission, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.

WEDNESDAY

Seaside Tourism Advisory Committee, 3 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Seaside Tree Board, 4 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

THURSDAY

Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

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Gearhart, state seek fixes for Highway 101

Section of highway is dangerous

By R.J. MARX

The Astorian

GEARHART — Crashes are common. Crossing is dangerous. And while the highway is used by the Oregon Coast Bike Route and the Oregon Coast Trail, there are no safe walking paths or bike lanes.

An Oregon Department of Transportation plan confirms what drivers already know: U.S. Highway 101 from Pacific Way in Gearhart north is dangerous.

The stretch "is notorious for speeding," state planners write. "Local law enforcement routinely clock drivers exceeding the speed limit by 20 mph or more."

A Highway 101 project update delivered to the city this month seeks public feedback on roadway improvements, a multiyear process

to culminate with delivery of a final facility plan at the end of 2022.

"The Highway 101 safety plan that ODOT is fully funding is underway," Carole Connell, the city planner, said at Thursday's joint meeting of the Planning Commission and City Council. "We had a stakeholders' advisory committee meeting of property owners, of people who live on the highway, people who use the highway for biking and all kinds of uses. There's been some very good feedback."

In March 2020, Kenneth Shonkwiler, ODOT's senior northwest region planner, appeared before the City Council to discuss plan priorities and 75 potential projects. The work could include narrowing the highway from four lanes to three, sidewalks, bike lanes, better, more visible crossings and fixes for flooding and stormwater drainage issues.

Facility plans are more

detailed than transportation system plans, and this particular project is solely focused on Highway 101 in Gearhart, Shonkwiler said Friday.

"The facility plan will use goals and project ideas from the city of Gearhart TSP 2017 to develop more detailed projects that have ODOT and community support," he said. "The end product will provide ODOT and the city with adequate information to pursue infrastructure projects."

Mayor Paulina Cockrum said the plan serves as a "jumping-off point."

"That document outlines increasing issues with speeding, traffic accidents, left-turn lanes, and the ability for people particularly on the east side of the highway to cross the highway anywhere except Pacific Way — and even Pacific Way is suboptimal in terms of ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards," she said. "Those are some of the many reasons it was such a pertinent part of

the transportation plan."

The Department of Transportation is entering the "feedback on draft goals and objectives," before delivery of a draft and final facility plan in winter 2022.

"This will make a difference in the final plan, how much people are in agreement with what they put out as a proposal, such as reducing the speed on 101, or reducing to three lanes with a center turn lane," Cockrum said.

As for funding, Shonkwiler said, the current project is a planning-level project, which means there is not construction funding at this time. But by the end, the state and the city will have a better understanding of infrastructure needs and relative cost. This plan then assists in pursuing state or federally funded programs for construction.

"We really just began the project and will have a better idea once we start developing solutions," he said.

Knappa teacher tests positive for coronavirus

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ

The Astorian

A teacher at the Knappa School District has tested positive for the coronavirus.

In a letter to the community outlining local case metrics last week, Superintendent Bill Fritz also acknowledged there was one employee in quarantine.

"This individual feels fine and we are monitoring for any possible transmission to others," he wrote. "Thus far, we have not seen any evidence of transmission at the school site."

But the announcement prompted some concern over the weekend among others who worried about how the school district was responding.

The teacher who tested positive doesn't know when she contracted the virus, Fritz clarified to The Astorian on Monday.

"So it's possible she had COVID while at school," he said. "We don't know."

School district employees practice social distancing and wear masks at all times, protocols they have followed since the start of school year, Fritz noted. When the district has a positive case and there is concern about exposure among others on campus, the district works with the Clatsop County Public Health Department and utilizes contact tracing logs.

In this case, the teacher did not fit any of the parameters that would cause school district or public health officials to be concerned about

exposure among students and other staff members. To date, nobody else has tested positive either, Fritz noted.

The school district has had around four staff members test positive for the virus this school year.

But, Fritz said, "we've seen no community spread inside our school so far."

Knappa began the school year with some students on campus and has been bringing students back when state guidelines allow. Kindergarten-through-eighth graders are in classrooms daily with nine-through-12th graders following a hybrid model. Some students continue to be enrolled in the district's virtual academy full-time.

District leaders, as well as the leaders of other North Coast school dis-

tricts, have discussed that reopening schools means there will likely be positive cases among students and staff despite safety protocols enforced on campus and inside school buildings.

Craig Hoppes, the superintendent of the Astoria School District, has cautioned school board members multiple times that administrators can only control so much. When students and staff leave buildings and go about their daily lives, they run the risk of exposure to the virus.

Teachers across North Coast school districts have begun to receive coronavirus vaccines. Many have already received their second doses. Districts have not tracked which teachers opted to get the vaccine.

North Coast Grub: Services 'too cumbersome to work with'

Continued from Page A1

Most delivery companies charge a commission to participating restaurants and customers for the convenience of delivery. North Coast Grub charged restaurants nothing but posted their menus on its website, marking prices up at least 20% to customers and adding a delivery fee. The business model drew the ire of some restaurant owners, who said Millo reposted their menus without permission.

Rita Schuyler, the owner of Geno's Pizza & Burgers, offers in-house delivery service but said North Coast Grub used her menu without permission and misrepresented her prices to customers.

"They are using our name and photos without our consent," Schuyler wrote on Facebook earlier this month. "Their prices are not

ours. They have marked up your cost by 30% over ours. So if you live in our delivery area, please continue to use us and save money."

Millo described the incident as a miscommunication and said she removed Geno's from North Coast Grub's website after hearing from Schuyler.

Tony Kischner, the owner of Bridgewater Bistro, said he discontinued both North Coast Grub and Slurpalicious shortly after joining.

"We quickly found both services to be too cumbersome to work with and not a good fit for our business type," he wrote in an email. "Our hard-working staff was also not happy that all tips left by customers for orders picked up by the delivery services went exclusively to the drivers."

Genelle Mosley, a driver for Slurpalicious, drove for North Coast Grub but said

she quit soon after because of issues with orders not being ready, a company provided charge card not working and what she described as the company pocketing most of the earnings.

Mosley said the breaking point came when she took a \$16 order from McDonald's that came to around \$27 through North Coast Grub.

"I did the math," she said. "It was like \$11 left over. They (North Coast Grub) paid me \$4.07 on that order, and they pocketed almost \$8. I was done."

Millo called Mosley's account untrue, saying North Coast Grub collects the surcharge in prices to market restaurants, but that drivers keep the delivery fee and tips. She described the drama unfolding on social media over her business model as a "witch hunt" when all she wanted to do was help restaurants on the coast add delivery

service.

"It's not that we're re-creating the wheel, and it is not illegal for people to do what we're doing," Millo said. "It's a new concept to Astoria. This is something that happens all over the U.S. It's very common."

"It's no different than someone going down and buying bottles of water at Costco and selling it in their shop for six times or 30% (more) or whatever they want to mark up," she said. "That's their prerogative. And nobody says anything about it."

Millo said she recently sold a similar operation, The Rock Eats, that she ran in Castle Rock, Washington, to a driver, because of the stress caused by her experience in Astoria.

"This is very, very upsetting to me, since the whole reason for it was to help out the community and the restaurants," she said.