

## IN BRIEF

## New assessment released on relocating county public works facility

A new assessment for relocating the Clatsop County public works facility found that the Warrenton Fiber sort yard is the best choice.

The county wants to move the public works facility on Olney Avenue out of the tsunami inundation zone. Consultants from Mackenzie, a Portland-based engineering and design firm, narrowed down the potential sites to the sort yard near Lewis and Clark and the North Coast Business Park in Warrenton.

A preliminary analysis indicated that the sort yard site would have lower overall development costs, or roughly \$56.1 million compared to \$56.6 million for the business park. Additionally, the size of the sort yard site allows for future growth and storage areas, and it would not present a loss of property tax revenue and a loss of job creation.

The county had previously identified the sort yard for the relocation, but neighbors have opposed the move.

The consultants presented the new assessment at a work session of the county Board of Commissioners on Wednesday.

According to County Manager Don Bohn, "it's not the end of the process — it's just another step."

## Port of Astoria raises marina fees

The Port of Astoria Commission has voted to raise marina rates.

In August, the annual rates for recreational and commercial boats will increase \$2 each year until 2023. The seasonal and off-season monthly rates will increase \$1 each year until 2023. Daily seasonal rates, as well as daily and monthly trailer parking rates, will also go up.

The Port found it necessary to raise the fees in order to "cover increased operational costs and ongoing capital costs for dredging and pile replacements."

The commission's vote on Tuesday was unanimous.

## Jury awards Port of Astoria damages in Pier 3 lawsuit

A jury has awarded the Port of Astoria \$36,750 in a lawsuit against Marathon Fisheries for damages caused to Pier 3.

The lawsuit claimed a fishing boat owned by Marathon Fisheries, based in Lincoln County, struck Pier 3 and caused a large portion of the dock to fall into the Columbia River in July 2018.

The Port was seeking \$147,000.

## Knappa lands state funds for school bond

The Knappa School District has landed a \$4 million state grant to boost the \$14 million capital bond it will ask voters to approve in November.

The school district had counted on receiving the funds from the state, Superintendent Bill Fritz said. The current scope of work proposed by the district assumes an \$18 million budget. The district will only receive the state money if the bond passes.

— *The Astorian*

## DEATHS

July 14, 2021

**SWEENEY**, Christy Kathrina Walker, 67, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

July 13, 2021

**RINER**, Louann L., 86, of Longview, Washington, formerly of Astoria, died in Longview. Caldwell's Luce-Lay-

ton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements. She was the daughter of Raymond and Marion Luce, the prior owners of the funeral home.

July 9, 2021

**NIEMI**, Gary Harold, 78, of Westport, died in Westport. Groulx Family Mortuary in Rainier is in charge of the arrangements.

## ON THE RECORD

## Criminal mischief

• Miles Joseph Hunsinger, 55, of Astoria, was arrested at Fourth Street and Marine Drive for criminal mischief in the third degree.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

## MONDAY

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

## TUESDAY

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

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

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

**Gearhart Small Business Committee**, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

## the Astorian

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## First phase of Naselle hatchery rebuild complete

By LUKE WHITTAKER  
*Chinook Observer*

NASELLE, Wash. — Cool, clear and clean water from Crusher Creek has begun pooling in a cement sediment settling pond above the Naselle Fish Hatchery.

The recently constructed pond represents the completion of the first phase of an ambitious three-phase series of changes slated over the next few years to modernize the aging hatchery, first constructed in 1979.

"The phase included the new settling ponds, distribution box and the pipeline (from Crusher Creek) to the new intake," said Brady Foreman, a specialist at the hatchery.

Both sediment settling ponds — one for Crusher Creek and one for the Naselle River — will serve a fundamental role in the raising of future salmon runs.

"They keep the mud and solids out of the rearing units and incubators. It's especially important for the incubators to keep the eggs clean, so they don't suffocate," Foreman said.

The antiquated infrastructure supporting the hatchery has become inadequate over time, Foreman explained, leading to a juggling act among staff to patch problems while preserving fish runs season to season.

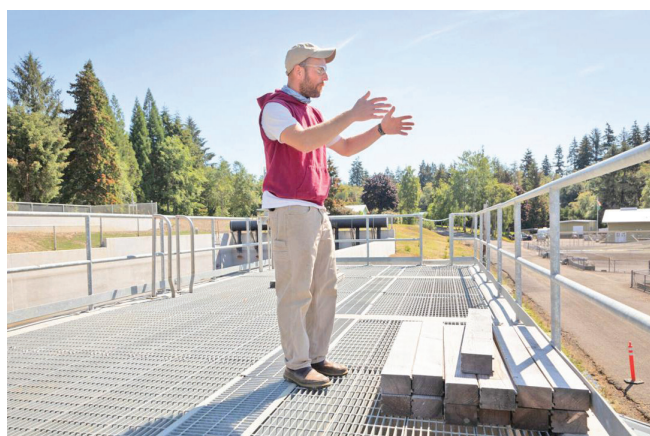
The half-acre ponds — riddled with cracks and prone to algae growth and "dead spots" — are unsuitable for use in the summer due to the deficiencies, leading to crowding in the limited raceways.

The pump house, which houses the generator and a series of pumps necessary for providing fresh water, is unreliable and often difficult to maintain.

The pipes beneath the hatchery — now rusting after more than 40 years underground — leak in places, causing sinkholes and soft spots.

Although each phase is important, some of the most impactful changes for the hatchery, including a new pump house and weir, will occur in the second phase, anticipated in 2023.

"We're going to have modern pumps and generator that won't be breaking down on us. We're not going to have to worry if all the fish are going



Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

**Brady Foreman, a specialist with the Naselle Fish Hatchery, talks about the infrastructure changes coming over the next few years.**

to die when a power outage happens," Foreman said. "This is the big one. This is the one we really need."

Replacing the failing infrastructure could change the trajectory for the hatchery and future local salmon runs.

"We'll be able to catch more fish and operate it more efficiently. That's the goal here," Foreman said.

"We'll be able to catch most of our hatchery fish to bring them into the hatchery and keep them off the spawning grounds (and from mixing with the wild fish). That's the big thing now. We need to protect the wild fish. If we can keep the hatchery fish off the spawning grounds upstream, and keep them from mixing with the wild fish, the wild genes are going to be stronger."

## Known for coho

The Naselle hatchery is known for prolific coho production, but has also ramped up Chinook production from 800,000 to 4 million over the past few years.

"Right now, we get a huge number of fish back. Our hatchery is usually first or second in coho returns in the whole state. We do a lot of Chinook now, too. Our goal is to do 5 million Chinook. This year we released 4 million. We do about 1.4 million coho and 500,000 chum and 75,000 steelhead."

Raising separate salmon species in an "old-style" system poses unique challenges that will be alleviated with the hatchery upgrades.

"We increased our production before our infrastructure, so we definitely need to get it done," Foreman said. "We have these huge returns of coho and Chinook coming in

at the same time and we have to separate the wilds (naturally spawning fish). It's hard to do in the old system. The new system is going to be great. We'll be able to work it every day with less staff and the fish are going to be treated better."

The hatchery has had close calls due to crumbling infrastructure, from leaking pipes to power failures. In one emergency, fish had to be evacuated by truck to the nearby Nemah hatchery.

Extreme weather conditions bring extra stress to hatchery crew, particularly the ice storm in February and the historic heat wave in June.

"You never know when the alarm is going to happen. We had that ice storm and I was on standby a couple days," Foreman said. "The storm covered the pump switches with a layer of ice. I couldn't restart the pumps because they were covered in ice. I couldn't thaw it out. I had to bring in a generator."

Those controls are now safely housed in a covered distribution box, part of the first phase changes.

The summer heat is especially problematic for the hatchery, where salmon and trout thrive in cooler water. The heat issues reached an apex in late June when temperatures soared above 100 degrees in part of Pacific County.

"We had a high water temperature of 73. We lost a lot of fish," Foreman said. "We struggle here with pathogens, bacteria and parasites, especially in the summertime."

Fortunately, a backup plan, including an extra abundance of coho eggs, was already in place, since the hatchery suffered a similar fate in the drought of 2015.

"We still have enough for our coho program. We take extra eggs knowing we're going to have these problems in the summer," Foreman said.

## Steelhead come to local lakes

Anglers in select local lakes may have noticed a new species casting a bigger shadow than the typical trout.

Hundreds of adult steelhead, surplus from the Naselle hatchery, have been planted in Black Lake and Radar Lake over the past two years, part of a plan to provide new fishing opportunities for local sportsmen.

"Now we're releasing surplus big adult steelhead when they come back," Foreman said.

Foreman has helped spearhead the plantings.

"When (we) have more fish than we need for eggs, we try to release those in the lakes so people can have a shot at catching them. We like to provide as many new fishing opportunities as we can."

The steelhead stockings started in 2019, but became more frequent over the past year.

"Last year, we had hundreds of surplus fish," Foreman said.

Steelhead and rainbow trout are the same species, but rainbow are freshwater only, and steelhead are anadromous, meaning they migrate to sea. Unlike most salmon, steelhead can survive spawning, and can spawn in multiple years, according to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The annual Black Lake fishing derby was canceled the last two years amid COVID-related precautions, but young fishermen in 2022 will have their first chance to reel in a 10-plus pound steelhead, a jump up from the jumbo rainbow trout that occasionally exceed seven pounds.

"It's going to be an interesting fishing derby next time around," Foreman said.

Sometimes the surplus steelhead are donated to tribes, food banks or used for nutrient enhancement, while others will now live out their final days in local lakes.

"If we can have one kid catch a 12-pound steelhead in the spring, it's worth it," Foreman said.

## Ilwaco secures money to protect drinking water

## City hopes to preserve watershed at Indian Creek

By BRANDON CLINE  
*Chinook Observer*

ILWACO, Wash. — The city's hopes of protecting its drinking water source and preserving hundreds of acres of land as a community forest took a huge step forward this month.

On July 1, the Washington State Department of Ecology announced that it is offering Ilwaco a \$500,000 grant and a nearly \$2 million loan for the Bear Ridge Community Forest Watershed Protection Project.

City Councilor Matt Lessnau, who's spearheading the project for the city, said

the grant and loan offer is a "big chunk" of funding that, once formally accepted, will go toward the acquisition of the land and surrounding timber deeds to make the project a reality.

The city plans to protect its drinking water source, the Indian Creek watershed, by purchasing land and surrounding timber deeds and preserving the area as a community forest. The two timber deeds the city is working to purchase total 178 acres, and another 210 acres of watershed area outside of city management would also be purchased.

Ilwaco is working on the sale with The Trust for Public Land, a nonprofit specializing in land conservation, and forestry consultant Ben Hayes.

The city previously

received a \$600,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2020, as part of the USDA Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program, that will also go toward the purchase. Ilwaco also received \$721,000 for the project from the state Legislature this spring as part of its \$6.3 billion capital construction budget.

The third time was the charm for the city when it came to the Ecology grant and loan. In 2020, the city was awarded a \$3.4 million

loan, and had applied but been denied twice a \$500,000 grant that it was able to secure during this funding period.

The success came after Ilwaco and its partners said they needed to do a better job of explaining to Ecology why purchasing and controlling the timberland within the watershed will protect the water source.

All told, Ilwaco has been offered \$1.8 million in grants and \$1.9 million in loans — at a 1.6% interest rate — for the project so far.

## VOLUNTEER PICK OF THE WEEK



**Sinclair**  
Young Anatolian Shepherd

No cowboy dreams here; He'd rather be a sidekick or maybe a butler. Compadre is his middle name.

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