

IN BRIEF

Astoria requires masks at city facilities to contain virus

Astoria officials are again requiring people to wear face coverings when in city facilities.

The city had lifted mask restrictions this summer, but leaders say they are following recommendations from state and federal health authorities to again require masks as cases of the coronavirus surge.

The face covering requirement took effect Tuesday.

Last week, county government announced people would need to wear face coverings to conduct in-person business in county buildings.

— *The Astorian*

Pacific County hospitality employment lags during busy season

LONG BEACH, Wash. — New data shows Pacific County's hospitality industry is facing a steep labor shortage this summer.

According to unemployment figures released by the Washington State Employment Security Department, the number of people employed in the county's leisure and hospitality industry in June sat at an estimated 920 people. While the number is up 21.1% from 2020's pandemic-plagued June, it is down 17.9% from June 2019.

Overall, the county's unemployment rate in June was preliminarily pegged at 7.4%, up slightly from May's revised total of 7.2%.

— *Chinook Observer*

DEATHS

Aug. 11, 2021
SPENCER, Philip, 40, of Astoria, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

Aug. 7, 2021
AADAMS, Laurie,

57, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

SEARLES, Troy, 46, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIALS

Sunday, Aug. 15
STEVENSON, Rosemary — Memorial picnic at 11 a.m., 320 Tennessee Road in Winlock, Washington. For information or direc-

tions, call 360-431-8638.
Saturday, Aug. 21
TELEN, Shirley — Celebration of life from 2 to 5 p.m., Astoria Moose Lodge, 420 17th St.

ON THE RECORD

Menacing
• Kenneth Lee Parkins, 44, of Astoria, was arrested Friday evening at Ninth and Astor streets in Astoria for menacing and disorderly conduct in the second degree.

Aggravated harassment
• Kareem Barkhade, 41, of Tigard, was indicted July 20 for aggravated harassment, attempted aggravated harassment, two counts of attempted assault of a public safety officer and resisting arrest.

Harassment
• Troy Peppin, 38, of Seaside, was arrested on Tuesday night on Dawson Road in Gearhart for two counts of harassment.

Restraining order
• Ashly Lukoszyk, 37, of Astoria, was arrested on U.S. Highway 101 Business on Monday evening for four counts of violating a restraining order, one violation of a release agreement, resisting arrest, escape in the third degree and four counts of contempt of court.

Theft
• Corey Elizabeth Jones, 27, of Astoria, was arrested Sunday afternoon at Goodwill in Warrenton for theft in the sec-

ond degree. She was also arrested that day for a second-degree theft that occurred May 22, also at Goodwill.

• Reed Montgomery Tardif, 26, of Shelton, Washington, was arrested Sunday night near Walmart in Warrenton for theft in the third degree and criminal trespassing.

• Meggan Breeana Bartlett, 27, of Astoria, was arrested on Monday night at Walmart in Warrenton for theft in the third degree.

DUII
• Anthony Lopez, 29, of Astoria, was charged with driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless endangerment and driving on a suspended license in the third degree after a crash Sunday night in Mason County, Washington. Lopez and a juvenile were taken to Providence St. Peter Hospital in Olympia after the crash.

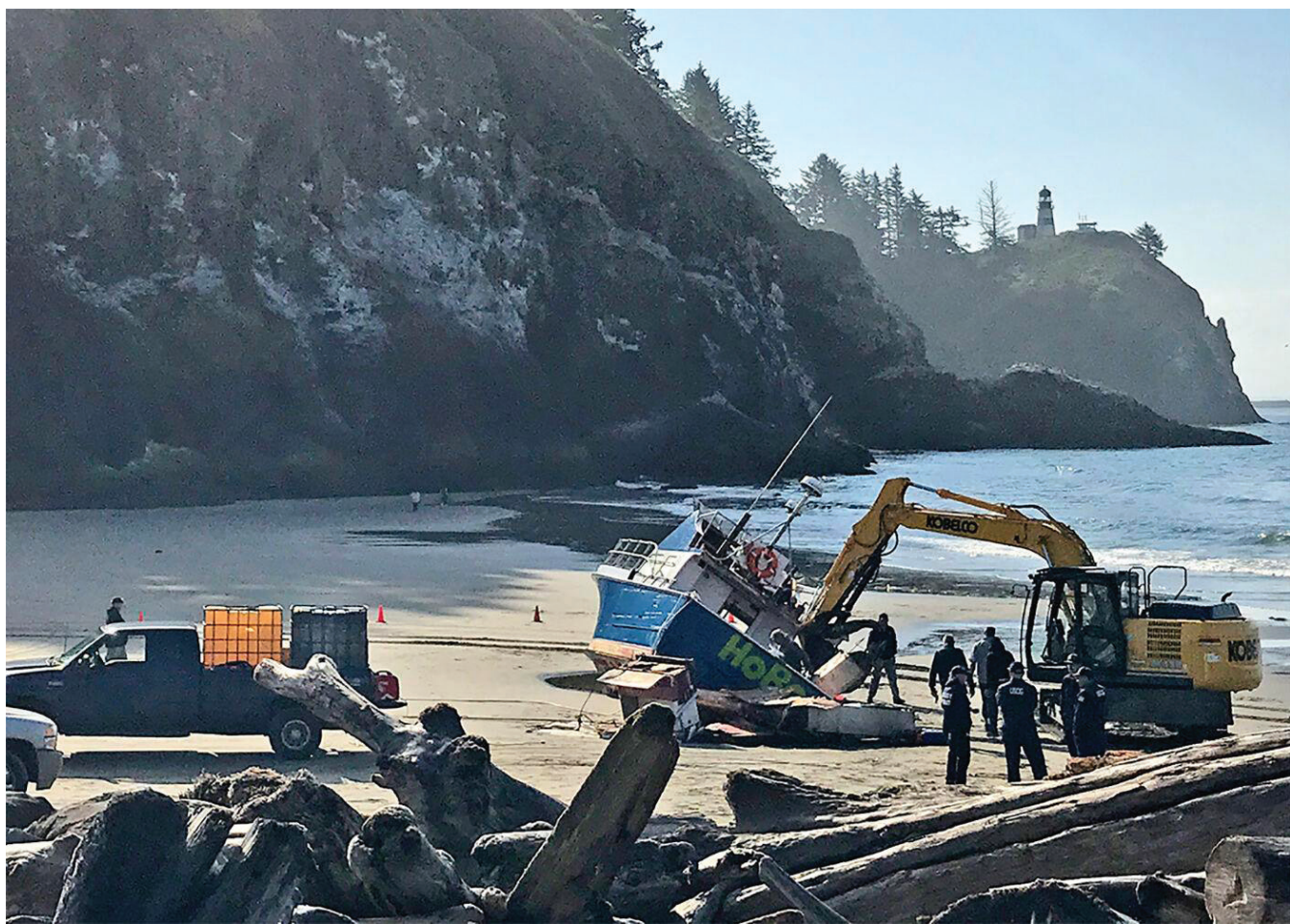
• Shawna Marie Hatchell, 29, of Gearhart, was arrested Sunday night on Bailey Lane in Gearhart for driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving and failing to perform the duties of a driver in an accident involving property damage.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY

Gearhart Planning Commission, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

Warrenton Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.



HOBO

The F/V Hobo, a 40-foot wood-hulled recreational vessel, ran aground Saturday and washed up on Waikiki Beach.

Hardy commercial clam diggers try to sustain a long tradition

The reward often comes with risk

By LUKE WHITTAKER
Chinook Observer

WILLAPA BAY, Wash. — On isolated, shifting spits in seemingly perpetual fog, some dig their living from the sand.

Razor clammers each collected about 110 pounds per day on average last season, but diggers are finding more clams and a more favorable market this year, making for some memorable days for the relatively small group who work the detached Willapa Spits off the north end of the Long Beach Peninsula.

"At \$3.75 per pound, I've never made more money this quickly," said Les Strange, of Raymond, standing over a 50-quart cooler of clams. After averaging \$2.20 in 2020, commercial diggers like Strange are hopeful the current market demand will continue.

"That's pretty much what I do for a living all year. It's backbreaking work, but you get in shape. You get out what you put into it. You can't beat that," said Strange, adding that he hoped to dig 250 pounds that day.

In Pacific County, the commercial harvest is allowed only on the Willapa Spits, located within the mouth of Willapa Bay. The sand spits, only accessible by boat, present unique challenges and opportunities for commercial diggers each season. The relatively small area has abundant clam numbers and accounts for an out-sized portion of the state's commercial clamming.

"For the past 10 years, they've accounted for about 35% of the (commercial) harvest. Just this little area in the spits is a pretty big producer," said Zach Forster, a coastal shellfish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, during a patrol of the grounds in late July.

The reward, however, doesn't come without risk. In order to reach the area, diggers must arrive by boat, since it's illegal to drive on the beaches leading to where the sand spits begin. Clammers come on small skiffs, often relying on GPS plotters to navigate through the heavy fog that frequently blankets the area.

"It only occurs on the detached spits of Willapa Bay. The only way diggers



A clam digger in Willapa Bay.

Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

can access the spits are by boat. It's boat-in only, which limits any potential interaction with driving on the beach or (bird) nesting," Forster said.

The shifting sand spits are several hundred yards from the peninsula, and sometimes disappear underwater depending on the tides.

"They're probably under 6 to 10 feet at high tide. It's breaking surf on the spits typically. It's all subtidal. They change from year to year. One area of the spits that's good digging might not even show the next year," Forster said.

Diggers dwindle

Participation among licensed commercial clambers in Washington state has declined over the past five years, from 132 diggers in 2015 to 68 in 2020 to just 29 this year. Scores of commercial diggers once ranged the sands of Pacific and Grays Harbor counties.

An aging workforce and seasonal disruptions due to domoic acid closures are considered the primary reasons for the drop in participation.

The season typically starts in April and lasts about eight weeks, but was delayed until July this year due to a common neurotoxin.

"We had a late start this year because of issues with domoic acid. The same that affected the recreational beaches also affected the clams on the Willapa Spits. We continued to test from March clear through July, when we got our two good (back to back) samples to open," Forster said. "July 2 we got the green light from

the Department of Health and we announced the opening date from July 10 running through Aug. 31, with the possibility of extending the fishery into September."

Despite the seasonal disruptions, dedicated diggers return year after year, like David Tegen, of Westport. On his best day, Tegen once dug 389 pounds. But on a Wednesday morning in late July, he had more moderate goals.

"I like to get up around 200 (pounds) or better," he said. "But my age is catching up with me."

Evolving market

In 2020, Pacific County accounted for 71% of the statewide commercial clam harvest, followed by Grays Harbor with 25%. The fishery landed 184,379 pounds of clams last year during an 87-day season, representing an ex-vessel value of about \$415,000, the fifth highest on record.

A majority of the commercial clam harvest historically went to the commercial bait market, where they're

a popular choice for everything from Dungeness crab to surf perch.

"A reason a good majority have been sold to the crab market is because, if you talk to a commercial crabber, they'll tell you razor clams are the best bait. They're going to get sold where the demand is," Forster said.

Lately, however, a growing percentage is destined for the fresh seafood market, as much as 40%. Many local seafood retailers and restaurants now have razor clams readily in stock or featured on menus. Commercial-harvested Pacific razor clams are considered a best choice among sustainable seafood, according to Seafood Watch.

"Their population is mostly driven by natural mortality and recruitment, not the recreational or commercial harvest," Forster said.

Preliminary population surveys on the peninsula's ocean beach indicate strong numbers for this coming fall's digs — if domoic acid levels stay below 20 parts per million.

the Astorian

Established July 1, 1873
(USPS 035-000)

Published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday by EO Media Group, 949 Exchange St., PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103 Telephone 503-325-3211, 800-781-3211 or Fax 503-325-6573. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Astorian, PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103-0210

DailyAstorian.com
MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
MEMBER CERTIFIED AUDIT OF CIRCULATIONS, INC.

Circulation phone number:
800-781-3214

Periodicals postage paid at Astoria, OR

ADVERTISING OWNERSHIP

All advertising copy and illustrations prepared by The Astorian become the property of The Astorian and may not be reproduced for any use without explicit prior approval.

COPYRIGHT ©
Entire contents © Copyright,
2021 by The Astorian.

Printed on
recycled paper

Subscription rates
Effective January 12, 2021

MAIL

EZpay (per month).....\$10.75
13 weeks in advance.....\$37.00
26 weeks in advance.....\$71.00
52 weeks in advance.....\$135.00

DIGITAL

EZpay (per month).....\$8.25

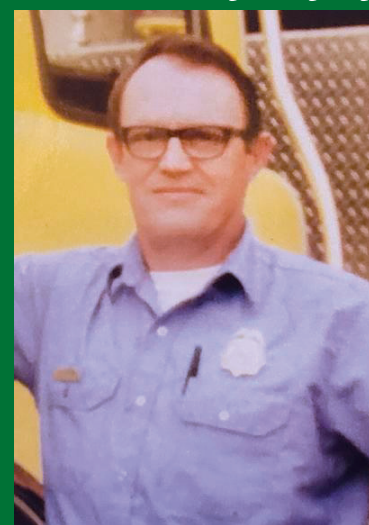
WANTED

Alder and Maple Saw Logs & Standing Timber

Northwest Hardwoods • Longview, WA

Contact: John Anderson • 360-269-2500

Celebration of Life for



James B McDermott

August 21st 11 am to 1 pm
at the Warrenton Shilo Columbia Room