



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Dungeness crab landings arrive at Hallmark Fisheries' processing plant in Newport.

Crab season: Industry almost starting from scratch

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of Thursday. And the crab, as Cotte can attest, is beautiful and full.

Cotte has heard some confusion from buyers about why they can't get exactly what they want now that the season has opened. They see pictures on social media of crab landings at local ports: Boats coming in, the decks loaded with crab.

However, processors up and down the Oregon Coast continue to report a shortage of workers. Boats have also struggled to find crew. The shortages have slowed what has otherwise been a fantastic start to the season, said Tim Novotny, spokesman for the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission.

"But," Novotny cautioned, "it's week one."

The industry was almost starting from scratch this season.

"Even in the best of circumstances, it might have taken a while to get crab some-

where," Novotny said.

Everything else appears to have fallen into place.

Some in the industry theorized the scarcity of crab last season could put fishermen in a strong position to negotiate a good starting price per pound this season.

Last season, already delayed by marine toxins and low meat fill results, fishermen fought for a starting price of around \$3 per pound. This season, buyers arrived at the bargaining table with offers between \$4.75 and \$5 per pound — the highest opening price per pound on record for the fishery, according to the state.

The fishery had already received an encouraging go-ahead from the state in November after pre-season testing showed high meat yield in crabs across the region and the marine toxin domoic acid was nowhere to be seen.

Even a feared ocean "dead zone" appears to have cleared for

now. Over the summer, researchers warned of an extended season of low-oxygen levels in waters off Oregon and Washington state. Such zones can be deadly for crab.

The Pacific Northwest has regularly experienced these hypoxia seasons for two decades. But the event that began in the spring hit earlier and lasted far longer than any other hypoxic event recorded on the West Coast in the last 35 years. Sensors were still picking up low-oxygen levels into October.

Winter storms seemed to have helped clear the water for now.

"We get to take a breather until the spring when the risk of hypoxia starts up again," said Francis Chan, a marine ecologist with Oregon State University.

Chan distributed several dozen dissolved oxygen sensors to commercial crab fishermen last year to expand tracking of low oxygen areas. He expects to deploy these sensors again closer to spring.

Bus drivers: Hazen is ready to defend concept

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In order to reinstate the bus routes that were cut in August, Hazen said, the transit district would need about eight new drivers. But there is no guarantee the returning citizen program will bring him any.

People released from prison return to the counties were their criminal cases were adjudicated. Hazen is prepared to work with transit agencies across the state to help trainees land jobs.

While the program has not accelerated as quickly in Iowa, Castillo said, she and Hazen have held meetings with transit agencies throughout the country to explain the opportunity. Word is traveling fast.

"This is an opportunity and we need to do something that helps the people that we serve, our communities become safer by employing people and it helps us fill a need," she said.

With guidance from Castillo's original concept, Sunset Empire plans to focus on recent information from

background checks that is primarily occupation-related during the interview process for potential trainees.

Job security is essential to reentering the community after incarceration, Castillo said in her blog post, and offers a better chance to avoid reoffending.

"I would be very excited to see the success of this, because it really would move all of us forward nationwide," said Rebecca Read, a transit district board member, during Thursday's meeting. "Maybe it's the transportation industry that is going to crack the code."

'I dare anybody to say that I am wrong on that'

Hazen and Castillo know that some negative reaction is inevitable. "The way that I approach it and what I have been telling people is every hire that you do, whether they have something on their background check or not, is a risk," Castillo said. "We have all hired somebody that has not been a stellar employee, so is it really based

on their background and their history because that isn't who they are today. That whole mindset needs to change."

Some former prisoners, like sex offenders and people with serious assault convictions, would be ineligible for the returning citizen program.

Hazen is ready to defend the concept.

"I am more than willing to go before any elected board and talk about this because I would challenge them, 'What would you rather do?'" he said. "Have someone come out of prison, work at a fast-food place, flipping burgers for minimum wage, getting back into their old routine of doing things and reoffending ... or would you rather support the training and get them into a good job with your agency and help them be successful and not be part of that vicious turnstile — that rotating door — where they are just going back into prison all the time?"

"I dare anybody to say that I am wrong on that."

Vista Ridge II: 'Many questions to be addressed'

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Morin claimed the geotechnical report is outdated and said the property is prone to landslides with "unsatisfactory geotechnical hazards."

Mike Haner, a neighbor, talked about water running down the street, underneath the ground and through the property. "It's raging constantly," he said. "To build on property that's got that much water running through it all the time is irresponsible."

Su Coddington, a neighbor, said there has always been a water issue in the Sunset Hills area. "Nature always wins," she said.

As a leader of the city's Community Emergency Response Team, she questioned the addition of more homes off Broadway.

"I'm a nurse and safety is always my first priority," said Coddington, who also serves on the Sunset Empire Park and Rec-

reation District Board. "I look at the fact that the one way in and out with the traffic pattern to Sunset Hills is only Broadway. And now you're going to add more traffic to that. I am so concerned that we're looking at a person building a house on an unsafe spot that will deteriorate with the Cascadia subduction event and we will have loss of life for Seaside."

"Please say 'no' to this concerning development."

The site had always been intended for development, engineer Mark Mead said on behalf of the owners, Sunset Ridge LLC.

The lots were originally included in the Vista Ridge development until that property was sold this year

by one of the original developers.

"Broadway was built to handle a lot of traffic up there," Mead said. "This piece was originally part of the Phillips' property, which was part of Sunset Hills originally. So that's why the streets are so wide up there, to allow for that development."

He said topographical maps are still valid and lot lines unchanged. The owners plan to meet any building codes, which are "a lot more strict" than any houses that have been built nearby.

While the nearby northern stream is salmon habitat, there was no sign of spawning fish, Mead said.

In a letter to the Planning Commission, members of Sunset Ridge LLC wrote they are working with local contractors with experience in the area for many years.

"These professionals will use all the technology and techniques required

to preserve and protect the stream and any other sensitive areas in the process of their work," they wrote. "All work will be done as required by approved plans and inspected by the appropriate local officials and inspectors."

Robin Montero, the chairwoman of the Planning Commission, proposed a continuance.

"There are many questions to be addressed," she said. "I think I'd roll it into January because I don't want to rush anybody because this is not something you can just run through."

Commissioners unanimously approved the continuance. The application returns at the commission's Jan. 4 meeting.

COMMISSIONERS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE CONTINUANCE. THE APPLICATION RETURNS AT THE COMMISSION'S JAN. 4 MEETING.

ZIP code: Since the 1960s, Gearhart mail has been routed through the Seaside Post Office

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Those already getting home delivery could face delays or even elimination of the service. "It's more about the bean counters that are already trying to cut the services in spots that will be terminated and save a fair amount of money by not delivering to Gearhart anymore," Jesse said. "When you say there's wide support for this, my guess is you're not seeing wide support for it in places that are getting mail delivery."

Since the 1960s, Gearhart mail has been routed through the Seaside Post Office to the Gearhart Post Office.

The Gearhart Post Office became a contract satellite office of Seaside Post Office in 1961. The change was made as a cost-saving measure, however, the Postal Service agreed that Gearhart would continue to receive mail addressed to "Gearhart, Oregon."

"As far as I am able to determine, Gearhart has never made a formal request and has never solicited assistance from its con-

gressional delegation to achieve this goal," Warren said.

City Attorney Peter Watts said during the ZIP code request process the post office will look at the overall impact on local customers, conducting surveys to see if the majority of residents favor the new ZIP.

One of the things that they'd be looking for is community support, Watts said.

Should the potential negatives outweigh the benefits, there are multiple off-ramps the City Council could take in order to step back from the process. "As I understand it, if the service is diminished as a result of this, it wouldn't happen," he said.

City councilors approved the resolution in a 4-1 vote. Jesse voted against it.

"It will be long, deliberative, and we probably will have to do a Survey Monkey and get community input and demonstrate broad support," Warren said. "But, so far, it looks like we have broad support, so we have to start the process somewhere and this is the way to start it."

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