

## IN BRIEF

## Chinook man killed in crash on Astoria Bridge

A Chinook, Washington, man was killed in a car crash Thursday night on the Astoria Bridge.

Stephen Schemel, 62, was heading southbound on U.S. Highway 101 when his 2003 Mini Cooper veered into the northbound lane and collided with a 2000 Ford F-250.

Police said Schemel was exceeding the speed limit and not wearing a seatbelt. The bridge was closed for an extended period while authorities investigated the crash.

## State discloses virus cases at local schools

The Oregon Health Authority has disclosed two new coronavirus cases at schools in Clatsop County.

Both cases were students, according to the health authority's weekly outbreak report. One case was from Warrenton Grade School, while the other case was from Seaside Middle School.

## Community college receives grant for maritime program

The maritime program at Clatsop Community College was awarded a \$37,500 grant from the Roundhouse Foundation, a philanthropic group based in Sisters that assists regional organizations and the challenges associated with rural culture and landscapes.

The funds will be used to purchase equipment, such as a life raft training model and jumbo immersion suits for safety training classes, as well as other items to assist the maritime science degree program, the college announced on Tuesday.

The foundation has challenged the college to raise scholarship funds that match or exceed the grant total.

## Knappa receives additional funding for bond project

The Knappa School District expects to receive an additional \$2 million to boost the bond that will fund a number of projects and improvements at schools.

Along with a \$4 million state grant, the total budget will reach \$20 million.

The average tax rate will be below the projected \$2.20 per \$1,000 of assessed value, saving taxpayers \$240,000 over the term of the bond, Knappa Superintendent Bill Fritz said on Friday.

Despite a rough market in the wake of bad inflation news, the bond sale went favorably, Fritz added. The bond, which was approved by voters in November, will mature in 25 years.

— *The Astorian*

## Oregon mayors push state for emergency homeless shelter money

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler is leading a lobbying effort to pressure the state to immediately fund temporary homeless shelters a week after announcing a planned crackdown on homeless camps near busy roadways.

Wheeler joined Mosier Mayor Arlene Burns and Eugene Mayor Lucy Vinis in introducing the idea to other mayors at a Friday call for the League of Oregon Cities.

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

## DEATHS

Jan. 5, 2022

**ROCKWELL, Larry**  
Lee, 77, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

Feb. 9, 2022

**WISEMAN, Levoy**  
74, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

## MEMORIAL

Wednesday, Feb. 16

**DONAHUE-BERNARD, Georgina** "Georgie" Faye — Celebration of life memorial service at 1:30 p.m., Willamette National Cemetery, 11800 S.E. Mount Scott Blvd. in Portland.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

**Jewell School District Board**, 6 p.m., 83874 Oregon Highway 103.

**Seaside City Council**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY

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

**Clatsop County Fair Board**, 5:30 p.m., 92937 Walluski Loop, Astoria.

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

## DRIVE-THRU



A sign outside Plaza Jalisco makes a subtle reference to a car crash at the restaurant at Marine Drive and Eighth Street during icy conditions this winter.

Lydia Ely/The Astorian

## House bill would ban mink farming

### Supporters want to protect mink from inhumane treatment

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
*Capital Press*

U.S. House lawmakers have passed a ban on mink farming in the U.S. as part of an omnibus bill intended to strengthen American competition with China.

Fur Commission USA, the trade association representing mink farmers, called it "a sneak attack on rural America."

The legislation was added as an amendment to the America COMPETES Act of 2022, which passed the House in early February mostly along party lines. The package is likely to face Republican opposition in the narrowly divided Senate.

Supporters cheered the measure as necessary to protect mink from inhumane treatment and halt COVID-19 spillover.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, mink farmers produced 1.41 million pelts in 2020. Wisconsin is the largest pelt-producing state, followed by Utah, Idaho and Oregon.

The amendment adopted in the House version of the America COMPETES Act would ban mink farming in the U.S. by the end of 2022. It was sponsored by U.S. Reps. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn.; Nancy Mace, R-S.C.; Peter DeFazio, D-Ore.; Jim Cooper, D-Tenn.; Andy Levin, D-Mich.; and Joe Neguse, D-Colo.

"Factory farming of mink threatens public health, especially as we continue fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic," DeLauro said in a statement. "The evidence is clear: mink operations can



Fur Commission USA

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a provision in the America COMPETES Act that would ban mink farming nationwide.

### SEVERAL COUNTRIES IN EUROPE HAVE ALREADY PASSED OR ARE CONSIDERING BANS ON MINK FARMING.

incubate and spread new COVID-19 variants and pose a unique threat of extending the pandemic."

The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service reports 17 mink farms have had confirmed cases of COVID-19, including one in Oregon.

Mink-to-human spread of the virus has been reported in major pelt-producing countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Poland, and data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest it might have occurred in the U.S.

Despite this, the CDC says, "Currently, there is no evidence that mink are playing a significant role in the spread of COVID-19 to people."

Wayne Pacelle, the presi-

dent of the nonprofit Animal Wellness Action, said mink farms are a danger to public health because they pack so many animals together in confinement, allowing them to easily spread the virus and possibly incubate new variants that can be shared with humans.

"This is just an unnecessary risk," said Pacelle, whose group is pushing the ban. He is the former head of the Humane Society of the United States.

Several countries in Europe have already passed or are considering bans on mink farming.

Denmark, the world's largest producer of pelts, culled 17 million mink in response to outbreaks at more than 200 farms, and extended a moratorium on mink breeding

through 2023. The Netherlands — where the first outbreak was detected — will also prohibit mink farming beginning in 2024.

USDA figures show the production of mink pelts has declined over the last six years. After peaking at 3.76 million pelts in 2014, the total fell 62.5% to 1.41 million pelts in 2020.

The average price per pelt has also fallen from \$57.70 to \$33.70. The price was even lower in 2019, at \$21.30.

Pacelle said there is virtually no domestic market for mink. About 80% of all pelts are exported to China.

"We thought it was relevant to the China competition bill," Pacelle said. "Essentially, we have a very small, unprofitable business operating in the U.S. that sells almost all of the pelts produced to China, while China is outsourcing all the environmental risks to the U.S."

Challis Hobbs, the Fur Commission USA executive director, said members are "shocked by the open hostility" of the proposed ban, and accused activists of exploiting the pandemic to further their goals of ending animal use.

"Proponents' use of unfounded scare tactics to justify this extreme taking of private property and livelihoods must be stopped immediately," Hobbs said.

More than 85% of pelts used in the world's fur trade comes from small, family-run farms, the commission says. Farms are licensed and regulated by state departments of agriculture, and the commission has developed standard guidelines for everything from feeding and cage size to transportation and harvest.

A COVID-19 vaccine for mink has also been released by Zoetis, a pharmaceutical company that specializes in medicine for pets and livestock.

## Signs: Could be installed by spring or early summer

*Continued from Page A1*

The signs will feature maps showing the length of the Riverwalk and points of interest along the way, including restrooms, trolley stops, historic points of interest, public areas and amenities.

Mile-marker signs will list the nearest Astoria Riverfront Trolley stop and the distance from both ends of the trail. Interpretive signs along the trail will be replaced.

The trolley stop signs will feature smaller maps showing nearby amenities and destinations, and display the hours and dates of operation

for the trolley. The signs will also include a QR code that will direct people to a website, maintained by the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association, listing nearby businesses.

Jonah Dart-McLean, the city's parks and recreation director, said the new Portland Loo-style outdoor bathroom will be placed at the Astoria Nordic Heritage Park, which is expected to be completed by summer.

Lighting will be added to the trestles through the downtown core to the Holiday Inn Express & Suites. The lights will be bulkhead lights, similar to the ones by Pier 11.

Bollard lights will be added from the Columbia River Maritime Museum to Mill Pond. A separate grant from the Oregon Department of Transportation will add lighting further east to 39th Street.

"We're hoping to have the

signs fabricated and installed in the spring or early summer," Dart-McLean said.

He hopes the bathroom and lighting will be completed around that time, but he said it could be later if there are material or other delays.

## the Astorian

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