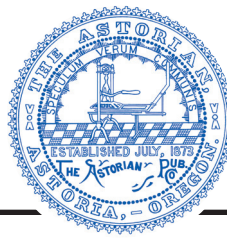


OPINION



the Astorian

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OUR VIEW

Green crab a serious threat to coastal ecosystems

Thanks to ongoing efforts in Willapa Bay and an informative Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife webinar last month, it has become apparent that invasive European green crab are an enormous threat to the ecology and economics of the Washington state coast.

As explored in recent Chinook Observer news coverage, these small and voracious crab that are native to the northeast Atlantic Ocean and the Baltic Sea are running amok in the Pacific Northwest. They are a particular threat to Manila clams and similar species that have become a major cash crop in Willapa Bay. Mature oyster shells are generally too hard for the crab to crack. Willapa, Grays Harbor and Makah tribal waters are all considered “hot spots” for the crab invasion.

A survey last year along the north shore of the Columbia River estuary found no green crab there — it may be exposed to too much fresh water for them — but two were found at Waikiki in Cape Disappointment State Park, which might present a future worry for lovers of razor clams.

Although there’s some crossover, green crab tend to occupy somewhat different water depths than Dungeness. But crab all eat



Steve Ringman/Seattle Times

Washington state is somewhat belatedly throwing money at the problem of green crab and may come up with strategies other places have not.

one another’s young, and their own, so having an abundant new species in local waters seems likely to eventually impact all native crab.

The East Coast, Australia, South Africa and other places are already in the throes of trying to limit green crab damage, with only limited success. Partly because of the need to avoid accidentally killing desirable species, most control mechanisms have significant drawbacks. Physically trapping the green crab seems to be the best of several bad options, but requires labor-inten-

sive ongoing efforts.

In 12 days trapping through Feb. 20, one Willapa shellfish grower caught 1,100 green crab, with no appreciable drop-off from one day to the next. And as discussed during the Department of Fish and Wildlife webinar, an ambitious trapping campaign in a small California estuary resulted the next year in an explosion in the green crab population — taking out the adults in effect removed the apex predators and allowed many more young crab to survive to adulthood.

Hope is not lost. Washington state is somewhat belatedly throwing money at the problem and may come up with strategies other places have not. It remains important to the West Coast as a whole to more carefully regulate ballast-water discharges and other vectors that spread invasive species. For example, a slightly more cold-tolerant version of green crab — not yet found on this coast — could colonize far to the north if they gain a foothold.

Invasive species are one of the disastrous themes of our time. Some, like the spartina grass that once threatened to turn Willapa Bay into a vast monoculture meadow, have been successfully curtailed. But the time is fast arriving when we won’t be talking about individual species but about entire “migrating menageries” — entire suites of living things that are inevitably shifting into our local habitats as our world’s climatic zones shift around.

Instead of individual incursions, we may need to find ways to manage whole diverse armies of invaders.

This doesn’t mean we should give in or lose hope about preserving native species, but it may be a better approach to the challenges we face this century.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Asking you

Gearhart voters: After many years of investigation and study, the Gearhart City Council has unanimously passed Measure 4-213 asking for a bond to build a 21st-century fire and police station near U.S. Highway 101 and Highlands Lane.

Your support of this bond would provide protection and community assistance for many years to come. I am asking each and every one of you to vote “yes” in the May 17 election in support of this bond. It is the right thing to do for both you, and our first responders, who provide the continuing great service and safety, for which we are very thankful.

Please vote early. As Mayor Paulina Cockrum has asked, “If not now, when?” Thank you for your consideration and support.

KERRY SMITH
Councilor, Gearhart City Council

Object strongly

Oregon Public Broadcasting had an article about Oregon lawmakers raising their own pay. It states that community groups, labor unions and the Portland Business Alliance are promoting this.

I object strongly to this body raising their own pay because they have done a terrible job in representing the people of Oregon — which is their only job!

Gov. Kate Brown has the distinction of being the least popular governor in America. And the Democratic legislators follow the governor’s lead like little ducks in a row.

The people of Oregon have lost their jobs, homes and businesses responding to the severe pandemic restrictions, while the state of Oregon has continually had some of the lowest numbers of cases and deaths when compared to other states.

So please let your legislators know they don’t need a raise.

DIXIE GAINER
Nehalem

Egregious disservice

The Gearhart City Council, under the influence of City Administrator Chad



LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Astorian. Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer’s name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship. All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month. Letters written in response

to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

Sweet, has committed an egregious disservice to the Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department. This City Council has proposed a preposterous solution to replace a much-needed fire station.

We have no need for a “resiliency” station. A resiliency station already exists at Camp Rilea. We have paid for, and

will continue to support this facility, with our tax dollars and the deployment of our efficient and heroic Oregon National Guard in the event of a coastal disaster.

The National Guard has never failed to respond to disasters throughout our nation and can be trusted to provide relief equal to the level of need.

In addition to this excessive approach to need versus want, this council will callously commit low- to- fixed-income retirees, families and individuals with an economic encumbrance.

This City Council seems to embrace and proliferate the narrative that Gearhart is only for the ultra-rich, who can afford the largest fire station in the smallest city of Clatsop County.

Voting “no” is not an act of disloyalty to the fire department; rather, it is communicating to this council and its city administrator that they have exhibited genuine disregard for the full-time citizens of Gearhart, and need to reevaluate what we really need to ensure the fire department has what they need to respond to day-to-day emergencies.

Help the Gearhart City Council become responsible leaders and vote “no.”

JOY and BRIAN SIGLER
Gearhart