

## MURRAY JOINS MAPLETON

SPORTS — B



## An American tradition

INSIDE — SCHOOL NEWS



# Siuslaw News

126TH YEAR | ISSUE NO. 95

SERVING WESTERN LANE COUNTY SINCE 1890

FLORENCE, OREGON



PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Mrs. Claus (above) and Santa Claus (right) rode into Old Town on a Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue fire truck and took photos with youth in Gazebo Park during the annual Florence Holiday Festival on Saturday.



PHOTO BY DEBBIE MEYER

## WATER RIGHTS International Paper sells Gardiner property

*Water rights agreement concerns Siltcoos, Tahkenitch lake residents*

In addition to purchasing 427 acres zoned heavy industrial from International Paper Company (IP) in Gardiner, Tacoma based Industrial Harbor USA, LLC. (IH) also acquired the rights to 15 million gallons of water per day as part of the \$3.3 million deal that closed Monday, Nov. 21.

BY JACK DAVIS  
Siuslaw News

The Gardiner site is the former location of IP's paper mill, lumber mill and sawmill. Construction on the mill complex began in 1962. At its peak, IP employed nearly 1,000 people at its Gardiner location. The downturn in the Oregon lumber industry caused the facility to close in 1998.

IP originally valued the water rights to the two lakes at \$12 million and the 427-acre mill complex site at \$10 million.

The water rights specified that of the 15 million gallons authorized, IP could take up to 11.7 million gallons of water per day from Tahkenitch Lake for non-industrial use. A pump was installed in Siltcoos Lake to pump water into Tahkenitch Lake to make up the difference if needed.

Dunes City Manager Jamie Mills said, "IP, in order to keep their water rights active on Siltcoos Lake, would use it once a year, running the pump for 24 hours. That is all they would do. Whoever purchases it will be allowed to use a lot more than that."

IH has not said what types of business it will be recruiting for the site.

"A representative of IP told me that they took the pump out of Siltcoos, where it would pump water into Tahkenitch Lake," Mills said. "For the new owners to use those water rights they would have to go back and install a new pump to standards set by the state."

She added, "Tahkenitch is the primary water source. Siltcoos is the supplemental source, only when they can no longer draw from Tahkenitch. If I lived on Tahkenitch I would be very concerned."

According to Mills, representatives from the governor's office, county and tribal members and State Sen. Arnie Roblan met last summer to discuss Siltcoos and Tahkenitch lake water concerns when the South Coast Water District's system, which services Siltcoos Lake residents, failed.

"I made them aware that (the water rights) issue was dangling out there. At that point in time the transaction was in escrow but had not closed," Mills said. "The state is aware of it and Susan Douthit, the Douglas County Watermaster who oversees the diversion at Siltcoos, is very aware of the situation, for which I am very thankful."

State Sen. Arnie Roblan said, "I have spent many years working with IP and the City of Reedsport and value our relationship. We hope to keep the industrial land as industrial land and to determine what works best for the region's economic development goals."

Roblan added, "Although we had little information on the details of the sale, we will work closely and diligently with the city, the new owners and water users in our communities on the future use of the property."

In addition to the mill sites and the water rights, the agreement transfers over the ownership of the two dams located on the

See **DRIVE 6A**

See **WATER 6A**

## Santa Claus — he's coming to town!

A wet but enthusiastic crowd greeted Santa and Mrs. Claus in Florence's Old Town on Saturday, Nov. 26, to usher in the winter holiday season at the Florence Holiday Festival.

Chamber of Commerce Event Coordinator Nancy Pearson said the afternoon was well received by those in attendance.

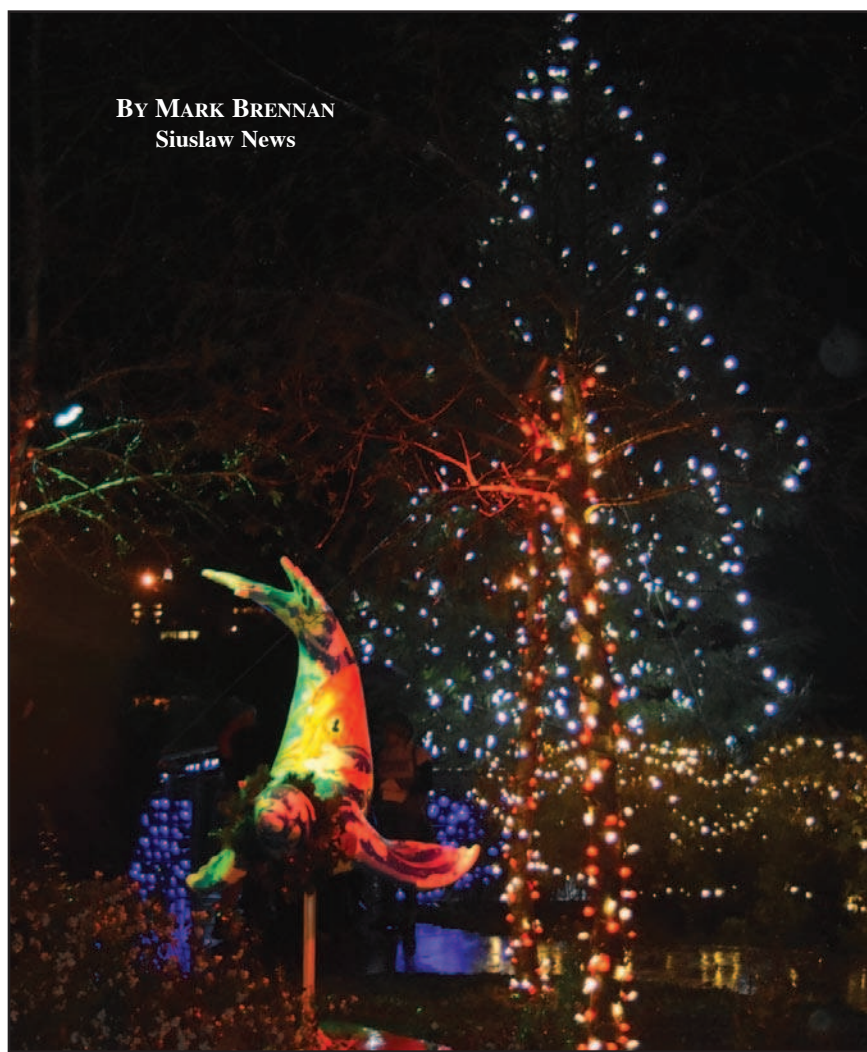
"Other than the rain, the festival was a great success. There were tons of kids to see Santa and to take hayrides, and the singing was a big hit," she said.

The festivities began with Santa's arrival at Old Town Park, continued throughout the drizzly afternoon with free hayrides and culminated after 5:30 p.m.

The highlight of the day was the lighting of the community Christmas tree by Florence Mayor Joe Henry, which went without a hitch as the rain stopped for just long enough to allow some caroling and the flip of the switch that lit the tree. **SEE PAGE 6A FOR MORE PHOTOS**

## Santa's arrival in Old Town signals start of holiday events

BY MARK BRENNAN  
Siuslaw News



Florence's community Christmas tree is at the Siuslaw River Bridge Interpretive Center on Bay Street in Historic Old Town.

## Casino helps deliver holiday gifts to Florence youth

*Three Rivers Casino Resort sponsors holiday promotions, 13th annual Toy Drive*

BY MARK BRENNAN  
Siuslaw News

Three Rivers Casino Resort Consumer Marketing Director Rich Colton wants the community to know about and participate in the casino's 13th annual Toy Drive, which is happening right now.

"It's amazing that we have been doing this for 13 years," Colton said. "Basically, you bring an unwrapped toy into the casino for donation and you will receive \$5 of free play. This is through December 16, and we will then take the toys over to the Soroptimists and they will divvy

them up."

This is just one of a number of efforts by Three Rivers to positively impact the community, according to Andy Tidball, promotions coordinator for the casino.

Tidball was raised in Florence and he said he sees this and other efforts by Three Rivers as an opportunity to contribute to his hometown.

"I grew up here. For me, it's important to give back to the community that gave to me when I was a kid," Tidball said. "So for us to do stuff like the coat drive and the toy drive and even the food drive, it really helps people in our town."

Three Rivers has a number of special promotions that it spearheads, including the recently completed coat drive for the Siuslaw Public School District.

"Our patrons donated 82 coats and we delivered them to the Florence PTA. They distributed them to the elementary school, middle school and all the way up to the high school," Colton said. "This was our first year doing this and our goal next year is to collect and distribute 100 coats."

While some of the casino's giving campaigns are seasonally focused, some are once a year and others run year round.

Colton said, "For Veteran's Day,

we donated 416 buffet lunches to vets, and they seemed to really appreciate that. And all year long we have been collecting money and food donations for Florence and Mapleton Food Share. Basically you can bring in three cans of food on Monday and play bingo for free. We also have a promotion where folks that donate three cans of food can play 18 holes of free golf on December 10."

When asked why he and his staff seemed to take these efforts so seriously, Colton's response was measured and somber.