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YourFidalgo B1



ANACORTES AMERICAN

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\$1.50



FILE PHOTO

Wyman's Marina, shown here being demolished in 2013, is one of the sites the Port of Anacortes cleaned up.

Port, Ecology partnership led to \$64 million in site cleanups



BY RICHARD WALKER
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Kathy Pittis remembers what the central waterfront area was like before the cleanups.

Industries that had long provided jobs that fed local families and paid mortgages had left a mark on the environment. Bulk fuel had leaked from underground fuel storage tanks and supply lines. Log storage, lumber milling and pulp milling had left behind metals, petroleum hydrocarbons, PCBs and dioxins in upland and in-water soils.

Now, when Pittis and her family walk the esplanade at Cap Sante Marina or visit Seafarers Memorial Park, "it makes my heart sing."



CONTRIBUTED / PORT OF ANACORTES

Eelgrass is returning to the nearshore at the former Scott Paper Mill site, which is now the home of Seafarers Memorial Park.

Cap Sante is a vibrant place, with restaurants and maritime-related businesses. The marina participates in the Clean Marina program, a voluntary program run by many states in coordination with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association

that encourages environmentally sound operating and maintenance procedures. At Seafarers Memorial Park, eelgrass is thriving and provides habitat for surf smelt and other critters.

Pittis witnessed the change as a port staff

member and, later, as a port commissioner — not only the environmental transformation, but a change in the relationship between the environment and how business is done along the waterfront.

See *Port*, page A8

District aims for more time in class

BY BRIANA ALZOLA
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Gov. Jay Inslee announced March 25 that Washington schools can follow new, less restrictive Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines about students in schools.

The CDC guidelines say that schools only need to put 3 feet of distance between desks in classrooms, a reduction from the previous guideline of 6 feet.

That would mean students in schools for more in-person hours during the week.

"We are really excited that our state is moving in this direction," Anacortes School District Superintendent Justin Irish said. "Not only are we working on a plan this year, but we will have plenty of opportunity this summer to figure out what school will look like in the fall."

Hopefully, restrictions continue to ease, Irish said.

The 6-foot buffers are still required during meals, activities and in common areas.

According to the Anacortes School District, staff is working to implement changes as soon as possible.

Right now, the district is looking at all grade levels and is working on figuring out when changes may be put into effect, Irish said. A lot depends on staffing challenges and having enough support staff and bus drivers to be able to have more students in schools at a time.

"We are working as fast as we can," Irish said.

Changes in the school day could mean changes in when school starts and ends to accommodate bus routes.

The district has a major challenge right

See *Schools*, page A7

New director of state parks comes from Anacortes

BY QUESTEN INGHAM
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Anacortes-raised Peter Mayer took over this month as director of Washington State Parks.

As head of the agency, he'll oversee about 1,000 employees and 124 state parks that saw an increase of 1.5 million visitors from 2019 to 2020.

Even more people might go to parks to re-engage with family and friends as the pandemic subsides, Mayer told the American. He hopes to be ready for them.

"We have seen the incredible popularity and increased attendance to our state parks. We feel they play a big role in improving us physically and emotionally," Mayer said.

He also wants to get more youth into the parks through employment opportunities and outdoor education programs.

Mayer had an early start in parks work. In the second grade, he would help set up before

his soccer games at Storvik Park and eventually was given keys to open and clean the restrooms.

"It was my first experience being entrusted with responsibility," he said.

As Mayer completed his education, he worked his way up through the ranks at Anacortes Parks and Recreation, from working on maintenance crews to managing Washington Park. He graduated from Anacortes High School in 1987.

Mayer and his wife still have family and friends who live in Anacortes.

"I give a lot of credit to Anacortes Parks and Recreation for getting me exposed and enabling me to having some growing responsibilities maintaining Storvik Park. It really grew into something that's led to where I am today," he said.

Mayer has a master's degree in parks and recreation administration from Washington State University, where he also completed his undergraduate studies.

See *Parks*, page A4

Inslee, other leaders talk climate change during visit

BY QUESTEN INGHAM
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Gov. Jay Inslee visited Anacortes on Tuesday to speak in support of two climate bills currently in the state Legislature.

Joining him at Seafarers Memorial Park to speak in support of the bills were Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Chairman Steve Edwards, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Executive Director Matthew Hepner and Michelle Simmons of Silfab Solar, a solar panel company in Bellingham.

"As we are defeating COVID-19 with science, confidence and action, we have to take similar action against the climate crisis, and we know that we can do this," Inslee said.



QUESTEN INGHAM / ANACORTES AMERICAN

Gov. Jay Inslee holds up an orca ornament given to him by Port of Anacortes Commissioner Kathy Pittis as he speaks on addressing the threat to orcas from climate change.

pollution to a virus, and said it is contributing to the demise of salmon and

orcas, as well as increasing wildfires throughout the country.

Inslee then called on

See *Climate*, page A7



Views

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letter guidelines

The Views page provides a space for civil community conversation about events affecting this area. There are some restrictions, including a length limit of 400 words (200 for election endorsements.)

Letters for publication should have one author and be opinion-based, not personal reporting or public service announcements. Please send news tips to news@goanacortes.com. Provide your name, address and phone number with submission.

More details on goanacortes.com under the Views tab.

Construction would change feel of town

450 condos, townhomes, apartments etc on the MJB property is not everyone's idea of the "right way to go," per a city council member.

That will have a huge impact on

our town.

Traffic, public works needs, public safety needs will all be maxed out. More importantly, the appeal of Anacortes will be forever changed.

These "higher amenity" developments chip away at our town's core, not enhance it. Anacortes is rapidly becoming a wealthy

white town. I would like someone to connect the dots on how these higher amenity condos will ease housing costs elsewhere in the city.

Speak up Anacortes before we become a Bellevue.

FRANCEENE NEBULONI
Anacortes

Looking *Anacortes AMERICAN* Back

March 30, 1911

An unfortunate condition in Anacortes has made itself more apparent during the present week than at any time heretofore, and that is the dearth of residences. Several families who have come to Anacortes in the past few days with the intention of making Anacortes their home have been compelled to leave for the reason that no houses could be secured.

March 31, 1921

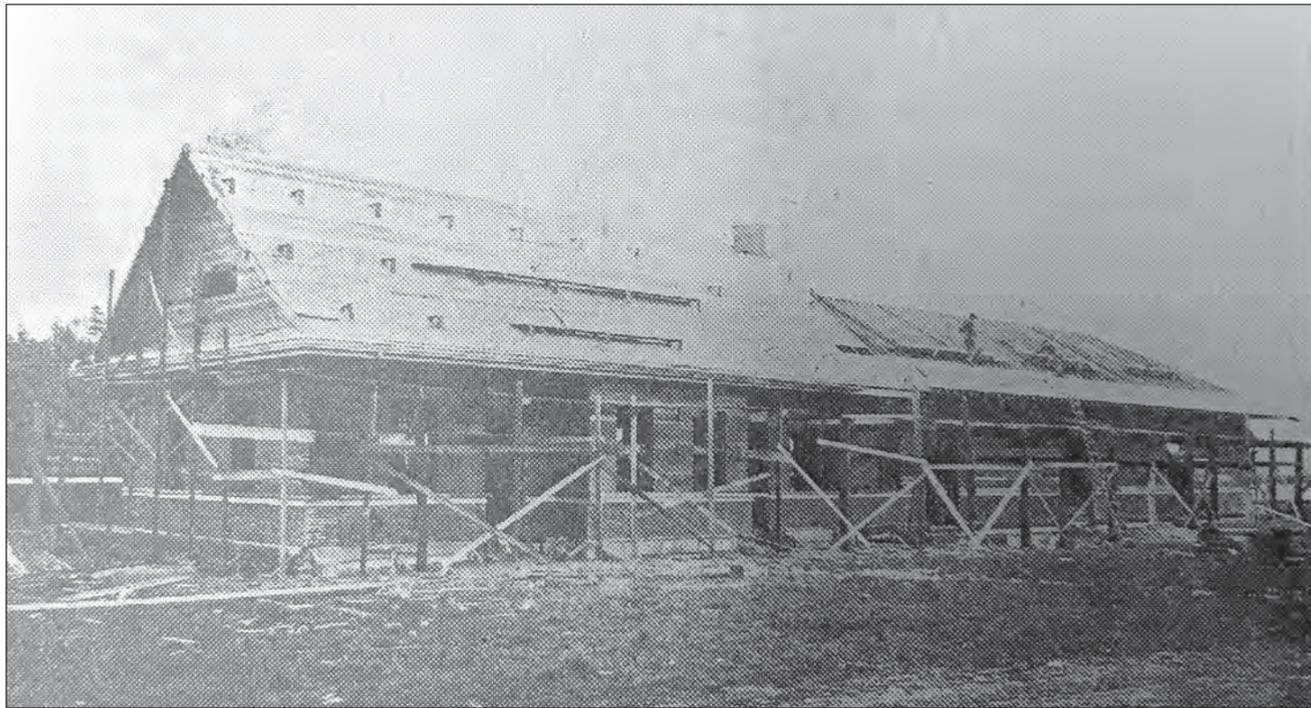
Sunday afternoon the bugle will sound the last post, the farewell volley will be fired and all that remains of one of Anacortes' immortals will be at rest in Grandview, when the body of Harry Johnson will be interred. This Anacortes boy who gave his life in France will be given a military funeral, the body arriving Thursday night. ... Mayor Queen has issued a proclamation asking all citizens to pay their last respects to the heroic dead.

April 2, 1931

Mrs. Alex Watson, of North Dakota, who is visiting her mother, Mrs. G. P. McGee and her aunt Mrs. J. C. Farrell, lost her purse containing \$4,700 in securities and cash, when she laid it down on a counter in a department store in Bellingham, to examine some goods.

March 29, 1951

Rhetorically speaking, it is considered poor taste to paint the lily. But artistically speaking - ah, now that is another matter entirely. Louise H. Williams, American artist, who is doing much to perpetuate Washington state blooms in water color, says she gets more



March 30, 1911: Construction is moving along at a lively rate on the new Great Northern Depot, a force of ten men being at work at the present time. The frame work and roof are practically complete. The structure, which is located on R avenue, will be 32 x 150 feet in dimensions, extending from Sixth across Seventh street.

Right: April 1, 1971: TRAFFIC STOPPER - Traffic just outside of Anacortes on Highway 536 was cut to one way as a result of a rock slide that closed off the southbound lanes. The screen installed over the rock cliff was all that kept the highway from being completely impassible as close to three tons of rock gave way from the cliff.

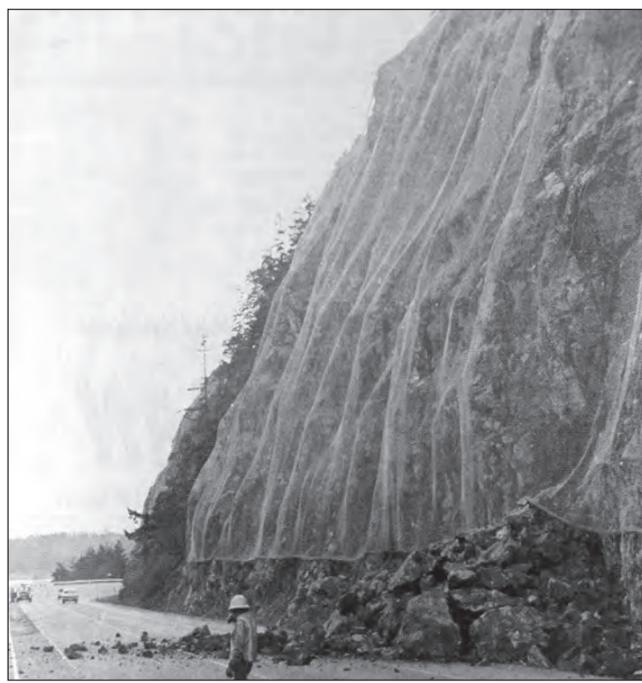
satisfaction from painting the lily than any other flower.

March 30, 1961

The Anacortes branch of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints has recently purchased property just west of the Heart Lake Road in the vicinity of 39th street. A new chapter is to be built here in the near future, according to Allen Larsen, president of the local branch.

April 1, 1971

"Let's put Anacortes back in the fish business," local resident Milo Moore told the Anacortes Chamber of Commerce Monday. ... Right now he is working on designing floating fishing farms for possible use in Alaska which will produce three times the growth that hatcheries can by using warmer water near the river mouths and feed.



Parks

Continued from page A1

He worked in different roles at Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation, Mercer Island Parks and Recreation, Fort Casey Historical State Park and former state park Chief Timothy.

While a college student, he interned at Metro Parks Tacoma, where he would eventually return as deputy executive director almost 30 years later in 2017, which was his most recent position before becoming director of state parks.

"I've never seen part-



CONTRIBUTED

Peter Mayer, shown here serving as Washington Park manager in 1987, is now in charge of all state parks.

nerships in collaboration to the level and depth I've seen in Tacoma and I think that's why they distinguish themselves from other communities that face similar challenges," Mayer said.

Mayer also has a special connection to Tacoma, as his grandfather, notable Anacortes resident and once state Sen. Paul Luvera Sr., built a totem pole that still stands at a Tacoma park, and his great-grandfather Aaron Titlow built a lodge hotel, which is now Titlow Park and Lodge, managed by the Metro Parks Tacoma.

Prior to helping lead Metro Parks Tacoma, Mayer served as deputy director and chief oper-

ating officer for the Snohomish Health District for five years. He made the move over to public health in part because he had aspirations of becoming a city manager and wanted to expand his public administration experience. Mayer had served as assistant city manager on Mercer Island.

Now, one of his first goals as director of state parks is to continue to strengthen the many partnerships the agency has with volunteer groups.

"We couldn't accomplish half of what we do without these communities of interest and volunteers across the state," he said.

Mayer hopes to expand capital projects, including improved restrooms, showers and camping sites throughout the state parks system.

Mayer would also like to expand sheltered accommodations such as cabins and yurts.

"This provides an opportunity to our community who want to go out and camp, but don't have all the equipment," he said.

Mayer said he hopes to better connect state parks to "users, neighbors and communities of interest to assure our parks systems in the future reflects them and their recreational interests."

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