



CHINOOK OBSERVER

Pacific County all set for covid shots

State expects 1st vaccine vials next week

By **BRANDON CLINE**
Chinook Observer

LONG BEACH PENINSULA — With a coronavirus vaccine becoming available in the United

States as soon as this week, providers on the Long Beach Peninsula are preparing to receive and distribute the initial batch of doses before Christmas.

Both Ocean Beach Hospital and Peninsula Pharmacies have enrolled into the federal Covid-19 Vaccination Program, a necessary step in order to receive and distribute coronavirus vaccines procured by the federal government. With

Pfizer's emergency use authorization for its vaccine expected to be approved following a Dec. 10 Food and Drug Administration hearing, doses could be shipped throughout the country in just a matter of days.

The vaccines are expected to be shipped in batches of 975 doses, in a storage container with dry ice pellets that can be re-iced several times to help ensure the vaccine remains at the appropriate tem-

perature. Pfizer's vaccine must be stored at minus-70 degrees Celsius to be effective when administered.

The storage containers are critical for providers that do not have the ultra-cold freezers at their facilities, such as smaller, rural providers. Jeff Harrell, owner of Peninsula Pharmacies, said none of the company's pharmacies have ultra-cold freezers of their own, and have been told that the containers

the vaccines are being shipped in are roughly the size of five pizza boxes stacked on top of each other.

Larry Cohen, CEO of Ocean Beach Hospital, said Pacific County officials purchased an ultra-cold freezer for the hospital to have for storing the vaccine once it arrives, but the freezer's vendor is backlogged and it likely

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SOUTH COUNTY RAPID TESTS OFF TO FAST START



LUKE WHITTAKER

Wendy D'Agostino puts on personal protective equipment before collecting a covid sample from the first patient at the drive-thru covid rapid testing site on Thursday, Dec. 3 in Ilwaco.

Pacific County nears 500-case milestone

By **BRANDON CLINE**
Chinook Observer

SOUTH BEND — Adding 33 more cases in the past week, Pacific County nears a 500-case milestone since the start of the pandemic.

The county sits at 479 cases overall, according to a Dec. 7 news release from the Pacific County Health and Human Services Department. Of that total, 306 have been confirmed via a PCR test, and 173 are considered probable following a positive rapid test.

The county seems destined to cross the 500-case threshold by the end of the year, although the 33 cases reported by the health department since last Wednesday constitute a fairly steep reduction following back-to-back weeks of more than 100 cases. Still, it's a weekly figure that was unheard of for Pacific County prior to the current surge the county has been in the midst of for about a month.

According to weekly zip code data provided by the county health depart-



LUKE WHITTAKER

Wendy D'Agostino, Eric McMillan and Samantha Millner prepare a covid test sample taken moments earlier at the drive-thru covid rapid testing site on Thursday, Dec. 3 in Ilwaco.

ment, a clear majority of the new recent cases continue to be concentrated in people who list their permanent residence as Raymond or South Bend, with about a quarter of new cases consisting of peninsula residents.

Wahkiakum County reported five new cases over the past week, bringing

its total to 39. Clatsop County reported 35 new cases over the same period, increasing its total to 418 — still fewer cases than Pacific County has reported, even with a population about twice as large.

See Tests, Page A10

Court OKs deal to keep Jessie's afloat

San Francisco Pucci Foods taking over

By **LUKE WHITTAKER**
Chinook Observer

ILWACO — A new owner is set to take the helm at Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Co., allowing the landmark waterfront business to resume operations.

San Francisco-based Pucci Foods is positioned to take ownership after a ruling by Judge Goelz on Monday, Dec. 6, in Pacific County Superior Court in South Bend. This ends a several-month saga that started when the prominent fish-processing operation filed for receivership in February 2019.

Two bidders vied for the colorful facility at the Port of Ilwaco — John Phillips, owner of Nelson Crab in Tokeland, and Pucci, owned by Chris Lam in Hayward, California.

See Jessie's, Page A10

Young dad-to-be fights for life after collision on deadly curve

By **JEFF CLEMENS**
For the Observer

SMITH CREEK — One curve on U.S. Highway 101 north of Raymond is gaining a reputation as among the most treacherous spots on the scenic route through Pacific County. In the aftermath of several other serious 2020 wrecks, the section claimed two more vehicles last week and sent several people to the hospital, including one clinging to life.

Local law enforcement and emergency medical services from multiple agencies scrambled to the scene of a two-vehicle

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Meet Frank Lehn: Moderator of lively peninsula web page

Facebook guy boosts community, zaps rudeness

By **PATRICK WEBB**
For the Observer

In the much-needed crusade for civility, Frank Lehn is the Peninsula's leader.

It's a role he plays so diligently that he is garnering applause from Chinook to Leadbetter for his efforts to keep everyone speaking

PENINSULA FRIENDS

From the "about" page:
www.facebook.com/groups/245639117923

"Long Beach Peninsula Friends of Facebook is a group to help make the bottom left-hand corner of Washington the best place to live and play. Posting local things to see and do. Listing local community events and posting pictures to show the world. With the help of my friends, we can make this group awesome."

kindly.

Lehn is the administrator for the Long Beach Peninsula Friends of Facebook web page.

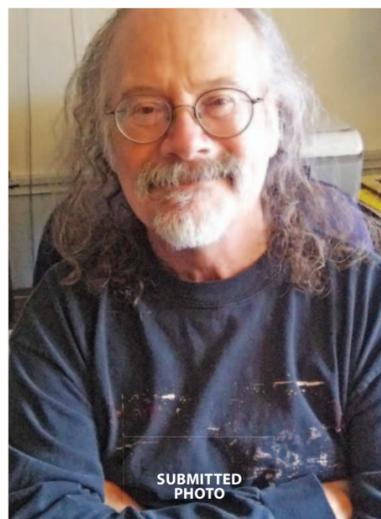
The page is dedicated to postings about the region's storied history of storms and shipwrecks, up-to-date weather and traffic alerts, recommendations for ser-

vices or projects, and more.

It's also a page that's "inhabited" by folks who grew up on the Peninsula and moved away, plus those who own second homes and visit periodically.

House hunters like Anita Lester

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

'I MAKE IT CLEAR THAT YOU NEED TO BE NICE TO PEOPLE.'

Frank Lehn, web page administrator

MORE INSIDE

In her darkest hour, neighborliness triumphs • A9



Curve

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head-on collision on US101 at milepost 63 only a couple miles north of Raymond at 6:08 p.m. on Dec. 4. Four Washington State Patrol units arrived a short time later and took over the investigation.

Due to the seriousness of the collision and injuries sustained, the roadway was shut down in both directions. Drivers were detoured down Smith Creek and Butte Creek Roads around the scene for 3 hours and 45 minutes.

Three injured

Responders found a 2002 Acura RSX-3D off the southbound lane of traffic with extensive damage and a male driver, 21-year-old Aaron Larsen of Cosmopolis, unconscious, unresponsive and clinging to life. The vehicle sustained massive damage to the passenger side and rear of the vehicle.

A 2008 Honda Pilot SUV was found in the southbound with extensive front end damage and two occupants inside. The female driver, 59-year-old Lorri Johnstone of Tumwater, was in serious condition. Her 26-year-old son, Colin Johnstone also of Tumwater, sustained non-life-threatening injuries.

Two helicopters from Airlift Northwest landed near the crash.

Larsen was transported to St. Joseph Hospital in Tacoma with life-threatening injuries. Lorri Johnstone was also transported to St. Joseph Hospital with serious but non-life-threatening injuries.

A Raymond Fire Department aid unit transported Colin Johnstone to Grays Harbor Hospital in Aberdeen.

Family provides an update

What should have been a joyful weekend for Larsen, who turned 21 on Dec. 6, ended up being a weekend of pain and heartache. Parents Sandra and Douglas Larsen, both of Cosmopolis, hurried to St. Joseph Hospital to be by his side while he fights to survive on life-support.

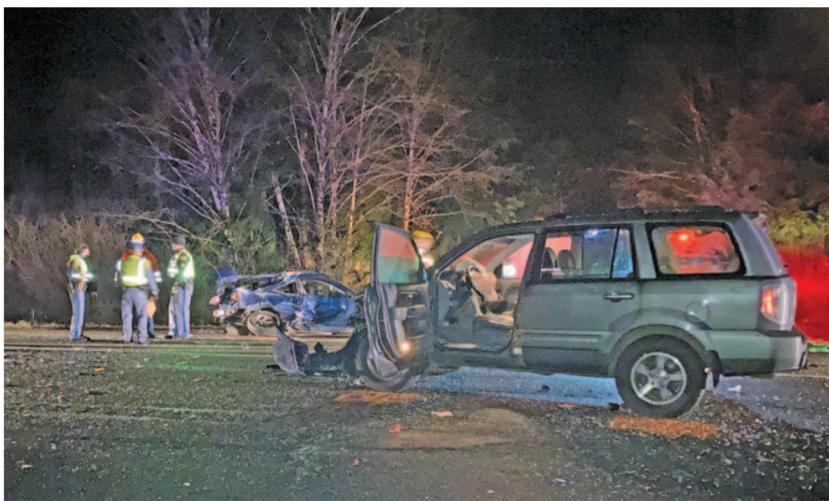
Both parents speak highly of their son as an outstanding person. He helps Douglas, who works construction, whenever he needs a hand without question. Others speak on his outgoing demeanor and recall he was a standout athlete at Aberdeen High School.

"He is in pretty tough shape," his father said. "He has a severe brain injury and has extensive microtears throughout his brain, like all over. They did some MRIs and his brain is not swelling right now, so that's the good thing. They took him out of sedation for a little bit today, and he was able [to have] some involuntary movements, or he may have been trying to touch his face a little, but they weren't sure if it was something he was initiating, but it was only on one side."

He has a long battle ahead

Larsen continues to remain in a medically induced coma to allow his brain to heal and any swelling to reduce. According to attending doctors, he also has injuries near his brain stem, which are the most concerning.

"It's the part of your brain that does all of your automatic



First responders meet to discuss a serious Dec. 4 collision on a particularly dangerous stretch of U.S. Highway 101 between Pacific and Grays Harbor counties.

JEFF CLEMENS

Agencies hope to deal with deadly curve

By JEFF CLEMENS
For the Observer

SMITH CREEK — There have been several injury collisions at the same stretch on U.S. Highway 101 in just the last four months, including two that resulted in severe injuries. According to Washington State Patrol Sgt. Brad Moon, his agency has been tossing around ideas on how to make the roadway safer.

The same corner has been the site of several tragedies in the past, including a collision in 1985 that left a Raymond man paralyzed; he later recovered. Vicky Johnson of Hoquiam, perished in a collision with a rock truck less than 100 yards from the same spot in 2018. A cross now sits at the site of the scene, a dim reminder of how tragic the section of the well-traveled highway really is.

"Back in January and February, I had talked to my command staff about trying to do something [at this spot]," Moon said. "Then when covid-19 stuff struck in March, obviously meetings and things like that kind of went out the door. So

with traffic being less, we hadn't gotten around to try and find the time to meet with people and do [something] about it. We recognize that we have had quite a number of collisions there, and most of them end up in one side of the ditch or the other."

Moon continued, "We have to talk to an engineer, so [everything] has to go through the engineers' office. We had spit-balled some thoughts like the bumps they have before you come to a stop at Johnson's Landing. Some kind of groove that you would drive over as you're getting ready to go into that [corner] to remind people to slow down with a new sign there or just new signage or ultimately possibly trying to change the posted speed limit rather than the recommended speed."

The section is hard to enforce because of how it is designed, according to Moon, who said he's even personally had issues with it. He said WSP and the Washington Department of Transportation have reached a point where something has to be done, sooner rather than later.

things like breathing and all of that, so they are a little worried about that," his dad said. "Right now, we want it to be slow because if things are going good, it's slow, and if things have been going bad, it's been fast. We are trying to stay positive about it and hope for the best."

Sandra and Douglas said that even if their son makes it through the most challenging times to come, he still has a long road of recovery that could span at least a year. "He has a lot to live for [and] if anybody can do it, he can," Douglas said.

Adding to the tragedy, Larsen and his girlfriend, Maria Muniz, are expecting their first child in June — Sandra and Douglas' very first grandchild. A GoFundMe account has been set up to help the family during this difficult time.

Words of an angel

Immediately following the collision, passerby Hannah Roberts of Raymond jumped

out of her vehicle and rushed to Aaron's aid. She reportedly held his hand and prayed alongside him, hoping for a positive outcome. She also attended to injured occupants in the other vehicle.

"She contacted me on Facebook and has been really nice about telling us what she knew and that she squeezed her hand and gives us hopeful little stories," Sandra said. "It's very nice of her to be in touch with us and also just how much she did for him and the other driver when they had taken Aaron away. It sounded like there were several people that were very helpful on the scene from what she told us."

Roberts remained at the scene until the last patient was transported.

"I just wanted him to know he wasn't alone," Roberts later said. "There were others that I feel did so much more. [I'm] just glad I could be there and help in any way. Prayers are still coming from here."

WSP works to find the cause

According to WSP, Larsen was heading northbound on US 101 when he lost control in a sharp corner and crossed the centerline into the southbound lane. The vehicle was then struck on the passenger side before being sent skidding off the roadway.

A collision investigation technician responded to the scene from the WSP Hoquiam Detachment to investigate the collision's cause. Evidence at the scene depicted an "intense" impact between the two vehicles, with debris impalement marks in the concrete roadway and an Acura tag pressed into the ground behind the SUV.

Another technician visited the scene the next day to collect aerial imagery from a drone to aid in the investigation.

Seven agencies worked together as one

The tough evening that brought out nearly two dozen responders between seven different agencies showcased how important it is that agencies work together smoothly, according to WSP Sgt. Bradford Moon.

"This really goes to show how well our agencies work together because the original response was South Bend, Pacific County, and Raymond," Moon said. "They got here well before we could, plus working with Raymond Fire. It was a really good cohesive unit to work together. Everybody has been great here on scene."

In total, the responders came from the Raymond and South Bend Police Departments, Pacific County Sheriff's Office, WSP, the Raymond Fire Department, Pacific County Fire District 3, Washington State Dept. of Transportation (DOT), and Airlift Northwest.

'KNOW THAT WE DO HAVE A PLAN, ALL OF THE PROVIDERS ARE ON BOARD AND READY TO DO WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO GET [THE VACCINE] OUT TO THE PEOPLE THAT NEED IT.'

Mary Goelz

Pacific County vaccine coordinator

Vaccine

Continued from Page A1

won't arrive until mid-January. The lack of a freezer until then shouldn't be a problem, Cohen said, since the storage container of dry ice can be replenished to last for up to 15 days.

The ultra-cold storage of the vaccine will not be necessary for Moderna's vaccine, which is receiving its own emergency use authorization hearing with the FDA on Dec. 17. Moderna's vaccine can be stored at 2 to 8 degrees Celsius, about the temperature of a normal refrigerator, for up to 30 days, the company claims. Pfizer's vaccine can only last up to five days when refrigerated.

"The cold chain distribution of Pfizer's vaccine is a great limiting factor for a lot of people," said Harrell. "The other vaccines, we're ready for today."

At the front of the line

Once the vaccine does arrive locally, the expectation is that high-risk health-care workers, along with residents and staff of long-term care facilities, will be first in line to receive the vaccine, according to Mary Goelz, Pacific County's vaccine czar.

The initial recommendations for who should receive vaccine prioritization came from an independent advisory panel within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The panel will meet again in several weeks to determine who should be next in line for the vaccine.

After the vaccine has been administered to the highest priority individuals, it's not yet known who will be in line to receive the vaccine next. Goelz suggested that health-care workers not at a high risk

of contracting the virus, along with emergency first-responders, could be next in line. Other possibilities include teachers, workers in essential industries such as food production, those with underlying medical conditions, and older people in general. A vaccine is not expected to be made widely available to the general public until the spring or summer.

Goelz, who for 31 years was the county health director before retiring in January, came out of her brief retirement to help the county's vaccine distribution efforts. In a Dec. 2 virtual forum, she said county officials have spent the past several months working with providers in Pacific County to make sure everyone is on the same page when it comes to distributing the vaccine.

"We're really working together — we've got a processed plan for how that's going to look. The biggest challenge will be getting enough of the vaccine, because it does come in sets of 975 doses," Goelz said.

The expectation, she said, is for the state to get initial doses of Pfizer's vaccines by around the middle of next week. After that, the vaccine will be distributed to the different parts of the state. The Washington State Department of Health said it expects to receive about 62,400 doses of Pfizer's vaccine initially, with an estimated total of 200,000 doses by the end of the month. In January, the state said it should begin receiving regular weekly shipments of the vaccine.

"Know that we do have a plan, all of the providers are on board and ready to do what we need to do to get [the vaccine] out to the people that need it," Goelz said.

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December can be a hard month for people with the holidays, loss of sun light, and missing those we love. Ocean Park Lutheran Church & Peace of Mind Pacific County will be hosting a Blue Christmas Service to help acknowledge the losses we have experienced and are experiencing. The service will be on December 21st at 6 pm. This will be a live service, and can be viewed at oceanparklutheran.org. You can pick up a candle to be used during the service at the Senior Center or by contacting Pastor Louise at pastorlouise@oceanparklutheran.org.



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Washington Gov. Jay Inslee announced that all counties will move into Phase 3 of covid reopening. However, counties that fail to keep infections down will be subject to reimposed restrictions in things like restaurant capacity.

Pacific County, Washington moving to Phase 3 next week

County has work to do if it wants to stay there

By BRANDON CLINE
Chinook Observer

OLYMPIA — Last week contained a bundle of good news on the reopening front for Pacific County and the state as a whole, and a return to a pre-pandemic “normal” is

closer to becoming a reality as each day goes by.

In a March 11 news conference, Gov. Jay Inslee announced that each of Washington’s 39 counties will move to the newly announced Phase 3 of the state’s reopening plan next Monday, March 22. Notably, Phase 3 allows for up to 50% of a building’s maximum occupancy for all indoor spaces, including restaurants.

Phase 3 guidance also permits in-person spectators at sporting events for the

first time since the pandemic began, for both high school and professional sports, as well as other outdoor spectator events. Fans will be allowed to attend outdoor venues that have permanent seating, capped at 25%, with social distancing and facial coverings still required. High-contact indoor sports, including basketball, wrestling and cheerleading, will also be able to compete again.

See Phase 3, Page A9

SUMMER-LIKE CRUSH

Happy visitors crowd peninsula



By LUKE WHITTAKER
Chinook Observer

PACIFIC COUNTY — Lines of cars stretched along Pacific Avenue while sidewalks and beach approaches bustled under blue skies.

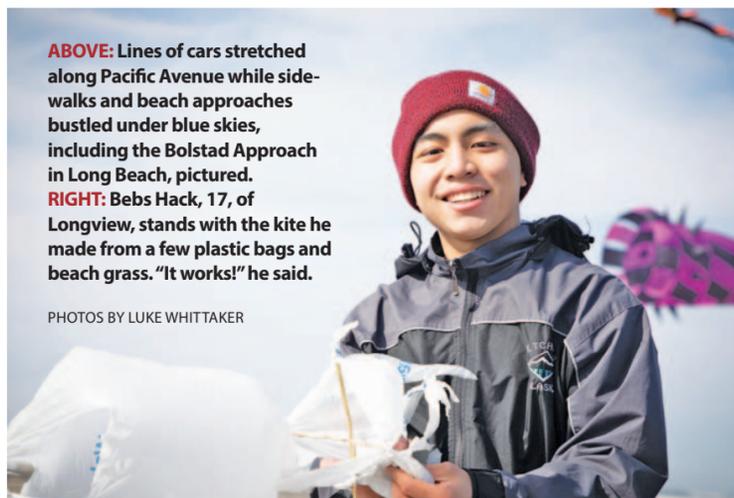
Favorable, spring-like weather and loosened covid-19 restrictions culminated in a summer-like crush of visitors to the coast over the weekend.

The surge in activity is a precursor to what some feel will be a strong spring and summer rebound for retailers, especially compared to last year at this time, when covid-19 cases began to mount and business and gatherings were first curtailed to help slow the spread of the deadly virus.

See Crush, Page A8

ABOVE: Lines of cars stretched along Pacific Avenue while sidewalks and beach approaches bustled under blue skies, including the Bolstad Approach in Long Beach, pictured. RIGHT: Bebs Hack, 17, of Longview, stands with the kite he made from a few plastic bags and beach grass. “It works!” he said.

PHOTOS BY LUKE WHITTAKER



County unveiling latest shot appointment approach

By BRANDON CLINE
Chinook Observer

SOUTH BEND — With covid-19 vaccines slated to become more widely available in the coming days and weeks, the Pacific County Health and Human Services Department is gearing up to unveil a new system for scheduling vaccine appointments that it hopes will lighten the load on the department’s staff.

The new system for making an appointment comes via the software program PrepMod, according to county health director Katie Lindstrom. The program, once some-

See Vaccines, Page A8

Story sparks US101 safety changes

Curve is site of unusual number of wrecks

By JEFF CLEMENS
For the Observer

RAYMOND — The Washington State Dept. of Transportation has made significant changes at a hot spot on U.S. Highway 101 north of Raymond that has had a series of serious injury collisions in recent years, including a fatality in early 2018.

The treacherous corner between Butte Creek and Smith Creek Road now has additional signage after WSDOT took note of a “thought-provoking” article by the *Observer* published on Dec. 9, 2020, after a near-fatal accident in the section on Dec. 4. The collision resulted in two patients, one in critical and another in serious condition, being airlifted to trauma centers.

See US101, Page A8

New owner takes helm at Sea Breeze Charters

By LUKE WHITTAKER
Chinook Observer

ILWACO — A new owner has taken the helm at a long-standing fishing charter business in Ilwaco.

Steve Sohlstrom officially became owner of Sea Breeze Charters after purchasing the business from the Schenk family in February.

“For the first time in my life I get to immerse myself in the sport fishery. It’s my absolute passion. There isn’t anything I want to do

SEA BREEZE CHARTERS

Steve Sohlstrom, owner
185 Howertown Ave., Ilwaco
360-642-2300
Washingtoncoastfishing.com

more than be a part of the community and fish,” Steve said March 8 at the Sea Breeze Charter office in Ilwaco.

In recent weeks, Sohlstrom, 64, has been busy preparing for the upcoming fishing season, which forecasters predict could be one of the best salmon years in decades.

Charter fishing family

Steve’s life has been long intertwined with Ilwaco waterfront, beginning with his father Aaron Sohlstrom, who previously operated 14 boats out of Ilwaco as part of Holiday Charters.

“He had Holiday Charters which was located where Don’s (Nisbett) art gallery is today. His 56-foot *Wind Song* was one of the nicest boats in Ilwaco. I grew up being a deckhand on it,” Steve said.

Fragments of Steve’s fishing past hang in the Sea Breeze Charter office today, including a 1982 photo next his father aboard the *Wind Song* with a 49.5-pound Chinook between them.

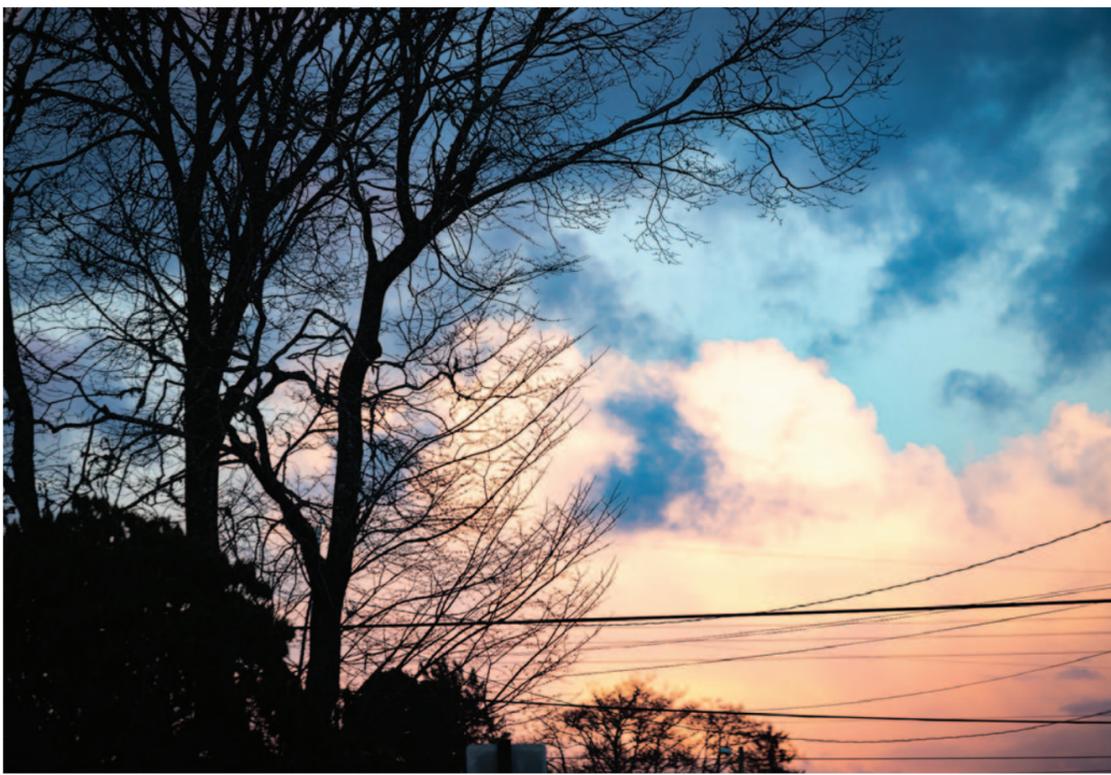
See Seabreeze, Page A9



LUKE WHITTAKER

Sea Breeze Charters owner Steve Sohlstrom describes the offseason upgrades for *F/V Salty Dog*. “The *Dog* is outfitted with a pair of brand-new Caterpillar 425-horsepower turbo cats delivering 25-knot speeds to get to the tuna and halibut grounds lickety-split,” he said





PHOTOS BY LUKE WHITTAKER

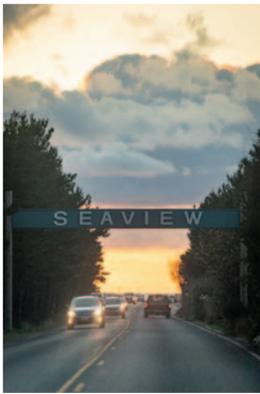
Tree limbs free of leaves are silhouetted against a March sky in Seaview. It won't be long before the first buds begin to blossom, signaling the start of spring.

Crush

Continued from Page A1

Over the weekend, the Sou'Wester Lodge in Seaview concluded their second annual arts week, drawing more than 30 artists from across the region. Among the artists was Eliza Roddy, who pit-fired a collection of funerary urns on the beach in Seaview. Roddy, 28, used horse hair and dried flowers during the 1,000-degree process to add color and designs, she said.

On Saturday, Pacific Salmon Charters kicked off the charter season by hosting the first bottom fishing trips of the year. The charter reported limits of rockfish with a few lingcod mixed in, including one monster pushing 25 pounds.



A line of cars drives down the Seaview beach approach ahead of the sunset March 14 in Seaview.

Meanwhile, local beach approaches from Long Beach to Ocean Park were filled with kite fliers, barbecues and beach-goers eager to escape and experience the sunshine.



Beachgoers walk a dog under blue skies filled with kites along the Bolstad beach approach on March 13.



Discovery Trail was busy with walkers and bike riders on March 13.

US101

Continued from Page A1

"We review all our highway routes all across the southwest region, which is probably 2,000-3,000 lane miles of highway, and we try to do that on a five-year basis," David Burkey of DOT said. "What we try to do is identify trends and crash hotspots and stuff like that and see if we can find some kind of safety improvements that we can do to those locations. That's originally how we would find those types of things."

"In this case, I had an email come through somebody sometime in December 2020 that said there was an article in the *Chinook Observer* that said something about crashes on curves out on highway 101 by Smith [Creek Road]," he said. "What people don't realize is we can't get out to every location; we have maintenance people that are out there that tell us we have crash history we can look at. For whatever reason, nothing spiked in that area when we did our safety audit."

Closer look

As a result, Burkey had some of his coworkers take a closer look at the roadway section, and they were able to identify the curve as having "higher than expected to see numbers" for crashes. The six-year look at the road determined that the collisions were predominantly in the northbound direction.

"First thing we do is we go out and make sure we have the proper signing out there, and we checked that, and we had proper signing, which typically is some sort of an advance sign in front of



JEFF CLEMENS

More prominent safety signage has been installed on a curve on U.S. Highway 101 where there have been several serious traffic accidents in recent years.

the curve, either windy road or a curve sign at the curve," Burkey said. "Then we look at the curve and see if we have like a large arrow and then the advisory speed you should drive it at. Everything looked ok there, but our job is to find more things that we can do to enhance it because we can't guess why people do the things they do when they crash."

"So we looked at that and some countermeasures that are somewhat effective and other stuff and tools we have in our toolbox to make safety improvements. So what we did on the curve is we went in there, and we put supplemental signs which are called chevrons at 80ft spacing throughout the whole curve so as you're driving down the road, you see them the whole direction. We added [the] advisory speed again, and we added post reflectors to the post so as you're driving at night, it lights it up like a picket fence. We also put a guidepost out there," Burkey added.

Led to more additions

On top of the corner changes, DOT looked at the intersection of US 101 and Smith Creek Road roughly

a half-mile from the corner. The crash history wasn't as significant, but they determined that the section could use a few enhancements as well.

"It's like you have a vertical curve and a horizontal curve which means you have issues a little bit, and so we looked at adding some advance signing to let people know the intersection was coming up," Burkey said. "We already had green and white signs out there, which those aren't even required, but we also try to have those in advance. We changed those out, I believe, to warning signs, and then we updated the signs at the intersection; I think we put a guidepost at the intersection too, just to, again, get a little more awareness to the intersection being there."

Burkey explained the changes were made in part in hopes of reaching DOT and the state's goal of "Target Zero," which is to have zero traffic-related injuries or

fatalities by 2030. He admits the goal is somewhat impractical, but it isn't impossible.

WSP: Hopefully will contribute to safety

Washington State Patrol Sgt. Bradford Moon, who heads the Naselle detachment of WSP, is excited to see changes in the treacherous section. He has championed ideas to improve safety in the section for at least the past year and has had numerous conversations with DOT about those ideas. According to Burkey, he meets with Moon and WSP twice a month, and they keep in close contact and even spoke together about the *Observer* article.

"I think that between the article [the *Observer*] wrote and the discussions we had, and them also trying to address things in the area, all played roles in them being able to put these signs up with the idea of it working toward the overall public safety and the safety of traveling vehicles through that area," Moon said. "Obviously, we are going to continue to encourage people to pay attention to signs because if they don't pay attention to the signs, then we can still continue to have some of those issues."

"You can post speed limits and signs, but if people don't heed them, then we are out to have some of the same continuing problems. Hopefully, these new signs and the other things [DOT] will do will help contribute to the safety in the area," Moon added.

Vaccines

Continued from Page A1

one is eligible to be vaccinated and there is enough local supply available, will email the individual a unique link that allows the person to schedule their own appointment.

The system used up until this point has consisted of county employees spending hours upon hours on the phone, manually calling people on a waitlist thousands of names long to schedule vaccine appointments.

"It should be a game-changer for us. Up until now, I would say for each day-long vaccine clinic it's probably two days worth of multiple people working to schedule and do paperwork for [the clinic]," Lindstrom said.

For people who don't have an email address, or otherwise don't want to be contacted via email, Lindstrom said they will still continue to manually make calls and schedule appointments over the phone.

Several hundred people are expected to receive first vaccine doses this week, as well as those previously scheduled to receive their second dose.

As of March 13, 11,509 vaccine doses had been given in Pacific County, up from 10,298 doses a week earlier. About 26.7% of county residents have received one vaccine dose, and another 17% have received two doses and are fully vaccinated. Statewide, 2.44 million doses have been given, up from 2.07 million doses a week ago.

New eligibility dates moved up

Along with announcing a host of news related to reopening efforts in the state, Gov. Jay Inslee also announced last week that individuals in Tier 2 of Phase 1B in the state's vaccine prioritization program are eligible to get vaccinated beginning this Wednesday, March 17 — five days earlier than expected.

The newly eligible groups include critical workers in congregate settings and all people 16 or older who are pregnant or have a disability that puts them at high-risk. Workers that are now eligible include those in agriculture, food processing, grocery stores, public transit, firefighters and law enforcement.

There are tentative plans, Lindstrom said, for providers to go directly to businesses such as seafood processors and vaccinate eligible people at their place of work.

As it stands, individuals age 50 or older with two or

more underlying health conditions or co-morbidities are projected to become eligible for vaccination on April 12. On April 26, those age 16 or older with at least two underlying conditions will become eligible, as well as those living in congregate settings, such as prisons or homeless shelters.

Like the aforementioned Tier 2 groups did, Lindstrom hopes the eligibility dates for these priority groups will ultimately be moved up, too.

"I think we're going to get through this next group that's eligible pretty quick," Lindstrom said.

Last Thursday, President Joe Biden called on states to make the vaccine eligible for all adults by May 1. In response later that night, Inslee said that while it's good the White House is prioritizing all adults to be eligible, he said the state will continue to focus on vaccinating those who are most at risk.

"Then we will turn our attention to the broader population consistent with the president's announcement tonight," Inslee said. "In order for widespread and comprehensive vaccination to work, the federal government will need to come through with increased doses and infrastructure."

Appointments coming—Lindstrom said those that became eligible on March 17 and have already signed up on the county's waitlist should be getting contacted to schedule an appointment soon. As of March 15, she said there are currently more outstanding first doses in the county than there were people who were currently eligible but had yet to be vaccinated, a sharp contrast compared to where the county stood earlier in the year.

"We shifted from feeling awful because we couldn't get everyone an appointment that wanted an appointment, to being like 'we need more people to sign up.' It's been a weird shift and a different dynamic," Lindstrom said.

Anyone living or working in Pacific County can sign up on the county's waitlist, regardless of whether they are currently eligible or not. Department staff, Lindstrom said, are able to sort those who sign up for the waitlist into their respective eligibility group, and will reach out to them to schedule a vaccine once their group becomes eligible and there is adequate vaccine supply in the county.

To sign up for the Pacific County vaccine waitlist, visit <https://tinyurl.com/2r-jnbb4m>. The county was also expected to send out a reverse-911 call on March 17, urging people to sign up for the waitlist.

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