

The Northern Light

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Community Newspaper of Blaine and Birch Bay

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\$269 million into Cherry Point to bring 300 jobs

BY IAN HAUPT

BP will invest \$269 million in three projects at the Cherry Point Refinery to improve the refinery's efficiency, reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by 7 percent and double its renewable diesel production capabilities, according to a recent press release. The company's goal is to achieve net zero carbon emission by no later than 2050.

The projects are expected to bring more than 300 jobs to Whatcom County over the next three years.

"BP's new investment in Cherry Point builds on a half century of innovation in Washington state," said David Lawler, BP America chairman and president. "It will position us to provide lower carbon energy while creating jobs and reducing emissions in our operations."

The new investment will put \$169 million into a hydrocracker improvement project (HIP), \$55 million into cooling water infrastructure (CWI) and \$45 million into renewable diesel optimization (RDO).

Enhancement of the hydrocracker, which is the "heart" of the refinery, will result in less hydrogen being consumed and fewer maintenance shutdowns. New cooling water infrastructure will increase utilization and energy use by improving year-round optimum cooling water reliability.

Together HIP and CWI improvements will reduce CO2 emissions by approximately 160,000 tons per year, equivalent to taking more than 32,000 U.S. cars off the road, the announcement says.

RDI will improve the refinery's renewable diesel production. Renewable diesel is manufactured from biomass-based feedstocks like vegetable oils and rendered animal fats. The release says Cherry Point became the first and only refinery in the Pacific Northwest capable of processing these feedstocks alongside conventional raw materials like crude oils.

BP has invested more than \$1.5 billion in capital improvements at Cherry Point

(See BP, page 7)



▲ The Home Farm U-Pick & Events pumpkin patch on an autumnal October day.

Photo by Grace McCarthy

Border reopening: No magic pill for bordertowns

BY PAT GRUBB

News that the U.S. would open its land borders to vaccinated travelers on November 8 was met with relief by border towns along the northern border and recognition that much more needs to be done before the local economy can begin to be restored. Canada's insistence that citizens and visitors entering the country must be fully vaccinated as well as having a negative Covid-19 PCR result taken within 72 hours will mean these communities will not see day trippers anytime soon.

In a letter to governor Jay Inslee's assistant Joe Timmons, Point Roberts fire chief Christopher Carleton explained why the reopening would not benefit the community.

"The difficulty remains for my commu-

nity of Point Roberts. It may provide access to a few international travelers into Point Roberts but not the day-to-day necessary for economic recovery. This is due to (if it maintains) Canada's requirement of a negative COVID test to return to Canada regardless of time spent in the US. Our grocery store, parcel locations, gas stations and other businesses need the day-to-day again. It is a welcomed start though for US resort areas and vacation destinations, just not border towns needing day-to-day economic influx as before the pandemic," he wrote.

Carleton pointed out that Point Roberts "provides a highly vaccinated, safe US community" and suggested a possible solution would be for Canada to adopt a "reciprocal approach as we currently have that allows permanent residents of Point

Roberts to travel into the Delta/Lower Mainland area without a negative COVID test made available to international travelers who live in the same area to enjoy Point Roberts again without having to provide negative COVID tests returning to Canada."

"Habitual residents" of Point Roberts were recently allowed by a change to the Canadian Order in Council authorizing quarantine measures to access neighboring communities for nonessential purposes without needing a Covid-19 test or show proof of vaccination.

The requirement for Covid-19 testing of travelers is gaining opposition in high places. B.C. premier John Horgan stated in an interview on Vancouver radio station CKNW that the test requirement was "stu-

(See Border, page 3)

School enrollment drops again, lowest in 5 years

BY IAN HAUPT

Forty fewer students walked through Blaine school district doors this year as the Borderites returned to full-time, masked, in-person learning.

According to district data, enrollment has decreased by 40 students when compared to the start of last year. Last year, 2,089 students enrolled while 2,049 have enrolled this September. It's the lowest the district's enrollment has been in five years.

The district has seen a distinct dip in

enrollment the past two years. When students returned for hybrid learning in September 2020, the district saw 57 fewer students enroll than in September 2019. The past two years account for a 4.5 percent decrease in enrollment.

District finance director Amber Porter said in a September 27 school board meeting she does not see the district needing to adjust or remove any school learning programs.

Porter told *The Northern Light* in an email the district expected enrollment to

decline again this year like it did the year before and that it would not affect school operations this year. "Fortunately, the district currently has the financial flexibility to continue operating without making expenditure adjustments in the current year," she wrote.

Unfortunately, because state education apportionment is enrollment driven, next school year's funding will be affected, Porter said.

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This Week's FLYER

Rite Aid

Park and recreation district candidates share top priorities

BY GRACE MCCARTHY

The Northern Light asked Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District 2 (BBBPRD2) Position 1 candidates Jesse Creydt and David Halme what their top priorities are for the parks and rec department. Incumbent Sheli Moore is running unopposed for Position 2 and incumbent Billy Brown is running unopposed for Position 4.



▲ Jesse Creydt.

Jesse Creydt

Jesse Creydt currently serves as a BBBPRD2 commissioner. He is the executive director of Touch-Stone Health Clinic in Blaine, president of Healthy Youth Coalition and the Blaine Economic Development Committee, among other organizations.

Why did you decide to run?

Now, more than ever, hopefully recreational opportunities can have a major impact on people's lives and parks and rec is the best way that I see to help be part of that solution.

What are your top priorities for the district?

While serving parks and rec as a commissioner, I've had the opportunity to support some of the major projects such as the trail project and the California Creek park project. Parks and rec has a lot of wonderful programs that I look forward to supporting. For example, they were able to support Blaine youth sporting activities and the free after-school program for youth, dance classes, Zumba and yoga. It's just a wonderful place where our community can come together and especially enjoy the major events that the district is able to put on and connect our community to healthy recreational activities.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I'm really thankful for the great job that the district has been doing and would be honored to continue to serve and represent all of the great ideas our community has so we can continue to come together toward healthy recreational activities.



▲ David Halme.

David Halme

David Halme is a retired school teacher who has served as the president of the Lake Cowichan Teachers Association and president of the B.C. Teachers Profes-

sional Development Committee.

Why did you decide to run?

I have an interest in parks and recreation, especially recreation. I'm connected to the Blaine-Birch Bay rec through pickle ball and through line dancing and participated in helping out whether it be Birch Bay Days, Halloween or a Christmas run.

I'm in the neighborhood, in Birch Bay, and I feel like there are some things missing. One is a proper baseball diamond and soccer pitch in the area. I feel the new park on Birch Bay Drive was quite an acquisition and they're in the beginnings of development there. I'm also interested in the Birch Bay library. I'm actively supporting what I can in the area and going as far as knocking on doors for the levies and so on to keep everything afloat.

What are your top priorities for the district?

The development on the park down on the water that used to be a campsite. I'd like to see a dog park, something that's a little bit closer than going to the refinery. Another one is developing a baseball/softball park at the rec center and making sure the present pickleball courts are being maintained.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I want to see continued equal access to all of the recreational opportunities we have in the area; trying to keep it community based and acknowledging the age groups, which I think they're doing and is already a priority. I'd like to see improvement on communications to the public. I'd be trying to get the public to respond to things and get more ideas from them.

border testing results for fully vaccinated travelers between August 9 and September 30, 2021. Of 102,501 tests completed for arrivals by air, just 0.2 percent, or 205 passengers, tested positive. Of 51,184 tests completed for land border arrivals, just 0.17 percent, or 87 individuals, tested positive.

Yet Canada's chief public health officer Dr. Theresa Tam maintains that the testing requirement

remains vital to the country's efforts to contain the Covid-19 pandemic. On October 14, she said, "We have to have ongoing evaluation and discussion. But I would just like to remind everyone that right now we're still at the top of that fourth wave. We're in a situation in Canada where our health systems are still very fragile. We need to take a precautionary approach in the next little while."

Border ...

From page 1

pid" and that he intended to call Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on it.

"Double immunization and the prospect of third doses for vulnerable people, which is currently underway, I believe puts us in a very strong position to say that the testing regime that is currently in place is redundant, and that we can probably move on without having that," Horgan said.

Point Roberts Chamber of Commerce president Brian Calder has hammered against the testing requirement in a series of interviews recently saying day trippers will not come back to Point Roberts until the testing requirement is abandoned. The cost of PCR testing will deter those people who would come for less than a day to pick up parcels, buy gas or groceries, he says.

Nick Kiniski, owner of Kiniski's Reef Tavern, agrees with Calder. "It's not going to help my business if the Canadians need a negative Covid-19 test to get back home," he told The Northern Light last week. On October 17, Kiniski closed the restaurant for the winter.

On October 13, the Canadian government released a report of

Barb for Blaine

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