

## 2022 PORT OF ALSEA NEWSLETTER

### Board of Commissioners:

Rob Bishop, President  
Ramon (Buster) Pankey, Vice-President  
Jan Power, Secretary / Treasurer  
Chuck Pavlik  
Joe Rohleder

### Staff:

Roxie Cuellar, Port Manager  
Robby Hensen, Dock of the Bay Manager  
Sean Frazier, Seasonal  
Mike Secor, Seasonal



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### Message from the Commission President Rob Bishop:

It has been extremely satisfying to see the Port's new facilities function so smoothly throughout the busy season. Our multi-use float and the ADA platform were a big hit as crabbers had one of the best years I've seen in some time. The two-lane boat launch made the traffic move smoothly and boat rentals at the Port's Dock of the Bay were brisk. I am sure there were a lot of good memories made out on the bay. I would be remiss if I did not thank Roxie, our port manager, for working tirelessly on and off the clock to make the Port a better place. A big thank you to Robby, who manages the Dock of the Bay, for being there with a big smile on his face to greet customers, even when high tide is at 5:30 in the morning. Thank you to Sean Frazier and Mike Secor, our seasonal employees, who stepped in and helped out through our busy season. Thank you to Commissioner Buster Pankey for all of his help and his work on our facilities and to all of our board members for all they have done throughout the year.

On behalf of our board and staff, I want to thank all of the people who used the facilities at the Port for making this year such a success.

## Who are the People Who Work for You?

The Port has five volunteer commissioners who serve on the Board of Commissioners and are identified above. The Board establishes Port policies and oversees the work of the port manager. Each commissioner is elected by Port District residents for a four-year term. The Port has two full-time employees and two seasonal employees.

## What is the Port of Alsea District?

The Port of Alsea District extends geographically from Marsh Street just south of Seal Rock on the north to the Lane County border on the south, the Pacific Ocean on the west, and the Benton County border on the east. The Port of Alsea provides marine facilities for boaters and multi-use facilities for fishing, crabbing, and kayak launching.

## Have the New Boat Launch and Marina Been a Good Investment?

Yes. The best year the Port had had recently was in 2018 when the Port took in \$30,535 in launch fees and \$8,256 in moorage fees for a total of \$38,791. During the same period this year, November 1 through October 30, the Port took in \$46,685 in launch fees and \$17,930 in moorage for a total of \$64,615. The Port has increased both the launch and moorage fees since 2018, but most of that increase in revenues is from increased usage by boaters. The Port of Alsea has become a more popular destination for both locals and people from out of the Port District.

## Was the Purchase of the Dock of the Bay a Good Investment?

Yes. The Dock of the Bay reopened under the Port of Alsea's ownership on May 5, 2021. Using a comparable period for comparison, the Dock of the Bay had total revenues from May 1, 2021 through October 31, 2021 of \$133,887. For the same period in 2022, the Dock of the Bay had revenues of \$162,491 and a net profit of just under \$50,000.

This off-season, the Port may purchase two more boats and motors to have nine rental boats on the water next year to increase its future revenues from boat rentals. Boat rentals drive more than half the revenue for the Dock of the Bay and during the summer, all of the boats are typically rented every day. Purchasing additional boats will depend on the economy and what kind of deals there are on new boats and motors. The Port may also wait a year to see where the economy is headed.

There are some people who feel that the Port should not be able to own a business, such as the Dock of the Bay. The Oregon state statutes provide a great deal of latitude for ports to do that. While other types of special districts, such as school districts and fire districts, go out for property tax levies to help pay for the costs of operations, ports are generally expected to make enough money to pay their own expenses except for major projects. One of the biggest costs for ports is dredging. The money the Port of Alsea makes from the Dock of the Bay will help fund the future costs of dredging.

## Is the Port Facility Project Finished Now?



Yes. The ADA kayak launch was installed in November, 2021. People who have used it have appreciated the design and the room available to stage before launching. The Port has not yet promoted the kayak launch; the Port wished to see how much the launch was used this past summer. The Port would also like to get the east parking lot paved in the next two years to better accommodate people who fish, crab, and kayak off the multi-use float.

## Is the Port Planning to Adopt New Ordinances Prohibiting Fires and Camping on Port Property?



Last summer, approximately two acres of the Port's beach property burned due to human activities, possibly people sitting in the beach grass while smoking. Firefighters from around the area worked for several hours to make sure the fire was extinguished. The fire came to within 20 feet of a nearby home. The Port has a homeless camp located in some trees on the bay front on property at least partially owned by the Port. Campfires have been seen at the encampment, which is always a potential problem when the fires are

located close to homes. The Port is currently looking at ordinances adopted at other places in Oregon to find some equitable solutions. While the Port is sympathetic to those who are homeless, it also needs to find a solution that takes neighbors and safety from fires into account as well. Banning fires in areas with vegetation is the obvious solution, but the Port will provide for public input as the Port looks at adopting some new ordinances very early next year.

## What Is the Current State of the Port's Finances?

Improved. Last year, at the end of November, the Port had approximately \$107,000 in general fund money, which includes the Dock of the Bay. This year, we had approximately \$153,000 at the end of November, so things are looking up. Some of those funds will be used to make payroll

and general expenses through the slow winter months. However, we will enter next spring and our busy season in better financial shape than previous years. The Port has every reason to believe that its financial situation will improve each year. One obvious goal is to have enough money in reserves to survive any serious downturns in the economy. Another is to provide better benefits to its employees. The Port wants to provide more competitive salaries for the future Port manager and other employees, as well as some benefits. The current employees do not receive health insurance nor retirement benefits, which makes the positions less attractive as people retire and need to be replaced.

## What Other Projects Does the Port Have Planned?

The Port still plans to carve out some parking at the south end of the boat launch parking lot for overflow parking during the busy months of September and October. We had hoped to get that done before this season, but it just didn't happen. That parking will probably be gravel until the east parking lot is paved and striped. We also hope that the Oregon State Marine Board will engineer our east parking lot by the Dock of the Bay so we can pave that parking lot in the next year or so.

The Port has begun the public outreach process on Eckman Lake. The Board held a public meeting at Eckman Lake on Tuesday, November 29, 2022 to hear from residents of the area. The board stressed that it is on the first step of a potentially long road. While the Port owns most of the lake, there are people with lakeside property who also own part of the lake. It makes the search for a solution more difficult, because anything that the Port does with its portion of the lake affects the other property owners as well. The best solution is for the other landowners to partner with the Port to find a solution that everyone can agree on, but that is often difficult. Doing nothing is always a solution, at least for a while. Returning the lake to a tidal estuary, like Lint Slough, is another possible solution. Trying to retain the lake while getting rid of the algae is another. Another possibility is for the residents around Eckman Lake to offer to buy the Port's share of the lake and establish a lake improvement district similar to that at Devil's Lake in Lincoln City.

The only reason why the Port is involved with Eckman Lake is that the land owned by the Willamette Valley and Coast Railroad Company was sold to the Port in 1929 for \$10.00. The sale included the land between median high and median low tides on both sides of the Alsea Bay and Alsea River up to the point where the river was no longer influenced by the tide. At that time, Eckman Lake did not yet exist. Instead, Eckman Slough was a tidal estuary and almost all, if not all, of the slough was between median high and median low tides and therefore owned mostly or entirely by the Port. Eckman Slough became Eckman Lake in the late 50's when the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) replaced a wooden bridge with a concrete bridge and dammed up the slough as part of the construction process.

Obviously, any of these or other solutions would require the approval of the Port's Board of Commissioners and the buy-in of other property owners who own pieces of the lake. The ultimate goal is to have a healthy lake or tidal estuary while also minimizing any liability of the Port that

could arise in the future from problematic vegetation in the lake. The Port will hold a second meeting in Waldport in January, a third meeting in February in Yachats, and possibly a fourth meeting at Eckman Lake in the spring. By next summer we should be closer to finding a solution, if a solution is in fact needed and can be agreed upon.

Sometimes these kind of situations, when there are multiple owners trying to solve a problem or even trying to agree on whether there is a problem, can become quagmires. The Port is obligated to act on behalf of all the residents of the Port District. The Port commissioners may need to decide if it is in the Port's best interest to continue to own land in Eckman Lake. It may become a question of whether putting a lot of time, energy, and possibly resources into Eckman Lake provides any benefits to residents who live up the Yachats River, for example. At some point, the commissioners will probably need to take stock and make some decisions.

As always, the commissioners and Port staff wish all of you a healthy, prosperous, and safe new year.