



600 S.E. BAY BOULEVARD NEWPORT, OREGON 97365 PHONE (541) 265-7758 FAX (541) 265-4235 www.portofnewport.com

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CONTACT: Paula Miranda

(541) 265-7758

Port of Newport announces May 14 boat ramp opening

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) announced today that all-depths halibut season will open on May 21, prompting the Port of Newport to announce that it will re-open the ramp at the South Beach marina on Thursday, May 14. The extra week before Halibut anglers arrive will serve as a type of “soft opening” that will allow Port staff the time needed to work through process improvements.

“A gradual opening will put us in a better position to see what will happen when larger numbers of boats arrive,” explained General Manager Paula Miranda. “It would have been very difficult for us to remain closed once Halibut season is open. Very difficult for us to manage the people who would have come here to fish, only to find the ramp closed.”

Instead, while coordinating with the city, county, and other Port and marina officials on the coast, the Port of Newport began making some physical changes to file tables and preparing for a time when the ramp would re-open.

The Port campus currently has three locations where anglers can clean and filet fish or engage someone locally who provides that service. According to Director of Operations Aaron Bretz, the file tables have each had a water spigot removed from the middle of the table. With shorter hoses at each end of the twelve-foot tables, social distancing of six feet can be achieved.

Signage about Coronavirus-related rules as outlined by the Governor’s office will also be on display, and sidewalks and walkways will also be labeled for proper social distancing.

Additionally, the Port has increased the cleaning schedule for restrooms and purchased extra garbage containers in accordance with the Governor’s direction.

“Our employees at the marina have been working hard to make these changes,” Miranda noted, adding that physical changes and increased cleaning schedules are only part of the plan that will be employed to assure compliance with state orders.

The Port has been in conversations with the Lincoln County Sheriff Marine Patrol, the Oregon State Marine Board, the Oregon State Police, and others. Some are expected to be on-site during the days when heavier traffic is anticipated.

The May 14 opening date will also see the re-opening of the Port’s restrooms, as well as the public fishing pier on South Beach.

An important reminder to anglers, however, is that local hotels, motels, and RV parks will still be closed to short-term guests. Under Lincoln County orders, those facilities are currently closed to stays shorter than 30 days unless special authorization is granted. That order is currently due to expire on May 31.

While the Port has taken steps to comply with the Governor’s orders and officials are hopeful things will progress smoothly and safely, they will also be keeping a watchful eye on the situation.

“If people do not comply with the regulations regarding social distancing and safety measures, we will look seriously at closing again. If there are behaviors that present a danger to the public or a danger to our employees, that could very well happen,” Miranda noted.

For further information on the Port of Newport and it’s response to Covid-19, visit www.portofnewport.com

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