

Digging Deeper into Cap-and-Trade *continued from page 9*

as you might think, especially when talking about Columbia County.

A 2017 report from the Oregon Employment Department titled, "The Employment Landscape of Rural Oregon," examined recent trends and statistics concerning jobs in Oregon. The report noted that "...the heading "Rural Oregon" is somewhat arbitrary and un-specific – it captures a broad diversity of places across the state. There is no one rural Oregon. About 17% of Oregon's population lives in the state's 23 non-metropolitan counties."

Oregon has 36 counties, which means if 23 are non-metro, then 13 are considered metro or urban. Joining the tri-county areas of Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas as urban are Linn, Benton, and Lane (Albany, Corvallis, and Eugene) counties, along with Marion (Salem), and Deschutes (Bend). That's eight. Care to guess which other counties are considered urban? Yamhill and Polk, Josephine and Jackson and... you guessed it, Columbia, which is statistically considered part of the Portland metro area.

The report attempted to explain this confusing perspective this way: "Urban counties are those defined as part of a 'metropolitan statistical area.' A shortcoming of this definition is that it undercounts the true impact of rural places. Areas inside metropolitan counties but outside city limits – some of them heavily agricultural and quite rural in appearance and activity – are included as urban here. Polk County is one example of a place characterized in federal data as 'metropolitan' because it is part of the Salem Metropolitan Statistical Area, but traveling westward on Highway 22 you'd have trouble pointing out urban features of the landscape in the agricultural valleys and forested coastal range."

So, statistically Columbia County is considered urban. Unfortunately, Columbia County has performed more like a rural county when reviewing employment statistics. According to the report Oregon has been in a period of employment expansion since February 2010. In October 2014 statewide employment levels actually exceeded the pre-recession peak, indicating the recession was over. However, in rural Oregon the recovery is ongoing. Employment remains 3.2% below the pre-recession peak in Oregon's combined rural counties, while urban counties as a group are solidly above their pre-recession peak employment. Columbia and Jose-

phine counties were the only two "urban" counties that were still below pre-recession peak employment: Columbia County was at -1.6% while counties like Multnomah and Deschutes showed recovery of jobs at +9% while Washington County showed over 12%.

The Employment Landscape of Rural Oregon also reports these other general findings:

- A variety of factors have led to a much slower recovery in rural Oregon. Less industry diversity in the rural economy increases vulnerability to economic shocks. The rural population and workforce are aging quickly, and rural Oregon needs improved access to infrastructure in order to get rural goods to market.
- The jobs that have returned in non-metro counties have been largely low wage, while jobs in high-wage industries remain below pre-recession levels in rural areas.
- Rural economies are often dependent on a single business or a certain type of economic activity, and if that business suffers, local workers may have difficulty finding a similar role using their skills at another business.

So yes, employment statistics in general show recovery in Oregon's urban areas, but those statistics appear to be very flawed. "Rural" communities in Oregon continue to struggle, including those statistically considered "urban."

How important is timber to Oregon's economy?

Oregon's soils and climate provide ideal conditions to grow commercially viable timber, and historically the timber industry has been a vital economic driver in Oregon's economy. Forests cover more than 30 million of Oregon's 62 million acres – almost half of the state's landmass.

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) estimates logging harvests totaled 3.9 billion board feet in 2016, a steep drop from the historic levels of the 1980s when harvests were at twice those levels. Still, Oregon's forests create jobs and income for workers and families in planting, growing, and harvesting, and in related wood products industries. But what exactly does Oregon's timber industry look like today?

According to the Oregon Employment Department, Oregon currently employs approximately 1.9 million people. According to the Oregon Forest Resources Institute, forest sector-related employment in Oregon totaled 61,100 jobs in 2017, which accounted for 3% of

Oregon's workforce, including primary and secondary forest products, forest management, forestry support, and forestry-dependent industries. Primary forest products made up one-third of the forest sector total with 19,300 jobs. Within primary forest products, sawmills, paper manufacturing, and softwood veneer, and plywood manufacturing accounted for three-fourths of all jobs.

Those numbers have been in decline since 2001, especially between 2005 and 2009, but have since leveled off, and often vary seasonally.

Somewhat surprisingly, of Oregon's 61,100 forest sector jobs, almost 39,500 (65%) of those jobs were found at establishments in metropolitan counties, although it's not so surprising given the above information about what is statistically considered rural Oregon, while 19,900 forest-related jobs (33%) belonged to businesses in rural counties. Another 1,600 jobs (3%) were in multi-area or unclassified locations.

Although metro counties accounted for twice as many timber related jobs, forest sector employment made up 7% of all rural employment, compared with 2% of all the jobs in the 13 counties that make up the eight Oregon metropolitan areas. In Columbia County 829 people worked in forest sector jobs in 2017, or 6.3% of the population.

More importantly, forest sector jobs in rural areas paid significantly more than the average jobs found there. That was the case in Columbia County where forest jobs paid from \$10,000 – \$20,000 (26-55%) higher than average jobs across the county. In Clatsop

County forest sector jobs paid an average of \$70,600, compared with \$36,800 for all jobs. Lincoln County was similar, with an average annual forest sector wage (\$68,400) that was 86% above the all-job average (\$31,200).

Does corporate money impact politics in Oregon?

A four-part investigation published by *The Oregonian*/OregonLive this spring titled "Polluted by Money – How Corporate Cash Corrupted One of the Greenest States in America," found that Oregon's lack of campaign finance limits (one of only five states that have no limits at all) has made the state one of the most influenced by corporate spending. *The Oregonian* found a clear impact on environmental policy, "...creating an easy regulatory climate where industry gets what it wants, again and again."

The Oregonian found that, while Oregon ranks as the 27th largest state by population, it ranks 6th in total corporate funds given per lawmaker, and 1st in the country in corporate donations to lawmakers per capita. The timber industry was at the forefront, giving more to Oregon lawmakers than in any other state.

Timber wasn't the only industry making big donations to Oregon lawmakers, with the state ranking 1st in money received from fish processors, grocers, and soft drink companies, 2nd in contributions from restaurants and lodging, 3rd from drug companies and food processors, 4th from tobacco and business associations, 5th from trucking, chemical, and waste management, 6th

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