

# Timber suit: County land represented 23 percent of all land in suit

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“There is no free money here, as far as I can see,” said Nebeker, who also expressed concerns about the future ramifications on state forestry policies. “I do not think this is a good or wise way to change such far-reaching rules and practices.”

## Linn County

Linn County, with financial aid from a number of private timber industry groups, filed the lawsuit against the state in March, claiming it had failed to meet an agreement to maximize timber profits. In October, a Linn County Circuit Court judge’s ruling gave the lawsuit class-action status, meaning 14 other counties — including Clatsop — and 130 taxing entities could participate.

Commissioner Lisa Clement, who voted against opting out along with Commissioner Lianne Thompson, said while she was concerned with the potential rise in state taxes as a result of a successful lawsuit, she saw the timber issue as a legal, not political, issue.

Clatsop County’s roughly 147,000 acres of forestland represented 23 percent of all land



Scott Lee



Lianne Thompson

included in the suit. Sheriff Tom Bergin, Warrenton Fiber’s Martin Nygaard and people who work in the local timber industry were among those who urged commissioners to remain in the suit.

Both Nebeker and Sullivan said the lawsuit favors Linn County’s interests more than those of Clatsop County.

“(The lawsuit) assumes that Linn County and Clatsop County agree with the greatest permanent value rule,” said Sullivan, who earlier in the meeting was sworn in for her first term as a commissioner. “While not perfect, the forest management plan is working.”

Thompson said that while she “hated” the lawsuit itself, she wanted Clatsop County to have a say in how its forests are managed.

“What I’m interested in is how best to control the



The Daily Astorian/File Photo

Clatsop County opted out of a \$1.4 billion timber lawsuit against the state Wednesday at the commission meeting.

outcomes,” she said.

Lee disagreed.

“Why would we join a lawsuit that demands maximum timber harvest over all other interests if we don’t support that position?” he said.

Should the counties win the lawsuit, Clatsop County might have received \$262 million. The county budget, by compar-

ison, is roughly \$57.6 million.

Other taxing districts, such as Clatsop Community College, would receive some of the money should they decide to remain in the lawsuit.

County Manager Cameron Moore said it was unlikely the county would consider filing a separate lawsuit against the state.

Moore said it’s not entirely certain what the board’s decision will mean for the county or the lawsuit. “I don’t think anyone will know what the exact impact of Clatsop County’s decision will be for at least a year,” he said.

Linn County Commissioner Roger Nyquist said the decision is between Clatsop County

commissioners and their constituents and will not hamper the lawsuit going forward.

“Clatsop County must be in a much better financial situation than the rest of us, which is a good thing,” Nyquist said. “I don’t know how they go to the voters now and ask for more money.”

## New Washington state proposal seeks expansion of wine refill law

By ALEXIS MYERS  
Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Two years ago, the Washington state Legislature began allowing wine lovers to fill reusable containers — known as growlers — at their favorite wineries.

Now, a new measure would allow refills at grocery stores, wine boutiques and other places licensed to sell wine in the state.

House Bill 1039, sponsored by Democratic Rep. Sharon Wylie, would let businesses already licensed to sell beer or cider in a growler to also offer wine in the containers. The measure is set for its first public hearing on Thursday.

“It’s an additional way to market and appeal to customers,” Wylie said. “And being able to safely reuse your bottles is a good thing.”

Oregon currently has a law allowing growler purchases at wineries, but no other states have passed or proposed a bill that would extend the growler



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

Restaurant manager Jason Appleton pours a glass of wine from a small barrel at Luc’s restaurant as he demonstrates that the same system could be used for consumers using their own growlers.

practice outside of wineries directly, according to Heather Morton, a policy specialist at the National Conference of State Legislatures

Paul Beveridge of Seattle’s Wilridge Winery said it’s the most eco-friendly way to consume wine without lessening quality. In addition, he said, consumers get more for less.

“It would be easier, and more convenient for custom-

ers to have filling stations outside of my winery,” said Beveridge, president of Family Wineries of Washington State, a proponent of the bill.

He said many state laws pertaining to alcohol date back to the repeal of Prohibition and are designed to protect existing wineries and distributors from competition.

Currently, the only way to avoid a trip to a winery is

to “swap out” a growler at a licensed store. But customers have to drop it off and wait for new growlers to be delivered to replace the old one.

More and more beer-filling stations have popped up in Seattle grocery stores and pharmacies, where growlers can be refilled with local beers.

Wylie says some wineries are concerned about giving up control over the bottling process and about protecting their products from oxygen spoilage and other threats to quality.

Anne Baunach, executive director of the Washington State Recycling Association, said growlers aid the environmental by eliminating some of the corks, labels and other waste associated with recycling glass.

“Right now if you go into a store and buy a bottle of wine, you consume the wine, and the bottle hopefully goes into a recycling container, but for many people, it would go into a landfill,” she said.

## PERS: Attempts at reform will face an uphill battle politically

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“We don’t want to propose anything that we don’t think would survive a legal challenge because it would be a waste of time,” Kruse said.

Legislative Counsel, in a memo to Knopp and Johnson in late August, noted that the court hasn’t addressed the method of calculating final average salary and whether it is a term of the PERS contract. If it is, they said, changes to the calculation are permissible “if the changes protect accrued benefits.”

Calls to Knopp and Johnson Wednesday afternoon were not immediately returned. Lawmakers were gathering at the Capitol this week to organize for the upcoming session and attend a slew of mandatory trainings.

Attempts at reform could face an uphill battle politically; some union representatives have already publicly questioned the legality of possible changes to the system.

### ‘Smarter government’

In her inauguration speech Monday, Gov. Kate Brown called for “smarter government,” including better management of PERS, just over a month after she nudged Oregon business leaders to contribute ideas to address the state’s budget shortfall in the wake of the failure of Measure 97, a tax on corporate sales.

Supporters said the tax would have raised about \$3 billion per year and could have fixed the state’s persistent budget shortfalls.

Brown said in her speech Monday that beside her proposal — outlined in SB 107 — to bring more investment functions in-house under a new Oregon Investment Department, she looked forward to “the other solutions proposed in the months ahead.”

“As we consider our next steps, let’s agree to keep our promises to retirees,” Brown said, according to her prepared remarks. “Let’s ensure that no one can (take) advantage of the system. And let’s seek solutions that are legally viable, so that dead ends aren’t left to languish in court while the challenge of PERS only continues to grow.”

In a phone interview in late December, Sen. Johnson said there was “very little political enthusiasm to engage in the discussion to find a solution or a partial solution.”

“In an ideal world, I would envision an omnibus bill that would have some revenue raising mechanisms done or agreed to with business rather than done to business,” Johnson said in late December. “The same omnibus bill would address the expenditure side of the ledger and include one or two strategic PERS reforms that would yield financial benefit to the system as well as survive any legal test.”

## Portland Port Director Wyatt to retire in June

Executive was raised in Astoria

By JIM REDDEN  
Portland Tribune

The Port of Portland currently owns four marine terminals, five business parks, and the Portland International, Hillsboro and Troutdale airports. Wyatt was hired as executive director in 2011, just weeks before the Sept. 11 attacks.

Port of Portland Executive Director Bill Wyatt has formally announced he will retire on June 30. The Port’s nine commissioners will appoint his successor. A recruitment process will be announced later this week.

“It has been an enormous privilege to have served the Port for the past 16 years. The Port’s best successes during my tenure have been the result of collaboration and partnership and I want to thank the many stakeholders and community members who have played a role in helping the Port carry

out its mission of providing access to global markets and land for job creation,” Wyatt said in a statement released Wednesday.

The Port of Portland currently owns four marine terminals, five business parks, and the Portland International, Hillsboro and Troutdale airports. Wyatt was hired as executive director in 2011, just weeks before the Sept. 11 attacks.

In addition to overseeing all of the security changes in the airport and terminal operations as a result of those attacks, Wyatt is credited with returning international service to the Portland airport and initiating \$2 billion in improvements there over the next few years. He also oversaw millions of dollars in the terminal operations following the \$199 million Columbia River navigation channel deepening project, completing the

state’s largest brownfield redevelopment project at the Troutdale Reynolds industrial Park, acquiring the Gresham Vista Business Park, and reducing Port-wide greenhouse gas emissions from Port source to 20 percent below 1990 levels.

“Bill has been a skilled, dynamic and admired leader and I know I speak for all of the Commission when I say how grateful we are for his unparalleled service,” said Port Commission President Jim Carter.

But the Port also lost all international cargo shipping business during Wyatt’s tenure during a still-unresolved labor dispute between the foreign-owned operator and the Longshoreman’s union that represents most of the workers there. Both the Port and State of Oregon have been unable to recruit new shipping lines or develop Portland-based alternative shipping methods for

those who used the deep water terminal.

Before his appointment, Wyatt, a native Oregon raised in Astoria, served as a state representative from there from 1974 to 1977. He then served five years as Executive Director of the Association for Portland Progress, six years as President of the Oregon Business Council, and seven years as Chief of Staff to former Oregon Governor John A. Kitzhaber.



Bill Wyatt

## Balzer: Former fire chief had earned more than \$100,000 in annual salary

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Balzer was fired in October 2015 in what the fire district’s board described as a “personnel matter.”

Balzer, who earned more than \$100,000 in annual salary

and compensation, was faulted for “poor leadership” in a performance evaluation.

Balzer stated in his complaint that the board’s actions led to damages to his reputation and standing in the community. He had sought com-

pensation of almost \$678,000 and reinstatement of his duties and benefits.

“The lawsuit itself is the end of any dispute between Mr. Balzer and the Cannon Beach Rural Fire District,” Snyder said this week.

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