

OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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KARI BORGEN
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM
Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

OUR VIEW

Newsprint trade war hurting newspapers

American newspapers are one of the latest industries to feel the pain from erratic U.S. government trade policies.

It's an odd and unfortunate situation that will drive up costs for many newspapers unless the government reverses itself.

As you probably know, newspapers already face strong economic headwinds. Online shopping via big-name websites has hurt local merchants, whose advertising is the financial foundation of this newspaper and others. Meanwhile, many readers have shifted from print newspapers to online versions, although both versions have their attributes.

Like other newspapers, it's our job to adapt to changing readership habits and advertising opportunities.

But a paper mill in Longview, Washington, is taking a different tack: It's crying foul, claiming foreign competitors don't play fairly.

North Pacific Paper Co. (Norpac), which produces newsprint and other paper, claims the Canadian government subsidizes Canadian paper manufacturers, enabling them to "dump" — that is, sell — their products at below-market prices in the U.S. The U.S. Department of Commerce bought that argument and has imposed substantial newsprint tariffs on newsprint imported from Canada.

The result has been a 20 to 30 percent jump in newsprint prices around the U.S. Newsprint already is the second-largest cost, next to personnel, for publishers. You can see that the price hike will have a big impact.

For Norpac, it may be a case of "be

careful what you wish for" if newspapers cut back because of price increases. Even Pacific Northwest newspapers that purchase from Norpac stand to lose if this tariff fight introduces chaos in the market, or gives Norpac too much power over prices.

It's not only the economics that concern us. It's mind-boggling that the Commerce Department accepted such a weak argument. Yes, paper mills have closed in Oregon and around the U.S. But Canadian competition is not the reason. The reality is that newsprint demand throughout North America has dropped 75 percent since 2000 as technology has replaced paper.

Most folks understand that. The tariffs, or duties, are opposed by the majority of U.S. newsprint manufacturers; by their trade association, the American Forest and Paper Association; and by newspapers and their trade groups, including the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association.

The opponents also include a wide range of other groups, such as the Heritage Foundation, religious publications, book companies and chambers of commerce.

By boosting costs, these tariffs will harm local businesses, including commercial printers, bookstores, directory publishers and newspapers. Unlike Wall



The cost of newsprint concerns publishers.

Street and the hedge fund that owns Norpac, most local businesses survive on thin operating margins. Forced to spend more in one area, they must trim elsewhere — and the local economy suffers.

That's why we'd like your help. We'd be most appreciative if you could take a moment to contact members of

Oregon's congressional delegation, asking them to overturn the "countervailing" and "antidumping" duties being imposed by the Commerce Department on Canadian newsprint and similar paper.

Your voice matters.

So does the voice of community newspapers across this great nation.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Manzanita golf links get second chance

Gearhart Mayor Matt Brown — known colloquially in Gearhart as "Mayor Matty" — is the proud owner of the nine-hole Manzanita Golf Links.

Brown purchased the course in October from Jim Pentz and Tony Erickson of Pine Grove Properties, and reopened for play on Feb. 1.

"There was a period there we weren't sure who was going to be running it or how it was going to be run, or if it was going to be open again," said Dan Haag, director of the Manzanita Visitors Center. "Keeping it part of this community has just been huge."

Both the Manzanita Open and the Mudd Nick charity golf tournaments have decades-long roots in Manzanita, and losing the annual events was unthinkable.

"To lose those was a big fear, because the Eugene Schmuck Foundation and Mudd Nick Foundation both do really important things in the community and surrounding area," Haag said. "I think there was always a drive and desire to get the right person to come in and do it, and it sounds like we have."

This year's open takes place May 18 to May 20, with proceeds going to higher education and community services. The Mudd Nick tournament and auction, with the goal of access to the arts and athletic programs for children in the community, takes place Sept. 15.

Mayor Mike Scott recalled the community angst felt after the course closed last fall. "We didn't want to lose it," he said. "We went through a dark period where we weren't sure what was going to happen, so it's worked out great. We're pretty happy to have it back."

Family affair

Founded in 1987 by Ted Erickson, the course hosted generations of golfers — and three generations of Ericksons.

When Ted's son Steve Erickson announced his retirement last fall, golfers and residents feared the loss of the 34-acre course to development — a potential double whammy, as a 37-acre neighboring property could see development of up to 450 housing units. Steve's son Tony Erickson now partners with Pentz.



Manzanita Golf Links.



Matt Brown at Highlands Golf Club.

"We went out and worked out how we could keep the course alive," Pentz said. "Tony and I wanted to keep the golf course rather than develop the property."

When Brown committed to purchasing the course, Erickson and Pentz granted a conservation easement on the land to the city of Manzanita.

"You see other places where they end up tearing golf courses down and building homes, and you end up losing something," Brown said.

Pine Grove Properties sold the course to Manzanita Golf Links LLC for \$1.3 million on Jan. 22, according to the Tillamook County assessor's office.

While the neighboring parcel is

afford to play those type of courses."

In Manzanita, golfers will find challenging elevations and a mix of short, narrow holes and wider, open holes.

Highlands presents golfers with a par 31, Manzanita with a par 32. Gearhart Golf Course offers a par 36 for each of its nine holes; Astoria is the same.

"It's a pretty cool course for all ability levels," Brown said. "Seniors, ladies — every golfer has a story about how much they enjoyed playing Manzanita."

Nine holes at Manzanita typically cost \$25, with an array of local and couples packages offered.

Brown now offers a junior unlimited golf pass for \$99 as a way to get more kids to play.

"We've got kids that play every day," Brown said. "We're trying to introduce as many new juniors to the game as possible. That's what it's about, why I'm in the game."

Manzanita's course is "a lot like the Highlands," built on sand dunes with good drainage. Golfers are limited only by their tolerance for North Coast weather. Since opening, Brown has experienced an outpouring of support from the Manzanita community, he said. "People are calling me, emailing. They're so happy this is going to remain a golf course."

Residents love the open space and scenic walk around the perimeter, he said. A men's league Tuesday breakfast typically brings in about 40 guests. People in the community help the maintenance and golf shop team maintain the landscaping.

Brown will continue his role as general manager and head professional at the Highlands Golf Club in Gearhart.

A separate management team, led by superintendent Jerrod Kunde and golf shop manager Jeff Mitchell, will manage the day-to-day operations at Manzanita.

"We know how to operate a nine-hole golf course and make it sustainable, not only for the people who play it, but for the whole community, Brown said.

He plans to come to Manzanita about once a week. "It's about time management."

Brown sees a golf course as a great way to maintain the environment, draw tourism and to provide a community service.

"It's Matt's operation," Pentz said. "When it comes to golf, Matt is very, very good at the business."

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.

"Golfers are limited only by their tolerance for North Coast weather."

still "probably going to be developed," according to Scott, the nine-hole course will remain intact. "We went through a long process to get where we are today. It will either be operated as a golf course or will be perpetual green space if it's not operated as a golf course."

'Big part' of community

Nine-hole public courses like Manzanita and the Highlands — which also opened in 1987 — are "great ways to get new people into the sport," Brown said, inexpensive and usually under two hours to play.

"A lot of courses have been built in the last 20 years that are these big, expensive, amazing courses that cost hundreds of dollars," Brown said. "Only a certain segment of the population can really