

OPINION



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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PUBLISHER'S NOTEBOOK

Forests a gift to Clatsop County

During the holidays most of us give more thought to trees than usual, since they're decorated with lights and ornaments everywhere.

Although we may be thinking evergreens now, let's face it, during most of the year we live along the river and sea and don't give much thought to the largest part of our county — the part that grows trees.



KARI BORGEN

Of 529,000 acres in Clatsop County, 499,000 acres is forestland, according to OregonForestFacts.org. That means trees cover 94 percent of our home.

In October I joined 108 community members on three school buses to tour forestry projects and logging operations on private timberlands and in the Clatsop State Forest. The idea was to get us to think about our forestland and the contributions it makes to our local economy more often.

The county's forestland is mostly large and small private ownership, as opposed to publicly owned. Five of Clatsop County's top 10 taxpayers are forest landowners or wood processors, and accounted for nearly 40 percent of property taxes in 2017, according to the county budget message. In addition to property tax revenues, timber sales on the State Forest Trust Lands comprise an additional \$3.6 million of the general fund. Forests fund a big chunk of the county budget — that's a year-round gift.

Changes in forest management

Our first tour stop was at a tract owned by Hampton Lumber, one of those top 10 property taxpayers, where retired forester Bud Henderson talked about the changes in historic forest management. At one time, forest practices called for cleaning snags and debris from streams, removing places where water pooled. Culverts channeled water under roads and prevented fish passage.

Oregon's Forest Practices Act now requires a buffer of trees around streams that provide shade, sticks and insects that create fish habitat. In the last 10



Kari Borgen/The Daily Astorian

The sun shines through the trees on the landing of a selective cut harvest site on the Clatsop State Forest.

years, state agencies collaborated with Hampton to install bridges over roads to remove the fish barrier and provide a more naturally flowing stream. Now fish have habitat again in the once-scarce weirs and pools. It's an example of a private-public project that keeps giving back, year after year, as fish now find homes upstream.

As the forestry tour bus traveled off paved roads and into the woods, I was struck by the vastness of the timbered ground in our county, much of it in steep ravines (something you notice riding in a school bus on a narrow gravel logging road).

More gravel road, switchbacks and a spur road took the bus to the second stop on the tour, a cut-to-length logging operation on Clatsop State Forest. The harvest plan on this site calls for the contractor, Miller Timber Services of Philomath, to selectively cut small trees

with a harvester, a machine with a computerized cutting head that falls, limbs, cuts correctly measured logs and marks for the right species sort in one pass. The accompanying forwarder has a grapple and boom mounted on a carrier to pick up the harvested logs and take them to the road to be unloaded and sorted. The forwarder also loads the sorted logs on the truck for delivery.

Fifty years ago though, these operations would have required a team of fallers, choker setters, skidder operators, knot bumpers and a log loader operator. Now with \$1.3 million in computerized machinery, this harvest operation is accomplished with a team of two.

"How hard is it to find employees?" asked someone on the tour. They have no problem finding operators, came the answer. That makes sense. It was like watching kids play with Tonka toys with

lights and grapples and tracks, out in the woods on their own. I even want to run one.

High-wage jobs

Clatsop County employed about 440 people in logging and lumber and wood products manufacturing in 2017, down from more than 500 in the 1990s, according to Oregon Employment Department figures. But the average forest-related job paid \$68,200 a year in 2015 — nearly double the county's all-job average of \$35,100. Those jobs are better than family-wage, and most don't require a college degree.

Our final stop on the tour was at Northrup Horse Camp, a recreational site in Clatsop State Forest managed by the Oregon Department of Forestry. As the name implies, there are corrals for horses, and camping areas for RVs and tents as well as a picnic area. Although we may not think about our forests often, the state forest is being managed for multiple use, which means the public can access more than nine miles of trails for hiking, horseback riding and camping — a livability benefit for county residents.

Clatsop County forest lands produced enough wood in 2017 to provide lumber for more than 15,000 typical 2000-square-foot homes. We are home to both a lumber mill and a paper mill that processes some of that lumber and pulp. The export yard at the Port of Astoria sorts and ships logs overseas. State and private foresters and land managers assure that harvests are done responsibly, and managed sustainably.

On the bus ride back through miles and miles of forests, it struck me that all of the management and harvest activity I saw on the tour goes on every day, out of sight of almost all of the rest of Clatsop County.

As you look at your Christmas tree this year, you might think about the other trees in Clatsop County that stand in the woods unadorned, and how fortunate we are to be home to a vibrant forest and forest economy.

Kari Borgen is publisher of The Daily Astorian.

Water under the bridge

Compiled by Bob Duke

From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers



10 years ago
this week — 2008

CORVALLIS — A little over 10 years ago, two high school basketball teams celebrated state championships with a parade through the streets of Astoria — where, as the story goes, "all they do is catch salmon and play basketball."

Well ... the local boys can play a little football, too.

For the second time in just over a week, Clatsop County welcomed home a state football champion, as the Astoria Fishermen capped their run for history with a 19-11 win over the Banks Braves in the 2008 Class 4A state title game, on a sunny Saturday afternoon at Reser Stadium in Corvallis.

Just one week after the Knappa Loggers capped '08 with their first football championship in school history, Astoria put the finishing touches on a perfect season with a victory over the Braves in the ultimate Cowapa Clash.

What do you say, Astoria and Knappa, same time, same place, 10 years from now?

The future of the port of Tillamook Bay Railroad is as murky now as it was exactly one year ago, when floodwaters and fallen trees knocked the line out of commission.

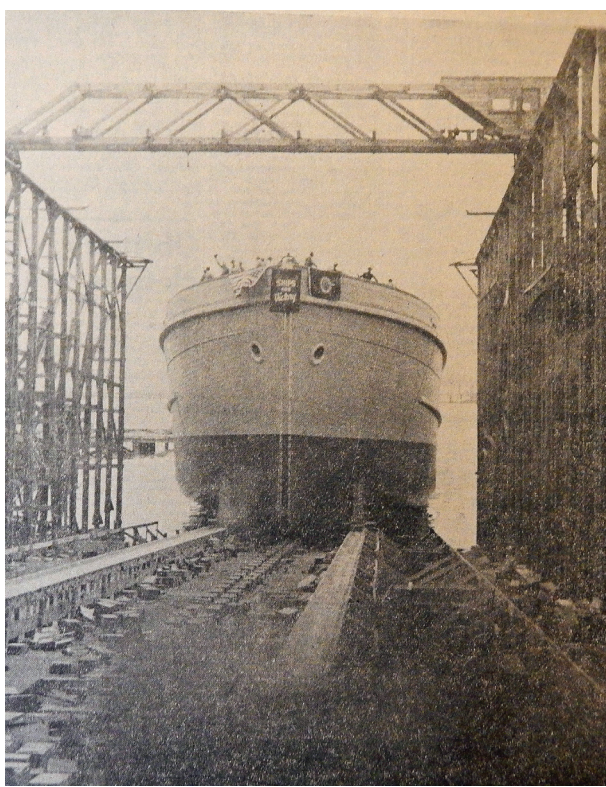
What has grown clearer, though, is the enormous investment that would be required to fix and upgrade the railroad.

Before the December 2007 storm, dairies and sawmills in the region relied upon the line, which runs from Tillamook to Gaston, for incoming cattle feed deliveries and outgoing lumber shipments.

In the storm's immediate aftermath, the port pegged the repair cost at roughly \$27 million.

A more complete analysis commissioned by the port brought the price tag to \$34 million, but that didn't include permitting and other bureaucratic requirements.

Astoria resident Curtis Dawson has been awarded the Carnegie Medal in recognition of his "outstanding act of heroism" in rescuing his captain, David M. Schmelzer,



1943 —The Oregon Pine No. 2, a 2,400-ton wooden barge build at the CRPA shipyard on Young's Bay, is shown sliding down the ways on Armistice Day in the company's first launching.

from drowning three years ago.

The medal is awarded to those who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree to save the lives of others.

50 years ago — 1968

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission has taken under advisement a request of Washington Mineral Inc., of Ilwaco for a long-term lease of beach at Fort Canby State Park to mine mineral-rich sand. The present one-year lease was extended until February while the long-term proposal is considered.

The company said the black sand at the southwestern tip of the state contains enough iron and titanium for its smelter at Centralia to produce 35,000 tons of iron annually for 25 years.

It said engineering studies indicate ocean action will deposit additional amounts of the sand.

Union Oil company has applied to the Portland district office, U.S. Corps of Engineers, for renewal of a permit to conduct core drilling and exploratory operations in the Pacific ocean off the Oregon coast.

Nature of exploratory work planned by union was not

disclosed, but The Daily Astorian has been advised by state and federal agencies that there is little likelihood of the type of seismic work that disturbed the offshore fishing industry so greatly a few years ago.

Port of Astoria Manager C.E. Hodges told the port commission Tuesday night he thinks the port will develop a facility to handle containerized cargo but not with its own money.

"I think Astoria is in a strategic position geographically as a containerization port but without sufficient financing," said Hodges.

He said this was another reason for obtaining the cooperation of the Port of Portland in leasing the former Cathlamet Bay reserve fleet facility from the federal Maritime Administration. The two ports are examining the potential of the site with an eye toward containerized cargo there.

Delegates to the National Conference of Coastal States were told Wednesday that mineral deposits may make the ocean floor along the coasts "one of the richest strips of real estate in the world."

But they were cautioned, too, that "only uninformed people believe ocean mining will be a large business within two or three years."

There appeared to be agreement among a number of speakers, however, that mining of hard metals from the coastal shelf is coming.

75 years ago — 1943

To renew interest of Clatsop County women in home nursing with a view to making every woman "symptom conscious" and thus forestall epidemics both during and after the war, Miss Mary Grey, Red Cross nursing consultant for the state of Oregon, conferred today and Thursday with local Red Cross workers.

Every war — from the time of the Egyptians to date — has been followed by an epidemic, according to Miss Grey. Consequently, she explained, the Red Cross and health departments have been observing the incidence of communicable disease in this country. The increase now nears 35 percent since the war began, she said.

"We are hoping to avoid any such epidemics as we had after the last war."

A light plane from the naval auxiliary air facility at the Clatsop County airport developed engine trouble while on a routine flight at 12:32 p.m. Sunday and crashed into the Columbia River near the naval station, port docks, naval authorities announced today.

The pilot, Ensign C.J. Dugan, "got wet."