

# OPINION



# the Astorian

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## GUEST COLUMN

# A living lab and boon to coastal economy

Here on the North Coast, we live in such a rich area for diverse scientific opportunities, from forestry to wetland restoration to maritime science. Our varied landscapes inform and inspire the ways we live, play, and earn a living. We believe that ensuring that this way of life continues for our coastal communities means investing in education, job opportunities, and in the care and management of our lands and waters.



**GLENN LAMB**



**CHRIS BREITMEYER**

That's why four years ago, Columbia Land Trust and the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce (CREST) came to Clatsop Community College with a plan for purchasing and conserving 82 acres of wetland at South Tongue Point. The property sits adjacent to the college's Marine and Environmental Research and Training Station (MERTS) campus and features tidal wetlands with tremendous habitat potential for salmon as well as migratory birds and other wildlife. The point is a haven of biodiversity, lush with willows, alder, and cottonwoods.

Together we set out to realize a vision for this land to serve as a living laboratory, part of a new campus for the MERTS program. Students of the program could use the living lab to practice long-term field research and gather real world data that would be of value to the scientific community, while also learning land management and restoration practices.

Austin Tomlinson, Columbia Land Trust's coastal land steward who went to Seaside High School, notes that he might not have had to leave the state to study environmental science if this kind of opportunity had been available at the time.

Stories like Austin's are part of why the



**The Columbia Land Trust plans to buy around 90 acres of South Tongue Point for wetland habitat and turn it over to Clatsop Community College.**

college is developing relationships with local environmental groups to create job pathways for students coming out of the program with certifications in environmental science.

To make this vision a reality, \$1.41 million was needed. To date, Columbia Land Trust has already raised 90%, with just \$141,000 left to complete the goal.

Afterwards, our partners at CREST will help restore the wetland habitat. With these funds, the Land Trust can fully pay

for the South Tongue Point property and transfer it to the college.

For the land trust, this partnership embodies our approach to conserve and restore important wetlands and floodplains in the estuary, while partnering to inspire and educate the next generation of conservationists and land stewards. The land trust serves the lower 250 miles of the Columbia River in both Oregon and Washington. We have invested in common ground conservation in the Columbia estu-

ary and the coast for more than 20 years.

From the Twilight Eagle Sanctuary and Kerry Island in Clatskanie to the Walacut River and Grays Bay in Washington, we've worked to conserve and restore thousands of acres of wetlands along the Columbia River Estuary and the rivers that drain into it. Restoring these wetland habitats means reviving a vital ecosystem at the nexus of vast salmon migrations and awe-inspiring bird migrations along the Pacific Flyway. South Tongue Point represents another important piece in broader restoration picture, and the educational opportunity makes it even more valuable.

Both as conservationists and educators, we are excited about all the good a MERTS campus with a living laboratory could do for the communities of the North Coast, both today and for years to come. This project represents an investment in a thriving future — a hub for 21st century education and training in land management, maritime science, and environmental science. A program with hands-on training on the land that will ultimately provide a home-grown boon to the coastal economy.

We invite everyone in support of educational opportunity, career pathways and a healthy environment in the North Coast to invest in this shared vision for South Tongue Point. If you would like to support the project, please reach out to [kdaly@columbialandtrust.org](mailto:kdaly@columbialandtrust.org) or call Columbia Land Trust at 360-213-1203.

*Glenn Lamb has been active with Columbia Land Trust since its founding in 1990 and became executive director in 1999. He serves on the Leadership Council for the Land Trust Alliance, and is a past board member of the Alliance and the Washington State Parks Foundation, among many other groups.*

*Chris Breitmeyer has been president at Clatsop Community College since July 2016. He started his academic career at Yavapai College in Arizona, where he taught environmental biology for more than 10 years.*

## LETTERS

### Gallery fills void

Ten years ago, Michael and Chelsea Granger opened the doors of a business here in Astoria for which any reasonable person would have predicted failure within two years. An art gallery showing only photographs seemed dead in the water. Launched during a recession, to boot.

Now here we are, a decade later, LightBox Photographic Gallery & Fine Printing has mounted more than 100 exhibitions, and the gallery has a reputation for showing high-quality photographic art that has put them on the radar of many photographers nationally, as well as internationally. Amazing.

As a local photographer, LightBox filled a void that I worried about when we decide to move here from Portland. It has provided a community meeting place for like-minded folks to exchange ideas and share their passion for photography.

A core group meets twice a month at the gallery to show our work and hear speakers on education night. It provides the networking with other photographers that has been important to me, and has produced a close bond among those who attend.

Much of the credit for LightBox's 10-year run is due to Michael's mastery of the Internet. LightBox has a beautiful webpage ([lightbox-photographic.com](http://lightbox-photographic.com)) on which you can read about current exhibits as well as view all of the photographs from the exhibits going back to LightBox's opening exhibition. Check it out. Congratulations, LightBox.

ROGER DORBAND  
Astoria

### Sea lions still here

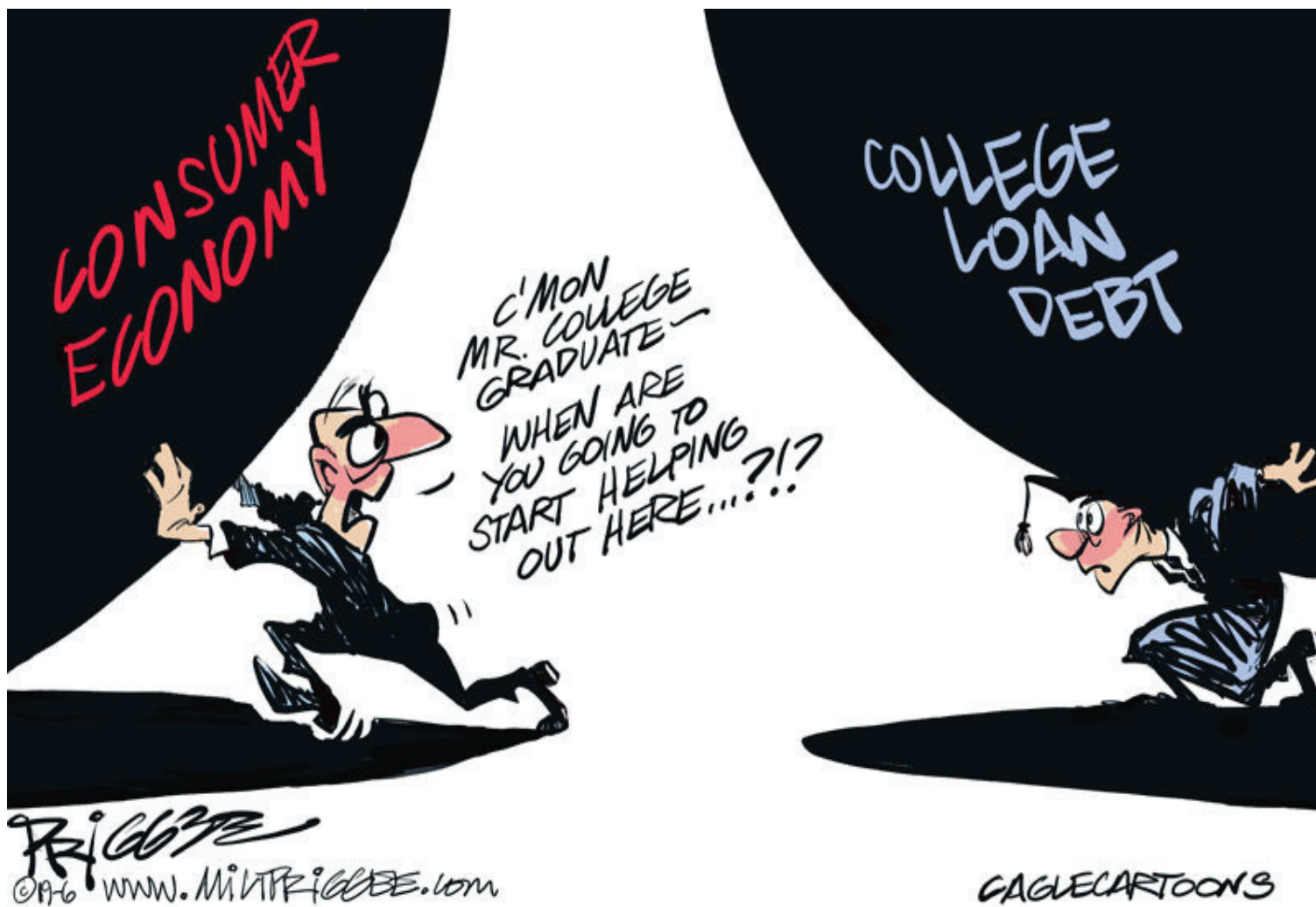
In Astoria, we have a huge problem with overpopulated California sea lions. These sea lions have raised many issues, from people not being able to get to their boats, to putting a strain on our fish populations.

These sea lions have raised many issues, and despite many attempts to combat this problem, they're still here. I believe we need to keep working on returning these sea lions home.

KATIE PATTERSON  
Astoria

### Abortion rights

On May 21, there was a demonstration in downtown Astoria for abortion rights. While driving by, I have noticed a



few of these demonstrations, and am so proud of these people who want to have their voices heard.

I believe that everyone should have their voices heard, especially when there is a problem that affects so many lives. Abortion should always be an option, and the fact that some states do not agree with this is extremely baffling to me.

By taking away abortion rights, you are taking away one of the most important rights a woman can have. Every woman deserves the right to their own body, and what to do with it.

I am glad that I live in a state that is for abortions, but am extremely saddened that women in other states aren't as lucky as I am. I am so glad that people are speaking out about this issue more and more, and that locals are even demonstrating, too.

MADISON NEILL  
Astoria

### Green New Deal

I am 25 years old, and I am motivated. The latest climate report from the UN says we only have 12 years to transform our economy and preserve the stability of our climate that human civilization depends on to survive.

It is not alarmist and it is not about poli-

tics. It is about survival.

A Green New Deal is the only viable proposal on the table. It would create millions of decent jobs and mobilize our society to change for the better by tackling issues of social injustice. It is an overwhelmingly popular initiative. Any presidential candidate who wants to be taken seriously by young people needs to support the resolution.

When our grandkids ask us what we did to change our ways, what will we tell them?

This is a chance to take action and be on the right side of history. It's not about right vs. left, it's about prioritizing people over money.

FAYTH BLACKWELL  
Astoria

### A rational approach

Foolishly I attended a recent town hall meeting conducted by state Rep. Tiffany Mitchell. Wow, it was spending over an hour on only one topic — her betrayal of progressives on the recent changes to the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

Now Rep. Mitchell, a former state of Oregon employee, campaigned hard that she would be a champion of the progres-

sive-dominated Democratic Party, and yet when a PERS vote came up, she finally did her research, and voted to take a moderate approach to controlling costs.

I, for one, as a 65-year member of what used to be the Democratic Party, am extremely glad someone is trying to do something rational, even if it means having to modify one's position. And yes, I'm glad that state Sen. Betsy Johnson is also taking a rational position on controlling costs.

There are literally hundreds of changes which an informed electorate could discuss that would devote more funds to our real collective needs rather than the I want approach voiced by the progressives at this meeting.

I would hope that future town hall meetings might draw a few moderate citizens who would have an opportunity to discuss rational approaches to our common interests.

You know, Rep. Mitchell, you have a commitment to all Clatsop County voters, not to just the fringe group which has seized control of the Democratic Party in Clatsop County. Are you up to it, or will you let your progressive base dictate that you must not seek, or discuss, alternative approaches?

JOHN DUNZER  
Seaside

GAGLE CARTOONS