

Oregon State celebrates the opening of timber research lab

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

CORVALLIS — A new facility dedicated to researching and testing mass timber in commercial buildings is now open at Oregon State University.

Oregon State celebrated the grand opening of the A.A. “Red” Emmerson Advanced Wood Products Laboratory on Oct. 10 at the main campus in Corvallis. The 17,500-square-foot lab is part of the College of Forestry’s new Oregon Forest Science Complex, which broke ground in 2016.

Mass timber refers to products such as cross-laminated timber, or CLT, and glue-laminated beams used in the construction of buildings, as opposed to steel or concrete.

While Europe has pioneered mass timber since the early 1990s, Oregon became just the first state last year to adopt building codes that allow for wood-framed buildings up to 18 stories tall.

That is due in part to research by the TallWood Design Institute, a partnership between Oregon State’s College of Forestry and College of Engineering, and the University of Oregon’s College of Design.

The Advanced Wood Products Lab will house the TallWood Design Institute, with 20 to 30 professors studying fire performance, building physics and environmental impact of new mass timber products.

Iain Macdonald, direc-



Oregon State University

The Advanced Wood Products Laboratory at Oregon State University will house the TallWood Design Institute, a research collaborative for mass timber in tall commercial buildings. It includes state-of-the-art equipment such as a KUKA milling robot.

tor of the TallWood Design Institute, said the program has close links with Oregon’s manufacturing community, including both of the state’s mass timber producers — D.R. Johnson Lumber in Riddle and Freres Lumber in Lyons.

“We have also been able to conduct structural, fire, acoustic and durability testing for many of the mass timber building projects that have taken shape around Oregon and beyond,” Macdonald said.

The grand opening featured live demonstrations of state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment, such as a milling robot used to carve mass timber beams and

panels.

Anthony Davis, interim dean of the Oregon State University College of Forestry, said wood construction “has to be a cornerstone in mounting an aggressive front in challenging our sustainability and climate crises.”

Figures provided by the Oregon Forest Resources Institute show it produces 26% less greenhouse gases to make CLT compared to steel, and 50% less than making concrete.

“Oregon is blessed with having some of the most productive and diverse forests in the world,” Davis said. “Because of this, we are better positioned than anyone else to serve as a

bridge between our natural resources and meeting demands of urban growth and renewal, while also continuing to conserve habitat and provide recreational access.”

The lab is named after A.A. “Red” Emmerson, who founded Sierra Pacific Industries in 1949. His son, George Emmerson, graduated from OSU in 1978 and is now the company president. His daughter, Carolyn Emmerson Dietz, is also president of the Sierra Pacific Foundation and graduated from Oregon State in 1982.

Sierra Pacific Industries is the second-largest lumber producer in the U.S., and donated \$6 million toward construction the Oregon Forest Science Complex.

The \$79.5 million complex, funded through a mix of public and private money, will also include the new 95,000-square-foot Peavy Hall, which is scheduled to open in spring 2020.

According to Oregon State, enrollment in the College of Forestry has steadily increased over the last decade, with the number of applications and admitted students up nearly 20% in 2018.

“These new facilities represent a critical step in the pathway toward using renewable materials in new ways,” Davis said. “Our mission is to use this space as a model of how we can pair Oregon’s intellectual capacity with our natural resources and capitalize on our spirit of innovation.”

Seaside gives nod to vacation rental fee hike

A new \$400 fee

By **R.J. MARX**
The Astorian

SEASIDE — The City Council has voted unanimously to raise annual permit fees for vacation rentals. The fee hike adds \$400 per year to all permit costs, which are divided into three tiers based on occupancy.

The goal is to fund a compliance officer, designed to inspect vacation rentals and enforce local codes related to items like noise, litter and parking.

“One of the things council needed to look at was how they would fund a compliance officer position,” City Manager Mark Winstanley said. “It was suggested the business license for vacation rental dwellings might be the best alternative.”

The fee increase, Winstanley said, will “allow for generation of enough money to pay for costs associated with the compliance officer.”

These could include salary, benefits and necessary equipment.

In public comment on Monday night, Joyce Hunt, a resident, “highly encouraged” councilors to increase the annual fee.

“We really need to get ordinance enforcement,” Hunt said. “This is the first step, and I hope we can keep it going.”

There are about 275 vacation rentals in Seaside, Winstanley said, the majority designated small or medium. The current rates are \$75 for rentals with one to five occupants, \$100 for six to 10 occupants, and \$150 for more than 11 occupants.

John Dunzer, who owns a one-bedroom bed-and-breakfast in the Cove,

objected to the increase.

“My little bed-and-breakfast — one room with two occupants — has had a 633% increase,” he said.

Winstanley said the increase was based on the cost of a visit to a property by a compliance officer, which would generally be the same regardless of a property’s size.

“The reason we made them all the same, was basically because the work is all the same,” he said.

With business licenses sent out in December, the council needed to act immediately to pass the ordinance in time for the new year.

City Councilor Dana Phillips showed little appetite for delay.

“If we start dragging our feet, it’s not going to go into effect for months,” Phillips said. “Isn’t that why we had two workshops? Isn’t this why the Planning Commission has done all the work they’ve done? I think we need to move forward.”

City Councilor Tom Horning echoed her comments, and defended the \$400 fee hike across all occupancy ranges.

“The idea of having fees set in order to meet a budget for an employee who is going to be hired to oversee this is an important part of the process,” he said. “If you start cutting discounts for certain parts, you start unfunding the position. I’d recommend moving forward with this.”

One more council reading remains, on Oct. 28, before the new fee structure goes into effect 30 days later.

Changes to the ordinance could be ahead, including incentives for property owners with a good record or who use a management company.

Weyerhaeuser ex-finance manager charged with fraud, identity theft

By **MAXINE BERNSTEIN**
The Oregonian

Federal prosecutors have filed criminal charges against an ex-finance manager from timber company Weyerhaeuser who is accused of stealing at least \$4.5 million from the business.

Susan Tranberg, 60, who had worked for the company for 42 years, is charged with mail fraud and aggravated identity theft, according to a criminal information filed in U.S. District Court in Eugene Tuesday.

Tranberg also faces a temporary restraining order in federal court, barred from liquidating or transferring any of her assets at Weyerhaeuser’s request.

Tranberg acknowledged the fraud in a signed statement to Weyerhaeuser that she wrote on Jan. 15, the day she was fired in a meeting with company officials at a hotel near the office in Springfield where she worked. Weyerhaeuser filed the statement in court.

“There is no (one) else to punish but ME,” Tranberg wrote, offering to give up her 12 weeks of banked vacation pay, retirement and 401(k) to try to make things right.

Weyerhaeuser in February referred the fraud case to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for criminal prosecution.

Tranberg defrauded the company from June 2004

through January, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Gavin W. Bruce.

Company officials say in court papers that Tranberg defrauded the business for at least 15 years by creating fake vendors and approving payment to the vendors by forging co-workers’ signatures. She also would hack into colleagues’ computer systems without authorization or their consent, the officials allege.

The payments in question were made to vendors identified as M.J. Miller and Margaret J. Miller, the name of Tranberg’s mother who died in 2009, company officials said.

Tranberg had created a phony contract between Weyerhaeuser and fake sellers M.J. Miller and R. J. Miller called the “Tree Farm Family Agreement,” which was dated June 16, 1986, according to court papers. Tranberg used her mother’s Social Security number, her own home mailing address and Springfield office address to receive fraudulent payments made to the Millers under the fake contract, according to Weyerhaeuser.

Weyerhaeuser never received timber under the contract but the payments to the non-existent Millers continued for more than a decade and were pocketed by Tranberg for her personal benefit, company officials wrote in court documents.

“Defendant used her



Weyerhaeuser officials say Susan L. Tranberg defrauded the business for at least 15 years.

knowledge of and responsibility for the advance cash payment process at Weyerhaeuser to receive cashier’s checks made payable to the fake vendor account,” the prosecutor wrote in a criminal information.

Tranberg was in federal court in Portland Tuesday morning, appearing in a civil case brought against her by her former employer. Her lawyer in that case, Randal Acker, told the court his client is not trying to hide her assets, nor has she been on any “spending spree,” as suggested by the company’s lawyer in court documents.

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