

IN BRIEF

Pacific County’s census response rate among lowest on West Coast

LONG BEACH, Wash. — The people of Pacific County have made it onto a top 10 list, but this is one list no county should strive to be on.

Since the U.S. census began in March, the county ranks 10th overall among counties in Washington, Oregon and California for the lowest self-response rate, at 26.1% as of Monday. Pacific County has the second lowest self-response rate in the state, with only Okanogan County having a lower rate at 25.2%.

The statewide self-response rate is 58.8% so far, higher than the nationwide rate of 53.4%. Washington also has the highest rate thus far among states in the western U.S., narrowly edging out Utah and Colorado.

A low census response rate isn’t unusual for Pacific County, which had a total response rate of 39.1% in 2010. That figure was the second lowest rate in the state that year, ahead of only San Juan County at 38.4%.

— *Chinook Observer*

Oregon state parks extend closure

Oregon’s state park system will likely remain closed through much of May, as officials keep parks closed to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department announced Tuesday evening that its systemwide closure will continue beyond May 8, the original end date for the closure established on March 22, when all park sites first closed to the public, though officials did not give a reopening date.

The parks department also canceled all overnight and day-use reservations through at least May 25. Officials said the department will eventually make a decision about reservations beyond that, but cautioned that “more cancellations are likely.”

The decision comes a day after Washington’s state park system announced it would partially reopen most of its state park sites on May 5, with the caveat that parks could close again should they become overcrowded.

Self-service gas rule extended again

The Oregon State Fire Marshal again extended a temporary rule that has lifted the state’s prohibition on self-service gas.

The extension allows Oregonians to pump their own gas through May 9. Without the extension, the rule change would have expired last weekend.

The move allows gas stations to continue voluntarily letting customers pump their own gas. It was initially announced March 28 in an attempt to reduce contact that could spread the coronavirus and ensure essential front-line workers have access to fuel during potential staffing shortages.

— *The Oregonian*

BIRTH

April 6, 2020

WILL, Colleena, and BUCIO, Cipriano, of Bay Center, Washington, a girl, Camila Rene Ann Bucio, born at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria. Grandparents are Doug Will, of Bay Center, Tabitha Will, of Sandy, and Adolfo and Flora Bucio.

ON THE RECORD

Assault

• Shayne Matthew Larsen, 43, of Seaside, was arrested Monday on Junction Road in Seaside for assault in the second degree, assault in the fourth degree, possession of a weapon with intent to use, strangulation, criminal mischief in the second degree, two counts of harassment and three counts of menacing.

Robbery

• Johnathan Christopher Rogers, 19, was arrested Wednesday on 12th Street and Marine Drive in Astoria for robbery in the third degree.

Disorderly conduct

• Troy Wayne Skinner, 31, was arrested on the Astoria Roundabout for disorderly conduct in the second degree, criminal mischief in the second degree and interfering with a firefighter or emergency medical services provider. Police say Skinner got into the middle of the road and tried to stop an ambulance and get inside. He then allegedly climbed onto the hood of the ambulance and

bent the antenna. Police say Skinner climbed off the ambulance when officers arrived.

Criminal trespass

• Everardo Machuca Quevas, 57, of Astoria, was arrested Monday on Ninth Street and Astor Street in Astoria for criminal trespass in the second degree.

Drug possession

• Jason Lee Barr, 39, of Clatskanie, was arrested Monday on 44th Street and Lief Erikson Drive in Astoria for unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, possession of methamphetamine and possession of heroin. Barr was also arrested on a warrant out of Washington state. Police say Barr was stopped for speeding when officers discovered the vehicle was reported stolen out of Portland in March. Police say methamphetamine and heroin were found inside the vehicle.

DUII

• Brandon D.J. Shoote, 32, of Longview, Washington, was arrested Wednesday on W. Marine Drive in Astoria for driving under the influence of intoxicants.



It's a boy!

TOP: From left, Tayla, Neymar and Jair Macareno celebrate the addition to their family, a baby boy due in October, at a socially-distanced gender reveal on Saturday afternoon in Astoria. Roberta Ryding, 83, stepped out of her home carrying the blue balloons to reveal the gender of her newest great-grandchild.

LEFT: Neymar Macareno, 2, excitedly runs to grab the balloons — which revealed the gender of his baby brother — from his great-grandmother, Roberta Ryding, 83.

Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Timber industry wants Brown to delay corporate tax

Money meant for public schools

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

SALEM — Oregon’s timber industry is urging state lawmakers and Gov. Kate Brown to delay the new corporate activity tax for six months to help businesses weather the coronavirus pandemic.

A petition started by Oregon Forests Forever now has more than 1,700 signatures, joining a chorus of appeals from the business community to temporarily suspend the tax.

Brown signed the new tax into law last May. It requires businesses that make more than \$1 million in Oregon to pay \$250 plus 0.57% of the excess revenues in tax, which will go into a special fund to help pay for public schools.

The tax went into effect this year, with the first quarterly reports due Thursday.

That was before COVID-19 became a widespread public health emergency, shuttering nonessential businesses and pummeling the U.S. economy. Between March 21 and April 18, 333,700 Oregonians filed for unemployment, according to the state Employment Department.

Oregon Forests Forever is a project started in 2018 by the Oregon Sustainable Resources Alliance, which

includes the Oregon Forest and Industries Council, a trade group representing loggers and timber manufacturers.

Sara Duncan, a community organizer for the group, said the pandemic has been especially hard on rural communities that rely on forests to provide jobs. “To have businesses asked to pay a new tax right now, this is probably the worst possible time,” she said.

Duncan said the state should do everything it can to keep as many jobs afloat in a time of crisis, and delaying the tax “would be a good and easy way to make that happen.”

A spokesman for Brown said the governor does not support delaying the tax — though she has instructed the Department of Revenue to give additional flexibility for businesses that owe less than \$10,000 in annual tax liability, given the economic disruption.

On Wednesday, the department announced that businesses that owe less than \$10,000 are not required to make quarterly payments this year. The department will also not impose penalties for missing or underestimating payments if businesses are financially unable to make payments.

“Businesses that make a good faith effort to cooperate with the department will not be penalized,” the spokesman, Charles Boyle, said. “This flexibility does not



The Astorian

Log exports have dried up at the Port of Astoria.

change businesses’ obligations to pay their annual tax liability, and is consistent with Gov. Brown’s priority of preserving revenue for essential state services for Oregonians during this crisis.”

Rex Storm, interim executive vice president for Associated Oregon Loggers, said the logging industry is already reeling from COVID-19, which has hammered down demand for wood products for homebuilding and remodeling.

In just one month, the U.S. Housing Market Index score — which rates market conditions for the sale of new single-family homes — plummeted from 72 to 30, the lowest mark since June 2012. As demand for homes decreases, so does production in lumber mills and, by extension, jobs for timber contractors.

“This has been the fastest, most dramatic drop in production that’s ever been experienced in our lifetimes,” Storm said.

Now, Storm said businesses are also being asked to pay what he described as a “punitive” tax that penalizes businesses for higher production.

“This tax keeps on taking, no matter what the status of the business is,” he said.

Steve Swanson, president and CEO of Swanson Group, a forest products manufacturer based in Roseburg, said his company is already struggling to keep employees since the pandemic began.

In late March, Swanson Group temporarily closed its plywood mill in Glendale due to shrinking demand. Another plywood mill about 115 miles north in Springfield is also running at one-third capacity. In all, Swanson said the company has laid off nearly 300 people.

“Because of the state-by-state shutdowns, and in particular Northern California and Washington state having a complete shutdown on construction, it has eliminated demand particularly for our plywood products, and to a lesser degree, our studs,” Swanson said.

Swanson said the company hopes to reopen its Glendale mill sometime in May, though that will depend on how quickly states lift stay-at-home orders. One year ago, Swanson Group permanently closed its original sawmill in Glendale — population 896 — citing market conditions and declining timber harvest from federal forests.

“In Glendale, the only other business left is a trucking firm. That’s it,” Swanson said. “It’s a community that’s been hard hit by general economics.”

Adding the corporate activity tax on top of everything else would only add to the pain businesses are feeling in these communities, Swanson said.

“At this juncture, cash is king,” he said. “We are trying our best to maintain a reasonable cash flow to prevent more curtailments.”

the Astorian

Established July 1, 1873
(USPS 035-000)

Published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday by EO Media Group, 949 Exchange St., PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103 Telephone 503-325-3211, 800-781-3211 or Fax 503-325-6573. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Astorian, PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103-0210

DailyAstorian.com

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEMBER CERTIFIED AUDIT OF CIRCULATIONS, INC.

Circulation phone number: 503-325-3211

Periodicals postage paid at Astoria, OR

ADVERTISING OWNERSHIP All advertising copy and illustrations prepared by The Astorian become the property of The Astorian and may not be reproduced for any use without explicit prior approval.

COPYRIGHT ©

Entire contents © Copyright, 2020 by The Astorian.



Printed on recycled paper

Subscription rates Effective May 1, 2019
MAIL (IN COUNTY)

EZpay (per month)	\$11.25
13 weeks in advance	\$37.00
26 weeks in advance	\$71.00
52 weeks in advance	\$135.00

Out of County Rates available at 800-781-3214

DIGITAL

EZpay (per month)	\$8.00
-------------------------	--------

WANTED

Alder and Maple Saw Logs & Standing Timber

Northwest Hardwoods • Longview, WA

Contact: John Anderson • 360-269-2500