

OPINION



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editor@dailyastorian.com

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KARI BORGEN
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GUEST COLUMN

Opportunities at Tongue Point

As Astoria and Clatsop County continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, I want to make sure that our young people are aware of one of the greatest resources available to them, the Tongue Point Job Corps Center campus at the east end of Astoria.

The center has immediate availability to safely house, feed and educate qualified applicants and place them directly into employment in our community.

Unfortunately, the pandemic significantly reduced the number of students Tongue Point has served over the past year and a half. With effective vaccines and continued safety precautions, the center is now ready to resume operation and to expand its training opportunities available to persons from 16 to 24 years old. This is an incredible opportunity for our young people and there is no cost to the students.

Born out of the War on Poverty and President Lyndon B. Johnson's Economic Opportunity Act, Job Corps is

the nation's largest residential education and job training program. It provides housing, basic health care, meals, social and emotional development and career preparation at 121 active Job Corps campuses in all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Tongue Point Job Corps has the capacity to train up to 473 students at one time, provide internship opportunities and help them transition into employment, higher education, or the military and ultimately break the cycle of poverty for themselves and their families.

At the Job Corps campus, students can train for jobs in the medical field, such as dental assistant and certified medical assistant, or one of eight hard trades such as electrical, carpentry, painting or for maritime jobs. In addition, Job Corps has worked directly with local and national employers to help fill in-demand and well-paying positions. Upon comple-

tion, students who trained in a union trade can go directly into union apprenticeship programs. Students also have the opportunity for advanced training opportunities.

Many people make the mistake of thinking Job Corps is a rehabilitation training program or for those who have had trouble with the law. This is not true. Job Corps can be the first choice for many young people who might not be a fit for the traditional education path, for those who are interested in getting to work immediately, or for those that have young families or personal obligations that may preclude them from participating in certain education programs.

Students can also obtain their driver's license, high school diploma or GED and many credentials needed for employment all free of charge.

When coupled with the huge demand for highly skilled and competent workers, the Job Corps campus can help the

county recover more quickly economically and fill the need for more skilled workers.

As a leader and proud resident of the county, I felt it my duty to make it known the tremendous benefits the Job Corps campus provides to its participants and its immediate availability to serve them. Take a tour, participate in the Workforce Council coming up in early April or provide a student for an internship in a local business. When students have reached 75% complete in trade they then spend six to eight weeks in an internship to help them hone their soft and hard skills and have a chance to actually work in their chosen field.

I hope readers will take time to learn more about our local Job Corps, its training programs and take advantage of all it offers to prospective students, employers and our community.

Melissa Padgett is a work-based learning specialist and business and community liaison at Tongue Point Job Corps Center.



MELISSA PADGETT

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GUEST COLUMN

The true value of the state's timber harvests

For 80 years, Clatsop State Forest has supported sustainable timber harvests while also providing recreational opportunities and habitat for important species.

Due to a decades-old contract with the state, surrounding counties and local public service providers receive 64% of all state forest timber revenue. The rest is retained by the Oregon Department of Forestry to cover the costs of managing these forests.

Last fiscal year, harvests in Clatsop State Forest generated \$22.9 million in revenue for Clatsop County as well as Clatsop Care Health District, Clatsop Community College, Jewell School District, rural law enforcement and fire protection districts, the Port of Astoria, public transport and other services.

This revenue is just part of the story, however, as many residents of North Coast communities know very well.

The tens of millions of dollars counties receive each year from the Department of Forestry is only the "stumpage" value — money derived from the initial sale of logs to a purchaser, usually a local sawmill. After the sale, harvesting, manufacturing and replanting state forests generates enormous additional economic opportunity for local businesses and workers. These forest-sector workers in turn frequent local shops, restaurants and service providers, helping to ensure rural



State timber harvests in the Clatsop State Forest generated \$22.9 million to the county and other local agencies last fiscal year.

communities continue to be places people want to visit, live, work and raise a family.

Each year, the Department of Forestry releases a report on the annual benefits of state forests. In addition to stumpage revenue, you'll see an accounting of the number of visitors and miles of trails maintained, but you won't see a valuation of the multigeneration, family-owned businesses

that make a living in these forests.

Local logging and hauling businesses, road building operations, rock hauling companies, reforestation crews, sawmills, mechanics and trucking companies all participate in state forest timber harvests and rely on the work and the wood products they generate. There are dozens of these businesses and thousands of forest-sec-

tor workers on the North Coast. The economic and social benefits generated by these businesses far exceeds the revenue generated through stumpage payments and yet it goes unaccounted for in Salem year after year.

Failing to account for these, arguably more meaningful economic indicators, creates a situation where policymakers and elected leaders often fail to understand and appreciate the true value of the state's timber harvests.

Leaders need to see the bigger picture when making policy decisions that affect how state forests are managed. Reducing timber harvests in state forests, whether to set aside additional acres for habitat or create carbon banks, does more than reduce stumpage revenue coming into the counties from the state — it also means less work and opportunity for local businesses and less resiliency and vitality in the surrounding rural communities.

The Department of Forestry can easily gather information on the broader impact of state forest harvests on local communities. The department and the Board of Forestry are considering new management plans for state forests, some of which would significantly reduce timber harvests.

All who depend on working public forests should encourage the Department of Forestry and the Board of Forestry to take the time to learn the whole story before making drastic changes to how these forests are managed.

Kristin Rasmussen is director of public affairs and communications for Hampton Lumber.



KRISTIN RASMUSSEN

Kari Borgen/The Astorian