



Mable Bowling shows the plastic and tape use to seal out smoke from a neighbor's outdoor furnace the comes through the windows in her home in St. Paul, Indiana.

Northwest residents, with wood to burn, among top polluters

BOISE — Oregon, Idaho, and Washington residents are among the top polluters in the nation when it comes to fine particle emissions from burning wood to heat homes. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lists Oregon, Idaho and Washington as seventh, eighth and ninth respectively in per capita emissions.

The three states share chilly climates, a tradition of wood burning, and lots of national forest land with easy access and where U.S. Forest Service managers appreciate the removing of some trees to reduce potential forest fires.

“We have a very large fuel wood cutting program and a large public that takes advantage of it,” said Julie Thomas, spokeswoman for the Sawtooth National Forest in Idaho. “For a lot of folks, it helps them reduce the cost of purchasing heat in the wintertime.”

Wood burning is also popular in Oregon, where that state’s Department of Environmental Quality found that a third of residents in the densely populated Portland region burn wood. Marcia Danab, an agency spokeswoman, said southeast Portland as well as some other areas of the state that experience inversions have problems with wood smoke. Health agencies issue alerts when it’s unhealthy to be outside. To alleviate the problem the state, she said, in 2009 enacted a law requiring uncertified woodstoves to be removed and destroyed when a home is sold.

“The newer stoves that conform to EPA standards put out far less particulates,” Danab said. That’s the kind that a Washington state company called Rich’s For The Home sells at its five store locations in that state. Beth Urban, an assistant manager at the company’s Lynnwood store, said the state has some of the strictest standards for wood stove emissions. To meet those standards, the new stoves use what Urban called secondary reburns that eliminate many of the particles.

She also said the stoves, while more expensive, in the long run save money because they’re more efficient, some models using half the wood to produce the same amount of heat as older stoves.

The stoves come in various materials, with soapstone being the most expensive. Urban said prices range from \$3,000 to \$4,000 for a soapstone stove, but they are also among the most attractive and effective at distributing heat.

“It cuts your consumption down quite a bit,” she said. “The newer wood stoves, you can load up the fire boxes to last six, eight, sometimes 10 hours. Nobody likes to babysit a wood stove.”

AP Photo/Michael Conroy

Gorge town opens city-owned pot shop

By JUSTIN RUNQUIST
The (Vancouver) Columbian

With the world’s second-largest monolith nearby and some of the best windsurfing conditions in the country, North Bonneville has long been a popular playground for outdoor enthusiasts. Just west of the Bridge of the Gods, North Bonneville is a frequent stopover for truckers and a quiet base camp for hikers, bicyclists and ice climbers in the Columbia River Gorge. Now, the rural city of about 1,000 people is about to shift into a new kind of recreational hot spot.

This weekend, North Bonneville will become home to what is apparently the nation’s only city-owned pot shop, The Cannabis Corner. While most cities around the state have spent the past two years either banning marijuana businesses or reviewing applications for new private stores, the city of North Bonneville took a different route, diving right into the industry.

No other city in Washington has even attempted to open a pot shop, said Brian Smith, a spokesman for the Liquor Control Board.

After an unusually rough and lengthy application review, the city won approval for a license to sell marijuana last month. The store is set to open on Saturday at 484 Evergreen Drive, stocked with dozens of strains that run the gamut of pricing and THC levels.

As the rest of Washington’s cities wait for the Legislature to deal them some of the state’s pot tax revenue, North Bonneville’s leaders say they are already a step ahead of everyone else.

Driving into town along Highway 14, The Cannabis Corner is impossible to miss. Just a couple miles from Beacon Rock, the tall blue sheet metal walls of the store stand out among the trees like a welcome sign amid the cliffs of the Columbia River Gorge.

City officials, such as Mayor Don Stevens, hope the store will be an inviting destination for tourists, and for good reason. The city operates with an annual budget of about \$1.2 million. But North Bonneville is still working to recover from several years of severe budget cuts that hit timber-dependent counties, such as Skamania County, worse than most areas.

Less than a year after Washington voters legalized recreational marijuana in November 2012, the North Bonneville City Council began mulling the idea of getting into the business. In 2013, the city created the North Bonneville Public Development Authority — a government-owned corporation — to apply for a license to sell marijuana and oversee operations once the Liquor Control Board granted approval.



Steven Lane/The Columbian
Tim Dudley gives a tour of The Cannabis Corner Wednesday. The place will be the first of its kind as the only city-owned pot shop in the country.

The setup gives the city more control over the local pot industry while adding a significant revenue source to its ailing budget, said Stevens, who’s a non-voting member of the store’s governing board. But even bigger than that, he noted, the move puts North Bonneville on the path toward making history with a novelty like no other.

In 2012, more than 53 percent of Skamania County’s voters supported Initiative 502, which legalized marijuana. But with greater location-based limitations in Stevenson and Carson — more parks and schools — it was much easier to find a spot to sell marijuana in North Bonneville. By law, marijuana stores can’t be too close to parks and schools.

“We don’t have any schools in North Bonneville, and that’s huge,” Stevens said. “The city park is really the only official park. Everything else is just open space.”

And with the closest competition sitting dozens of miles away to the east in Bingen and to the west in Vancouver, city officials believe isolation works in The Cannabis Corner’s favor.

The store is just close enough for a drive from the Portland-Vancouver metro area. Yet it’s also far enough away for anyone afraid of being spotted by friends, family or co-workers to comfortably buy marijuana, said Tim Dudley, the chairman of the store’s governing board.

“We’ll get the east end of Clark County that will not want to have their reputations tarnished,” Dudley said, “(which is) my argument from day one why this will work here.”

After North Bonneville City Councilor Charles Pace pitched the idea to his colleagues in September 2013, the city held a series of public meetings about the plan. Few residents spoke out against it, and some are even excited about the possibilities of what the store

could do for North Bonneville. Zach Martin, the manager of the Dam Roadhouse Restaurant located just down the street from The Cannabis Corner, said he’s working out deals to package coupons for the restaurant with purchases from The Cannabis Corner. “Most people around here are really excited about it,” Martin said. “We’re just looking forward to the proceeds to help build Bonneville back up.”

Of course, some local businesspeople are still wary of the idea. For many reasons, Dave Hutchison, the manager of the Lewis & Clark Campground & RV Park, is uncomfortable about having a pot shop little more than a block from where he works.

Tourists driving high along the windy, tree-lined stretches of highway that run up to North Bonneville will put safety on the line, he said. And Hutchison expects the store to draw more crime to the city.

“It’s a place waiting to be robbed ...,” he said. “And being out in the middle of nowhere, like it is, it’s easy access off the freeway.”

Brad Andersen, a trial attorney from Stevenson, even tried to put a halt to the store. Citing the drug’s illegal status at the federal level, Andersen, a former Skamania County prosecutor, said the city should never get into the business of recreational marijuana.

“I threatened to file for recalls against the mayor and the city council members,” he said. “It’s still in violation of federal law.”

Early on, Andersen worked with a group of local opponents to the pot shop. In recent months, their voices have gone quiet as the community waits to see how the experiment plays out in its first year.

“If there are enough citizens that decide they want to challenge this, then I’ve offered to provide my services,” Andersen said.

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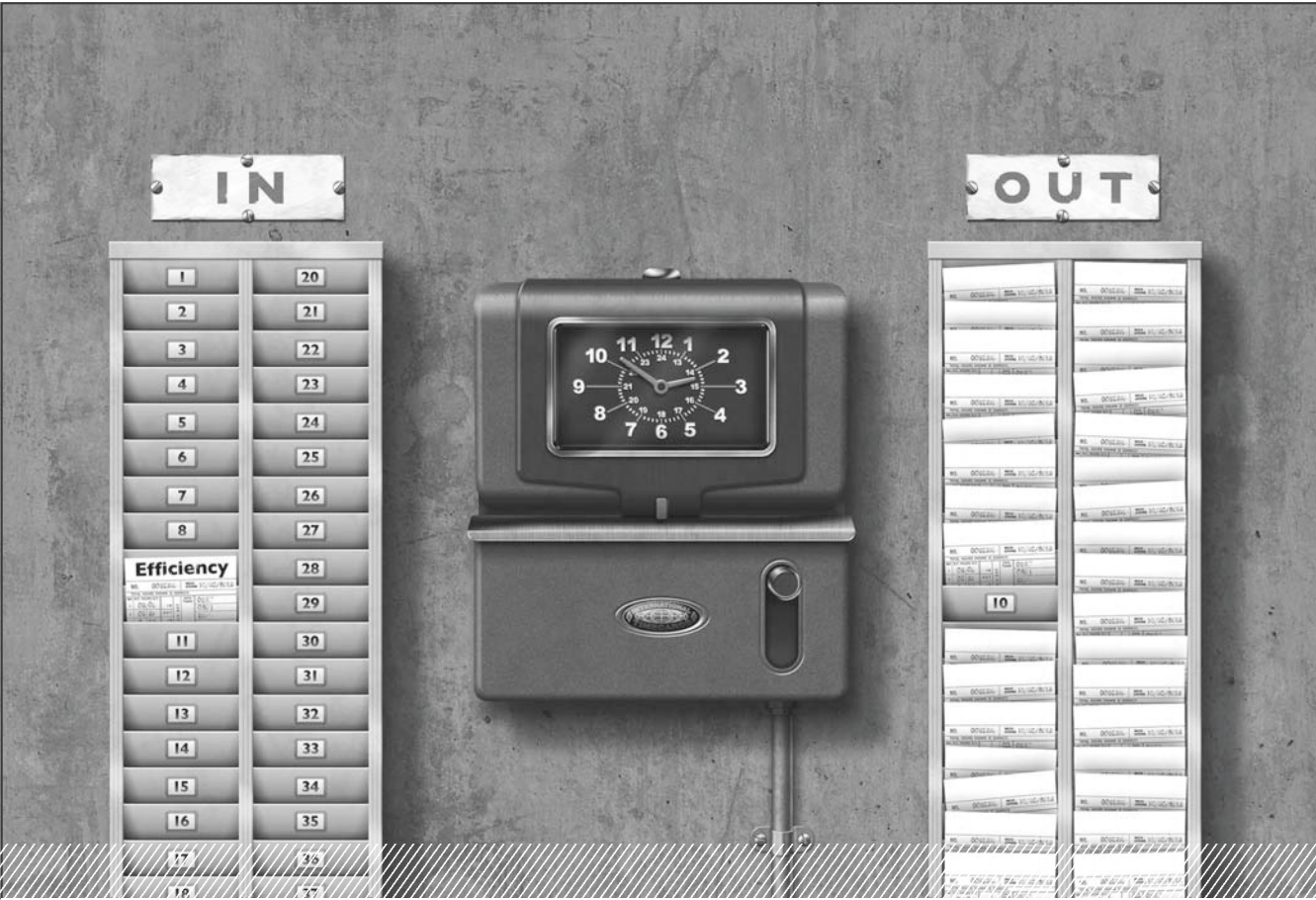
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