

Despite downturn incomes keep rising

By MIKE ROGOWAY
The Oregonian

SALEM — Incomes and wages have been rising in Oregon, and continued that growth last year during the the steepest, deepest economic downturn in Oregon history. And the income gains spanned the entire state, reaching all 36 counties, according to the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis.

The pandemic distorted many economic measures, though. And inflation is devaluing some of this year's wage gains. So the picture may not be quite as rosy as the numbers suggest.

Income includes wages but also other sources of money, including Social Security checks, investment returns, unemployment payments and stimulus checks.

Last year's federal pandemic relief bills played a big role in the rising incomes. While temporary federal unemployment bonuses were in place, some people actually made more while they were unemployed than they did while working.

The effects of the federal payments were largest in Oregon's rural counties, where incomes are lower and so the stimulus payments had a larger impact in percentage terms.

Oregon's rural counties also

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\$40 million in forgivable disaster loans approved for farmers

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Oregon farmers who've suffered from drought and other disasters will gain access to \$40 million in forgivable loans under a legislative package approved Monday, Dec. 13.

The money will serve as a "bridge" to keep farmers afloat while they wait for USDA assistance, but the loans will be forgiven if growers don't qualify for federal disaster relief.

"We're telling farmers and ag workers across the state that we acknowledge how hard it's been to survive this year," said Rep. Bobby Levy, R-Echo, before the House floor vote.

Throughout 2021, farmers have been plagued by winter storms, drought, heat waves, insect infestations, wildfires and flood damage, all during a global pandemic.

"It's been the hardest year for natural disasters in many Oregon producers' memories," said Mary Anne Cooper, Oregon Farm Bureau's vice president of public policy, during a legislative hearing on the bill.

The forgivable loans are intended to allow farmers to stay in business, but won't actually result in a profitable year, she said. "I just think that's out of reach for the 2021 year."

The Oregon Farm Bureau estimates about \$75 million was made available to disaster-afflicted growers in the legislative package, which was passed during a Dec. 13 special session.

The idea for forgivable loans sprang from concerns that niche Oregon farmers face "gaps" in USDA disaster programs, which are primarily designed for major commodity crops. For example, damage from the ice storm and heat wave this year may not directly kill hazelnut trees or nursery stock. However, yields and marketability are adversely affected.

"Assistance is needed to help

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Don Mallory works on a silver bit at his shop in Flora.
Sandy Mallory/Contributed Photo

Self-taught

Silversmith Don Mallory learned the craft after 20-year career with ODOT

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

FLORA — It's mainly a post-retirement hobby, but Don Mallory really enjoys the craft of silversmithing. "I really like making bits and spurs, but jewelry sells better," the longtime Flora resident said. "I've got a better market for it than the bits and spurs."

You won't find Mallory with a brick-and-mortar shop or even an online presence.

"We don't have a computer out here," he said, adding that internet connections in his area are a bit sketchy.

Mallory and his wife, Sandy, live just outside of Flora. He has two sons, five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

His version of marketing is mainly word of mouth, "and I do a few shows."

Silver enthusiasts can find Mallory's work at various shows and bazaars, such as one held around Valentine's Day at the Hurricane Creek Grange, during Hells Canyon Mule Days in September — for about 20 years — or, more recently, at bazaars held during the Christmas season.

He's also shown his stuff outside of Oregon.

"I got invited to Sheridan, Wyoming, to the Great Western Silver Exposition in 2011 by a silversmith out of California, Jeremiah Watt," Mallory said. "Somehow, he got my address and invited me. He invited several silversmiths from Australia, Germany, Canada and all over the United States. About 20 people were at that deal. It was to show off your engraving and what you can do."

Largely self-taught

As Mallory neared retirement from about 20 years working for the Oregon Department of Transportation, he realized he'd need something to fill the time.

"I figured I'd need something to occupy my time," he said. "It turned into a job after

I got started at it."

In 1993, a cousin, Larry Bacon, who lives near Lost Prairie in the northern part of Wallowa County, went to a silversmithing school in Nampa, Idaho. Bacon invited Mallory to accompany him, but he didn't think he should leave because of his job with ODOT.

"I didn't go because I thought sure it would snow — it was January," he said. "He came back with bit and spurs. He's the one who helped get me started in it."

From there, he taught himself. "It was all hit and miss. I basically taught myself," Mallory said. "When I needed help, Larry would help... The rest of it I would learn on my own."

Working with silver

Mallory said he buys the silver in 16-24 gauge sheets that are about 6 inches wide and 18 inches long.

"That'll last you quite a while," he said.

He starts by determining and cutting the pattern of whatever he's making with an air-powered pneumatic engraver. He said it has a blade that's about an eighth of

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Pollution from Columbia River dams leads to lawsuit

By GEORGE PAVLEN
Capital Press

PORTLAND — An Oregon environmental group is suing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers claiming the agency pollutes the Columbia River with heated water, oil and other toxic chemicals at three hydroelectric dams between Portland and the Tri-Cities in Southeastern Washington.

Columbia Riverkeeper filed the lawsuit on Wednesday, Dec. 8. It alleges the Corps has failed to obtain permits regulating pollutants discharged into the Columbia River at The Dalles, John Day and McNary dams, in violation of the federal Clean Water Act.

Miles Johnson, senior attorney for Columbia Riverkeeper, said the dams are making the river too warm for endangered salmon and steelhead.

"Our runs of salmon and steelhead in the Columbia Basin are in serious trouble," Johnson said. "It's really disappointing to see the Army Corps refuse to even comply with our basic laws for protecting clean water."

According to Johnson, pollution is occurring daily at the dams, threatening the health and survival of anadromous fish.

Columbia Riverkeeper initially sued the Corps in 2013 over discharges. The lawsuit was dropped a year later after the agency agreed to apply for Clean Water Act permits through the Environ-



East Oregonian, File

A lawsuit filed on Wednesday, Dec. 8, 2021, by the Columbia Riverkeeper, an Oregon environmental group, alleges the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers pollutes the Columbia River with heated water, oil and other toxic chemicals at three hydroelectric dams, including McNary Dam, shown here, between Portland and the Tri-Cities in Southeastern Washington.

mental Protection Agency.

Those permits still have not been issued seven years later, Johnson said.

"We don't think anyone, especially the federal government, is above the law," he said. "We're asking for the Army Corps to follow the law and reduce pollution going into the river."

Matt Rabe, spokesperson for the Corps' Northwest Division, said the agency applied for the EPA permits in 2015 and takes its Clean Water Act obligations seriously.

"Our team is working tirelessly to find solutions that balance all of the purposes of the system, including the needs of fish and wildlife, flood risk management, navigation, power gen-

eration, recreation, water supply and water quality," Rabe said.

Water temperature is one of the "pollutants" regulated by the EPA under the Clean Water Act. Both Oregon and Washington have established a maximum temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit for the Columbia River to protect salmon and steelhead runs.

Temperatures higher than 68 degrees can cause stress and disease among salmonids, leading to significant die-offs.

A recent EPA report for the Columbia and Snake rivers concluded that water temperatures regularly exceed 68 degrees at the dams between July and October.

Johnson said Clean Water Act permits could address this problem several ways. They might

require the Corps to improve fish ladders at the dam, or draw down the reservoirs during the warm summer months to keep cooler water moving quickly through the system — rather than sitting stagnant and absorbing sunlight.

However, Rabe said that though the pools behind the lower Columbia River dams are considered reservoirs, they are largely not storage reservoirs but rather run-of-river facilities.

"This limits our ability to impact water temperatures by drawing down water levels in the spring," he said.

Other users of the Columbia River system have questioned the temperature standard for navigation, hydropower and water supplies.

Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, said the temperature standard adopted in Oregon and Washington is setting the dams up for failure.

Northwest RiverPartners is a group based in Vancouver, Washington, that advocates for hydroelectricity, transportation and agriculture within the Columbia River system.

Looking at the EPA's report released last year, Miller said water coming into the system from farther upstream was already warmer than 68 degrees

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