

A look at county's timber decision

Clatsop only county to opt out of class-action suit

By Edward Stratton
EO Media Group

Clatsop County contains nearly one-quarter of state-run forestlands involved in a lawsuit brought by Linn County against the state over timber revenue. But Clatsop was the only one of the 15 counties covered by class action to opt out.

Linn County's lawsuit claims the state violated a contract to maximize sustainable harvests on land deeded by counties in the 1930s and '40s. The lawsuit claims state policies from emphasizing recreation and conservation have cost the counties a total of \$35 million a year in timber revenue since 2000. It also seeks future payments of \$35 million a year to account for the lost revenue.

Deemed a class action by a Linn County Circuit Court judge, the lawsuit grew to include 15 counties and approximately 130 taxing districts, all of which stood to gain sizable settlements were the lawsuit successful.



AP PHOTO/JEFF BARNARD

Dense forest on a steep slope on U.S. Bureau of Land Management land outside Ruch.

'It's a matter of cost-sharing. Should rural Oregonians be the only ones who pay for the cost of a policy that benefits all?'

John DiLorenzo, lead lawyer for Linn County

The governing bodies of the affected counties and taxing districts had until Jan. 25 to let the court know if they wanted out. Most did nothing, by default staying in the lawsuit.

An outlier

According to a filing last week by lawyers for Linn

County, five of the nine taxing districts that opted out were in Clatsop County.

Four — County Rural Law Enforcement, Road District No. 1, the county affiliate of Oregon State University's 4-H and Extension Service programs and the Clatsop County Fair —

were automatically removed as plaintiffs by the county Board of Commissioners' decision. The board of directors for Sunset Empire Parks and Recreation District voted last month to opt out.

Michael Hinton, chairman of Sunset Empire's board, said the group didn't agree

with the change in forest practices that might result from the lawsuit, and that the district's budget doesn't rely on timber revenue.

"I think we made the right decision," Board of Commissioners Chairman Scott Lee said about the county's decision last month to opt out. "And of course I'm disappointed other taxing districts didn't opt out. I still think I made a right decision."

The county will still potentially be a big recipient of any settlement from the lawsuit. Of the 30 taxing districts in the county receiving timber tax revenues, 25 remained involved.

The board of Jewell School District, a timber tax-funded K-12 school in the middle of the Clatsop State Forest, took no action. The Port of Astoria Commission was the only major taxing district to vote publicly to stay in.

Clatsop Community College's board voted 4-3 the day before the deadline to opt out. But board member Esther Moberg's vote to opt out, submitted via email after she declined to attend the meeting and vote via teleconference, was rescinded as a violation of voting rules. The vote was ruled a tie, and the

college was left in the lawsuit.

No sense in opt-out

John DiLorenzo, the lead lawyer for Linn County in the case, said all Clatsop County did was give up money and any influence over the outcome of the \$1.4 billion lawsuit.

"It just makes no logical sense to me," he said. "But hey; you know what? It's their right to do it."

DiLorenzo said there's a misconception that the case is about changing timber policies, which he said would ultimately involve an extensive rule-making process or legislative action requiring public input.

"I know that passions are ... very much present as part of this debate," DiLorenzo said. "But believe me; this case is all about money."

DiLorenzo said environmental and timber policies are created by and seen as beneficial to the entire state. But the costs of such policies not maximizing timber revenues, he said, fall more on rural counties that can least afford it.

"It's a matter of cost-sharing," he said. "Should rural Oregonians be the only ones who pay for the cost of a policy that benefits all?"

Local grad rates remain stagnant

Seaside sees a 1 percent drop

By Edward Stratton
EO Media Group

WARRENTON — Over the past five school years, Warrenton High School has steadily climbed from the worst to nearly the best in Clatsop County at graduating students in four years.

Since 57.9 percent of the class of 2012 graduated in four years, the worst mark in the county, the school has seen continual gains, with more than 63 percent in 2013, 66 percent in 2014 and more than 69 percent in 2015. Last year, more than 74 percent of Warrenton students graduated on time, nearly the highest rate among the county's three larger school districts.

Over the same period of time, Astoria High School has increased from less than 60 percent to a nearly 73 percent four-year graduation rate. Seaside, which has historically had a stronger graduation rate, increased from 69 to 74.4 percent over the past five years.

Knappa, which boasted the second-highest graduation rate five years ago at more than 72 percent, fell off into the mid-60s for three years, but built graduation back above 70 percent last year. The state as a whole has increased graduation from 68.4 percent in 2012 to 74.8 percent last year.

More support

"I do think it's the work we've done in my time here that we're starting to see the effects of," Warrenton-Hammond Superintendent Mark Jeffery, in his sixth year with the district, said of the district's continual increases. "We're hoping to see it to continue to improve."

Jeffery said Warrenton has increased staffing for remedial support and focused

on making sure eighth-graders are ready to enter high school.

"I've put a lot of emphasis in math over the last five years," Jeffery said. "That's one area that the majority of kids will struggle with coming into high school."

Principal Rod Heyen said Warrenton brought in retired math instructor Kate Gruetter part time to work with students, and provides after-school opportunities for students to make up homework and tests. "That has become really beneficial and become part of our culture here."

Green, yellow, red

Each year, Heyen compiles a list of seniors, labeling them the color green if on track to graduate, yellow if one or two credits behind and red if more. "My goal is to get everybody in the green and everybody in the yellow over the hump," he said.

Heyen said he will try to counsel students in the red into a fifth year of high school, or even toward the GED exam if more realistic.

"Then I try to get them into college classes as an incentive to get back into school," he said. "We're really, really trying to push that. I sit down and show them some of the numbers of money I'm spending on them (in subsidized tuition), and present it as a scholarship."

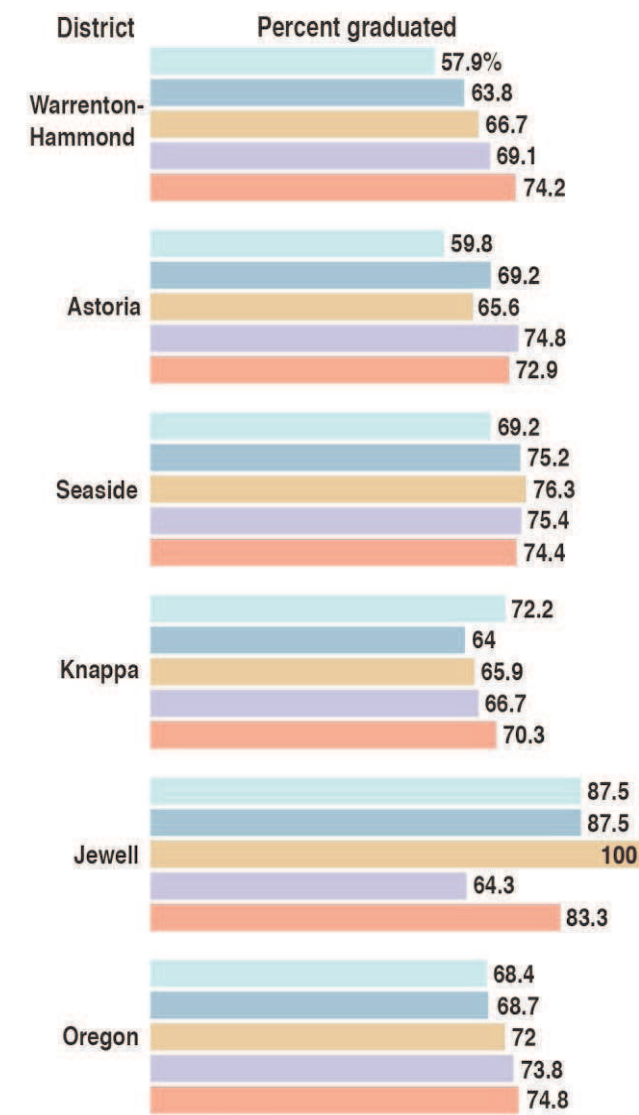
Part of the challenge, Heyen and Jeffery said, is how small Warrenton is. The district awarded 47 diplomas last year, out of a class of 66. Every student equals 1.5 percent of the group, meaning graduation rates can significantly fluctuate based on very few students.

Bringing them in

Heyen said he gets many of his ideas from other districts, including Principal Lynn Jackson at Astoria High School, who, he added,

Clatsop County graduation rates

Graduation rates for the five area school districts compared to the Oregon state average for the last five years.



Source: Oregon Dept. of Education

Edward Stratton and Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group

is good about pulling in kids who might be falling through the cracks, regardless of the effect on the graduation rate.

Astoria regularly takes students from around the county into the Gray School Campus Alternative Education Program, a self-paced, largely online school for students who need to recover credits on their own schedules.

Heyen said he recently consulted with a fifth-year senior, living on her own with a job, who had been to several different high schools without finishing, but wants to try again.

"Behind the grad rate, you have a kid walking in the door saying he wants to try," Heyen said. "You've got to go after that."

Red Cross seeks to strengthen ties with Cannon Beach

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well-prepared," Dugaw said. "We want to make sure we tap into that preparedness and strengthen our community partnerships by offering Red Cross training and engaging individuals who are already prepared themselves."

The Cascades region helps an average of three families each day who are affected by disasters, such as home fires and storms. After a recent home fire, the Red Cross opened a shelter so that 30 individuals displaced from their homes could have access to food, water, showers and an overnight stay.

The Red Cross will train Cannon Beach volunteers on disaster action, preparedness and sheltering displaced people after an emergency, such as a tsunami.

Disaster response training might include deploying to scenes like home fires to assist families with food, shelter, clothing, mental health resources and other immediate basic needs. Preparedness education trains residents to deliver presentations within their community, install smoke alarms, put together disaster supply kits and other actions that increase readiness.

Dugaw said the Red Cross will form relationships with Medical Reserve Corps and CERT.

"The more people that we have cross-trained in disaster response and recovery, the more resilient communities can become for disasters of all kind," Dugaw said.

"I think for our little rural communities, we all need to be cross-trained to do everything," Wiedenhoft said. "If something happens, it might take awhile for help to arrive. Any community can train

volunteers to do the stuff that we did."

After the tornado, which damaged 128 structures, Wiedenhoft remembers seeing downed trees and power lines and planned to help with medical response. When he learned no one was hurt, he switched modes to taking care of people who were displaced from their home. He helped relocate them to a safe place and eventually to the local Red Cross shelter at Calvary Bible Church.

Though Wiedenhoft has responded to disasters in other locations, he said it was different responding to an emergency that affected his community.

"He immediately went down to where help was needed the most and found out what he could do to assist," Dugaw said. "That kind of on-the-ground knowledge of your community is priceless."

Wiedenhoft, who leads some trainings, said Cannon Beach residents are welcome to participate in the emergency corps of Nehalem Bay's exercises.

To volunteer

WHAT: Red Cross general recruitment session

WHERE: Cannon Beach Chamber Hall

WHEN: Thursday, March 30, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

COST: Free

PHONE: 503-284-1234;

WEB: www.redcross.org/local/oregon/volunteer

EMAIL: volunteer.cascades@redcross.org

Yoga festival comes to Cannon Beach

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Right Brain" and "Restorative Yoga" among other classes.

A third of the attendees are teachers themselves, Allsop added.

Allsop's parents bought a home in Cannon Beach in 1978. Her husband, Mark Allsop, is the owner of North Coast Mechanical. Daughter Lauren Allsop — known as Lolly — teaches yoga at the studio.

"When my husband and I moved here 25 years ago, our daughter went to Fire Mountain School, then Broadway and Seaside High School."

A yoga teacher for 15 years, Allsop opened Cannon Beach Yoga in 2011.

"Yoga's grown so much over the last 10 years, now there's actually a chance to sustain a yoga studio year-round," she said.

The studio on North Hemlock will offer a central hub for

all of the festival activities and a shuttle bus available to bring attendees to and from events.

"It's really an honor and a privilege to be able to have an opportunity to produce this event in Cannon Beach," Allsop said. "I'm proud our community can put something like this together. It's really pretty special."

For registration and information, visit www.CannonBeachYogaFestival.com or call 503-440-1649.

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