

Columbia-Pacific Economic Development District 2007 — 2008

Issue 7

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A Year of Resiliency, Recovery and Re-Invention

2007—2008 has been a year of resiliency, recovery and re-invention for NW Oregon:

Resiliency

In early December 2007, NW Oregon was pummeled by hurricane force winds and typhoon rains resulting in over \$130 million in wind and flood damage in Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties—the largest natural disaster in over a decade. Within a month, emergency relief efforts were able to care of the most immediate shelter, utilities and food needs. Existing disaster mitigation plans were set in motion, providing critical direction and local leadership.

Fall of 2007 was also a testing time for Col-Pac, with the Oregon Legislature requesting complete inventories of the region's infrastructure needs and an updated Regional Economic Development Strategy. Over 200 needed infrastructure projects were identified, prioritized, and included in an electronic database—setting the stage for coordinated, strategic investment in NW Oregon's infrastructure assets.

In August 2008, Col-Pac's financial mainstay, its small

business loan program, was awarded an additional \$660,000 USDA Rural Business Development loan funds. At \$3 million in capitalization, Col-Pac's loan fund is now seventh largest in USDA's Oregon Intermediary Relending Program portfolio, and has reached self-sustainability.

Finally, Col-Pac, in its ongoing efforts to ensure long term self-sustainability, has also been able to stretch and expand its staffing capacity by contracting for additional fee-for-service projects.

Recovery

Two critical aspects to the NW Oregon's remarkable recovery from the December storm, has been the involvement of Col-Pac's federal funding partners: the Economic Development Administration and the US Dept of Agriculture's Rural Business Program. Within six weeks of the storm, EDA representatives toured NW Oregon, resulting in a \$125,000 grant to Col-Pac to assist with disaster recover efforts.

In July, USDA awarded Col-Pac an additional \$698,000 in disaster recovery technical assistance and loan funds for small businesses. Working with the Economic Development

Council of Tillamook County and Clatsop Economic Development Resources, Col-Pac has already begun working with affected businesses, and will be co-sponsoring a Business Resiliency Workshop in Seaside on November 4th.

Re-Invention

The last 12 months has also been a time of incredible opportunity for NW Oregon to be creatively resourceful about economic development—cementing the foundation of a truly integrated service delivery system. Examples include:

- ◆ NW Oregon Works (NOW). Recipient of approximately \$150,000 in funding, this program has been working on clustered business development:
 - Clatsop County—Starting up a Marine Services Industry Cluster, focusing on the Port of Astoria's haul-out pier facilities. Key activities are mapping out the existing related businesses, suppliers, and customers and identifying potential business expansion opportunities. Management of the NOW program has been merged with Clatsop County Economic Resources' workplan.

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- Columbia County—Aviation cluster at the Scappoose Airport has been started. Scappoose and St Helens are coordinating on Economic Opportunity Analyses to identify potential business expansion needs and opportunities. Vernonia has established a local economic development council.
- Tillamook County—Starting up a Construction Industry Cluster, which may be looking at restarting its local Homebuilders Association chapter
- Washington County—The Forest Grove and Cornelius city councils have agreed to extend the enterprise zone into Cornelius. Hillsboro, Forest Grove and Cornelius have hired the firm of Johnson-Gardner to do a coordinated study of long term economic development opportunities
- ◆ Local Economic Development Council Collaboration with Community College Small Business Development Centers. Both Clatsop and Tillamook Bay Community College Small Business Development Centers and the local economic development councils have integrated their business counseling into one-stop centers, including shared Executive Directors and support staff. Col-Pac participates in the one-stops through its loan financing and business resiliency technical training.
- ◆ Workforce Investment. NW Oregon continues to have an active and productive workforce council, providing employee training funds for upgrading the region's workforce. Management Training Corporation, Oregon Employment Department, Clatsop and Tillamook Bay Community Colleges, and the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department are partnering with Col-Pac on the NW Oregon Works (NOW) initiative to establish clusters of business development.
- ◆ Tillamook County Ports Consolidation Feasibility Study. Col-Pac has provided management oversight to the project, which has resulted in the three ports identifying potential opportunities for greater collaboration.
- ◆ Oregon Solutions Teams in Tillamook and Vernonia. An innovative mediation-style approach to identifying and resolving complex public issues, NW Oregon has had two of these teams working on addressing flood issues in Tillamook and Vernonia. In Tillamook, two projects opening spillways have already been implemented. In Vernonia, the Oregon Solution Team is exploring the feasibility of establishing an education campus for its K–12 school system, including the potential of adding community college classes and private business training.

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