

## GUEST COLUMN

# State of the county address

By **Bill Baertlein, Chair**  
**Tim Josi, Vice-Chair**  
**Mark Labhart,**  
**Commissioner**

This has been a year of significant change in Tillamook County. Our county roads were some of the worst in Oregon and our voters approved a bond levy to start the process of repairing them. We also passed a Transient Lodging Tax, 30 percent of which will go to road maintenance and 70 percent to fund tourism promotion and facilities in our county. This tax on tourists will help our community compete with counties to the north and south of us, who already have a tourist tax to fund their promotions and facilities.

We reorganized our fair board, adding both gender and geographic diversity and expanded it from a five member board to a seven member board. We changed the Citizen Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC) to a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to advise us on all issues in their communities, not just planning. In 2013 we started quarterly meetings with the Grand Ronde Tribal Council to see where we can work corroboratively on issues affecting both our communities.

Work was completed on options for addressing Neskowin coastal hazards and we took a strong position against the proposed site near Pacific City for potential wave energy siting machines. We also expressed our concerns to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding shellfish harvesting in Netarts Bay.

On a more regional and national scale relating to issues that affect Tillamook County, we were active in helping develop a proposal for the Oregon and California (O&C)

federal lands that increases timber harvest and revenue to the counties while protecting sensitive environmental areas. We participated with a stakeholder group to develop a coastal multi-species conservation and management plan for the Oregon coast. In addition, we took a strong position on the marbled murrelet lawsuit in our state forests and participated in the development of a revised management plan and funding options for state forests. We have also lobbied our representatives in congress to slow down the implementation of the National Flood Insurance Program increases.

Looking ahead to 2014 we see getting the county back into the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Rating System to reduce flood insurance as a high priority. We designated our federal funding priorities to be repairs to the South Jetty and the Shilo Levee. Also designated as priorities, are the Rails and Trails project and finally earthquake and Tsunami preparedness.

We anticipate being active in promoting funding for the Rails and Trails project. We will support an upcoming bill in the Oregon Legislature to increase the county's share of the RV registration fees. The Transient Lodging Tax Intergovernmental Agreement with the Tillamook County Economic Development Council will be finalized and implemented so that 70 percent of the funds can be spent on tourism promotion and facilities. The remaining funds will be distributed to the Road Department for continued maintenance of our county roads. We will continue working to develop an emergency egress road in the Community

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of Neskowin, finish the engineering work on Cape Meares Loop Road slide, actively pursue grants to relocate the Cape Meares Loop Road and work with the Citizens Road Advisory Committee to prioritize road improvements.

Implementation of the state's resilience plan to address Earthquake/Tsunami preparedness, continued work on the Southern Flow Corridor Landowner preferred flood control project

and entering into a lease arrangement with the Port of Tillamook Bay to move our dog shelter to Port property will also be priorities. Each of us will continue to speak on KTIL radio each month.

Finally, we want to say what an honor and a privilege it has been to serve as your Tillamook County Commissioners over the last year. We, as a community, have worked through some tough and contentious issues in a collaborative manner. Tillamook County has now better positioned itself for economic growth and livability. Thank you Tillamook County!

