

TOURISM IS THE NOT THE ONLY KEY INDUSTRY IN TILLAMOOK COUNTY. YET IT'S INTERWOVEN THROUGHOUT OUR LOCAL ECONOMY AND CULTURE

By Nan Devlin,
*Executive Director,
Tillamook County
Visitors Association*

It's summer. That's certainly obvious to everyone who lives here. This is the traditional time of the year when families are getting in their vacations before school starts up again. While some may see this as an intrusion on our roads, beaches and parking lots, it's an infusion of much needed economic support.

We're very lucky in Tillamook County to have multiple industries that are very successful, providing jobs for our families. Timber, fishing, food processing, farming, education, construction, retail and food stores, natural resources, healthcare, government and tourism are major employers. Each of these sectors is interwoven.

For instance, nearly 35% of sales of two large grocery stores are derived from people who don't live in Tillamook County. Forty percent of one local retail store's annual revenue comes from out-of-town residents. Recreational fishing guides wouldn't have businesses without those who come from elsewhere to enjoy the experience.

Throughout Oregon's history, there are examples of places dependent upon one industry, especially in our traditional sectors of timber and commercial fishing. When that single industry leaves, so do all the jobs, then soon enough, the families, too. Businesses close, people lose their life savings and investments, property values plummet. Here, we have the strength and vitality of diverse industries.

Those who work in tourism-related and hospitality businesses are neighbors. These owners and employees buy fuel at the gas station, buy groceries at markets, pay taxes, attend church, and their children go to local schools. They volunteer, donate to local causes, serve on boards of local organizations.

Direct impact of visitor spending

When COVID hit in March, 2020 lodging was shut down. Restaurants closed, too, or limited service to takeout orders. The impact was immediate: farmers, fishers and other producers who supplied restaurants lost 75% of their revenue in one quick dive. When boat launches closed, recreational fishing guides lost nearly 100% of their livelihoods.



Generations of families have enjoyed spending time at the Oregon Coast. And our towns benefit from the money they spend here.



Photos by Tillamook County Visitors Association

Lodging was empty.

Visitor spending fuels businesses and the jobs they create. In 2019, \$35 of every \$100 visitors spent in the county went toward employee wages. In 2020 that amount rose to \$58 of every \$100. One of the reasons for that big rise is that *since June 1, 2020, after 12 weeks of closure, our lodging has been at nearly 100% capacity, even given COVID restrictions.* That's a direct benefit to restaurants, grocery stores, gas stations, retail shops, fishing guides, farmers, state and county parks – the list goes on – because there are more customers and more jobs. Good paying jobs.

Visitor spending also has a huge impact on improvements to the community. Lodging tax, paid by overnight guests, was used to purchase the Jensen property (which will help alleviate parking issues at the cape), extra waste receptacles, portable bathrooms and digital signage along Kiwanda Drive. It paid for the Kiawanda Community Center expansion, improvements to the beach access at Cape Kiwanda, concrete tiles to improve beach access for dory boats, and helped fund the parking lot, infrastructure and park equipment for the Nestucca Valley Community Alliance.

All of these projects benefit locals, without increasing local taxes on residents. And there are many more projects being planned that residents will enjoy.

As this warm, sunny and very busy summer wraps up, neighbors will be bringing home a paycheck, paying mortgages and rent, keeping their businesses afloat, and buying school supplies for their kids. Just as it is for those working in other industries.