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## **Executive Director Report**



Duane Wollmuth  
*Executive Director*  
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### **Broadband Internet Access** ***Why It Should Be Our*** ***#1 Economic Development Priority***

There are few of us today who haven’t made the internet an integral part of our everyday lives, both personally and professionally. For myself, I clearly remember the moment twenty years ago when a co-worker of mine in the cellular telephone industry talked about how we would all soon be using the internet and this new technology called “email”, and how both of these services would change the way we lived and did business. Today, of course, we can see how important email and internet service have become and how they have significantly altered our lives in so many ways. The information, or digital revolution as it has been called, has altered nearly every facet of our daily lives, from entertainment, to business, to even the way we communicate with others around us.

Perhaps just as significant as the impact the internet has had on our lives in the past two decades, will be the impact of broadband internet access. Broadband as it is often referred to, is a high data rate connection to the internet. According to Wikipedia, “broadband is often contrasted to dial-up access using a 56k modem”. While there is no standard definition of broadband in the industry, the federal government has used definitions ranging from 768 kilobits/second to 4.0 Megabits/second. Informally, the Washington State Department of Information Services and many in the industry believe bit rates up to 100 Mbts/s are a better definition of what is necessary for transmitting the services and information that we have access to today.

While the pace at which broadband service is being adopted in the U.S. continues to escalate, the U.S. as a whole is rapidly falling behind other countries. Starting out as number four among all countries in the early years of broadband service, the U.S. has quickly fallen to the mid-twenties. At the national level, the Federal Communications Commission in early 2010 outlined a National Broadband Plan to ensure that every American has access to broadband capability. However, that plan will be slow to implement in the nation’s rural areas, especially in outlying areas with small or highly dispersed populations.

(Continued)

## Executive Director Report (cont.)

Broadband is vital to our region for several reasons. Perhaps most important is the role broadband access will have in our ability to facilitate economic development in coming years. According to the Washington State Department of Information Services, “looking ahead, American communities without broadband will find themselves left out of the digital revolution.” In a recent survey of small and medium sized business owners conducted by the DIS, an overwhelming majority (80%) of the respondents said that access to broadband services was “very important” (61%) or “important” (19%) in their choice of a new location or satellite office location.

The value of broadband service goes beyond the impact it has on doing business. Broadband service will also impact our personal quality of life by improving health care service, emergency response, educational and library access, and family management capabilities. The Internet Innovation Alliance recently showed that the typical American family can save more than \$7,200 per year through discounts and sales only available to online consumers. These discounts come in the areas of entertainment, travel, housing, food, apparel, automotive, gasoline, and non-prescription drugs. Accessing these discounts and the creative ways in which they are communicated, will increasingly be dependent upon high speed internet connections. Simply stated, families without broadband service will benefit less.

In a recent article by John Cromartie of the USDA Economic Research Service and Peter Nelson of Middlebury College, the authors convincingly prognosticated about the migration of the baby boom generation to rural America over the next ten years. They argue that between 2010 and 2020 baby boom retirees will move not only to rural areas, but increasingly to remote rural areas. This educated, highly mobile generation will bring with them very active lifestyles that will be dependent upon access (via the internet) to the global marketplace. These individuals will use the internet for managing their businesses from afar, managing personal finances, accessing travel information, staying in touch with family, philanthropic activities, online purchases, entertainment, and other purposes. Clearly, broadband will be important not only for its’ direct impact on business development in our rural counties in coming years, but indirectly by impacting our quality of life.

So how do we ensure that broadband service is made available in our region in coming years? Fortunately, several major developments have occurred since early this year that will bring broadband infrastructure to Southeast Washington. Northwest Open Access Network (NoaNet), a non-profit wholesale telecommunications corporation, in partnership with the Port of Whitman County and other entities, has received two federal grants as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to fund the construction of broadband infrastructure in our region and throughout Washington State. This new optical fiber system will create a seamless network reaching rural communities and schools, hospitals, emergency responders, libraries, colleges and universities. Over the next three years, NoaNet is mandated to provide broadband connections for anchor institutions such as hospitals, libraries, and emergency services. NoaNet is not, however, mandated to ensure broadband access is made available to businesses or consumers.

Led by the innovative work of the Port of Whitman, the Ports of Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin Counties have joined together to work with NoaNet and take steps to extend the reach of the optical fiber network beyond the anchor institutions in each county. Through this collaboration and the support of SEWEDA, the Ports are building business models that will make economic sense for their communities and ensure that we do not get left behind the broadband internet service revolution.

# Asotin County



Tina Davidson  
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**~NOVEMBER~**

**The month to say  
THANK YOU!**

I would like to start out by saying Thank You to all the partners in Asotin County that continue to work hard to make Economic Development a rewarding job.

This last quarter of the year we have been focusing on our recruitment activities and how we can make them better. At the beginning of the year SEWEDA put together a Marketing Outline that helped the Managing Directors for each county, identify their target industries. This outline included information on how to generate recruitment leads, what tools and resources are available and identification of readiness and capacity building priorities.

We put together a new recruitment packet that provides information about Asotin County. This packet, along with the LC Valley recruitment DVD is used as a part of our “Recruitment Toolkit”, for marketing the local area to attract businesses from out-of-state. This DVD is available on our website at [www.seweda.org](http://www.seweda.org). We continue to receive leads from the State of Washington from site selectors that are interested in starting a business in Asotin County. We have been utilizing some great tools and resources for this recruitment process.



Bob Potter from the Inland Northwest Economic Alliance (INEA) provided us with ideas on successful business recruitment. He reminded us that whether a small community or a region, is looking for job growth or economic diversification, business recruitment can be a key component leading to positive economic results. He referred us to some sources that we are currently utilizing in targeting our industries. We also have been utilizing a variety of resources to provide Economic Indicator data as part of our recruitment toolkit. We look forward to applying these techniques and fine tuning some of our current procedures. We continue to work closely with Valley Vision on all of our recruitment activities.

And with all the exciting things going on with the Snake River Boat Builders Export Program, it has been getting a lot of media coverage and we know this is a great industry to build on. We are being labeled as the “Jet Boat Capital of the World” and that is something that this community can embrace. We will soon have a “Sustainable Business Park” that is going to have infrastructure in place and land available for businesses wanting to locate in Asotin County.

SEWEDA also provides retention and expansion services to address challenges and opportunities faced by businesses by conducting outreach efforts to identify businesses in need of assistance. We continue to visit local businesses and gather data and provide resources to assist with such needs, along with business start-up assistance. And for those businesses with service needs beyond my scope of work, they are referred to other service providing organizations such as the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) which we work closely with and continue to utilize their free expertise and training programs.

I hope that if you have a business need or know of someone who does, that you will please refer them to “Tina with SEWEDA”. Great things are happening in Asotin County and I am excited to be a part of this community and all the great partners we have here.

*Asotin County  
A Great Place to Live  
A Great Place to do Business!*

# Columbia County



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## **Columbia County Celebrates New owners of Ski Bluewood**

Mike and Kelly Stephenson, a Kennewick couple, are looking forward to excellent snow and great crowds at Bluewood after announcing they would buy Ski Bluewood.

Rumors about Bluewood's possible closure had circulated for more than a year, but that's history, said Kelly Stephenson, who with her husband Mike, have been working to get the resort, 21 miles south of Dayton, ready for the ski season.

Mike and Kelly are forming a limited liability company to purchase the resort with the backing of a few investors, she said. Mike, a certified Level 3 ski instructor, has worked there for more than 15 years, so is very familiar with the facility.

He didn't want Bluewood to go away when owners Stan and Nancy Goodell shared with him their plans to sell out and retire. In the summer, he began to explore the level of local interest and managed to find people who shared his dream to continue Ski Bluewood as a community institution where generations of area residents have learned to ski and snowboard.

So Kelly and Mike -- who met on a ski slope three years ago -- created a business plan and took a leap. And everything fell in place.

"It was unexpected," Kelly said, unable to hide her excitement at the opportunity. Bluewood typically opens in the first week of December, depending on the snow, she said.

Right now, they are busy getting maintenance and safety work done for the season ahead, she said. "We're paddling as fast as we can."

Mike, who grew up in Mesa and graduated from Connell High School, is passionate about skiing and teaching the skills to young children, Kelly said. He owns an agriculture consulting business in Pasco, which allows him to continue working as a training director at the resort's ski school, she said. And she's also a Level 1 ski instructor.

They plan to keep the youth programs and involve the local community. "We want to make sure it's affordable and accessible," she said.

Their plans include holding 3-D archery events and developing trails for mountain biking to help keep people outdoors year-round, she said. The U.S. Forest Service, which owns the land, allows recreational activities throughout the year, she said. But those plans will have to wait until they get comfortable and settled into their new role as owners, she said.

Their priority is to finish the outdoor maintenance, including brush clearance, before fall temperatures turn frigid, she said.

They will honor current season passes and plan to soon resume sales of passes for the season.

This is excellent news for Columbia County residents and businesses. Many businesses rely on the ski season traffic and local residents use the off season from agriculture for their winter employment.

For more information, go to [www.bluewood.com](http://www.bluewood.com)



**Dayton Wine Works** is also cause for celebration in Columbia County. Carl Kramer, from Kennewick, has opened his business in the previous Patit Creek Cellars location. Dayton Wine Works has numerous wines from the region and features several unique labels such as "Lured In" and "No Rut Red." For the holiday season they have a special commemorative wine series titled "Old Iron" featuring labels with Columbia County historical

## Columbia County (cont):

settings. A WA State Merlot, WA State Cabernet-Sauvignon and WA State Red are included in the unique wooden gift box. Carl definitely has plans for the tasting room and has created a unique outdoor seating area where he will be hosting a pre-fireworks party during Dayton's annual Christmas Kickoff the weekend after Thanksgiving. Dayton Wine Works is located on the east end of Dayton's historic Main Street – stop by and taste what you're missing!

## Garfield County



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### SEWEDA PARTNERS WITH POMEROY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE In Holiday and Community Promotion Initiatives

Many have reported that it took them by surprise, hearing not only Pomeroy's name, but that of local businesses mentioned in advertising spots on regional radio stations. Listeners to KRLC's Toe Tappin' Tommy Tucker show will find themselves invited to shop at several Pomeroy businesses and attend the upcoming holiday festivities, such as the Starlight Parade and the Festival of Trees during Thanksgiving weekend. These ads and several remote broadcasts by Ida Vend Broadcasters' traveling DJ's are a result of the Pomeroy Chamber of Commerce's ongoing promotional initiatives, which is being partially funded through a partnership with SEWEDA in Garfield County. Chamber Executive Director Stephanie Newberg worked with Chamber member and Ida Vend Marketing Consultant Carlye Anderson in spearheading the efforts to get more shoppers from the area into town to boost the local retail economy. The Chamber is using a cooperative ad format to make the spots more affordable for the local businesses, and SEWEDA is underwriting a portion of the costs as well. So far, nine local businesses have taken advantage of the opportunities to utilize radio advertising.

As the holiday season draws near, the Chamber is using the spots to alert regional listeners to the Old Fashioned Christmas activities that take place annually in Pomeroy, including the Holiday Craft Bazaar Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>, Moonlight Madness after hours shopping in downtown Pomeroy on Thursday, Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> followed by Chocolate Extravaganza and Downtown Open House on Friday Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>.



Downtown decorating efforts are being undertaken by a variety of community partners including SEWEDA, Chamber of Commerce, Pacific Power, Pomeroy FFA, Pomeroy High Class of 2011, and the local Boy Scouts troop. The Pomeroy FFA Ag Mechanics group and PHS Class of 2011 have been sprucing up the Main Street light pole decorations with some assistance from SEWEDA and Chamber. The students removed all the old lights and garland and some rust from the metal Christmas tree frames, and are repairing some damage and applying a new coat of paint. The Chamber Executive team will be redecorating the frames with new lights and garland. The newly refurbished decorations will be hung by PPL Community Liaison Marc Jenkins and the downtown pocket park, Pioneer Plaza, will be decorated by Scout Troop. "We knew it was time to do something different with our Main Street decorations," reports Chamber Board Member and SEWEDA Managing Director Alesia Ruchert. "In light of the Transportation Enhancement grant the City of Pomeroy received to purchase and install historic light poles, the Chamber felt that purchasing new decorations should be done once the new light poles are up. So we did what we do best, and used the resources we had, including all the available human capital. It's a win-win situation, since the students receive community service credits for their assistance with the project and downtown will look fresh for all our visitors."

## Garfield County (cont):

The official downtown lighting will take place at 5:00 pm Friday, Nov. 26<sup>th</sup> at the start of the Starlight Parade. Santa will come through town at the end of the parade, and settle in at the Maple Hall on 7<sup>th</sup> & Columbia for pictures during the Festival of Trees & Chili Feed. Chamber Board member and Garfield County Managing Director for SEWEDA Alesia Ruchert would like to invite everyone to town for the holiday festivities, and wishes everyone a very Merry Christmas!

## Whitman County



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## **BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION**

The Washington State University Business Plan Competition is scheduled for April 22 and 23, 2011. The Port of Whitman and SEWEDA will participate again.

The Port is sponsoring the Open Division and the prize money is \$15,000. The competition is open to any individual(s) in Whitman County.

SEWEDA is sponsoring the High School Division with prize money of \$10,000. The competition is open to any high school students in Whitman, Asotin, Garfield and Columbia Counties. Deadline for application is February 4, 2011.

For application and further information contact Dick Watters @509-595-1151 or email@ [dick@seweda.org](mailto:dick@seweda.org). Applications can also be found on the SEWEDA webpage-[www.seweda.org](http://www.seweda.org).

### **WALMART**

Walmart opened in Pullman on October 28 and is off to a great start. The 165,000 sq. ft. Superstore includes grocery, clothing, pharmacy, vision and much, much more. The store is located on the south end of Pullman on Bishop Blvd.

Walmart employs 382 associates with many living in Whitman County. Pullman is expecting Walmart to generate approximately \$400,000 in tax revenue with Whitman County receiving an additional \$85,000.



### **PALOUSE WIND**

Whitman County has approved the construction of 40-55 turbines for a wind farm in Whitman County. The farm will be located between the town of Oakesdale and State Route 195 on the hills surrounding Naff Ridge. First Wind, which operates as Palouse Wind in Whitman County, is based in Boston, with 13 offices across the country. First Wind is an American owned wind energy company, focused exclusively on the development, financing, construction, ownership and operation of utility-scale wind energy projects. Presently there are seven farms in operation from Maine to Maui.

Palouse Wind has opened an office in Oakesdale under the direction of Ben Fairbanks. Ben is the Director of Business Development in the Pacific NW with 10 years experience in developing wind projects across the western US.

## Whitman County cont:

Professor Jonathon Yoder from Washington State University recently analyzed the benefits of the proposed Palouse Wind project. Listed below are his findings:

1. The direct and indirect financial impacts to County taxpayers and residents are \$26 million during construction and \$1.4 million/year during operations.
2. Over 160 construction jobs will be created during construction
3. 18 jobs during operation
4. An estimated \$1.9 million in tax revenue in the first year: \$896,000 for local schools; \$278,000 for roads; \$91,000 for parks and recreation; \$75,000 for library services
5. Over the facility lifetime of 30 years, it is estimated that the County could collect and average of \$789,000/year

For more information go to [www.palousewind.com](http://www.palousewind.com) or contact Palouse Wind @ [palousewind@firstwind.com](mailto:palousewind@firstwind.com)

## **EMBASSY SUITES HOTEL**

Embassy Suites Hotels, a subsidiary of Hilton Hotels, has purchased seven acres from Washington State University to build and 150 unit hotel on the WSU Campus. The hotel will also include a 10-12,000 sq. ft. conference center.

Construction is set to start in the spring of 2011 with completion in the spring of 2012.

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