

A TEMPORARY SETBACK IN JOBS

STATEWIDE The unemployed aren't the only ones scrambling for work these days; staffing agencies are also feeling the pain of high unemployment. Whenever there's a recession the employment services industry is hit first as companies shave off their temporary help.

"Temp employees are the first to go when a company is cutting costs," says Molly Kalomiris, general manager of Portland-based Northwest Staffing Resources.

According to the Oregon Employment Department, between June 2007 and June 2009 the number of jobs in the employment services industry in Oregon dropped 35%, decreasing slightly more than the national average.

Fewer temp jobs also means a drop in revenue for staffing agencies. Barrett Business Service's net revenue is down 22.8% in the first quarter this year. Portland-based Employers Overload has seen a 40% drop in traditional business, and relies on the nontraditional role of managing crews on site to stay in business. Those few staffing firms that have tapped into a niche are still growing, such as Lake Oswego-based United Human Capital Solutions, which focuses on health care staffing, and California-based Mainz Brady Group, which specializes in information technology staffing in Portland.

Agencies stay in business because the recession also creates a need for temporary workers, though permanent placements and temp-to-hire positions remain down. After laying off permanent employees, companies turn to staffing agencies to fill in the gaps. Companies are also referring laid-off employees to staffing agencies and when business improves, hiring them through that agency as temporary employees.

Even though there are fewer jobs available, the unemployed continue to turn to staffing agencies to find work. Agencies have seen an increase in applicants, as high as 30% to 40% at Northwest Staffing Resources.

As competition increases, under-qualified applicants apply for any job they can find and over-qualified applicants take lower-level jobs just to get back to work. "People are working at lower salaries than they used to make and they're so much more qualified," says Pete Szambelan, Employers Overload CEO. "I'll tell you, those people are worth their weight in gold."

With competition for temporary positions fierce, the unemployed continue to encounter challenges as they search for Oregon's latest endangered species, a job.

JENNY FURNISS



TRIBES EXPLORE WIND POWER

STATEWIDE One day wind turbines might add a futuristic element to the Umatilla Reservation. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation are currently evaluating wind patterns to establish whether wind power is a worthwhile investment, but they are also considering turbines' impact on the landscape and culture.

"The knowledge of a place where perhaps somebody fought the bad guys and won is important. It may not have a monument or marker there, but if it's recorded in the tribal oral histories, it's important," says Stuart Harris, director of the tribes' Department of Science and Engineering.

They're putting up four anemometers around the reservation to measure wind speed and direction. They'll use this data to develop a wind power energy policy. According to Harris, if the tribes decide to develop a wind farm, the Board of Trustees will decide whether to partner with a company (which would allow the project to receive energy tax credits) or build the farm themselves.

Board of Trustees Chairman Antone Minthorn says wind power could create opportunities for employment and energy independence.

The tribes have been financially involved with wind power since 2004, when they helped develop the Rattlesnake Road Wind Power Project in Arlington. They sold their

equity investment to Texas-based Horizon Wind Energy but continue to have a financial interest in the operation.

Other tribes around Oregon are also investigating wind power. Three tribal groups along the coast — the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians; Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians; and Coquille Indian Tribe — are interested in wind power and have been approached by wind energy companies, but are not yet developing wind power plans. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs conducted a study to determine the potential of wind energy and are discussing the next steps of development.

Being sensitive to tribe members' personal retreats and the history of the land is also important to Warm Springs tribal members.

"We'll take into consideration discussions with elders that have knowledge of the area," says Jim Manion, general manager of Warm Springs Power and Water Enterprises.

Through town meetings the Umatilla tribal government hopes to mitigate disturbances to their members' relationship to the land.

"Our view of the earth is the earth is our church and there are places where people go to find solace and meditate on the landscape," says Harris. "If it happens to be on the spot where they put a windmill, I think that would disturb you." **JENNY FURNISS**

DATABURST: OREGON REMAINS FATTER THAN MOST OF ITS NEIGHBORS, BUT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS SECOND-HIGHEST AMONG STATES.

