Economic Alliance of Lewis County

October 2026

The Economic Report

A Supplement of The Chronicle

Tourism contributes $212.3M to the Lewis County economy



Discover Lewis County photos

Lewis County is filled with alpine lakes with the clearest of waters.

Visitor spending supports more than 1,500 direct jobs and generates $17.9 million in state and local tax revenue

By The Economic Alliance of Lewis County

Discover Lewis County

Tourism is an important contributor to the Lewis County economy, generating $212.3 million in direct visitor spending in 2025, according to the latest economic impact research from Tourism Economics, prepared for State of Washington Tourism.

That spending supported approximately 1,544 direct jobs and generated $17.9 million in state and local tax revenue. The research also estimates that visitor-generated tax revenue provides the equivalent of $543 in annual tax savings per Lewis County household.

These figures demonstrate that tourism is more than a recreational activity. It is an important component of our local economy, bringing new dollars into Lewis County, supporting businesses, and creating employment opportunities throughout our communities.

Visitor spending benefits businesses across Lewis County

The economic impact of tourism reaches well beyond hotels and vacation rentals. Visitors spend money at restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, retail shops, recreational attractions, and businesses throughout the county.

From Centralia and Chehalis to Toledo, Winlock, Morton, Mossyrock, Packwood, and our smaller rural communities, visitor spending helps sustain businesses and supports local employment.

In 2025, visitors spent approximately $53.5 million on food and beverages, $52.1 million on lodging, $38.1 million on retail purchases, $24.5 million on recreation, and $44 million on transportation.

These expenditures provide important revenue for local businesses, many of which depend on customers from outside the county to supplement their local customer base.

Tourism supports jobs and strengthens communities

Tourism directly supported approximately 1,544 jobs in Lewis County in 2025, representing nearly 4% of total county employment as measured in the report.

These positions extend across lodging, restaurants, retail, recreation, transportation, and other visitor-related industries.

Tourism also creates opportunities for entrepreneurship and small-business development. From locally owned restaurants and specialty retailers to outdoor recreation providers and accommodations, businesses throughout Lewis County benefit from attracting visitors to the region.

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The 4th Annual Woody Biomass Conference is coming to Centralia

By The Economic Alliance of Lewis County

Join the Economic Alliance of Lewis County for an afternoon of innovation, collaboration, and conversation about the future of woody biomass and its potential to strengthen our regional economy at the 4th Annual Woody Biomass Conference on Thursday, November 12 from 3 to 6 p.m. at Centralia College's TransAlta Commons.

This year's conference brings together industry leaders, researchers, policymakers, and regional partners to explore emerging technologies, sustainable resource management, and new economic opportunities for our communities.

The afternoon will feature a keynote address from state Rep. Peter Abbarno, R-20th District, who serves as the House Republican Caucus Chair, and updates from the Economic Alliance on regional woody biomass initiatives, and technical presentations from industry innovators, including:

Ken Cavallon | Ways2H

Ways2H is the technology subsidiary of Clean Energy Enterprises. They engineer and deliver waste-to-hydrogen systems and support projects from early assessment through commissioning and long-term operation. Cavallon is also co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of HydrogenXT where he leads strategy, operations, and corporate development. Ken has held senior roles at Fortune 500 firms such as Microsoft, IBM, and Lumen, and at five companies through successful exits, including Docusign, Tier 3, Blue Box, Conga, and Youreka, and brings early technology leadership in AI and data infrastructure.

Dale Smith | Cascadia Accelerator

Dale Smith is affiliated with the Cascadia Sustainable Aviation Accelerator, an initiative launched in January 2026 to position the Pacific Northwest as a global hub for sustainable aviation fuel (SAF).



Ecostrat

In December of 2023 Lewis County was designated a Bioeconomy Development Opportunity (BDO) Zone for woody biomass with an AA rating, which denotes a high prospective viability of feedstock supply and Infrastructure and low expectations of default risk in the Zone. They indicate very strong ongoing capacity of the region to support new biobased plant operations.

The Cascadia Sustainable Aviation Accelerator is a public-private coalition bringing together major regional entities — including Washington State University, Boeing, Alaska Airlines, and Amazon — to scale SAF production. The organization targets a regional production goal of up to one billion gallons of SAF annually by 2035.

Brian Bonlender
Renew Biomaterials

Brian Bonlender is an experienced executive, public affairs advisor, and consultant who represents Renew Biomaterials.

Before entering the private consulting sector, Bonlender had a prominent career in Washington state public policy, clean technology, and government affairs. He is currently a Principal at Lodestar Partners (and founder of Lodestar Strategic LLC), a firm advising clients across the clean tech, life sciences, tech, and maritime sectors.

He served as the Director of the Washington State Department of Commerce from 2013 to 2019 under Governor Jay Inslee. He spent several years as Chief of Staff to then-U.S. Rep. Jay Inslee in Washington, D.C., and later served as his gubernatorial campaign senior advisor and transition director.

After an introduction from Economic Alliance Executive Director Todd Chaput, a panel discussion featuring Katie Whittier, Jason Spadaro, Bob Russell, and representatives from the University of Washington will further explore the opportunities and challenges shaping the future of this growing industry.

As Lewis County continues to explore innovative ways to support our timber industry, create jobs, and strengthen our economy, conversations like these are essential to building meaningful partnerships and moving new opportunities forward.

Mark your calendars and join the Alliance for the 4th Annual Woody Biomass Conference.

Save the dates: Woody Biomass Conference, economic EXPO and the Alliance's banquet

Todd Chaput

Executive Director

Economic Alliance of Lewis County



We ended this month with a healthy discussion on working forests and how they will make a strong economic contribution to the Greater Lewis County Region, adding jobs, resistance to wildfire, enhancing wildlife and expanding recreation opportunities at the seminar "The Forests Around You, things to know about your silent neighbors in Lewis County," held this past Thursday at Centralia College.

The Alliance will continue this theme with the 4th Annual Woody Biomass Conference, where you can once again join us for an afternoon of discussion and conversation about the future of woody biomass and its present and future potential for strengthening the Lewis County economy. The seminar — "Woody Biomass Conference 2026, Spotlighting the Pacific Northwest's Renewable Energy Future" from 3 to 6 p.m. Thursday, November 12 at the Centralia College's TransAlta Commons.

You can read all about it in a story to the left of this column. The conference is bringing in some heavy hitters — Ken Cavallon with Ways2H, Dale Smith with Cascadia Sustainable Aviation Accelerator and Brian Bonlender with Renew Biomaterials. You should read their bios in the story. Impressive.

The conference will also feature our own state Rep. Peter Abbarno, and updates from the Alliance on woody biomass initiatives.

Expect a lively discussion composed of a panel featuring Katie Whittier, Jason Spadaro, Bob Russell, and University of Washington biomass experts, as we continue to focus on how Lewis County and the region are going to be the economic beneficiary as we take advantage of our legacy industry of timber.

This column is a save-the-dates reminder. Plan for the Woody Biomass Conference 2026 in a few weeks. Put it on your calendar.

Then add a couple more dates to your calendar.

As I get older, it seems like time quickens. It's hard to believe we're just a few days away from November, Thanksgiving will be in about a month, and Christmas is but two months away. So mark these upcoming dates as reminders.

On December 9-10, at the Great Wolf Lodge in Grand Mound, it will be time once again for the Regional Economic Forecast & Innovation EXPO. The Economic Alliance of Lewis County is a host partner, and similar to the Woody Biomass Conference 2026, the EXPO offers a strong lineup for those in the field of economic development.

Two experts — Hart Hodges and James McCafferty of Western Washington University — will give economic forecasts, and among many panels will be one on tribal economic development. Other key topics include rural healthcare, energy, international development and foreign trade, and emerging business innovations.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the EXPO is networking with business and government leaders from our five-county region — Lewis, Thurston, Mason, Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. You can get all the details in a report on page 2 of this economic report.

Another key date to place on your calendar is the Economic Alliance Annual Banquet on February 5 at 5:30 p.m. at Jesters Auto Museum. This celebration will offer up vibrant speakers and a recap of the past years developments. It usually sells out, so register now.

Finally, our feature story to the left of this column is "Tourism contributes $212.3 million to the Lewis County economy; visitor spending supports more than 1,500 direct jobs and generates $17.9 million in state and local tax revenue," produced with the Alliance's Discover Lewis County.

Tourism is one of our county's top economic engines.

So, save the dates and be most welcome to tourists when they come to visit.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



South Sound Softwash photos

An employee of South Sound Softwash cleans a concrete surface.

South Sound Softwash will clean both business and residential buildings

By The Economic Alliance of Lewis County

Sound Sound Softwash specializes in exterior cleaning services that restore the beauty of your home or business. Using their safe and effective softwash system, they remove algae, grime, and buildup from siding, roofs, windows, gutters, driveways and more — leaving your property looking like new.

Sound Sound Softwash is one of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County's newest members and the Alliance is excited to partner up with such a quality business that can offer our other members a real service, be it residential or commercial.

Their full range of services includes roof cleaning, gutter cleaning, window washing, rust removal, and other exterior surface treatments. Whether you're a homeowner or business owner, their team is committed to delivering results that exceed your expectations.

They proudly serve communities throughout the Pacific Northwest, including in Olympia, Lacey, Puyallup, Tacoma, Lakewood, University Place, Shelton, Rochester, Chehalis, Centralia Yelm and surrounding areas.

Why South Sound Softwash?

- The best industry-trained employees
- General liability
- Locally owned and operated
- Bio-degradable cleaning solutions
- Pet safe

Their services

- Exterior building washing
- Roof cleaning
- Gutter cleaning
- Pressure washing
- Window washing
- Sidewalk cleaning
- Parking lot cleaning
- Parking lot striping
- Graffiti removal
- Snow removal

Why Softwash?

Soft washing was developed by AC Lockyer, the CEO of Droplet International, a business holdings company with international assets in six countries, with great brands like SoftWash Systems, Disruptor Manufacturing, Phantom Window Works, Stingray Hose Reels and The Wash Life Store. We strive to provide our family of businesses with the leadership they need to achieve their life goals.

With his knowledge and experience in plant sciences and horticulture. Lockyer knew that the bacteria, molds, fungi, and algae growing on the exterior of buildings were more closely associated with an infection than a stain.

Knowing this he drew from his experiences and combined the technology of treating pests and fungus on plants with compatible cleaning chemicals, thereby inventing a method of soft washing.

Now instead of the blowing and blasting of pressure washing, property owners can have cleanings done without the damages normally associated with pressure washing.

Soft washing then developed ways to clean other surfaces in differing regions of the country. Once just used to eradicate mold and mildew, SoftWash Systems developed new chemicals and techniques to take this advanced cleaning into dry, arid climates as well.



Before and after photographs of an entrance bay.

Pacific Northwest weather

Pacific Northwest weather can quickly leave commercial properties looking dirty and weathered, with algae, mold, mildew, and grime building up on exterior surfaces. Professional exterior cleaning helps keep your property looking clean, welcoming, and well maintained for customers, employees, and visitors.

South Sound Softwash provides commercial exterior cleaning for businesses throughout Western Washington. They work around your schedule — including during closed or off-hours — to minimize disruption to their customers and operations. Their quiet softwash equipment also allows them to work with minimal disturbance to neighboring businesses and properties.

They offer:

- **Building washing**
  Professional exterior cleaning for siding, storefronts and commercial buildings.
- **Roof gutter cleaning**
  Remove organic buildup and help keep your roof and drainage systems looking their best.
- **Concrete and pavement**
  Pressure washing for sidewalks, entryways and other durable exterior surfaces.
- **Parking lots**
  Parking lot cleaning and striping for a cleaner, more professional property.
- **Windows and awnings**
  Exterior window and awning cleaning for a brighter, cleaner appearance.
- **Specialty Services**
  Graffiti cleaning, rust removal, snow removal and day porter services.

How often should your building exterior be commercially cleaned?

At a minimum, exterior building surfaces should be cleaned every three years with professional grade softwash equipment in order to maintain their high quality appearance over time. Some businesses require more frequent washing and SoundWash offers maintenance schedules based on each client's specific needs. The use of softwash solution prevents biological growths such as gloeocapsa magma — an unsightly form that breaks down structures slowly without any signs or symptoms until it is too late.

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Contact them for a free estimate 360.789.7196 or email office@southsoundsoftwash.com

Register now for the Regional Economic Forecast & Innovation EXPO

By The Economic Alliance of Lewis County

Regional Economic Forecast & Innovation EXPO coming December 9-10 at the Great Wolf Lodge in Grand Mound.

The Regional Economic Forecast & Innovation EXPO is hosted by the region's economic development leaders: Thurston Economic Development Council, Economic Alliance of Lewis County, Mason County Economic Development Council, Pacific County Economic Development Council, Greater Grays Harbor Inc., and Evergreen Coast Regional Partnership.

Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council is the event's Platinum Partner.

Over two days, the EXPO brings together business, government, and community leaders from across Washington state to share insights, spark innovation, strengthen collaboration, and build meaningful connections.

This premier regional event features an economic forecast from Hart Hodges and James McCafferty of Western Washington University, a Tribal Economic Development Panel, and conversations with regional economic development leaders. Engaging breakout sessions will explore the economic advantages of Tribal Government, and business collaboration; rural healthcare access; energy; place branding; international development and foreign trade; and emerging business innovations. Attendees will also have opportunities to connect with exhibitors, exchange ideas, and explore strategies that strengthen our regional economy.

December 9 – The future of rural

A full-day pre-conference focused on strengthening rural economies through innovative development strategies, agritourism and food systems, workforce opportunities, and collaborative problem-solving. Featuring regional experts and interactive discussions, this day is designed to inspire practical solutions and lasting partnerships.

December 10 – Economic Forecast & Innovation EXPO

The region's signature economic development gathering, featuring economic insights, thought-provoking discussions, innovative strategies, an exhibition hall, and valuable networking opportunities with leaders shaping the future of the five-county Pacific Mountain region.

With more than 450 business and community decision-makers participating, the EXPO offers exceptional opportunities to build relationships, exchange ideas, discover new opportunities, and help shape a thriving regional economy.

Choose the day — or days — that fit your interests

December 9
Rural Economic Development Pre-Conference
Early registration: $50
regular registration: $75

Explore the trends, challenges, and emerging opportunities shaping rural communities across our region. Sessions will highlight agritourism, community branding, resilience-building, and innovative approaches that help strengthen local economies and create vibrant, sustainable communities.

December 10
Regional Economic Forecast & Innovation EXPO
Early registration: $175
regular registration: $200

Our region comes together for economic insight, innovative ideas, meaningful connections and conversations about what's next.

Featuring an Economic Forecast from Hart Hodges and James McCafferty of Western Washington University's Center for Economic and Business Research, plus breakout sessions, regional experts, exhibitors and networking.

You may register for either day or both days during the registration process.

Registering just yourself?

Create your attendee account, select December 9, December 10, or both days, and complete your registration.

Registering multiple people from your organization?

Use Group Registration to register your attendees together. You'll be able to select the appropriate event day or days for each attendee.

Group Registration

You will be asked to create an account during registration.

Your account does more than complete your registration— it also gives you access to the EXPO online event app, where you'll be able to access event information, build your profile, view the agenda and connect with the EXPO experience.

Please use an email address you can easily access, as this will be connected to your attendee account and event app.

Need some help? Email Events@thurstonedc.com.

TOURISM From page B1

The industry's broader economic contribution is also significant. When indirect and induced economic activity is included, tourism generated an estimated $337.7 million in total business sales and supported approximately 2,192 jobs.

Tourism generates revenue that benefits residents

One of tourism's most important contributions is the tax revenue generated by visitor spending.

In 2025, tourism produced $17.9 million in direct state and local tax revenue, including approximately $8.4 million in local taxes.

Tourism economics estimates that this revenue represents the equivalent of $543 in annual tax savings per Lewis County household, based on the amount of revenue that would otherwise need to be generated to maintain the same level of public services.

Tourism also helps sustain businesses, amenities, attractions, and recreational opportunities that residents enjoy year-round.

A countywide approach to tourism and economic development

Lewis County is uniquely positioned between three of Washington's most recognizable natural landmarks: Mount Rainier, Mount St. Helens, and Mount Adams.

These destinations attract visitors from throughout the Pacific Northwest and beyond, creating opportunities for communities and businesses across the county.

However, visitors do not travel according to jurisdictional boundaries. A single trip may include shopping in Centralia, dining in Chehalis, exploring the Cowlitz River Valley, and staying overnight near Packwood.

Every community has a role in the county's tourism economy, and every visitor represents an opportunity to support local businesses.

Recognizing this interconnected economy, Discover Lewis County, an initiative of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, works to promote Lewis County as a unified destination.

The introduction of Discover Volcano Country builds upon this approach, connecting our communities through a shared identity that highlights our extraordinary natural surroundings while encouraging visitors to experience the businesses, attractions, and communities throughout Lewis County.

Investing in tourism is investing in Lewis County

Tourism and economic development share a common goal: supporting businesses, creating employment opportunities, and strengthening the local economy.

Through the Economic Alliance of Lewis County and Discover Lewis County, tourism promotion is closely connected with broader efforts to support entrepreneurship, business growth, and community development.

Effective destination marketing brings visitors to our communities. Strong partnerships, visitor services, recreation infrastructure, and local businesses help turn those visits into lasting economic benefits.

With $212.3 million in annual direct visitor spending, approximately 1,544 direct jobs, and $17.9 million in direct state and local tax revenue, tourism represents a substantial economic asset for Lewis County.

Continuing to strengthen that contribution requires collaboration, strategic investment, and a commitment to promoting the entire county.

When tourism succeeds, our businesses, communities, and residents benefit.

Source: Tourism Economics, Washington County Analysis, 2025, prepared for State of Washington Tourism. Employment figures and economic impacts are estimates. Household tax savings represent a modeled equivalent, not an actual household tax reduction.





Discover Lewis County photo

Hiking along the Pacific Crest Trail in the Goat Rocks Wilderness in East Lewis County, a hiker takes in the stunning landscape.

PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT • 1453 HIGHWAY 603 • CHEHALIS • $2,600,000

Features:

Rare 12.58-acre commercial/industrial property in Napavine with Highway 603 frontage, railroad adjacency, residential rental income and agricultural use. Two approximately 2,400-square-foot metal industrial buildings with concrete floors were developed and permitted for chemical manufacturing/processing, with substantial investment in engineering, commercial water, electrical systems and related infrastructure. Extensive permit and supporting documentation is available. One building includes approximately 300 square feet of office space. A commercial well with well house and storage tank serves the property, along with a large gravel drive and turnaround area. Railroad frontage may allow a future rail spur, subject to railroad and governmental approval. Additional features include fenced acreage suitable for cattle grazing, a pond, two RV hookups and two rented homes. The approximately 1,704square-foot older home rents for $1,000/month and needs repairs; the approximately 1,000-square-foot newer home is in excellent condition and rents for $1,500/month. RR-5 zoning may offer future division or additional uses, subject to Lewis County approval and buyer verification. A versatile site for manufacturing, agricultural business, storage, distribution or owner-user operations. Presented by Van Dorm Realty, Inc. X CENTURY 21 Van Dorm Realty, 360.943.3800.

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For information on this property and others available throughout Lewis County (or to list your industrial/commercial property for sale or lease), contact Economic Alliance of Lewis County External Relations Manager Eric Sonnenberg at 208.206.5407 or eric@lewiscountyalliance.org.



Eric Sonnenberg
Economic Alliance of Lewis County External Relations Manager





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