

ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

Business Spotlight

Backwoods Brewing Company is a family-owned craft beer company that operates a brewery and pub in Carson, Washington and a second pub in Portland. Backwoods has set the course to be a true Pacific Northwest brewery with their hearty beer and amazing food. Founded by the Waters family in 2012, the team of brewers and staff consists of all local family and friends which is a cornerstone of their brand.

In this Spotlight, Steve Waters tells us how the family adapted to and grew – and even planned an expansion into a new industry - through a pandemic.

The Beginning...

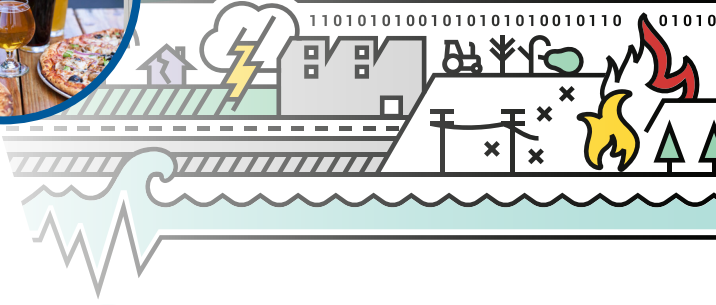
My brother Tom and I were raised in Carson, WA, so the Gorge is home to us. Our family opened the Carson General Store in 2010, but only used half of the building that the store operated from. The intention was to operate a brewery out of the other half. Two years later, that idea came to fruition with the opening of Backwoods Brewing Company using a small one-barrel system. Demand for the craft beers grew and the pub bumped up to a 7-barrel, and finally up to a 20-barrel system. Our beers can be found throughout the Pacific Northwest in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.



The success of the brewery allowed the operation to expand with the opening of full-service pubs in both Carson and in Portland's Pearl District. We now have over 100 employees staffing our multi-state operations. We are operated by a team of friends and family which has always been an important piece of the Backwoods Brewing Company story.

The Future...

There are big plans in the works in Carson. We are looking to move the general store and pub to the 18 acres we own across the street from the current location. The plan includes building cabins to create a destination resort that expands our vision of comfort, good beer, and good food. We also want to add another satellite pub in Washington.



The Pandemic...



When the shutdown happened, we implemented our doomsday plan. We had enough cash to get through six weeks of operations. We had to do some lay-offs and salaried employees took a pay cut. Our existing relationships with suppliers and vendors were integral to getting through the pandemic - they allowed us to pay late or offered us discounts. We received Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. Our loyal customers came in for our take-out orders and would tailgate in our parking lot. That evolved into an outdoor movie set up. We purchased 2,400 sq feet of industrial grade aluminum tents, then added two event tents so we could meet the outside space requirements. That winter turned out to be one of our busiest ever.



“The cornerstone for our success is founded here in the camaraderie of the Backwoods family.”

Advice for starting a business...

Really think about why you want to be in business. Think about why you want to come to work every day. Know your community and appreciate your employees. Allow your employees to grow and be supportive of their growth. Be passionate about what you do.



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