

Regional Roundup

Clark County

Clark County's labor market continued to improve over the past three months. Seasonally-adjusted nonfarm employment rose by 200 jobs in August, 400 jobs in September and 700 jobs in October, while unemployment continued to decline.

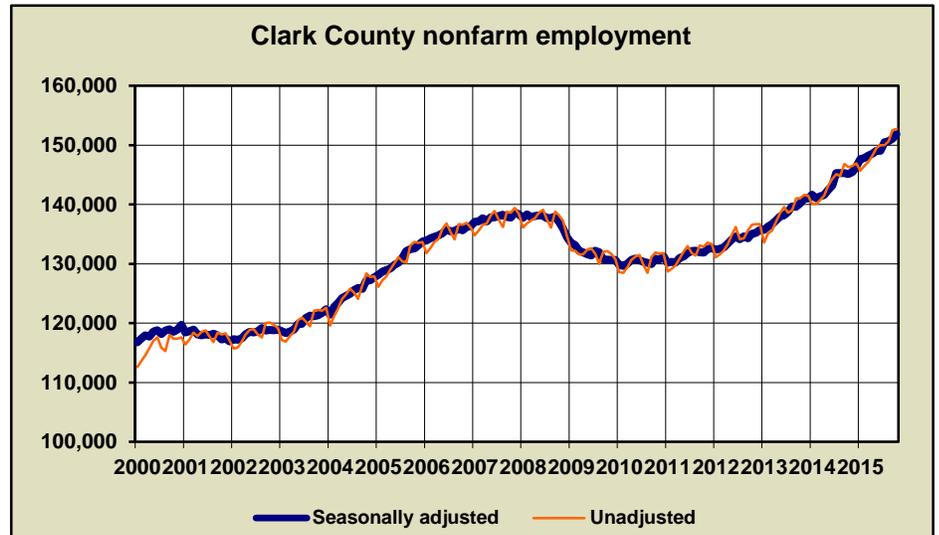
Unadjusted employment rose by 200 jobs. In contrast, payrolls fell by 500 jobs last October. This year's number were sparked by a typically big jump in K-12 employment (+1,100) along with small gains in private educational services and a number of other

industries. These were only partially offset by a large seasonal loss (-900) in arts, entertainment & recreational services—this industry typically has a spike in September, and was returning to normal levels in October. There were also seasonal layoffs in accommodation and food services (-300).

Over the year:

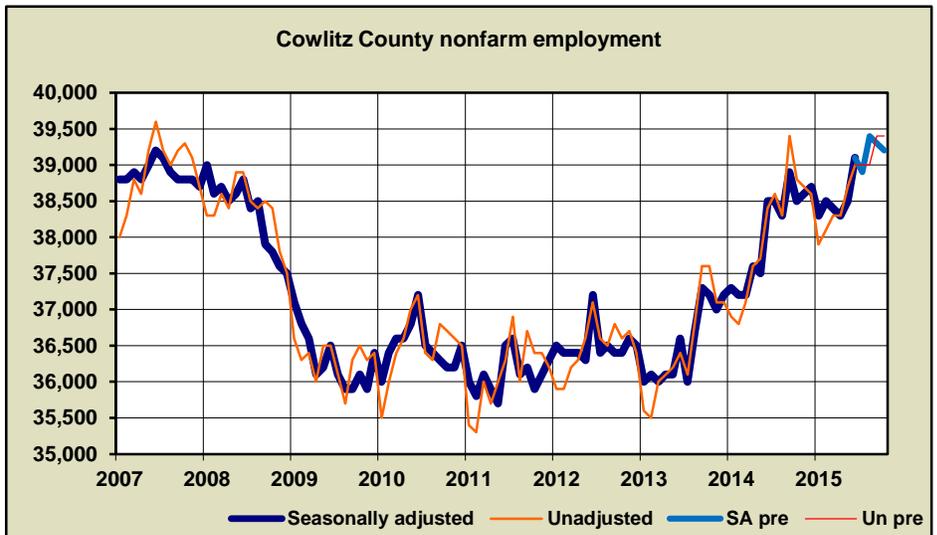
- Job growth over the year was still strong at 6,400 jobs, or 4.4 percent. Comparison rates: U. S., 2.0 percent; state of Washington, 2.8 percent; state of Oregon, 3.5 percent; Portland Metro, 3.2 percent.
- The big industries for job creation were identical to last month: trade, transportation & utilities (+1,400 jobs, 5.2 percent), construction & mining (+1,000, 9.7 percent), leisure & hospitality (+800, 6.1 percent), financial services (+700, 9.6 percent), professional & business services (+700 jobs, 3.9 percent), and education & health services. The fact that so many industries are listed shows the diversity in job creation.
- Manufacturing employment was revised downward to a small loss of 100 jobs over the year (0.7 percent). The loss of 300 in transportation equipment continues to act as a drag.
- Other than manufacturing, every major sector was up over the year. Information services was barely above water (+100, 3.3 percent), along with other services (+200, 3.7 percent). Government payrolls have expanded (+900, 3.7 percent), with all the gain coming in K-12 education.

The unemployment rate was estimated at 5.6 percent, a point and a half below the 7.1 percent from last October. This was the lowest rate since December 2007. Both initial and continued unemployment claims dipped over the month, reducing their already rock-bottom levels.



Cowlitz County

Editor's note: The Employment Security Department revises employment estimates every three months, based on tax returns from employers for the quarter six months earlier. Recently tax data for the second quarter of 2015 was processed and preliminary estimates for the second quarter were revised ("benchmarked"). The Bureau of Labor Statistics then re-estimated employment for July through October based on a sample of employers and historical trends where there is insufficient sample (most industries, actually). These sample-based preliminary estimates have been highly inaccurate this year. Earlier in the year



they were too high: preliminary March estimates of 39,100 (job growth over 5 percent) were revised down to 38,300 (3.2 percent). Preliminary June estimates put nonfarm employment at 37,800 (-1.6 percent) were revised to 39,000 (+1.6 percent). September estimates, which are still sample-based, have swung from 38,100 (-3.3 percent) to 39,400 jobs (0 change over the year). I will continue to provide guidance in interpreting these preliminary estimates.

Benchmarked data for June 2015 show Cowlitz County nonfarm employment increased by 600 jobs over the year, a 1.6 percent growth rate. According to preliminary estimates prepared by the federal government, employment has continued to grow at that same rate over the year. This may be too optimistic.

- The estimates show no change in construction over the year, when a not-unsubstantial drop is more likely the case.
- State government per the preliminary estimates employed 1,700 jobs in the county, up from 1,300 in October 2014. A more realistic estimate is for no change over the year.
- Given those two factors, it would not be surprising to see revised data three months from now showing a small loss of jobs over the year.

The official estimates show a net gain of only 100 jobs in the county between June and October on a seasonally-adjusted basis. Total unadjusted employment was unchanged in July and August before increasing by 400 in September. There was again no change in October, leaving total job counts at 39,400. Looking at industry employment over those four months, there was little change.

Over the past twelve months, the preliminary estimates indicate that retail trade and health care both added 200 jobs, while leisure & hospitality was down 100 and other services (not broken out in the accompanying table) was off 200 jobs. Government was up 500 jobs, including 400 in state government and 100 in local government.

The county unemployment rate was estimated at 7.3 percent in August, 7.0 percent in September and 6.9 percent in October, a typical downward trend for this time of year—unemployment typically is lowest in the fall. All three months were considerably lower than the same month in 2014. October's 6.9 percent was slightly more than a point lower than the 8.0 percent from October 2014. Almost 3,000 county residents were jobless and actively seeking work. The number of initial unemployment claims, which rose sharply last month, dropped back down in October, while continued claims declined slightly.

Wahkiakum County

Wahkiakum County nonfarm employment was little changed over the past three months, with 760 jobs in August and September and 750 in October. Employment was 10 jobs more than a year ago.

Unemployment was estimated at 7.4 percent in August, 7.7 percent in September, and 7.5 percent in October. Each month was significantly below the 2014 rate, including October's 1.8 point improvement. About 100 county residents were jobless and actively seeking work, versus 120 a year ago. Both initial and continued unemployment claims remained at low levels.

