

ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COUNTIES
AND COUNCIL OF FOREST TRUST LAND COUNTIES
INVOLVEMENT IN FOREST POLICY

*Comments before the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources by Gil Riddell, AOC
Policy Coordinator and CFTLC Executive Director, February 5, 2013.*

Association of Oregon Counties

- AOC represents all 36 Oregon counties. Counties are the teammates with the State in matters of shared delivery of vital public services, shared revenue, and public policy development. Counties together represent the same population and land area of the State as does the legislature, with local, day-to-day accountability.
- In forest policy, AOC is by necessity focused on federal matters. Oregon has 13 National Forests covering over 14 million acres, or nearly one-quarter of the State's land mass. In addition, Oregon is home to the unique O&C lands, covering 2.4 million acres across 18 Oregon counties, generally in a checkerboard array with private lands. AOC provides support to those 18 counties on forest policy matters when requested by the O&C Counties Association.
- AOC is working closely with the National Association of Counties and other stakeholders to draft and support congressional legislation to direct and enable federal agencies through active management on a landscape scale to reduce fuel loads, to restore fish and wildlife habitat, and to utilize the nation's timber resource to help restore the economic, environmental, and social condition of rural Oregon.
- AOC praises the Oregon congressional delegation for leading the adoption of the financial lifeline of the Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act to county governments and schools throughout the nation. And AOC will engage again in an effort to reauthorize those federal payments, but only to the extent that it is "bridge funding" included in a long-term, active management solution to management of our federal forests.

Council of Forest Trust Land Counties

- CFTLC, a subcommittee of AOC, represents the 15 Oregon counties that transferred their forestlands to the State since 1936, largely under the 1939 Acquisition Act and its amendments. The State bargained with counties for the lands and actively promoted the program with assurances that the lands would be rehabilitated, reforested, and protected to produce harvestable forestlands.

Primarily during the decades of acquisition, the State, through various Governors and the Board and Department of Forestry, characterized the state forest arrangement as a trust, contract, or partnership. In reliance on these promises, counties consented to changes in the shared-revenue formula for fire protection and suppression and intensive management, paid back the State's costs for the rehabilitation program, and continue to make substantial investments in forest roads, bridges, and habitat improvements.

- Today you would recognize these forests as the State Forests, including the Tillamook, Clatsop, and Sun Pass. There are 701,000 acres of these forests with management and revenue sharing under ORS Chapter 530 and rulemaking by the Board and Department of Forestry.
- Based on the clear history of the program, CFTLC believes that the primary purpose of these state forests is timber production for public revenues and jobs. Nevertheless, the counties are working cooperatively through the Forest Trust Land Advisory Committee, the statutory advisory body to the Board of Forestry and State Forester, to implement the Greatest Permanent Value Rule, which incorporates the range of forest values important to Oregonians.
- Generally speaking, 36.25% of gross revenues are retained by the State for administration and forest management investments. The remaining 63.75% goes to the county of origin for its discretionary use and further distribution to local taxing districts of origin. In FY 2011-12, this meant a county share of \$37.4 million on a harvest of some 230 million board feet. Although it varies by county, system-wide about 64% of the county share is further distributed to schools, 28% is retained by the county, and 8% is distributed to other local taxing districts.

How the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources can be most productively involved in public forest policy.

- On federal matters, stay informed and support productive actions by stakeholders in Congress and the Executive Branch.
- On state forest matters, ensure that the state administrative processes and outcomes respect the history of the acquisition program and the enormous stake held by local state forest communities.