

HOUSE BILL 3240 AND HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 13

The Association of Oregon Counties, representing all 36 county governments in Oregon, **supports House Bill 3240 and House Joint Memorial 13**, both related to the transfer of most federal lands to ownership by the State of Oregon.

The topic of federal transfer of its lands to the states has been under active discussion since the State of Utah, in its House Bill 148 (2012), demanded that the federal government “extinguish” its title to an estimated more than 20 million acres of federal public lands in the state by December 31, 2014. Note that House Bill 3444, before your Committee today, takes the same approach.

AOC formed a subcommittee, which worked from August, 2014, to January, 2015, to study what other western states are doing; whether and how the State of Oregon should approach the question; potential economic, legal, and political benefits and risks; and other relevant issues.

Ultimately, AOC adopted Resolution 2015 L1, Request for State Study of Transfer of certain Federal Lands to the State of Oregon, which describes the current conditions of public lands in Oregon; recommends a study by a bi-cameral and bi-partisan committee appointed by the Legislative Assembly that includes two county governing body members to study the concept described in the Resolution; and poses questions for the committee to answer.

This statement, the AOC Resolution, and an AOC survey (Activities related to transfer of federal lands to the state in other Western States with large federal ownership, as known on September 11, 2014) have been submitted for the record of this hearing.

You will notice that the “Whereas clauses” of both HB 3240 and HJM 13 are virtually identical to those of the AOC Resolution.

HB 3240 would have a task force appointed by legislative leadership to study the question of federal land transfer, which is the request of the AOC Resolution. Unfortunately, the committee does not include a county governing body member. *AOC respectfully requests that the bill be amended to include a county governing body member on the task force.* Our reasons:

- County governing body members have direct and frequent relations with field staff and leaders of the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.
- Since 2005 AOC, representing the 36 counties, has a Memorandum of Understanding with the two federal land management agencies for “early and often informal communication”, so that potential policies by any of the three parties that effect the other two will be discussed informally before becoming published.

- There is a long history of revenue sharing between the federal land management agencies and counties. O&C counties for years “plowed back” a portion of their receipts to finance improvements on the land.
- Counties are practitioners of Cooperating Agency Status during federal land management planning.
- AOC, the Eastern Oregon Counties Association, and the Association of O&C Counties continue to make significant investments in strategic activities in Washington, D.C., to gain reform of federal forest management.

AOC has found that Joint Memorials can be valuable, but are often overlooked by those in Washington, D.C. Nevertheless, **HJM 13** expresses the sentiment of the AOC Resolution and deserves support.