



Oregon State Sheriffs' Association

Conservators of the Peace

Toll Free In Oregon (800) 624-4405

Salem (503) 364-4204

Fax (503) 364 -2059

To: **Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources**

From: **John Bishop, Executive Director**
Oregon State Sheriffs' Association

Date: April 13, 2017

Re: **Oregon State Sheriffs Support House Joint Memorial 11**

Chair Clem and members of the committee, for the record, my name is John Bishop and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association. I am here today to express our strong support for this measure. HJM 11 urges the President and the U.S. Congress to find a long-term solution for management of Bureau of Land Management's O&C forest lands.

The O&C Lands are essential to the social and economic well-being of Oregon communities. Sustained yield forestry on O&C Lands provides jobs, supports local economies and helps pay for essential public services. Under federal law, the 2.1 million acres of O&C Lands are required to be managed under principles of sustained-yield forestry, meaning no more wood is cut than is grown. Counties hosting O&C Lands receive 50 percent of revenues from timber receipts. These revenues are essential because many O&C counties are dominated by federally-owned lands that pay no property taxes. The leading County uses of O&C revenues include Sheriff's patrols; Corrections; Search and Rescue; Emergency Services; and the District Attorney. These programs along with Mental Health Services; and service programs for Juveniles and Seniors; and more. This county-federal partnership was successful in sustaining vital public services, while supporting jobs and economic activity in rural Oregon.

The use of O&C payments to finance general funds has been a very significant factor for the O&C Counties and historically made up more than 50 percent of several Counties' discretionary budgets. When harvest levels collapsed in the early 1990s due to changes in Federal policies, shared timber receipts dropped by almost 90 percent. Thereafter, Congress adopted a series of temporary "safety net" measures that resulted in payments to Counties in lieu of timber receipts. The most recent such measures, known as the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) program, ended in 2015. There is little prospect of any further renewals of SRS. As a result, Counties are once again reliant on the timber harvest receipts to support local services. Unfortunately, the level of support for County budgets from current and projected BLM management is drastically below historic levels.

Oregon Sheriffs are facing a fiscal cliff, and are being forced to make draconian cuts to essential public services. Sheriff's deputies are being taken off the road, public and mental health facilities are closing. Emergency Management, is being severely hampered in preparing for and responding to disasters (Many of these counties are in the Cascadia Zone for both Earthquake and Tsunami devastation) such as wildland fires, which seem to be getting bigger every year.

Unless a long-term solution is found, rural Oregon communities will continue to lose both public- and private-sector jobs, in areas that already have high levels of unemployment and poverty. And because many county-provided services are required to be provided under law, the state government may be responsible for funding and delivering these services in the near future. With the State of Oregon already facing a significant budget deficit. The Sheriffs are asking for your help in getting our congressional delegation to act.

Oregon, and our Sheriffs needs a long-term solution that protects the O&C Counties and rural communities. We need stable revenues to maintain public safety and services. Forests are Oregon's most abundant and renewable natural resource, and responsibly managing them is a big part of the solution for Counties and rural communities.

Please join us in asking our representatives in Washington D.C. to act.