



### **Oppose House Joint Memorial (HJM) 11**

House Joint Memorial (HJM) 11 is aimed at encouraging a solution to the funding crisis facing some Western Oregon county governments by advocating a return to aggressive logging practices on federal public lands—lands that belong to all Americans. A number of the claims made in HJM 11 are exaggerated or inaccurate. Oregon Wild and the Sierra Club urge you to vote “no” on HJM 11.

- **Misleading Statement:** HJM 11 states that the 1937 O&C Act “states that all the timberlands shall be managed for sustained yield production and also mandates a minimum harvest each year of 500 million board feet...”

In fact, the O&C Act of 1937 also requires that “sustained yield production” ensures clean water, wildlife habitat, recreation, and other public values. Far from mandating 500 million board feet of harvest, the Act states that the BLM shall establish an annual sustained yield capacity, translated into an Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ). This was done in both the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan and the 2016 Resource Management Plan for Western Oregon, and the ASQ set for just over 200 million board feet – less than half of the 500 claimed in the HJM.<sup>1</sup>

- **Misleading Statement:** HJM 11 states that “...timber harvests have been reduced by 90 percent over the last 20 years...”

This is based on a comparison of current logging levels on federal public lands to the level that occurred during rampant clearcutting of the late 1980’s—the highest level of clearcutting ever to occur on public lands in Oregon. That unsustainably high level of logging led to endangered species listings, public protests, and conflict that ultimately led former President Bill Clinton to adopt the compromise 1994 Northwest Forest Plan.

- **Misleading Statement:** It goes on to state that the above reduction in harvest “...resulted in a drastic decline in revenues ...and left many of the 18 Oregon counties in which O&C lands are located without adequate revenues...”

Counties did receive a share of the revenues from the unsustainably high logging levels of the 1970’s and 80’s. This allowed them to grow government services beyond what local tax rates could support. However, in 2000, the U.S. Congress enacted the Secure Rural Schools program to transition counties away from dependence on federal subsidies. That program has now expired, and some Oregon counties have done little to prepare for it.

Actually solving the county funding crisis will require these counties to modernize their local tax structures, among other actions. That is unpopular, but it is reality. In 2012, Curry County, one of the hardest hit of the 18 O&C counties, maintained the lowest property taxes in the state.

- **Misleading Statement: HJM 11 states that due to the reduction in federal timber harvest revenue, “...counties have suffered a perilous loss of jobs and infrastructure due to sawmill and peeling mill closures and the disappearance of other forest-based industries...”**

Mill closures and job losses in the timber industry started long before the spotted owl became an issue, and have more to do with the mechanization of the logging industry, changes in management structure of mills and companies, and record levels of raw log exports overseas from private timber lands than they do with federal logging levels.

A more reasonable way to seek solutions to county funding than further stressing public resources is by addressing these issues through re-instituting the severance tax on logging that was eliminated in Oregon in 1990’s, creating a tax credit to promote in-state milling and directing revenues to fund counties, and counties raising their property taxes to be more in line with the national average.

- **Misleading Statement: HJM 11 claims that BLM’s 2016 Resource Management Plans “further limit sustainable, active management of O&C lands and limit the ability of counties to provide public services...”**

The BLM’s new management plan anticipates a timber harvest level of 278 million board feet – a 37% increase over the levels established under the Northwest Forest Plan in 1994 – and significantly reduces restrictions on logging near streams and aggressive harvest techniques. These changes hardly equate to “further limiting management,” and are not based on the best available science. The ability of counties to provide public services is unrelated to the BLM plan.

- **Misleading Statement: “...members of the Oregon Congressional Delegation have proposed plans that would result in stable county revenues in an effort to avoid the financial crises currently confronting many Oregon counties and assist in the revival of the ailing economies...”**

Independent analyses have shown that neither Senator Wyden’s nor Representative DeFazio’s bills introduced over the past few years would actually solve county funding woes, or result in major job growth. This statement also fails to acknowledge the important role these lands already play in Oregon’s economy, from providing clean drinking water to our communities to sustaining our growing tourism and outdoor recreation industry<sup>2</sup>. This statement also ignores the controversy and scientific criticism these proposals have generated over the past several years.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.blm.gov/or/plans/rmpswesternoregon/index.php>

<sup>2</sup> <http://pacificrivers.org/o-c-economic-analysis>