
Josephine (JO) County (CO) Justice System (JS) & Public Safety Services (PSS)

JO CO Justice System & Public Safety Services¹⁻²

The 2012 expiration of federal funding for services resulted in two JO CO proposed levies as a solution. They both failed. The Exploratory Committee asks the question: “Is JO CO providing an minimally adequate level of public safety services?”

Chapter 8. Conclusion Of Analysis of Policy Impacts and Responses from Loss of Secure Rural School Funding in Selected Oregon Counties.³

The resource revenue sharing programs for counties with extensive tracts of federal land, combined with highly productive timber harvests through the 1980s, created dependence by county government and its citizens on the revenues it provided to fund county services, and have shaped the economies and local governments of rural Oregon. Counties with O&C lands within their borders became more dependent on these payments for general fund services, such as public safety, than those with NFS lands, who became more dependent on these payments for roads and schools.

Changes in federal forest management, enactment of environmental policies, recessions, and a shift to a global economy dramatically impacted counties between the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1990s, counties began experiencing a shift away from traditional natural resource extraction activities – amidst changing demographics resulting from rural restructuring taking place across the west by baby-boomers and amenity seekers – towards more service, recreation and tourism oriented economies.

1. Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (HNA&HS). July 9, 2013. *Justice System Exploratory Committee*. Hugo, OR.

2. HNA&HS. July 24, 2013. *Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society's Mission*. Hugo, OR.

OSU Analysis Of Policy Impacts & Government Responses

Progressive population increases have escalated demand for county government services, while progressively declining populations have reduced county tax bases. At the same time, voter-initiated state tax measures fixed property tax rates and restricted annual increases in property tax assessments, reflecting anti-tax/anti-government sentiments. The federal government's attempt to stabilize payments to county governments perpetuated a continued reliance on these payments through the authorization of OBRA in 1993 and the subsequent authorization of SRS in 2000 and reauthorizations in 2007 and 2008, in spite of their impending expiration.

Taken together, all of these factors have influenced the actions Oregon county governments faced with the loss of SRS payments. However, federal forest and state property tax policies are the predominant structural constraints that influence county government decision making. Or – to quote the Association of Oregon Counties – together they have created “structural handcuffs” that have narrowed the choices available to county government, making it difficult for counties to raise additional revenues necessary to **maintain public service levels of the past**. The result has been dramatic cuts to staff and service levels in programs and departments, which vary by county.

Reductions in services may have very specific impacts on the well-being of **businesses, institutions and residents**, and these impacts may generate private responses that have financial and political implications.

OSU Conclusion

In many instances, these responses may feed back to generate more impacts. Responses were consistent across all participant groups, and across all counties, although the degrees of concern for well-being, and financial and political impacts varied.

In general, businesses expressed more concern over financial impacts, while institutions tended to be balanced between financial impacts and impacts on well-being, and residents expressed more concern over impacts on well-being, particularly issues of safety. Business, institution and resident responses were also consistent with county government official perceptions for all three counties. The data revealed how difficult it is for participants to imagine possible impacts and their responses – either because they do not have enough experience or knowledge, or it has yet to impact them. The data also revealed the burdens are disproportionately placed on segments of the populations – especially those in remote parts of the county, or those without financial resources.

This research has examined how JO CO changed budgets and services in response to pending termination of the **Secure Rural Schools** funding. By looking at these changes through the eyes of both local officials and their constituents, it can assist federal, state and county decision makers in developing and choosing thoughtful policy alternatives, informed with the knowledge of the influences of past policies, collective action, their **own world views**.

3. Gaid, Dawn Marie, October 2009. *Changing Federal County Payments and Rural Oregon Counties: Analysis of Policy Impacts and Responses from Loss of Secure Rural School Funding in Selected Oregon Counties*. RSP 09-04. (134 pages). OSU's Rural Studies Program. Working Paper Series.

Exploratory Committee's Mission

Mission An independent Justice System and Public Safety Services Exploratory Committee (*Exploratory Committee*) to investigate the JO CO Justice System & Public Safety Services (JS&PSS) issue was formed under the leadership of the Hugo Neighborhood Association and Historical Society (HNA&HS).

Big picture ideas for the exploratory effort include the following.

1. Identifying the JS&PSS issue.
2. Identifying the JS&PSS sub-issues for research and analysis.
3. Identifying a range in level of services
4. Identifying a range of cost for services.
5. Identifying revenues for services.

The ultimate goal is an adequate justice system and public safety services. Is it possible to have a higher level of service for a lower cost? The purpose of the *Exploratory Committee* is to gather information adequate enough to understand the JS&PSS issues. This includes educational outreach efforts.

The *Exploratory Committee's* purpose is limited to investigating and researching the JS&PSS issues. It will not make evaluations of right or wrong, nor make recommendations on how to vote.

The contents of this brochure are expressions of the opinions and beliefs of those that contribute based on their thoughts and experiences. Hopefully, their efforts will assist the public toward informed decision-making.

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Justice System Exploratory Committee

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OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY RURAL STUDY PROGRAM CONCLUSION

Brochure Br. III.H.5.7
Justice System & Public Safety Services Series

OSU'S Rural Studies Program & JS&PPS Documents



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Hugo Justice System Exploratory Committee