

BLM's latest forestry plan raises disputes all over state

The Grants Pass Daily Courier

By Troy Brynelson of the Roseburg News-Review

May 18, 2016

<http://web.thedailycourier.com/eedition/index.html>

ROSEBURG — A group representing sheriffs in Oregon has joined the chorus of boos for the Bureau of Land Management's latest forestry plan.

In a statement released Thursday, the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association said the BLM's newly announced Resource Management Plan for southwest Oregon will leave timber-reliant counties empty-handed and unable to pay for law enforcement, among other things.

In doing so, the agency has "failed the communities where these public lands are located." "That revenue stream is supposed to help these counties provide a variety of public services, including law enforcement," the association said in a statement. "Quite simply, the BLM plan ignores clear law and proposes a timber harvest plan that will continue to place these counties in a fiscal crisis."

The sheriffs association, which represents Oregon's 36 county sheriffs, joined leaders in several southwestern Oregon counties and timber advocates in saying the plan doesn't make enough trees available for harvest to fuel rural timber economies.

"The BLM refused to even consider revenues for counties as an objective in developing its plan, even though that is mandated by statute and case law," the group said. "It has routinely ignored comments from affected counties, concerned citizens and state and federal legislators."

BLM spokesman Cheyne Rossbach called the plan a "good faith effort" and the bureau hoped it would be seen as a compromise for all sides of the forestry debate. Rossbach, based out of the Roseburg office, said the bureau routinely works with sheriff's deputies.

"We want to see strong law enforcement in our communities, that's fundamental," Rossbach said. "We deal with activities every day where we require law enforcement. That's definitely on our radar and something we want to make sure is strong in our communities ... This plan is trying to get an uptick on those payments to the degree that we can, with the rules that we need to operate under."

The bureau released the plan April 12 and hoped it would be seen as a compromise for all sides of the forestry debate. It aims to raise the amount of harvestable timber by 37 percent and strengthen protections for the environment.

Proponents of timber harvest said the plan fell woefully short of its promises to the timber dependent communities. They point to the O&C Act of 1937 — which calls for almost twice as much timber harvest as this plan promises — splitting the profits down the middle between the federal government and 17 Oregon counties. Sixteen of those 17 counties filed suit against the bureau almost immediately.

Environmental groups cited the Clean Water Act and the Environmental Protection Act, both of which were ratified in the 1990s, and say the BLM fails to protect old-growth trees, waterways and wildlife.