

Hare may ask voters to join lawsuit against feds

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SIMON HARE

Although he declined to sign on to a series of property tax proposals for the May ballot, Josephine County Commissioner Simon Hare is considering asking voters to raise \$60,000 to join a lawsuit against the federal government.

The Association of O&C Counties is preparing to file litigation to wrest control of federally owned forestlands and hand them over to affected counties. This, Hare said, would cost taxpayers 1 cent per \$1,000 of assessed value, a levy he says would help area loggers get back to work and give the economy a much-needed boost.

"Will we reach the same levels of the harvest we saw in the '80s and '90s? Of course not," he said. "But this, at least, is a piece of the pie."

Hare proposed the 1 cent levy to the Board of Commissioners Thursday morning after announcing that he would not back the so-called "a la carte" property tax levies sponsored by fellow County Commissioner Cheryl Walker.

Instead of raising taxes piecemeal, Hare said, he'd prefer to gain more access to the forests.

He's hoping county residents see litigation as an opportunity to take action rather than watch as federal subsidies continue to diminish.

Walker, however, contends that there's no guarantee the one-year levy would do the trick.

"I have a very difficult time asking the public to fund a lawsuit, especially when you don't know how long it would drag on," she said. "How do you know you won't need to go back to the voters next year?"