

CLATSOP COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Thomas J. Bergin
SHERIFF

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Committee members

June 3, 2015

I come before you today to encourage the Board of Forestry to manage its State forests, particularly the Northwest state forests, in such a manner as to provide necessary funding for counties that, in turn, allow us to carry out our critical public safety mission.

The Clatsop County Sheriff's Office is the primary law enforcement agency for rural Clatsop County residents and visitors.

We are responsible for the provision: of public safety; the safe and secure custody of inmates in our jail; oversight of those on parole and probation; direct services to the public such as Search and Rescue, civil service, court security and animal control.

We take pride in serving our citizens with the highest level of integrity and respect. I have had the privilege to serve Clatsop County in the law enforcement field for almost 30 years and as the elected Sheriff, since January 2005. I have worked diligently to provide the highest level of service at the best possible cost. We are, therefore, very mindful of our budget and are very aware of the important role that timber receipts from state forest lands play in funding our Office, which directly affects all Oregonians throughout the State.

As this Board is well aware, Clatsop County, more so than other Forest Trust Land Counties, is the beneficiary of active timber management on state forest lands. Beyond the critical funds that come from timber sales in our county, the industry provides jobs and economic activity that helps our tax base. Knowing the importance of the industry to our County and the communities within, it has been a source of frustration to see such a valuable renewable resource, as our state forest lands, go underutilized.

While we full appreciate the need for a sustainable forest with appropriate conservation buffers, state law requires an equitable balance that adheres to the State's commitment to manage these forest lands to achieve the greatest permanent value. I am not alone when I say that we are currently falling short of that promise and I encourage this body, as it considers the future of Northwest state forest lands, to arrive at a solution that increases the financial viability of the resource - while also providing greater conservation outcomes.

As I cited above, a Sheriff's Office in a rural county but yet so close to heavy populated areas such as Portland, Vancouver, Beaverton and Salem plays many

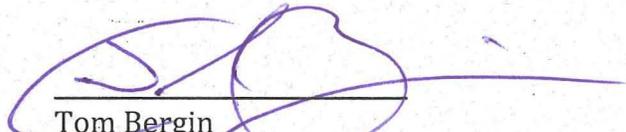
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critical roles that benefit our entire States population. Policing a rural county also provides challenges, but even more interesting is how Clatsop County's population swells immensely during numerous events that are held here regularly throughout the year. Events such as Hood to Coast, Miss Oregon Pageant, Crab Festival, The Bridge run, The world's 2nd largest beach volleyball tournament and the 4th of July festival, just to name a few put a strain on our community as we are responsible for all the visitors public safety which quite often can be trying to say the least. Everyone has been to Seaside, Cannon Beach or Astoria at one time or another in their life so ensuring adequate staffing levels is necessary to fulfill our public safety mission and our ability to do so is impacted by the returns off of state forest lands.

I am aware that there has been debate as to the definition of the "greatest permanent value". I would respectfully ask the Board to consider the value of public safety, not only in Clatsop, but in all the forest trust counties as you work towards a new management plan for the state forests. Sheriff Offices account for a significant portion of a county's budget. A forest management plan, such as the suggested 70/30 plan, that will increase funds directed to the counties will help ensure that we are able to continue to provide the public the level of service they deserve.

Please work to arrive at a solution that will fulfill the State's obligation to its trust counties; increase returns to those counties; and ensure the continued health and sustainability of our state forests.

Sincerely,



Tom Bergin
Clatsop County Sheriff