



Compared to Willamette Valley counties, for example, southwest Oregon counties have significantly lower assessed property values, lower average wages, and higher poverty levels. Five-year operating levies yield much less revenue in rural Oregon, than in metro counties.

In southwest Oregon, rates of child, spousal and drug abuse, and enrollment in free and reduced school lunches are amongst the highest in the state.

Additionally, federal lands managers are ramping up use of stewardship and good neighbor authority programs. While these are important tools to reduce fuels on federal lands, counties are cut out of revenue distribution. Understandably, this departure from the traditional revenue sharing relationship is making counties nervous.

The viability universe is becoming smaller and smaller for our counties. As we seek to provide services that protect the safety, health and welfare of our citizens, revenue that is generated from management of our county timberlands is becoming increasingly important.

As you deliberate on the Marbled Murrelet, Coos County urges you to consider the current protections that the bird receives on the federal and state levels, the population increases that are being reported, and the small amount of scientific data that is available. I urge you to consider the impact that decreasing harvest on private and county owned lands would have on the social and economic stability of our region.

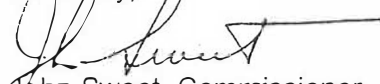
In Coos County, as in Douglas & Josephine, many of our best paying, fully benefitted jobs are closely related to forest products. In Coos County, our average annual wage in the private sector is just over \$35,000. Wages in forestry, wood products manufacturing, and trucking range from \$43-\$51,000 per year. These are important jobs that strengthen the social and economic fabric of our communities.

By comparison, tourist sector jobs in Coos County pay between \$17-\$21,000 per year.

As we move through these discussions, know that the consequences to counties of taking more land out of the harvest base are very real. Diminishing yet another county revenue producer, and decreasing the strongest part of our job base will have very real impacts, especially in southwest Oregon.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

  
John Sweet, Commissioner  
Coos County