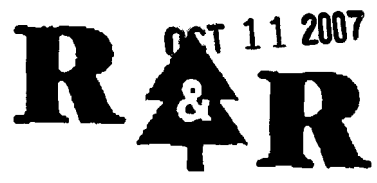


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PO BOX 519  
CAVE JUNCTION, OR 97523  
541/592-3116 FAX 541/592-3221

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Freeland, Bill  
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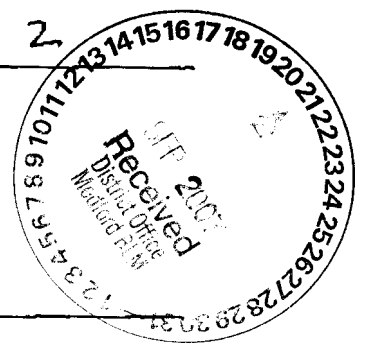
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TO: Bill Freeland & FROM: Luke Phillippi

ATTN: Sarah Bickford DATE: 9/24/07

FAX NUMBER: 618-2400 TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 2

RE: Dave Tolar op-ed piece  
(opinion-editorial)



Bill-

It is hard to imagine why a Josephine County Commissioner would write such a poor op-ed piece. He misses the mark everywhere. We will be sending in our own opinion piece this week to the Courier. We totally support the RRM WORK process. Selling a reasonable and sustainable supply of timber is the only way to get our county out of its financial hole. We all want this county to be a nice place to live.

Luke

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pted creative (risky) mortgages and a foreclosures  
ty commissioners, Grants Pass officials  
ic development people can hardly be  
this national problem, but mustn't be  
let retirees and retail determine this  
course.

number of retirees in this area has  
economy once overly dependent on the  
er industry. And new jobs in retail and  
y have helped, too, even though many  
as ones they replaced in the timber  
here.

ars need to focus on bright spots that  
h as health care and secondary wood  
p them expand, while looking for new  
len the local financial base.

timber industry has admittedly often  
in the past, officials should look to pro-  
there and, hopefully, add to them. Due  
g on nearby federal lands, the industry  
once was. However, it can and should  
nificantly to the local economy, given  
cts in the county.

e have talked of increasing federal for-  
ive county funding problems. The pri-  
ould be boosted if logging returned to a  
sustainable level.

Dennis Roler

# BLM plan no help to timber counties

Rural Oregonians should take note of the recent release of the Bureau of Land Management's Western Oregon Plan Revision. The WOPR will guide the management of more than 2.2 million acres of federal timber land in Oregon that have played a central role in our way of life, our economy and our county governments for decades.

The BLM proposes to return timber harvest levels back to the 1980s, when many of Oregon's rural counties were flush in timber dollars.

Unfortunately, the federal agency's attempt to turn back the clock delivers a real blow to efforts by timber-dependent county governments throughout Oregon to make a long overdue transition into the 21st century.

Surely bureau officials would agree it is highly unlikely that these forest lands will ever produce the level of timber receipts we saw in the 1980s, because federal land management laws simply won't allow it. Given that dose of reality, the bureau's preferred alternative in the WOPR will only serve to distract and confuse citizens in timber-dependent counties faced with the task of developing local funding sources to replace diminishing federal payments.

During the 1960s, '70s and '80s, these BLM-controlled lands provided logs that fueled local economies throughout rural Oregon.

Timber receipts generated by these lands paid for county services such as sheriff's patrols. In fact, there was so much cash rolling in from timber receipts in the 1970s that Josephine County government didn't levy any property taxes for county operations.

In the 1990s, the continued cutting of old-growth trees began to bump up against the National Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act and other federal environmental laws. Court decisions based on these laws were conclusive:

The clear-cutting of old-growth forests conflicted with a plethora of federal environmental laws. Since the early 1990s, federal forests have produced anemic harvest levels — and timber receipts for rural Oregon counties plummeted to near zero. Since



then, Congress has stepped in to provide "safety net" funding to 18 of Oregon's 36 counties, so rural communities can continue to provide basic services to their citizens.

While timber-dependent county governments have struggled to transition from high timber harvests, the private sector in affected communities like Grants Pass and Medford has come a long way in its economic transition to tourism, health care and service jobs that serve the region's growing community of retirees.

Today, census statistics reflect a Grants Pass economy that is stronger than it has ever been. From 1960 through 1990, Josephine County median household income consistently ranked in the bottom three among Oregon's 36 counties. By 2006, the county had moved up several notches to No. 29.

While businesses and residents have adapted to the new economy, most timber-dependent county governments in Oregon still depend on federal safety net funds. For example, more than 85 percent of Josephine County's general fund is financed by "safety net" payments.

So why have so many counties failed to make the inevitable transition?

In the last May election, many of these counties attempted to pass local tax levies of some sort to begin the transition, but in every case, the voters said no. During levy campaigns last spring, Oregon congressional delegates assured their constituents they were going to secure an extension of safety net funds. Many county commissioners like myself were hopeful they would prevail — and sure enough they did — if only for one more year.

You can bet those voters who voted no

on these levies because they were banking on Congress to deliver were feeling pretty smug.

Now, the BLM has sent a strong signal to our citizens that they still need not make the transition toward self-sufficiency. The bureau proposes a return to harvest levels of the 1980s so timber receipts can once again pay for county services. For rural Oregon taxpayers who aren't anxious to shoulder the cost of local programs, the bureau's call to turn back the clock sounds awfully good. The problem is, it's too good to be true.

With no detectable changes whatsoever in federal land management laws, how can the BLM pronounce that things are different now? Are present and future court decisions really going to change just because the bureau believes they should?

The last 15 years certainly contradicts that perspective. Is the current Congress really going to allow more logging on federal lands than we've seen in over 15 years? I don't think so!

Until the WOPR was released, most counties were beginning to acknowledge the inevitable: Federal payments are eventually going to end. By proposing that timber receipts will once again fund county services in rural counties, the BLM's proposal only serves to confuse and distract citizens.

I am committed to working for more timber receipts than we have seen since the mid-1990s, and I'll be supporting an alternative in the WOPR that would do just that.

But we must face the fact that federal timber money will never cover the entire bill again and, therefore, we need to develop local revenue sources. To achieve that goal, we have to hope the BLM will stop playing politics and provide a forest plan that is based on reality.

Without such fanciful distractions, I am hopeful timber-dependent counties throughout Oregon can at last make the transition to more self-reliant and fiscally stable county governments.

□ □ □

Dave Toler was elected a Josephine County commissioner in November of last year.

## your local officials

izinger can be reached at 660-2983.  
ger and other city officials, phone 474-6360 or  
t., Grants Pass, OR 97526.  
umbers for city councilors are:  
west): Phil Paquin, 476-4120; Del Renfro, 476-

ast): Jack Patterson Jr., 471-3656; Bill Kan-

ast): Tim Cummings: 471-8231; DonnaJean

west): Lisa Berger, 955-7270; Jocelyn

### arty

ty Commissioners Dwight Ellis, Jim Raf-  
Toler. Phone 474-5221, write them at Room  
Grants Pass, OR 97526, or e-mail them at  
jr.us