



AOC Information Services

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No Silver Bullet

Salem – Solving the budgetary crisis facing Oregon counties is going to be complicated and involved. That's the conclusion of the Final Report of the Governor's Task Force on Federal Forest Payments and County Services. The report, out today, finds that there is no one solution to the pending loss of federal forest payments, but a number of potential solutions need to be explored seriously.

The number one recommendation in the Preliminary Report of the Task Force issued last year was for Congress to reauthorize federal forest payments. Congress came through with a ramped down extension of federal forest payments in the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008.

"Congress acknowledged the obligation the federal government has toward Oregon," Association of Oregon Counties Executive Director Mike McArthur said. "But that recognition came with a price tag." The reauthorized federal forest payments will be reduced each year until they stop in 2012. "Oregon counties have been given a small amount of time to deal with the loss of federal forest payments," McArthur said. "It's better than no time at all, but it adds to the mounting pressure Oregon counties face in today's uncertain economic climate."

The Final Report's number one recommendation is the creation of a joint state-county County Services Planning Council to encourage and coordinate effective fiscal planning for the counties to prepare for and manage through the phase-out of federal payments over the next four fiscal years. The Task Force has 52 other recommendations that cover how the state can help the counties, how the counties can help themselves and what the federal government can do.

Governor Kulongoski underscored the urgency of acting swiftly. "With the precious time the reauthorization granted us, it is imperative that we develop a plan now to deal with the eventual loss of payments. By the spring of 2011, counties will be receiving less than half of what they are receiving now," Governor Kulongoski said. "To help prepare Oregon's counties, I have introduced the legislation needed to create the joint state-county planning council so that essential services continue."

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For more information about that legislation or the Final Report, please contact Tim Nesbitt in the Governor's Office or Gil Riddell at the Association of Oregon Counties.

A copy of the Final Report is available at www.aocweb.org or www.governor.state.or.us/.

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