



# DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Oregon and California Counties to Receive Nearly \$1.4 million in Withheld Timber Payments**

(Roseburg, OR) – November 30, 2017 - The Association of Oregon and California Counties (AOCC) today announced a breakthrough in discussions with the Department of the Interior and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regarding \$1.39 million in timber payments withheld by the federal government earlier this year. "We are happy to report the 18 O&C Counties will be receiving those withheld payments very soon," said Commissioner Tim Freeman of Douglas County, the Association's President. "We give full credit to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, Acting Assistant Secretary Scott Cameron and Acting Interior Solicitor Dan Jorjani for their willingness to work with us to persuade OMB to release these funds. We are also grateful to Congressman Walden for his assistance in facilitating communications between the Association and the Department of the Interior."

The disputed funds were withheld as part of a government-wide "sequestration" of 6.9 percent of all spending. Sequestration is required by federal statute when the total of all government spending exceeds certain budget caps. The amount sequestered in any given year varies depending on the level of government spending compared to the applicable budget caps. For federal fiscal year 2016, sequestration was set at 6.9 percent.

The 18 O&C Counties receive a share of receipts from the sale of timber harvested from 2.1 million acres managed by the Bureau of Land Management, an agency within the Department of the Interior. "When we received our timber payments in January for fiscal year 2016, we were shocked to find they were short by 6.9 percent" said Commissioner Freeman. "Our budgets are already under terrible pressure and the sequestration made a bad situation even worse. Having those payments restored does not cure our larger budget problems but it sure helps fill a few gaps. Every County will use these much-needed funds for vital services according to their local priorities, from public safety and juvenile programs to elections departments and infrastructure maintenance, and everything in between."

The Association has been working with the Department of the Interior since March to identify a way to restore the sequestered payments. Secretary Zinke, Assistant Secretary Cameron and Solicitor Jorjani recognized that O&C timber payments are not ordinary government "spending." Because timber sale receipts are placed in a special account in the U.S. Treasury set up in 1916 for the benefit of the 18 O&C Counties, they are not subject to sequestration in the usual way. OMB was persuaded and this week authorized release of the withheld funds.

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