

Oregon faces 90 percent reduction in key federal timber payments

Program has not been reauthorized

Associated Press

SALEM — A U.S. Forest Service program that infused rural communities with millions to make up for lost timber revenue is drying up, and that means Oregon will see a 90 percent reduction in the payments that have kept critical services afloat in many counties since environmental rules curtailed logging nearly 30 years ago.

The Salem Statesman Journal reported that the changes will impact more than 700 counties and 4,000 school districts in 41 states.

The Secure Rural Schools program was enacted in 2000 to help ease the financial blow after a dramatic reduction in logging in the 1990s.

But the program has not been reauthorized and payments going forward will revert to a 1908 law that ded-

icates 25 percent of timber revenues to local governments.

For Oregon, the reduction would be particularly severe, dropping the 2015 payment of \$86.4 million to \$7 million, according to an analysis by the National Association of Counties. The law had provided gradually reduced payments since 2012 and was authorized a final time at \$285 million in April 2015 and expired six months later.

Payments to counties at the previous 25 percent level will start to be sent out in February, said Babete R. Anderson, the national press officer for the Forest Service.

"We are working through the steps required to process the 25 percent fund payments expeditiously and anticipate making those payments by the middle of February," she said.

The National Association of Counties is trying to drum up support for reauthorizing the program — and some Western lawmakers are listening.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, was a co-author of the 2000 bill and is work-



AP Photo/Rick Bowmer

Trees in the Mt. Hood National Forest outside Zigzag in 2004. A U.S. Forest Service program that infused rural communities with millions to make up for lost timber revenue is drying up; for Oregon, the reduction would be particularly severe, dropping the 2015 payment of \$86.4 million to \$7 million, according to an analysis by the National Association of Counties.

ing with Sen. Mike Crapo and Sen. James Risch, both Idaho Republicans, to craft a solu-

Oregon governor, AG condemn Trump's immigration order

Associated Press

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown said President Donald Trump's executive order that bans U.S. legal permanent residents and visa-holders from seven Muslim-majority countries from returning to the United States for 90 days divides and discriminates.

Brown said Sunday that Trump's actions "do not reflect the values enshrined in the U.S. Constitution or the principles we stand for as Oregonians."

"In Oregon, where thousands have fought for and demanded equality, we can not and will not retreat," the governor said in a statement. "As governor, I will uphold the civil and human rights of all who call Oregon home. My staff is studying the recent executive orders to determine what effects they may have on Oregonians, and I will explore options to keep Oregon a safe place for everyone. I am also in contact

with the Port of Portland and local authorities and am prepared to assist if necessary.

"Now, more than ever, we must stand together, guided by the enduring belief in freedom, liberty, and justice for all, and make our voices heard."

Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum said Saturday she is "appalled" by the immigration crackdown on non-American citizens from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia or Yemen.

She adds that Oregon will use the "force of the rule of law" to protect and serve all people in Oregon.

Trump signed the order Friday and it's having an immediate effect on U.S. legal permanent residents and visa-holders who are traveling outside the U.S.

Trump's ban on asylum-seekers came even as Iraqis endangered by work for the United States in their home country were midflight to the United States.

Getting up close and personal with gray whales

Whale research provides some important clues

By REBECCA HERREN
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Vacationers are not the only part-time residents of our region.

About 200 gray whales in the Pacific Coast feeding group return every year. Instead of migrating with the rest of the population north to the Bering Sea, they cavort for several months along Oregon's coastline.

Known as resident whales, animals in the group do not live in the area year-round, according to Oregon State University graduate student Florence Sullivan at a lecture, "Inside Gray Whales," presented by the North Coast Land Conservancy's "Listening to the Land" series this month.

Sullivan is part of a research team for Geospatial Ecology of Marine Megafauna Laboratory, studying the gray whales that feed in the southern waters between Northern California and southeastern Alaska.

Sullivan noted that gray whales do not feed during migration, which makes the Oregon Coast an important habitat for them on their return to Alaska.

The focus of Sullivan's research is to document the foraging behavior of the feeding group, the affect of man-made disturbances, overall health, body condition and the whales' response to changing ocean conditions.

After the findings are completed, Sullivan works with local communities and whale-watching operators to



Rebecca Herren/The Daily Astorian

Florence Sullivan, center, discusses the "Watch Out for Whales" brochure with Lianne Thompson, Jeff Gage, Judith Pearson and Jim Border.

create scientific guidelines for vessel operation in the presence of feeding gray whales.

Foraging ecology

The researchers' viewing location is concentrated between Titchener Cove and Mill Rocks near Port Orford and Depoe Bay. The team uses a surveyor's instrument called a theodolite to track and map the movement of individual whales as they forage. The data collected shows the whales' traveling patterns between kelp beds, how they search for food and how they interact with vessels.

New research techniques such as GoPro cameras and aerial drones benefit the team to closely observe the whales' patterns and behaviors, and hydrophones aid in recording the ocean noise — natu-

ral, human and mechanical — whales become exposed to.

In an effort to gain a better understanding of the foraging ecology of the gray whales' feeding group, the team collects samples of a particular prey called mysid. Mysids are small, shrimp-like crustaceans found near the kelp beds.

"We think the reason they're attracted to these foraging hotspots along the Oregon Coast is an abundance of mysid shrimp," Sullivan said. "During summer months, the mysid can be really dense from the sea floor to the surface and really close to shore. We want to know if this wealth of for-

aging is enough to get these whales to disrupt their migration north, or is there some other mechanism that makes 200 whales act differently than the other 20,000? That's what we hope to find out."

Monitoring the activities of commercial, charter and recreational fishing boats, as well as whale-watching boats, can also determine the effects on whale behavior.

Understanding patterns

Sullivan pointed to a series of graphs and charts explaining how the data collected on vessel noise showed a significant disruption to the whale's



Rebecca Herren/The Daily Astorian

Florence Sullivan, a graduate student in Oregon State University's Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, points to a near collision between a gray whale and a kayaker during her powerpoint presentation.

behavior patterns while traveling from one kelp bed to another, whereas there was little change to their behavior when actual foraging and eating was in process.

Photographing individual whales is another form of data collection. This allows the team to follow the whale's migration patterns, their health and nutritional state. Aerial photographs allow the team to document breeding females with or without a new calf. This can also give the team an estimate of the number of calves produced each year, which is an important key of reproductive health and part of marine ecologist

Leigh Torres' research. Sullivan noted that photographing a gray whale involves multiple photos and a lot of patience.

"To identify gray whales, we need to take five photographs compared to one photo of the underside fluke of a humpback whale or one photo of the profile of a dorsal fin and saddle patch of an orca," said Sullivan. To identify gray whales, researchers need to photograph the knuckle ridge along the back, underside of the fluke, both sides of the head and body showing scarring, barnacle patterns and mottling to make individual identification.

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