

Common School Fund allocations

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The Oregon Constitution established the State Land Board as trustee of the Common School Fund. The State Land Board is composed of the Governor, Secretary of State and State Treasurer; DSL is the administrative agency for the board. At statehood, the federal government granted Oregon roughly six percent of the new state's land for the use of schools. The Constitution dedicated the school lands and their mineral, timber and other resources to the Common School Fund.

The State Treasurer and Oregon Investment Council invest the fund. Fund values in recent years have ranged from \$600 million to \$800 million, depending on market conditions. Twice a year, earnings from investments are distributed to counties for the support of schools according to a formula established by the State Land Board.

"While the supplemental distribution provides a much-needed boost for schools, the Land Board is looking at changes in investment and distribution policies to both stabilize and increase the amount of money available to public schools over the long term from the Common School Fund," said Secretary of State Bill Bradbury.

Bradbury said he expects discussion of this issue to be a high priority for the Land Board early in 2003 after Gov. Kulon-goski begins serving as Land Board chair.

Distributions for the 2000-2001 fiscal year totaled \$40.8 million. Distributions for the prior 1999-2000 fiscal year totaled \$35.2 million. Annual distributions in recent years have fluctuated from \$9 million to \$40.8 million depending on board policies and market conditions. The value of the Common School Fund totaled \$683 million on November 30, 2002.

Common School Fund Distributions 12/30/02 December 30, 2002

COUNTY	POPULATION*	DISTRIBUTION
Clatsop	8,449	\$258,408.58
Columbia	11,201	\$342,577.17
Washington	109,651	\$3,353,622.80

* Population ages 4-20 from Portland State University as of 10/25/01

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Confused by Medicare? Help is available

As Medicare has become more and more complex, the federal government has also supplied a source of advice. In Oregon, it's the Senior Health Insurance Benefit Assistance program, known as SHIBA. This program provides free insurance help and information, in person or by phone, to people on Medicare and to their caregivers.

Although funded by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the State Health Insurance Counseling and Assistance programs are administered by each individual state. The Oregon Insurance Division, which is part of the Department of Consumer & Business Services, sponsors the SHIBA program.

SHIBA is a statewide network of trained volunteers who educate, assist, and serve as advocates for people with Medicare. SHIBA volunteers help people with Medicare understand their rights and options in health insurance, so that they can make informed

choices. All volunteer contact with clients is kept confidential.

Examples of the kinds of questions the trained SHIBA program volunteers can help with are:

➤ What Medigap plans are available in Oregon?

➤ Do you need a Medigap policy? If so, which one is best for you?

➤ Medicare wouldn't pay for one of your medical bills. Should it have?

➤ How can you appeal a payment denial?

➤ Can you get any help from your state in paying your Medicare premiums?

➤ Do you need long-term care insurance?

➤ What are the differences between original Medicare and MedicarePlusChoice?

➤ What are the differences among health-maintenance organizations, preferred provider organizations, and other

➤ MedicarePlusChoice programs?

➤ What do the various items on your Medicare bill mean?

➤ How can you organize all your medical paperwork?

In addition to one-on-one help, SHIBA also offers brochures or other written information on understanding health care. SHIBA offices can refer people to other sources of help, such as social services or legal services. The SHIBA program does not sell insurance and has no links to any insurance company. The information they provide is meant to be independent and unbiased.

SHIBA also offers an opportunity to become a volunteer, helping other seniors with their insurance problems. Here's what volunteer assistants do:

Answer questions about Medicare, Medicaid, Medicare + Choice, or supplemental insurance, or refer clients to someone who can assist them.

Answer questions about long-term-care insurance and provide clients with information to help decide whether to purchase long-term-care insurance.

Help clients understand and

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Class on how to prevent hazard trees

"How to Prevent Hazard Trees," a day-long continuing education seminar, will teach landscape professionals, highway maintenance personnel, utility workers, etc., how to prevent trees from becoming hazardous. The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (PNW-ISA), which is headquartered in Silverton,

are sponsoring the educational opportunity in Albany, Roseburg and Coos Bay.

"Usually ODF helps arborists and landscape professionals identify whether or not trees are a likely hazard," said Paul Ries, ODF urban forester and seminar instructor. "Conducting this seminar is a new approach. Instead, we will be trying to reach people who don't regularly work with trees. We'll show them how to work safely around healthy trees to prevent them from becoming a hazard."

The development of the seminars was prompted by a severe windstorm that impacted Coos, Curry, Douglas, Linn, Lane and Benton Counties in February, 2002.

During the storm, several

trees were uprooted and many fell on powerlines. "Human influences can impact whether some trees will withstand strong winds, while others snap like matchsticks," added Ries.

The seminar will be held Tuesday, Feb. 4, at Linn Benton Community College in Albany. The seminar will also be held in Roseburg and Coos Bay. The cost is \$20 and registration forms can be downloaded from www.pnwisa.org/news.html

The seminars are funded, in part, by a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Oregon Emergency Management. For more information, contact the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture, 503-874-8263.

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