

Committee on Resources

Witness Testimony

Testimony on
Oversight Hearing on
Management of the Stanislaus National Forest
LARRY ROTELLI
Chairman
Board of Supervisors
Tuolumne County California
Before the
House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health
September 13, 1997

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, my name is Larry Rotelli, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Tuolumne County. I wanted to come before you today just to say a few words. Generally the area that I wish to address today has to do with the forest reserve revenues which are received by the County for both roads and schools. Over the last ten years the County and the schools have received from a low of \$800,000 to a high of \$3.2 million to fund impacts on schools and local roads. The school funding, which is administered through the Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools Office, provides for many special programs for all the schools within the County. These programs include a county-wide spelling bee, academic decathlon, a focus on the arts, speech festival, honor music festival, and many other programs. A letter from Dr. Orville V. Millhollin is attached as part of my comments and discusses the impacts of forest reserve receipts on the County schools.

In addition to the impacts on the schools from the reduction of these funds which threatens the elimination of many of these programs, the County is heavily impacted by the reduction in forest reserve receipts. The County road system currently maintains over 600 miles of roads within Tuolumne County. Many of these roads are used to access summer homes, the National Forest and Yosemite National Park. The amount of federal forest reserve revenues do not offset the impacts on the County roads. In addition to not mitigating the impacts on the roads, other County services are impacted from the amount of timber cut on the Stanislaus National Forest. Attached is a chart showing graphically the amount of revenue derived by the County's Road Department over the last ten years. As you can there are a couple of noticeable spikes in the graph. These spikes represent in 1988, 1989 and 1990 the sale of salvage timber from the Stanislaus Complex Fire. There is also another noticeable spike in 1993 which was due to a large amount of bug killed timber harvested. These radical changes in forest harvest levels of fire and bug killed timber also create fluctuations in the number of forest related jobs. Unemployment affects the number of individuals receiving welfare in the County, the health department, sheriff s department and many other services which the County provides.

What we in Tuolumne County want for our forest is to be able to have a continued sustainable use of our forest at a level which will support not only the impact of the forest users within the County but also work to utilize the employment of those who work in the forest and in the forest industries.

Thank you for allowing me to make these comments.

ATTACHMENTS

TUOLUMNE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
175 South Fairview Lane Sonora, California 95370-4859

September 13, 1997

To: Citizens of Tuolumne County

Tuolumne county schools and roads have recently shared approximately \$2,000,000 per year in Forest Reserve Receipts. This past year the amount has dropped to less than \$800,000. The school funds are general fund monies to school districts and allocated to programs that directly impact children. Forest Reserve Receipts allow school districts to provide and promote general and environmental science, math, technology, the arts, language arts, social science, and physical education, all of which challenge the natural curiosity of children. These funds are vital to the everyday operation of an integrated instructional program.

Under authority in Ed. Code 2300, 15% of the monies are used by the Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools Office to provide student participation programs for the 20 school sites in the county. The programs provided by Forest Reserve Receipts are spent directly on countywide services to children. These services include math, science, technology and environmental education, the arts, including language arts, fine arts, social science, economics, and physical education.

The County Superintendent of Schools Office maintains multimedia and technology centers which include audio-visual materials, a fully integrated textbook library, a computer repair center and an technician. The office also provides a professional library for teachers from Forest Reserve Receipts. Media and video collections are provided to all school sites in the county. A technology networking system is currently in it's first stage which includes networking the county schools office. Future stages will include networking all the schools within Tuolumne County.

The issue is not only one of Forest Reserve Receipts but one of economical outcomes that schools and counties must continue to provide to their constituents. These services are extremely expensive and tug at the very infrastructure of county services and the very fabric of the forest community. The curtailment of receipts creates an additional need for free and reduced meals to school age children when family income drops below the poverty level.

History has it that during times of high unemployment, there are increased incidents of child and spousal abuse along with drug and alcohol abuse. A tremendous burden of psychological and emotional stress is placed upon young people when the family's principal bread winner is no longer employed. These actions require an additional need for mental and public health services. It places an additional burden on the juvenile justice system, District Attorney's office, law enforcement and probation departments. These needs are greater than rural counties can provide. Only recently Tuolumne County's published unemployment rate was at 9.4%. The numbers of families that go on the county general assistance welfare role increases as well as aid for dependent children.

Government cannot continue to make decisions that compromise their responsibilities to the citizens of a region. Government encouraged investments in these forested areas and invited people to settle there.

Government cannot just walk away from those long standing compacts and agreements. 77% of Tuolumne County is under the direct ownership of the government. If the largest land owner does not participate in supporting our forest related industries then the entire social and economic infrastructure is at risk of collapse.

ORVILLE V. Millhollin, Ph.D.
County Superintendent of Schools

OVUM/kf

#