



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on May 1, 2014

Armed Volunteers Bolster Law Enforcement in Oregon County

Volunteers from Citizens Against Crime are patrolling the roads of Josephine County, Oregon, after budget cuts forced the sheriff's department to lay off two-thirds of its personnel. The sheriff's office, which can now afford only a single deputy to patrol the entire 1,642-square-mile county, issued a press release announcing that their deputies would respond only to "life-threatening situations."



Citizens Against Crime volunteer Alan Cress was quoted by NPR: "We're not trying to take the place of law enforcement. In fact, we have a great deal of respect for what law enforcement does. We recognize the limited resources they have, and we're just trying to keep a presence out there."

A report from Jefferson Public Radio (JPR, an NPR affiliate at Southern Oregon University) interviewed Ken Selig, a 33-year veteran of the sheriff's department who recently retired when budget cuts forced his layoff. Selig now trains volunteers for the North Valley Community Watch Responder Team in Merlin, an unincorporated community of about 3,000 people. Selig says, "I used the same lesson plans, the same things that [I used] when I taught at the academy."

Another member of the North Valley Team, Jeff Bailey, said, community watches are "solving the problem, No. 1, and [they are] also kind of sending a message that people are watching and people are willing to do something about crime in the area."

JPR repeated County Sheriff Gil Gilbertson's concern about the situation. He says that while he supports neighborhood watches, what he heard at a recent community meeting left him feeling unsettled. Some citizens believe that the community watches have so effectively replaced law enforcement that they now oppose paying for officials to resume regular law enforcement.

"Well, that really concerns me. That does concern me," Gilbertson told JPR.

The Josephine County Sheriff's Department budgets for fiscal years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 were a little over \$11.4 million. The budgets for fiscal years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 were reduced to between \$5.25 and \$5.5 million.

As for why Josephine County should be facing such severe budgetary problems that it cannot pay for the most basic and essential of all government service — protection of life and property — the answer lies in the federal government's virtual war on the logging industry. Logging, lumber, and wood products were once the backbone of Josephine County's economy, as it was in much of Oregon. As one example of the decline, a chart posted on the website of the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis showed the decline in "Oregon Wood Products Employment (1947-2013)." Jobs in the industry fell from about 75,000 in 1947 to less than 30,000 in 2013.

The story of what happened in Josephine County was reflected in an article published in *The Oregonian* on May 20, 2013. The report had a sad tone, and noted the closing of Rough & Ready Lumber, the last



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sawmill in Josephine County. The reporter summed up what he termed “the 1990s timber wars” between environmentalists and the logging industry. The article noted:

Federal timber production and jobs at Oregon mills have fallen dramatically since 1990, when the northern spotted owl was listed under the Endangered Species Act. Bigger, more efficient mills and the huge housing construction drop in the recent recession contributed as well.

Rough & Ready was among 22 sawmills in Josephine and Jackson counties in 1975, the Phillippis [Jennifer and Link, Rough & Ready’s owners] said, down to none now.

Like most Oregon lumber mills, Rough & Ready bought most of its wood from local loggers who cut wood on forests owned by the federal government. The federal government owns 53.1 percent of all land in Oregon and nearly 70 percent of the land in Josephine County.

To understand the economics of the relationship between loggers and the federal government, it is necessary to look at the O&C [Oregon and California Revested Grantlands] Act of 1937. A history of the act is posted on the website of the Association of O&C Counties, where we learn that act set aside approximately 2.4 million acres of federally owned forest lands in 18 Western Oregon counties for the economic benefit of those counties.

As to how the financial arrangement between the loggers and the feds worked, the article notes:

The O&C Act directs that 75 percent of receipts from the sale of timber be distributed to the 18 O&C counties. Over the years, the counties voluntarily returned one-third of their entitlement to be plowed back into the management of the lands. These plow-back funds, with a present value exceeding \$2.0 billion, have helped pay for reforestation, road construction and maintenance, campgrounds, recreational facilities and other improvements on the land.

Back to *The Oregonian* report, the Phillippis said that environmental groups have helped stifle timber sales, by protesting five of the last six U.S. Bureau of Land Management sales in which Rough & Ready was the winning bidder. The writer noted that BLM handles most of the O&C Lands.

Link Phillippi told *The Oregonian*: “Rarely do we buy a federal timber sale that we can operate right away. It usually takes a year or two. Sometimes they get eliminated.”

The report quoted a man named John Dunkin, who is president of Rogue Valley Door, the nation’s largest wooden door manufacturer, who said that Rough & Ready’s mill put out “one of the best products in the sawmill business.” With Rough & Ready closed down, his company now buys wood from Canada.

The Oregonian also spoke with Larry Mason, a 19-year millwright who is pessimistic about his future. Noting that Josephine County’s unemployment rate is in excess of 11 percent and that a quarter of its residents were on food stamps, Mason figures his chances of getting a local job are close to zero.

“It could make you cry every night,” Mason told the newspaper. “In this valley, there’s no jobs. The kids my daughter went to school with, none of them have jobs. It’s tough, man.”

An article in *U.S. News & World Report* for June 25, 1990 cited an estimate from the logging industry that 30,000 of 168,000 jobs would be lost because of the protected status granted to the spotted owl, a figure that agreed closely with a Forest Service estimate. An article about the Northern Spotted Owl posted by the Oregon History Project offered more conservative, yet substantial, figures. The OHP report noted:



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The owl was officially listed as threatened on July 23, 1990. Federal timber sales were drastically cut after the listing and a subsequent lawsuit, dropping from a 1983-1989 average of 2.9 billion board-feet in western Oregon to less than 0.5 billion board-feet in 1996....

The 1992 federal draft recovery plan ... estimated that the region would lose 18,900 jobs in the timber industry and another 13,200 jobs in related sectors due to implementation of recovery measures.

Josephine County's economic woes — so severe that it can barely provide police protection for its residents, not to mention jobs — is yet another example of how environment extremism, coupled with massive federal land ownership and control, can bankrupt a region. The obvious solution is for the federal government to sell off all its lands (except for defense installations), use the proceeds to pay down the national debt, and turn control of the lands it once owned over to private free enterprise.



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