

MDT quarterly

Raising children in rural Oregon



Etta Wilkins-Foster, January 2004

Challenges and opportunities

by Tina Kotek, Policy Director, Children First for Oregon

The opportunities and challenges of raising children in Oregon's rural communities are too often not presented adequately when state decision-makers develop policies and strategies to invest in families. To address this, Children First for Oregon teamed up with Washington Kids Count to better understand the lives of children and families in the rural Pacific Northwest.

The specific focus of the Northwest Rural Communities Project (NWRCP) is on families raising children with limited financial resources and how we can better support these families. Nearly half the children living in rural Oregon either live in poverty or in financially vulnerable homes.

Between May and August of this year, the NWRCP conducted eight focus groups with parents in Oregon (Madras, Ontario, Roseburg and Siletz) and in Washington. The NWRCP also interviewed local decision-makers, educators, service providers and business leaders about the benefits and barriers to raising children in their communities.

The preliminary analysis of the focus groups reveals an emerging story of hope – parents dreaming big for their children and themselves – coupled with realism and frustration about the economic state of their communities, their limitations and the challenges they face in providing the best for their children.

Parents like raising their children in the Northwest's rural areas because of the safety and security afforded by small communities, the beautiful environment and for many, the proximity to family. For the most part, the benefits of rural life for their children outweigh the challenges.

The number one challenge is economic – the lack of jobs in general and the lack of good paying jobs with family-friendly hours in particular. Lack of affordable, safe and quality child care is a significant work and family financial support issue for low-income families.

Education is an important issue for low-income rural parents. They praise Head Start, care deeply about their schools and

desire more educational opportunities for themselves, especially when further education may bring a chance for better employment. There is universal concern about decreased K-12 funding, specifically growing class sizes, few after-school activities and unaffordable sports programs.

Parents worry that older children have little to do and will get into trouble unless something is done about it. The lack of supervised youth activities and the expense of the programs that do exist are a significant problem for low-income working parents. Transportation to activities can be a considerable time and cost burden – and parents must have cars because public transportation is scarce to nonexistent, and distances are often considerable.

These themes – employment, education and youth activities – and others will be explored in depth in the final report, to be released in February 2004.

For more information, go to: www.childrenfirstforegon.org. ★

Finding resources can be a “nightmare”

MDT Quarterly interview with Malheur County Circuit Court Judge Patricia Sullivan

What victims’ services would you like to have in your community that are not currently available?

There are no compensation services when there is property loss because of a crime. That is true throughout Oregon, but it can be more of a problem when people already don’t have much money. In domestic violence or other relationship crimes there may be property damage (such as tires slashed or doors broken in), and too often here people have no insurance.

Our advocacy resources are stretched thin. Some Eastern Oregon counties are not as aggressive in getting grants because of insufficient staff. Also, it can be difficult to get cooperation from local governing bodies in rural areas in applying for grants because they are justifiably worried about what happens when money runs out.

Transportation and distances are a big issue for victims. This county stretches to the Nevada border, more than 200 miles. Most people live in Ontario, 16 miles away from Vale, where the courts and district attorney’s office are. There’s no public transportation and it is prohibitively expensive to get them here by taxi.

How would you like to see the service system changed?

If we had more money, we could have more staffing. Because a grant ended, we lost a victims’ advocate who worked out of the sheriff’s office. We also need more bilingual and Hispanic advocates and other staff because our county is now 40 or 50 percent Hispanic. Funding for gas and transportation is important.

I would also keep the push on for training for judges and their staff. It’s terribly important for us because we only have two judges here. In Multnomah County you don’t have to train every judge on everything, but here we do.

What recommendations do you have for keeping children and youth in their own community in lieu of transporting them to more metropolitan areas to receive services?

There’s a flip side to that. Many youth who are involved in the criminal system and have substance issues need to leave their own community. I’ve sent kids to Street Visions in Salem, which does good work in dealing with gang issues. But it is hard when youth are too far away to see their parents.

Two things are needed in the juvenile system. One is after-school and activity programs in combination with therapeutic strategies. There’s an excellent program at a middle school in Ontario where there are many juvenile and gang problems.

The second is more beds, just like all over the state. Finding beds for sexual offenders is a nightmare. A detention center built as part of a new juvenile facility in Burns has never opened because we never got funding. So we’re driving kids to Pendleton for detention, but there are not enough beds there, either. Kids figure out quickly that they’re not going to go anywhere. We don’t have a detox center serving either adults or youth. Our foster care beds are constantly full.

I’ve sent dependency kids (who are out of control or have drug issues or have attempted suicide) to detention simply because there is a lack of mental health services and options between foster care and absolute lock-down. We can’t leave them there for long, but we have to do it because there is no alternative.

I hate to see us having to fight so hard to keep what we have, because there’s no energy to do anything visionary. We can’t do adequate planning when we’re constantly in crisis mode. ★

Some facts about rural Oregon

From the Oregon Labor Market Information System

- Harney County, Oregon’s largest county, represents more than 10 percent of Oregon’s land area, yet only one-fifth of one percent of Oregon’s population lives there.
- Rural Oregon counties have 16 percent of Oregon’s population, yet 20 percent of Oregon’s government employment.
- If rural Oregon were its own state, it would be the fourth poorest state in the US in terms of per capita income.
- For decades, rural Oregon has been replacing lost timber, ranching, manufacturing and farming jobs with lower-income retirees. ★

MDT quarterly

The MDT Quarterly is published by the Crime Victims’ Assistance Section of the Oregon Department of Justice. The MDT Quarterly is dedicated to improving the knowledge and skill level of professionals responsible for prevention, intervention and support services to families, children, and adults requiring crime victim services. There is no subscription charge.

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Readers are invited to submit articles, story ideas, resources, and training information. Please direct submissions and address corrections to:

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Crime Victims' Needs Assessment – a rural perspective

The Department of Justice's Crime Victims' Assistance Section, in partnership with the Portland State University Regional Research Institute, conducted an Oregon crime victims' needs assessment in 2001-2002. The study had a particular focus on underserved victims of crime, and the final report was published in January 2003. Rural victims of crime, providers and key informants were among the many voices included in the needs assessment.

Overarching problem

Providers and advocates in less populated counties reported limited service infrastructure was an overarching problem. This included too few staff to cover the need; a shallow pool of qualified professionals for agency openings; in some cases, no licensed mental health counselors; limited transitional housing; and inadequate grant funding for administration. Key informants said lower salaries made it difficult to keep service professionals in rural areas. In addition, professionals reported that there are fewer businesses to provide extra financial support and fewer community volunteers.

An example of how infrastructure can keep victims from being served came from a key informant in one rural county: "Crime Victims' Compensation requires victims to be seen by a licensed mental health professional with the State of Oregon, and we have none."

Service barriers

Extreme rural and isolated victims were the most frequently mentioned underserved population. Victims who lived in Oregon's more remote areas did not receive the same level of response as urban victims of crime. Issues faced by victims who lived in remote corners of the state included limited resources, provider turnover, and the need to drive long distances to get services.

The top barriers to accessing victim services fell into the following categories:

- Lack of information.
- Insufficient services.
- Language and culture.
- Victim issues.
- Isolation and mobility.

Some ideas to overcome these barriers were:

- Hold statewide meetings in rural Oregon to hear the voice of rural people.
- Provide collaborative funding for multi-agency staff positions.
- Hire a multi-agency victim advocate who will go to crime scenes with officers.
- Furnish technical assistance and more staff.
- Develop transportation resources.
- Address the problem of rural poverty.
- Provide consistent, stable funding for existing services.

Service gaps

Victims simply could not get services in some locations around the state. Other victims mentioned that although services existed in their communities, long waiting lists made it difficult to receive the services when they were needed.

For more information about the Oregon Crime Victims' Needs Assessment, go to the Crime Victims' Assistance Section's website at www.doj.or.us. ☆

Individuals recognized for extraordinary work

by Marshall Brogie, Crime Victims' Assistance Section, Oregon Department of Justice

The 2003 MDT Awards were presented during the luncheon at the November 4, 2003 MDT Training Day at the SCAR Conference in Eugene. The recipients, both individuals and teams, were recognized for their extraordinary efforts. Their accomplishments were representative of the remarkable work being done by multidisciplinary teams throughout the state. MDTs provide coordinated, child age appropriate intervention service to children and families affected by child abuse.

This year awards were presented by the Oregon Peace Officers Association (OPOA), the Oregon District Attorney's Association (ODAA) and the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC), Oregon's Chapter. The following were the five 2003 MDT Award recipients:

- OPOA - Eduardo Rosario, Detective, Yamhill County Sheriff's Office.
- OPOA - Clackamas County Child Abuse Team.
- ODAA - Bob Hull, DDA Washington County DA's Office.
- ODAA - Charles Sparks, DDA Multnomah County DA's Office.
- APSAC - Sally Bovett, Child Advocate, Lincoln County Child Advocacy Center.

MDT members from around the state participated in the one day training event. Topics included a variety of policy and informational updates from MDT member agencies and a training session devoted to interviewing special populations. ☆





Rural Oregon

Caught in strong economic currents

by Bruce Sorte, Assistant Director, and Bruce Weber, Director, of the OSU Rural Studies Program & Faculty members, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Oregon State University

Introduction

Rural Oregon has never recovered from the recession of the early 1980's and the political and market changes that followed. Timber harvests have dropped from more than 8 billion board feet and are expected to stabilize at 4 billion board feet. Technological improvements in the agriculture and wood products sectors and globalization of the economy increased output and competition and put downward pressure on prices, jobs, salaries, and profits.

This article summarizes some of the statistics necessary to understand the economic trends that are affecting rural Oregon.

Definitions

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget defines a Metropolitan Statistical Area as one or more central counties with at least one urbanized area of 50,000 people plus adjacent commuter linked counties. All other counties are non-metropolitan. For this article, we call metro counties "urban" and non-metro counties "rural." Under current OMB definitions, there are 11 metro or urban counties, including those in the Willamette Valley (except Linn County) plus Columbia, Deschutes and Jackson counties.

Demographic, economic and social indicators

Approximately 76.5 percent of Oregon's population resides in urban counties and 23.5 percent in rural counties. Over the last thirty years, Oregon's urban and rural population growth rates, 68 percent and

57 percent respectively, have exceeded the national rate of 40 percent. Most of the growth in rural counties took place in those that were closer to metro areas. Recent estimates indicate that nine rural counties have lost population during the latest recession.

Thirty years ago, most rural economies were based on natural resources – agriculture, logging, fishing and manufacturing, primarily wood products and food processing. While employment in these industries has declined since 1970, rural Oregon remains far more dependent on agriculture and wood products than urban Oregon.

During the same period, the percentage of jobs in the service industries increased from 15 percent to 26 percent. A similar trend towards services has occurred in urban Oregon. However, in rural Oregon a higher proportion of the service industry jobs are tourism or recreation based and tend to be lower paying and very seasonal. As an example, Wallowa County's unemployment rate can range from a summer low of 5 percent to a winter high of almost 16 percent. Rural Oregon's unemployment rate runs about 25 percent higher than urban Oregon's and rural Oregon's poverty rate is approximately 18 percent higher.

In 1969, rural Oregon's per capita income was 86 percent of the national average and in 2001 it was 75 percent. The decline in the smaller and more remote counties has been even more severe. In 1969, Gilliam County's per capita income was 103 percent of the national average and in 2001 it was 42 percent. The

sources of that income have been shifting, as well. In 1969, both rural and urban counties received an average of 75 percent of their income from net earnings and 25 percent came from dividends, rents, and transfer payments (e.g. social security). In 2001, the average proportions of income derived from dividends, rents, and transfer payments was 49 percent for rural counties and 39 percent for urban counties.

Considerations

Rural Oregon has become progressively more reliant on retiree related income including Social Security, Medicare, and dividends and tourism related jobs in the service sectors. Most rural communities have not been able to reach the economies of scale or the mix of local suppliers of goods and services necessary to recruit and retain the firms with higher paying manufacturing and service jobs. The results have been a steady decline in real average earnings per job from almost 90 percent of the national average in 1969 to less than 70 percent in 2001.

Even if environmental regulations are changed in ways that support more flexibility and increased utilization of natural resources, technological changes and globalization have dramatically changed the opportunities for rural businesses. To move from rural economies being swept along by economic currents to using those currents to support economic development will require more creativity and commitment from both the private and public sectors, possibly at the scale of the large rural infrastructure developments of the last century. ★





Meeting challenges – forging partnerships

Laura Peterson, MA, CADC-I
Site Director, Albertina Kerr Youth & Family Services, Albany

It is not a news flash that Oregon has less money to fund services. Counties and non-profits are grappling to meet the mental health needs of Oregon's youth. But there are reasons to feel hopeful. Public and private agencies are breaking down barriers, pulling rabbits out of hats and making positive things happen.

One such example is an innovative collaboration formed between Marion County Health Department and Albertina Kerr Youth and Families Services. These two organizations – one public and one private – joined forces to create options for high-risk youth facing psychiatric hospitalization. The collaboration offers a way for children and families to voluntarily agree to a short-term respite that does not threaten parental rights. Youth are able to be immediately placed in a therapeutic foster home, staffed by Marion County and certified by Albertina Kerr. This initiative, launched in January of 2003, has achieved some success. In 2002, Marion County hospitalized 27 youth. In 2003, 21 youth required hospitalization.

The Marion County Health Department has a specialized team called Safe Treatment Alternatives for Youth (STAY). Its mission is to safely maintain youth in their own communities while providing wrap-around services to youth and families. STAY was looking for ways to de-escalate a mental health crisis by removing youth from their homes and placing them in community crisis respite care.

STAY contacted Albertina Kerr Youth and Family Services. Kerr, a large provider of high level therapeutic foster care, recruits, trains, certifies and supports foster homes for high-needs kids. A vision was created and a partnership was formed to provide crisis respite to youth in a therapeutic foster home. This solution provides the best of all worlds. When in everyone's best interest, children and their families are given comprehensive services to support them and keep them together. STAY has the option of using a therapeutic foster home or sending a team into the youth's home to offer relief to a crisis situation without the trauma or legalities of removing a child from a home or terminating parental rights.

Sending a youth to a psychiatric hospital in an effort to stabilize him is costly both for the system and for the youth. After a psychiatric hospitalization the youth will forever be identified by family, peers, and themselves as a psychiatric hospital patient. Sadly, this still carries a heavy social stigma. Marion County and Albertina Kerr's partnership provides a healthy and safe alternative to youth and families in need. ★

All for one and one for all

by Kim Carnine, Service Delivery Area 12 Manager,
Department of Human Services, Morrow County

I was loading groceries into my car one day at a Wal-Mart parking lot when a minivan pulled up to me. A woman got out and said, "Is your name Kim?" She looked familiar to me, and after a brief hesitation, she told me who she was. I immediately remembered her as a young foster girl on my caseload some 25 years ago in a rural Oregon community.

She told me about her life today – a mom and grandmom with children who have gone to college and a son in the National Guard. She smiled the whole time we talked – something I don't remember her doing as a foster youth. I sensed her pride as she told me about her accomplishments. I was proud of her, too.

Crossing paths with clients, providers, and partners is commonplace in small towns. These interactions often require a delicate balance of acknowledgment and privacy. Knowing our clients so well can be helpful in providing a holistic approach to case planning. However, the challenges can sometimes make you lose site of the rewards.

A "given" in rural communities is the shortage of critical resources. You can find this in just about every area of work with families and children – foster homes, adoptive homes, experts in children's mental and physical health, sex offender treatment specialists, and therapeutic and medical foster homes. When the needs for culturally appropriate services are factored in, the resource gaps widen even more.

To the credit of rural caseworkers, they see resource challenges as opportunities to use their innovation and creativity to develop workable plans for families. Community partnerships in rural areas are by and large very positive. Social workers in rural areas, regardless of their disciplines, learn quickly to rely on each other to get the collective work done. It is an all for one and one for all mentality.

Public perception of child welfare services in our rural community is very good. An example of recent feedback was a feature article in the local newspaper with editor's commentary. The editor wrote, "There are easier professions to pursue, but few are more rewarding. These are our friends, family and neighbors who do this work, not faceless bureaucrats who care nothing for the people they help. They're just like us, but with an awesome responsibility."

The editor's comments reflect why many of us choose to live and work in rural areas. That, and meeting up with success stories in the parking lot of the local Wal-Mart. ★

Regional disadvantages to serving delinquent youth

by Deevy Holcomb, Program Development Specialist,
Deschutes County Juvenile Community Justice



In January 2002 the *MDT Quarterly* published an article on Deschutes County's Community Youth Investment Program (CYIP), a pilot project of the Oregon State Legislature between 1997 and 2003. The CYIP was a local accountability program for juvenile offenders that aimed to reduce youth placements at state juvenile facilities and redirect funds to early intervention and crime prevention programs.

For the last decade, Deschutes County citizens have felt strongly about their responsibility for all youth, even those with delinquent and destructive behavior. The Community Youth Investment Program (CYIP) was one model of addressing delinquency locally and reducing reliance on statewide facilities that were mostly clustered in metropolitan areas. At the time the program started, there were no state juvenile facilities within three hours, which meant that youth being placed were sent far away from their support networks and from the community to which they would eventually return.

As an experimental pilot project, the CYIP received mixed reviews. Evaluated over five years by three separate entities (two state-funded and one privately funded), all evaluations indicated that the program provided a more successful model than the state in providing opportunities for youth accountability such as community work service and restitution completion. However, the CYIP was no better than the state at preventing recidivism, the most commonly used indicator of program success.

Despite the mixed evidence about the program's success in managing rural (non-metropolitan) juvenile crime, in 2003 the legislature cut all state funding for the CYIP due to budgetary constraints. The legislature also cut funding for the one state juvenile facility in the region that had

opened during the CYIP's lifetime, Ochoco Youth Correctional Facility in Prineville, Crook County.

These events landed Deschutes and other Central and Eastern Oregon counties in virtually the same position they had been in five years earlier – regionally disadvantaged in relation to the bulk of state resources for juvenile offenders.

The county's response to this situation and to the knowledge gained from CYIP program evaluations has been to continue to seek ways to serve youth and families locally, maintain public safety and seek strength in partnerships with regional Central and Eastern Oregon counties as well as the state.

One result of this approach was the September 2003 opening of "WellSpring," a new residential program for serious and chronic male offenders. Housed in the same facility as the former CYIP, the program is significantly different. It is funded through Deschutes County and federal Medicaid resources, in partnership with the Oregon Youth Authority. It emphasizes rehabilitation of youth through on-site individual, group and family mental health treatment and skill building. One of the most exciting changes is that the program serves youth from Crook and Jefferson counties, something CYIP was unable to provide.

WellSpring will continue where CYIP left off by providing needed services to rural and semi-urban communities in Central and Eastern Oregon, despite current and probably future years of tight state budget allocations to Oregonians.

For more information about WellSpring or other Deschutes County juvenile programs, please contact Jennifer LaMarche at (541) 617-3325 or visit www.co.deschutes.or.us. ★

A rural response to child abuse

by Jennifer Cole-Small, Director
Klamath-Lake CARES Child Abuse
Intervention Center

What happens when children in some of Oregon's most remote areas need child abuse intervention services? Certainly, the Department of Human Services Child Protective Services will intervene and, when necessary, take children into custody. But what happens when children require specialized medical services, or when they show up in an emergency room with signs of acute child abuse? The answer to this question varies across Oregon, and is currently an issue of focus in the state.

In some cases, child abuse intervention centers play a vital role in helping children receive immediate care. In some of Oregon's most rural areas, child abuse intervention centers may be uniquely poised to provide the immediate and specialized medical services that children need – either at the center itself, or in the local hospital's emergency department.

When Lake County law enforcement officers need immediate services for a teen rape victim, they call Klamath-Lake CARES if their hospital cannot respond. Klamath-Lake CARES works with Lake County's multidisciplinary team to provide child abuse assessment services to children in Lake County. While Klamath-Lake CARES is not a crisis oriented clinic, it works with six private medical providers in its community, all of them specially trained in the diagnosis of child abuse.

In less than 24 hours, the alleged teen victim may be able to receive the services she needs in a child-friendly facility with an experienced medical provider who can complete a necessary rape kit, and provide her with the appropriate prophylactic medications.



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Just when the need is greatest

*An MDT Quarterly Interview with Tom Thorburn, Director of Grant Programs,
The Ford Family Foundation, Roseburg*

As government resources for social services decrease, what role does the foundation have in meeting the needs of the rural communities?

During the past three years, The Ford Family Foundation's resources have diminished like those of many other foundations. We have a policy of not filling funding gaps due to decreasing government revenues. We continue to focus our grant programs on certain areas of interest. However, recently we've also chosen to focus as much as possible on some of the basic necessities like food and clothing to help people get through these difficult times.

What are the key elements of a viable social service system that are missing in parts of rural Oregon?

One of the greatest challenges in local social service systems is the difficulty of meeting the needs of people that don't fit all of the agency eligibility criteria. Frequently I hear agency and organizational leaders and staff say that their hands are tied by regulations that prevent serving people more effectively and efficiently. However, the hope I often see is the flexibility of non-profit organizations to fill critical gaps in services that government agencies can't fill because of restrictions. External funding from a foundation can help because it can be more flexible than public funding. In tough economic times the biggest challenge is decreasing levels of giving and government support – just when the need is greatest.

Does The Ford Family Foundation see itself as forming partnerships with government in addressing particular needs?

We believe that for rural communities to be healthy and viable, all segments of the community must be working together effectively. At this time we work most closely with rural non-profit organizations and with targeted project collaborations made up of local non-profits, government agencies, schools and others.

Are there interesting or promising program or system models that your foundation is aware of or is supporting?

Examples of communities where I've seen collaboration working quite well are Roseburg and Douglas County, Wallowa County and Coos County. Organizations like community action agencies

or Education Service Districts are overcoming barriers by helping individual people access needed programs.

The Foundation has invested heavily in two major areas that illustrate the elements of collaboration. The two major three-year grant programs are Enhancing the Skills of Parents (11 projects) and the Rural Community Schools Partnership (16 projects). Each is located in a rural community, led by a local non-profit organization or school and has many partners from all sectors and a significant financial investment from the community. We've learned from these projects that highly collaborative programs take a lot of time and effort because you have to build strong relationships across the community. However, the payoff is more effective programs and services when agencies, schools and organizations are working together to serve the needs of people in their community.

What are The Ford Family Foundation's funding priorities?

In Grant Programs we have three major areas: K-12 Rural Education with an emphasis on teacher quality and arts and culture programs; Rural Human Services grants, focusing on strengthening families, positive youth development, job training, sufficient necessities and counseling and treatment; and capital projects related to libraries, community centers, teen centers, and other community services.

We have two major initiatives in addition to our grant programs. Our Scholarship Program currently supports 700 scholars working toward a higher education degree. The Ford Institute for Community Building is providing leadership development programs to enhance the skills of community leaders. Eight communities with 20 people from each community have completed the 60 hours of leadership training, with four additional rural areas scheduled to begin in January of 2004.

We serve all rural counties in Oregon, and towns of 30,000 or less in population. Our website (www.tfff.org) has much more detailed information about all aspects of the Foundation's initiatives and programs.

The Foundation's Board and staff have a great deal of confidence in rural people and their ability to affect change in their communities. We want to be helpful to rural areas by assisting them in building on their strengths to improve the quality of life for children and their families. ★



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A forensic child interviewer, specially trained in interviewing children, can interview the youth on videotape. Within 25 hours, the youth, her family, and law enforcement officials can head home – albeit over two high mountain passes. When Klamath-Lake CARES cannot respond this quickly, the child will be referred to the Emergency Department at Lake District Hospital in Lakeview, or to Merle West Medical Center in Klamath Falls.

There are 19 child abuse assessment centers across Oregon, and they provide a myriad of services to Oregon's child victims. How Oregon's 36 counties respond to acute child abuse in Oregon is as unique and varied as the state itself. In sparsely populated counties like Klamath and Lake, individuals and MDT teams invested in the welfare of children decide how best to respond to children's needs. But make no mistake about it: rural counties have a unique advantage – individuals know whom to call. When children need intervention services now, these individuals can often get on the phone and make things happen. ★



Rural policy center raises community awareness

The Oregon Center for Rural Policy, Research and Services is committed to fostering the environment for development of “rural policy” in the State of Oregon.

The Center is initiating efforts to raise awareness of rural public policy needs in the state, addressing the following questions:

- What is “rural”?
- What constitutes “rural policy”?
- How can “rural policy” focus assist rural interests in communicating rural needs and issues?
- How can “rural policy” inform and enhance the development and implementation of public policy in Oregon?

The diversity of rural Oregon communities, the changes in rural demographics and economies, the varying socio-economic conditions in rural communities, disparity in economic health in rural communities in Oregon and the growing dichotomy between rural and urban Oregon speak to an emerging rural policy.

The specific conditions of “rural” which inform and shape the development of rural policy – low density population, distances between rural communities and between rural communities and urban centers, the presence of great expanses of open space, and the presence of Federal land management agencies in the lives of rural communities – are forces which shape rural communities and have great influence on the effectiveness of public policy to address rural needs and issues.

For more information about what the Center is doing, go to www.ruralpolicy@ruralpolicy.org or call (541) 663-8777. ★

