

Press Release

2011-12 Columbia County Property Tax Statements

October 12, 2011

Sue Martin, Columbia County Assessor

The 2011-12 Columbia County Assessment and Tax Roll has been certified and property tax bills will soon be mailed to Columbia County property owners.

Due to the steep decline in the real market value of residential properties between January 1, 2010 and January 1, 2011, many property owners may see a decrease in their tax bill for the first time since maximum assessed value was set in 1997 by passage of Measure 50. This is due to the real market value falling below the maximum assessed value for these properties, therefore the real market value becomes the tax assessed value. In addition, if the categorized consolidated rates exceed the constitutional limits of \$5 per thousand for education districts or \$10 per thousand for general government limits when applied to the real market value, the tax is further reduced by compression. Based on permanent operating rates, the consolidated education rates for Saint Helens, Scappoose, Vernonia and Rainier exceed the \$5 per thousand rate limit, and the consolidated general government rates for properties located inside the city limits of Rainier and Clatskanie exceed the \$10 per thousand rate limit.

For the 2010-11 tax year, only 579 out of a total of 23204 residential properties countywide had a tax assessed value lower than their maximum assessed value. For the 2011-12 tax year, this number has increased to 5838 out of a total of 23026 residential properties. The City of Clatskanie had the least percentage of properties at 9.29% that fell below the maximum assessed value this year, while the Cities of Saint Helens and Columbia City had the highest percentage of properties at 40.46% that fell below the maximum assessed value.

All properties have market trends developed by analyzing sales in each market area to determine the current tax year's increase or decrease in value. For the current assessment date of January 1, 2011, all sales in 2010 are reviewed and compared to the January 1, 2010 value. Real market values for residential properties decreased an average of 20% countywide. Property owners of townhouses and row houses in Saint Helens and Columbia City will see the greatest decrease of 36%, while property owners of rural residential properties in the Clatskanie dikeland area will see an increase of 3% in their real market value.

For residential properties that are currently electronically recalculated annually, the sales are analyzed using the recalculated value, not the actual previous year value. This means that the trend applied to the previous year value shown on the tax statement is not likely to equal this year's value. Real market values of residential property located in Saint Helens, Columbia City, and Vernonia (both city and rural) were