

Columbia County



Press Release

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2009-10 Columbia County Property Tax Statements

Columbia County Assessor, Sue Poling, has certified the 2009-10 Columbia County Assessment and Tax Rolls, and over 28,000 property tax bills will soon be mailed to Columbia County property owners.

Owners of residential property throughout Columbia County will see a decrease in their real market values ranging from 7 to 16 percent depending on location. However, Poling warns, taxpayers should not expect to see a decrease in their tax bills. While Oregon's property tax system has limited assessed values to a predictable increase of 3% even during the years in which real market values were exceeding a 10% growth, many taxpayers will still be surprised to find an increase in their assessed value when their real market value has dropped. Since the tax assessed value of a property is the lower of the real market value or the maximum assessed value, the average real market values for most residential properties would have to fall at least

30% more before property owners would see a decrease in their tax bills.

Real market values of residential property located within the city limits of Saint Helens and Columbia City were recalculated this year, and property owners in these areas will not see the same percentage difference in real market values among neighbors. A recalculation does not include a physical inspection of property, Poling explained, but rather is a computer assisted recalculation of values by analyzing and using current market data and local cost modifiers. While this method does not identify properties that may have more or less than typical maintenance, it provides the most efficient and accurate method of valuing properties at 100% of real market value each year between physical reappraisals.

Although most property owners can expect a predictable 3% increase in their property tax bill each year, there is another source of change. Whether a property owner's tax bill varies more than three percent is largely the result of changes in local option and bonded debt levy rates, which are not limited by Measure 50. This is why the percentage change is not the same throughout the county.

Two new bond measures were passed this year, Scappoose School District voters approved \$33,300,000 in general obligation bonds to upgrade, expand and construct schools and Portland Community College District voters approved \$374,000,000 in general obligations bonds to expand, modernize and construct facilities, and upgrade technology. In addition, this is the first year that Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District will levy an operating tax of 0.10 per

thousand as approved by voters last November. The affect of these rate changes on properties that have had no physical changes over the last year, according to Poling, is that the owner of an average residential property in Clatskanie may only see a 2.5% increase in their tax bill, whereas, the owner of an average residential property in Scappoose may see up to a 17% increase in their tax bill.

A total of \$53,776,900 in property taxes are being billed for the county, cities, schools and special districts. That amount is 7.83 percent more than was billed last year. In addition, a total of \$990,131.54 will be collected for such things as drainage district assessments and the Oregon Department of Forestry's fire patrol special assessments. That amount is 11 percent lower than last year.

County wide, the market value of all taxable property decreased from \$7.25 billion to \$5.72 billion, a decrease of 21 percent. This decrease not only reflects the decline in residential real market values, but also reductions in large industrial real market values. The total tax assessed value this year is \$3,993,491,030 or 3.30 percent higher than last year.

The first payment of the tax bill is due by November 16, 2009. Payments that are mailed need to be postmarked by the 16th. At least one third of the amount is due at that time. The second and third installments are due by February 16, 2010 and May 17, 2010, however the County does not send out statements for the February or May due dates.

Property owners who pay the entire amount due by November 16th will receive a three percent discount. If two thirds of the bill is paid by November 16th a two percent discount of the amount paid will be allowed.

Columbia County is once again providing a way to pay property taxes with credit and debit cards, through the Point & Pay website. Property Tax payments can be made with your credit and debit cards on-line at www.co.columbia.or.us, or by calling 1-866-587-4007. There is a 2.95% charge to use your credit or debit card.

Also, as in past years, arrangements have been made with local financial institutions to collect only the 2009-10 property taxes through November 16, 2009 at the following authorized collectors: Bank of the West in St. Helens; Wauna Federal Credit Union, Clatskanie, St. Helens, and Vernonia; St. Helens Community Federal Credit Union, all branches in Columbia County.

Property owners may appeal the value of their property as in past years. However, there would only be a reduction in the taxes due if the market value falls below the assessed value. The deadline for filing an appeal is December 31, 2009. Appeal forms are available from the County Clerk or County Assessors Office.