

Oregon's Kitchen Table – Curry County Consultation

Davis, Hibbitts, & Midghall, Inc. (DHM Research) in partnership with Oregon's Kitchen Table conducted an online consultation with Curry County residents to better understand their opinions, values, and beliefs about county services and funding.

Research Design: Oregon's Kitchen Table was invited to Curry County by local residents and leaders in order to engage residents in the issues related to county services. Between November 9 and December 21, 2012, Curry County residents were invited to participate in a consultation focused on county services and funding. The content of the consultation was developed by a committee of Curry County residents along with staff of the National Policy Consensus Center and DHM research. Rural Development Initiative (RDI) assisted by holding four meetings of Curry County Ford Leadership Institute graduates to give feedback on the content.

RDI, the Ford Leadership Institute, NPCC, and the county all participated in outreach to encourage as many Curry County residents as possible to give input through the consultation.

The vast majority of the participants accessed the consultation through the online tool, but there were also paper surveys available through the newspapers and at other public venues.

A total of 438 Curry County residents, ages 18 and older, participated in the survey. 117 youth also participated, and the feedback from these participants is available upon request.

The majority (69%) of Curry County residents believed things in Curry County are off on the wrong track, while one in ten (11%) believed things are headed in the right direction (Q1).

Younger residents, under the age of 35, were more optimistic about the direction of the county (20% believed the county is heading in right direction).

Right Direction

"Expenditures are coming under control and moves are being made to increase revenues."
"We're starting to coordinate efforts rather than duplicate efforts to improve the community. There seems to be more collaboration and cooperation lately amongst non-profits, etc."
"Community leaders are actively trying to engage the community in a dialog about the impending budget crisis."

* Relatively representative verbatims presented throughout report

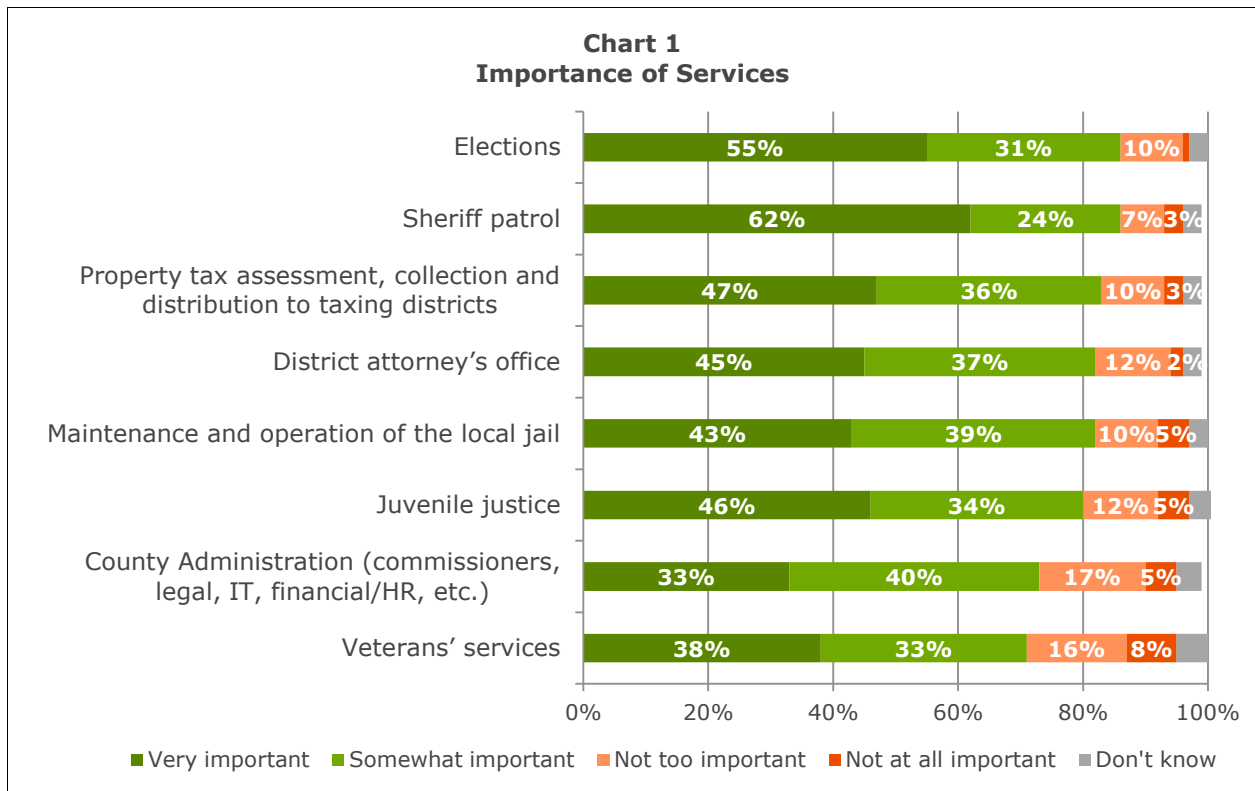
Wrong Track

"Leadership, starting with the commissioners has not worked toward positive achievable goals."
"The citizenry has failed to acknowledge, or has ignored, the reality of the current county services funding crisis. That failure is demonstrated in the failure to pass funding measures on past ballots."
"The general public's unwillingness to share the financial burden that our county is facing... We pay one of the lowest property tax rates in Oregon it's ridiculous."

Sheriff patrol and elections are the services most important to Curry County residents (Q6-Q21).

More than three in four residents were aware that the county provides all services surveyed (76%-92% awareness), with the exception of veteran’s services (42%). Residents were most aware that the county provides county administration (92%) and sheriff’s patrol (91%).

In addition, most residents felt each county service was very or somewhat important. At least seven in ten rated each service as very or somewhat important, with the lowest rated services being county administration (73%) and veteran’s services (71%).



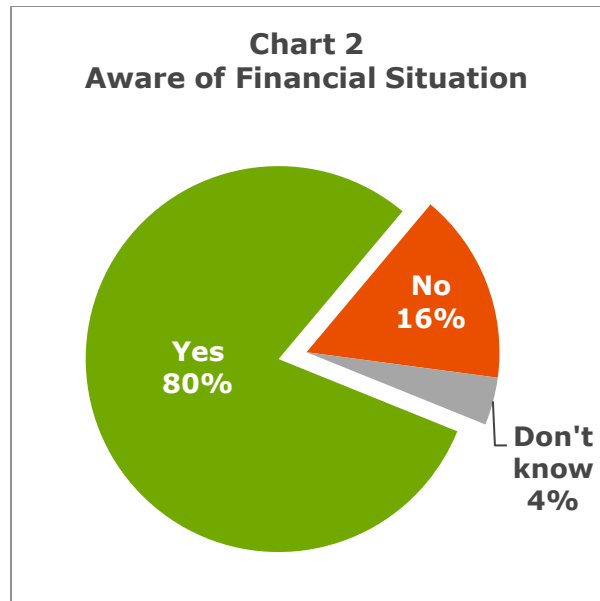
Source: DHM Research, December 2012

In general, older residents (over the age of 35) valued county services more than younger residents. The largest differences in importance of services between older residents and younger residents were with juvenile justice (20% difference), district attorney’s office (19%), Property tax assessment, collection and distribution to taxing districts (16%), and sheriff patrol (14%).

At least eight in ten were aware of Curry County's financial situation before the survey and were concerned about cuts to county services (Q22-Q23).

Eight in ten residents were aware that the 2013 county budget will have at least a \$3 million dollar shortfall that will require additional cuts in services. Respondents age 35 and older (88%) were much more likely to be aware than younger residents (37%). Home owners (86%) were also more likely to be aware than renters (65%).

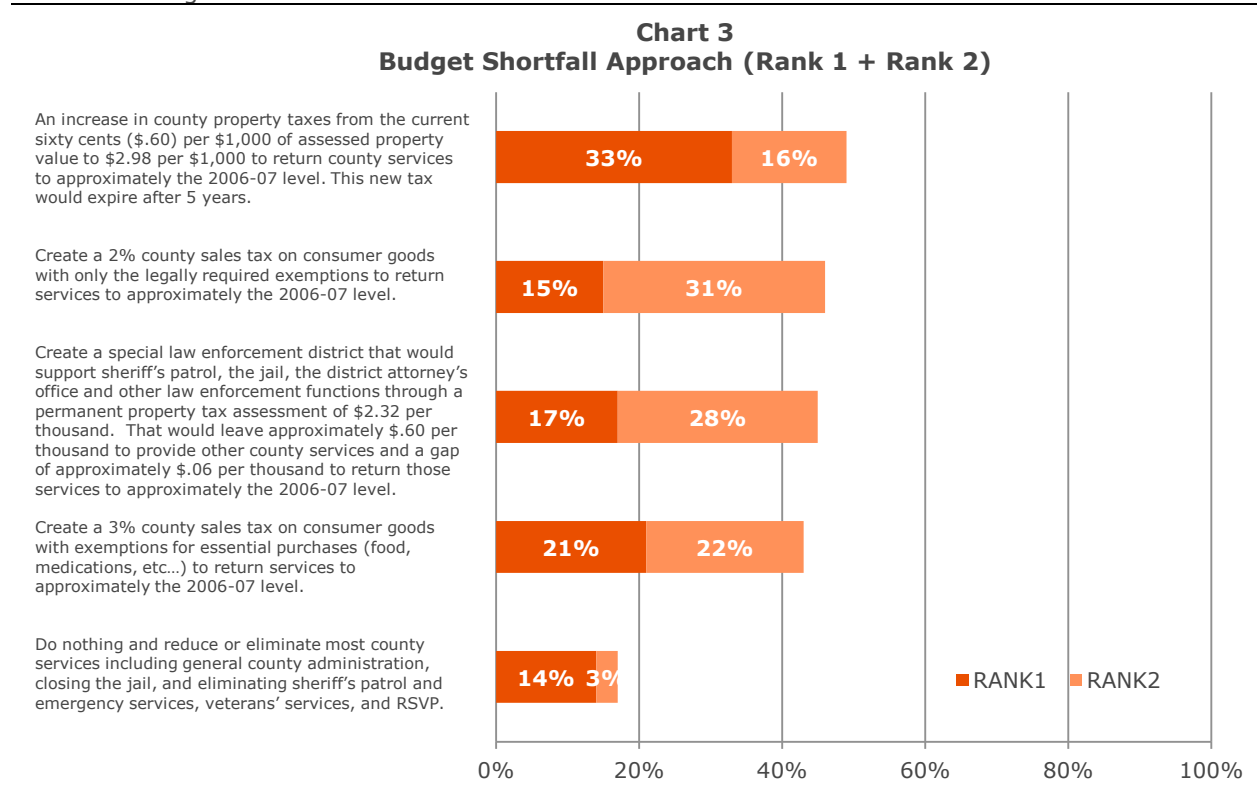
More than half (62%) of all residents stated that they are "very concerned" about cuts to county services. Again, concern was highest among those ages 35 and older. Democrats (93%) are also more likely than Republicans (81%) and Independents (80%) to be concerned.



Source: DHM Research, December 2012

Almost all residents agreed that something must be done about the budget shortfall; though no single proposed approach to dealing with the budget shortfall stood out (Q24).

Participants were asked to rank 5 proposed approaches to dealing with the budget shortfall, one which was to “do nothing and eliminate additional services.” When combining those ranked 1 and 2, no single approach stood out from the proposals. All fell between 43% and 49% with the exception of the “do nothing.”



thing” approach (17%). Most agree that something must be done.

Source: DHM Research, December 2012

There were differences in ranking among certain demographic groups. Not surprisingly, home owners in the county were most likely to support a sales tax as opposed to a property tax. Younger residents and Democrats were more likely to support a property tax than a sales tax.

- 2% county **sales tax** - home owner (51%) vs. renter (35%)
- 3% county **sales tax** - home owner (47%) vs. renter (41%)
- Increase in **property taxes** to \$2.98 per \$1,000 assessed value – 18-34 (63%) vs. 35+ (46%), Democrats (57%) vs. Republicans (42%) and Independents (41%)
- Create special law enforcement district through permanent **property tax** of \$2.32 per \$1,000 assessed value – 18-34 (51%) vs. 35+ (43%), Democrats (51%) vs. Republicans (45%) and Independents (37%)

It’s worth noting that some residents did not agree with any of the approaches (as stated in open-ended responses), but had to rank them in order to continue and finish the questionnaire.

Seven in ten residents agree (strongly/somewhat) that Curry County is a great place to live and public services need to be funded even if it means more taxes (73%), county services should not be cut any further (73%), and they would consider additional taxes (71%) to provide county services. (Q25-Q29).

Willingness to pay more in taxes was high among most residents, and most do not agree that due to the economy, now is not the right time to raise taxes (63% disagreement). The majority do not believe the state or federal government will step in with additional resources (15% agreement).

In general, Democrats and residents over the age of 35 are most likely to agree with statements in support of taxation, while Republicans and younger residents are more likely to disagree.

Response Category	Agreement (very/somewhat)						
	Total	Dem.	Rep.	Ind./ Other	18-34	35-54	55+
County services are critical and should not be cut anymore.	73%	81%	65%	71%	76%	74%	72%
Curry County is great places to live, raise a family, and retire. We need to fund public services to maintain our community even if it means I need to pay a little more in taxes.	73%	85%	62%	71%	65%	74%	76%
This is a tough economy, and this is not the right time to raise taxes even it means that Curry County will be without most county services.	34%	20%	47%	39%	49%	38%	29%
If the county were to restructure to create additional efficiencies, I would be willing to consider additional taxes.	71%	80%	64%	70%	49%	69%	77%
I believe that the state or federal government will step in with additional resources to prevent the county from having to make additional deep cuts or raise taxes on residents.	15%	14%	13%	18%	33%	13%	12%

Responses and comments to the final open-ended question were varied.

Some residents felt that an additional property tax would be unfair to land owners in the county while others felt that a sales tax could potentially harm the economy and encourage people to shop elsewhere. It was also suggested that a combination of both could be utilized. Comments reinforced that most residents understand that additional taxes will most likely be needed in order to address the financial situation.

Do you have any additional ideas or concerns to share with Curry County leadership?

"I believe property taxes would be fair to raise, but taxing consumer goods would just cause more people to move out of the area."

"Bring employers to Curry County; create jobs. Jobs bring income and revenue."

"I believe we need to look at all the options available instead of just taxing the landowners. Too many of the counties services are used, and abused, by non-property tax owing citizens."

"UN-incorporate cities and create a Unified County wide Taxing District for Schools and Public Safety. Consolidate our resources."

"I believe that the county should not take any methods for additional taxation UNTIL they look seriously at what can and cannot be cut. This does not mean that they should hire an outside company and pay them huge amounts of money to look at the counties problems, but work with citizens (not hand-picked) who have backgrounds to truly work to make changes and leave any agendas at home."

"Why raise my property taxes more than \$1500 per year to support this? Sales tax is spread around to EVERYONE, that lives and works here, rather than on the backs of the low #'s of property owners."

"A concern about the sales tax idea: it might drive business out of the county, if Coos County doesn't have a sales tax in place."

"Please consider raising property tax before a sales tax. Sales tax would hurt low income. Begin a campaign to educate the public on the need to raise property tax."

** All verbatim responses, including those emailed to Oregon's Kitchen Table are available upon request*

1 | ANNOTATED QUESTIONNAIRE

Curry County & Oregon's Kitchen Table Online Survey November 2012-January 2013 Residents Ages 18+ (N=438) DHM Research

Oregon's Kitchen Table is a new way to bring all Oregonians to the table. Oregon's Kitchen Table is a project of the College of Urban and Public Affairs at Portland State University, and was created by a group of non-partisan, non-profit community organizations dedicated to helping Oregonians have a voice. Our advisory board of highly-regarded leaders representing diverse community perspectives works closely with public opinion researchers to create in-depth consultations — without the spin — to reflect the needs of real Oregonians.

Leaders and community members in Curry County have engaged Oregon's Kitchen Table to consult with Curry County Residents about their opinions, values, and beliefs about county services and county funding. The responses you provide will be compiled and provided to the new County Commission and Curry County residents in January.

This consultation consists of 34 questions and typically takes less than 15 minutes to complete. Thank you very much for your participation.

General Attitudes

1. In general, do you feel things in Curry County are headed in the right direction or off on the wrong track?

Response Category	N=436
Right direction	11%
Wrong track	69%
Don't know	20%

2. Why? **(Open text box)**

Right direction

"Expenditures are coming under control and moves are being made to increase revenues."

"We're starting to coordinate efforts rather than duplicate efforts to improve the community."

There seems to be more collaboration and cooperation lately amongst non-profits, etc."

"Community leaders are actively trying to engage the community in a dialog about the impending budget crisis."

Wrong track

"Leadership, starting with the commissioners has not worked toward positive achievable goals."

"The citizenry has failed to acknowledge, or has ignored, the reality of the current county services funding crisis. That failure is demonstrated in the failure to pass funding measures on past ballots."

"The general public's unwillingness to share the financial burden that our county is facing in a smart way...We pay one of the lowest property tax rates in Oregon it's ridiculous."

3. Do you trust **county** government to do the right thing for Curry County residents?

Response Category	N=437
All of the time	1%
Most of the time	20%
Some of the time	51%
Almost never	24%
Don't know	4%

4. Why? **(Open text box)**

All/Most of the time

"In spite of insufficient funding everyone involved seems to be doing the best they can for the county and city."

"The new Board of Commissioners has no choice but to face reality. If they will avoid letting personal agendas slip into the programs, they can do some real good."

"They are genuinely concerned about the county's future. They are making good efforts to shave unneeded services, without compromising safety, convenience, and efficiency."

Some of the time/Almost never

"We don't always have county officials with enough knowledge and/or intelligence to make wise decisions."

"They pander to the loudest voices rather than do the right thing. The loudest voices always want someone else to pay their share."

"I do not feel like we were getting very honest feedback or efforts in the right direction with the Sheriff and County Commissioners. We have a new group of commissioners so I will reserve judgment on their performance until they have a chance to get in and begin working."

5. What are the most important issues that you would like to see your county government officials do something about? **(Open text box)**

"Get the state out of our land use policies, so we can develop our economies"

"Fund departments to functional levels through tax measure."

"County wide sustainable development initiatives. maintain quality education regardless of dropping enrollments. keep curry county green and clean."

"Raise taxes to provide quality education, support for troubled families, lack of jobs."

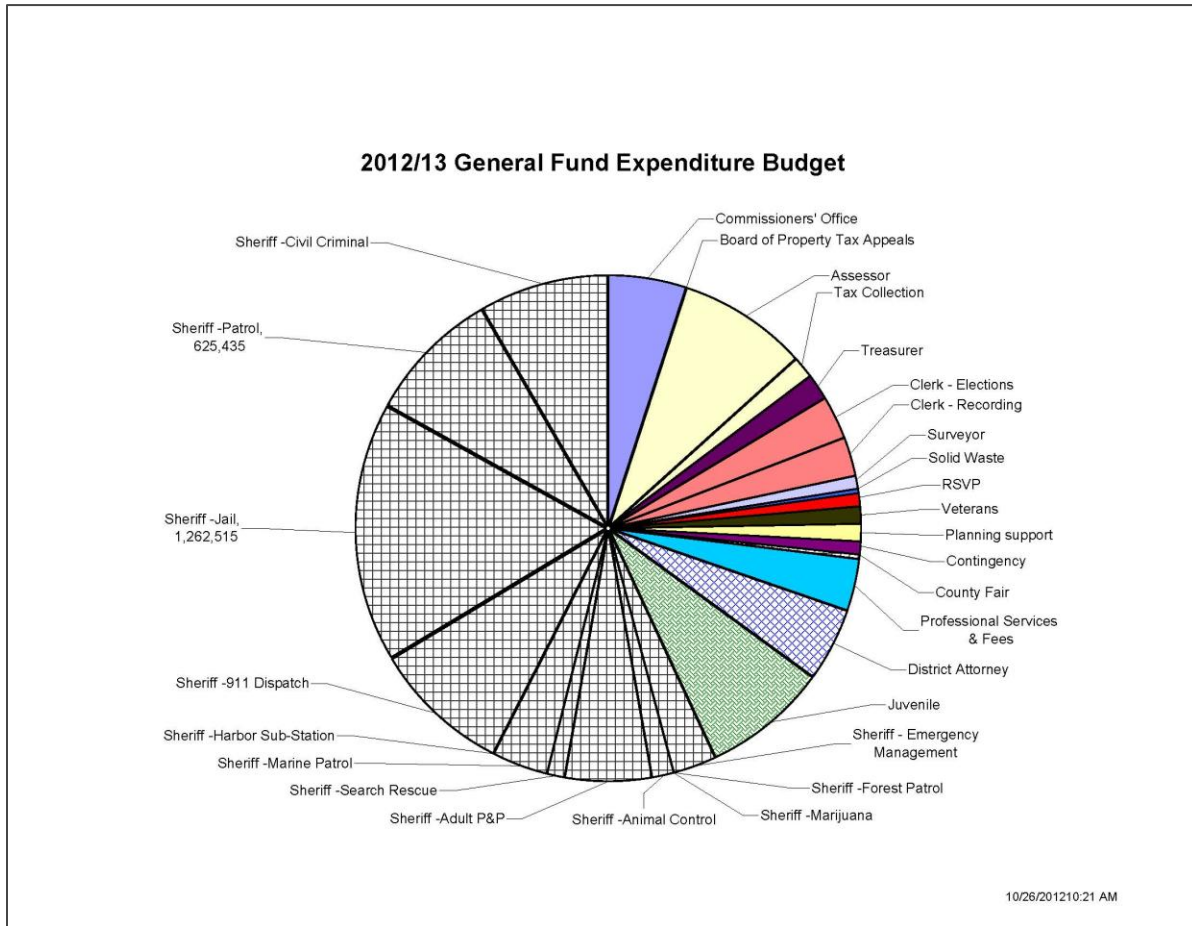
"Cutting spending and generating a little more tax base with clean economy incentives to get more business in Curry. Let's be the first coastal county to generate 50% of our power from renewable energy like wind, solar and other clean energy production (maybe bio fuels)."

Who do you believe provides these services? **(check all that apply)**

Response Category	City	County	State	Federal	Don't know
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6. Sheriff patrol	8%	91%	10%	1%	4%
7. Maintenance and operation of the local jail	12%	86%	8%	3%	5%
8. District attorney's office	3%	79%	26%	3%	6%
9. Veterans' services	3%	42%	27%	45%	12%
10. County Administration (commissioners, legal, IT, financial/HR, etc.)	2%	92%	4%	3%	5%
11. Juvenile justice	6%	80%	27%	5%	6%
12. Property tax assessment, collection and distribution to taxing districts	7%	82%	17%	3%	6%
13. Elections	8%	76%	34%	15%	6%

Here is the actual distribution of the spendable County general fund budget:



Values & Priorities

How important are these services to you?

Response Category	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important	Don't know
14. Sheriff patrol	62%	24%	7%	3%	3%
15. Maintenance and operation of the local jail	43%	39%	10%	5%	3%
16. District attorney's office	45%	37%	12%	2%	3%
17. Veterans' services	38%	33%	16%	8%	5%
18. County Administration (commissioners, legal, IT, financial/HR, etc.)	33%	40%	17%	5%	4%
19. Juvenile justice	46%	34%	12%	5%	4%
20. Property tax assessment, collection and distribution to taxing districts	47%	36%	10%	3%	3%
21. Elections	55%	31%	10%	1%	3%

Funding Options

Since 2006, Curry County general fund revenue has decreased by nearly two-thirds—from just over \$6 million dollars to about \$2.1 million dollars. Most of that was loss of federal timber payments to the county. Over the past few years, Curry County has reduced its general fund workforce by nearly one-third. According to a study by the state, the courthouse and the jail needs several million dollars in repairs and structural improvements, and there are at least \$775,000 worth of repairs required within the next two years to keep all three county buildings functional.

The Oregon Constitution does not allow states or counties to deficit spend. There will be more than a \$3 million gap in next year's budget between the current level of service and available revenues, and there will be an approximately \$5 million gap between next year's available revenue and the basic county services provided in the 2006-07 budget.

According to a Secretary of State's report, Curry County residents pay the second lowest county property tax rate in the state, and it is less than one-quarter of the statewide average. Curry County officials have been advised by the Governor and others that they should re-examine the tax rate as part of their response to the end of county timber payments.

22. Before this survey, did you know that over the past six years, the county general fund revenues will have decreased two-thirds and even with these reductions, the 2013 county budget will have at least a \$3 million dollar shortfall that will require additional cuts in county services if there are no other sources of revenue?

Response Category	N=437
Yes	80%
No	16%
(DON'T ASK) Don't know	4%

23. How concerned are you about cuts to county services?

Response Category	N=435
Very concerned	62%
Somewhat concerned	23%
Not too concerned	9%
Not at all concerned	4%
(DON'T ASK) Don't know	3%

Several options have been proposed to respond to the loss of federal timber payments and resulting \$3 million shortfall that the county will be facing starting next year:

- a) Increase county property taxes from the current sixty cents (\$.60) per \$1,000 of assessed property value to \$2.98 per \$1,000 to return county services to approximately the 2006-07 level. This new tax would expire after 5 years.
- b) Create a special law enforcement district that would support sheriff's patrol, the jail, the district attorney's office and other law enforcement functions through a permanent property tax assessment of \$2.32 per thousand. That would leave approximately \$.60 per thousand to provide other county services and a gap of approximately \$.06 per thousand to return those services to approximately the 2006-07 level.
- c) Create a 3% county sales tax on consumer goods with exemptions for essential purchases (food, medications, etc...) to return services to approximately the 2006-07 level.
- d) Create a 2% county sales tax on consumer goods with only the legally required exemptions to return services to approximately the 2006-07 level.
- e) Do nothing and reduce or eliminate most county services including general county administration, closing the jail, and eliminating sheriff's patrol and emergency services, veterans' services, and RSVP.

24. Please rank the following approaches to dealing with the budget shortfall:

Response Category	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
a) An increase in county property taxes from the current sixty cents (\$.60) per \$1,000 of assessed property value to \$2.98 per \$1,000 to return county services to approximately the 2006-07 level. This new tax would expire after 5 years.	33%	16%	12%	23%	15%
b) Create a special law enforcement district that would support sheriff's patrol, the jail, the district attorney's office and other law enforcement functions through a permanent property tax assessment of \$2.32 per thousand. That would leave approximately \$.60 per thousand to provide other county services and a gap of approximately \$.06 per thousand to return those services to approximately the 2006-07 level.	17%	28%	20%	28%	7%
c) Create a 3% county sales tax on consumer goods with exemptions for essential purchases (food, medications, etc...) to return services to approximately the 2006-07 level.	21%	22%	34%	16%	6%
d) Create a 2% county sales tax on consumer goods with only the legally required exemptions to return services to approximately the 2006-07 level.	15%	31%	22%	28%	3%
e) Do nothing and reduce or eliminate most county services including general county administration, closing the jail, and eliminating sheriff's patrol and emergency services, veterans' services, and RSVP.	14%	3%	12%	3%	67%

Do you agree or disagree with these statements?

Response Category	Strongly agree	Smwt agree	Smwt disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
25. County services are critical and should not be cut anymore.	45%	28%	14%	10%	3%
26. Curry County is great places to live, raise a family, and retire. We need to fund public services to maintain our community even if it means I need to pay a little more in taxes.	47%	26%	13%	10%	4%
27. This is a tough economy, and this is not the right time to raise taxes even it means that Curry County will be without most county services.	15%	20%	23%	40%	3%
28. If the county were to restructure to create additional efficiencies, I would be willing to consider additional taxes.	36%	34%	13%	8%	8%
29. I believe that the state or federal government will step in with additional resources to prevent the county from having to make additional deep cuts or raise taxes on residents.	4%	11%	22%	50%	13%

30. Do you have any additional ideas or concerns to share with Curry County leadership? (**open text box**)

"I believe property taxes would be fair to raise, but taxing consumer goods would just cause more people to move out of the area."

"Bring employers to Curry County; create jobs. Jobs bring income and revenue."

"I believe we need to look at all the options available instead of just taxing the landowners. Too many of the counties services are used, and abused, by non-property tax owing citizens."

"UN-incorporate cities and create a Unified County wide Taxing District for Schools and Public Safety. Consolidate our resources."

"I believe that the county should not take any methods for additional taxation UNTIL they look seriously at what can and cannot be cut. This does not mean that they should hire an outside company and pay them huge amounts of money to look at the counties problems, but work with citizens (not hand-picked) who have backgrounds to truly work to make changes and leave any agendas at home."

31. Where do you get your information about county government? **(open text box)**

"Newspaper, talking to people who have first-hand knowledge of what is going on."

"Mostly from the county commissioners. They have been taking the story to the people for at least the past five years, since timber payments started diminishing, trying to solve Curry County's fiscal needs. Also some from talking with other citizens."

"Mostly from the Pilot, but also from county employees and staff."

Demographics

32. How many years have you lived in the county? (5 or less, 6-10, 11-20, 21+)

Response Category	N=437
5 years or less	24%
6-10 years	22%
11-20 years	32%
21 years or longer	22%
Refused/Don't know	1%

33. Do you own or rent your home?

Response Category	N=437
Own	78%
Rent	16%
Refused/Don't know	5%

34. Please indicate where you live in Curry County

Response Category	N=437
Brookings	36%
Gold Beach	23%
Port Orford	12%
Harbor	10%
Langlois	3%
Agness	1%
Pistol River	1%
Carpenterville	1%
Nesika Beach	2%
Ophir	2%
Other Unincorporated Curry County	9%
Refused/Don't know	1%

[NOT TO BE ASKED OF OKT RESPONDENTS]

35. In what year were you born?

Response Category	N=416
12-17	--
18-24	7%
25-34	6%
35-44	6%
45-54	15%
55-64	28%
65+	40%

36. What is your zip code?

Response Category	N=437
97406	1%
97415	54%
97444	28%
97450	3%
97464	0%
97465	13%
97491	1%

37. What is your education?

Response Category	N=437
Less than High school	6%
High school graduate	7%
Some college associate or technical	31%
College graduate	32%

Post college graduate degree	22%
Refused/Don't know	2%

38. Do you consider yourself to be **(select all that apply)**

Response Category	N=438
Asian	1%
Black or African American	1%
Hispanic	1%
Native American	4%
White	88%
Other (please specify)	5%
Refused/Don't know	5%

What is your household income?

Response Category	N=435
Less than \$30K	16%
\$30-\$50K	25%
\$50-\$75K	14%
\$75-\$100K	15%
\$100-\$150K	9%
\$150K+	5%
Refused/Don't know	16%

39. Are you currently registered to vote?

Response Category	N=437
Yes	91%
No	6%
Not sure	0%
Not eligible	1%
Refused	2%

40. Do you consider yourself to be a:

Response Category	N=435
Republican	23%
Democrat	38%
Non-affiliated	23%
Other (please specify)	7%
Refused	10%

41. Would you consider yourself:

Response Category	N=435
Very liberal	10%
Liberal	24%
Moderate	35%
Conservative	17%
Very conservative	5%
None of the above	9%