



CONTINUE REVENUE SHARING PAYMENTS TO FOREST COUNTIES

ACTION NEEDED: Urge your Members of Congress to pursue a long-term legislative solution for continued revenue sharing payments to forest counties. Explain to members of your Congressional delegation that the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination (SRS) Act expired in September 2012 and was extended for one year in October 2013.

Congress should establish a new revenue sharing program to allocate revenues generated from the management of designated federal lands to all forest counties. If Congress fails to renew its long-standing federal obligation by not providing a longterm solution, counties could face dramatic budgetary shortfalls.

BACKGROUND: The SRS program provides assistance to rural counties and school districts affected by the decline in revenue from timber harvests on federal lands. Historically, rural communities and schools have relied on a share of receipts from timber harvests to supplement local funding for education services and roads. During the 1980s, national policies substantially diminished the revenue-generating activity permitted in these forests. The resulting steep decline in timber sales decreased the revenues that rural counties and school districts received from these timber sales.

In response to this decline, SRS was enacted in 2000 (P.L. 106-393) to stabilize payments to counties and to compensate for lost revenues. In October 2008, SRS was reauthorized (P.L. 110-343) and amended to continue, on sliding payment scale, through FY 2011. In 2012, the program provided approximately \$346 million in funding to 729 rural counties, parishes and boroughs across the United States.

The expiration of SRS in 2014 will create dramatic budgetary shortfalls if Congress fails to renew the long-standing federal obligation to county governments. The enactment of a new revenue sharing program to allocate revenues generated from the management of designated federal lands to forest counties and schools would ensure that students receive essential education services and that rural communities have funding for roads, conservation projects, search and rescue missions, and fire prevention programs.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- The expiration of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination (SRS) Act in 2014 will create dramatic budgetary shortfalls for 729 rural counties if Congress fails to renew this

QUICK FACTS

- NACo is pursuing a long-term legislative solution, based on active forest management, to continue revenue sharing payments to counties
- The SRS program was enacted in 2000 to provide funding for counties and schools to compensate for steep reductions in revenues from timber harvests
- In 2014, the SRS program provided \$270 million to 729 rural counties, parishes and boroughs across the United States
- Historically (since 1908), the Forest Service provided counties and schools 25 percent of the revenues collected from management activities on the National Forest System

federal obligation to rural county governments.

- New legislation should be enacted that provides payments to counties and promotes active natural resource management for the stability and well-being of forest counties and communities. NACo supports a forest trust model that would designate specific Forest Service land to be managed by the states on behalf of counties and schools according to state land management practices and federal and state laws as they apply to state land.
- While the Senate and House of Representatives differ in their legislative solutions for future forest payments to counties, NACo continues to urge leadership on both sides of the aisle to act in a spirit of bipartisan and bicameral cooperation to move an acceptable solution to the President's desk.

For further information, contact Tom Wolfe at 202.942.4207 or twolfe@naco.org

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