

- In 2010, Colorado School Districts and Counties received approximately \$13.6 million in funding from SRSCA
- 43 Colorado rural counties receive funding from SRSCA
- Over 480,000 school children in Colorado are impacted by funding from SRSCA
- Reauthorization of SRSCA is a priority for rural communities

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# Partnership for Rural America Campaign

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January 2011

## Overview of SRSCA

The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRSCA) provides assistance to rural counties and school districts affected by the decline in revenue from timber harvests on federal lands.

Historically, rural counties and schools have relied on a share of receipts from timber harvests to supplement local funding for education services and roads.

The steep decline in timber sales decreased the revenues that rural counties and school districts received from these timber sales.

In response, Congress passed the “Secure Rural Schools & Commu-



Gunnison National Forest

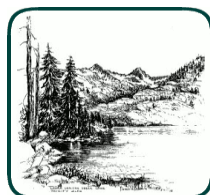
nity Self-Determination Act” to stabilize the payments to counties and to compensate for lost revenues.

In 2010, SRSCA provided approximately \$391 million in funding to 729 rural counties and parishes across the United States.

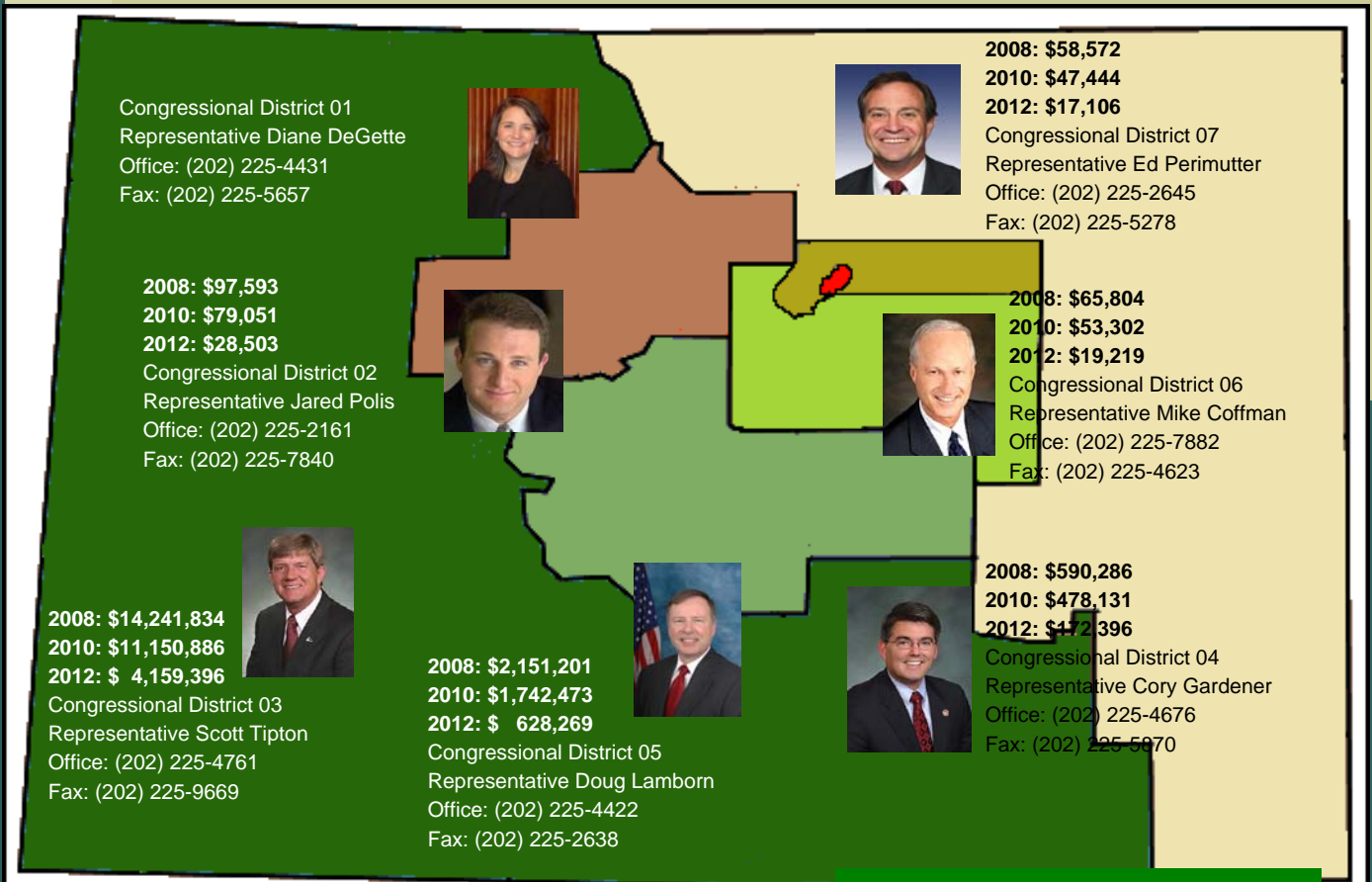
Reauthorization of SRSCA is critical for resource constrained rural Colorado counties, schools, and communities.

## SRSCA Funding to Colorado

- In 2010 Colorado school districts and counties received \$13.6 million in funding from SRSCA
- From 2008 thru 2011, rural Colorado is projected to receive \$59 in SRSCA funding
- Colorado’s funding from SRSCA will decline by approximately \$8.7 million) from \$13.7 million in 2010 to \$5 million in 2012



## Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act Funding to Rural Colorado Counties and School Districts 2008 - 2012



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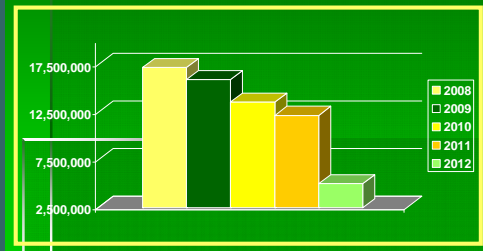


Senator Mark Udall (D)

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National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition  
Partners for a Rural America Campaign

Colorado Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act Receipts  
2008: \$17,205,291 2009: \$45,931,720 2010: \$13,577,767 2011: \$12,191,163 2012: \$5,024,888



- Colorado received \$17,205,291 in 2008
- This number will fall to \$5,024,888 in 2012

## History of SRSCA Legislation



Arapahoe National Forest

President Teddy Roosevelt developed and implemented the policy of conserving lands for multi-use. He also understood the economic challenges that this placed on rural communities. To address this challenge, a revenue sharing

plan was formulated specifying 25% of all revenues from National Forests would be returned to forested counties. This law worked for nearly a century. However, in the 1980s national resource policies substantially diminished the revenue-generating activity in the forests. In 2000 the *Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act*

(P.L. 106-393) was enacted. The goal of the Act was to provide assistance to rural counties and schools affected by declining revenues from timber harvests on federal lands.

*“These funds are used for schools and roads, to create employment opportunities, to maintain current infrastructure, and to improve*

*the health of watershed and ecosystems”* (USDA Forest Service Release No. 0814, October 8, 2008).

On October 3, 2008, the *Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act* (P.L. 110-343) was enacted; it reauthorized and amended SRSCA 2000 to continue, on a sliding payment scale, through 2011.

**Efforts to assure that SRSCA is reauthorized are underway today.**

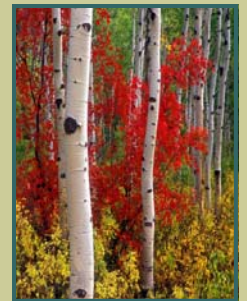
## Reauthorization of SRSCA

In Colorado, rural counties must fund education and maintain roads on a tax base that is constrained by high child poverty rates, a limited business tax base, and a property tax base that is restricted by the tax-exempt status of national forest land within their boundaries. Secure, reliable payments from SRSCA are an essential source of revenues that enable rural counties to meet their financial obligations.

The *Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act* will expire in 2011. The reauthorization of SRSCA will ensure that students receive essential educational services and that rural communities have funding for

roads, conservation projects, Search and Rescue missions, (a safety structure for residents and visitors) and fire prevention programs. Funding from SRSCA also provides necessary revenue to cash-strapped rural school districts. It is important for Congress to commit the resources necessary to ensure that rural communities do not have to make further cuts to children’s education or further reduce vital services.

In 2009, counties and school districts began seeking support for the reauthorization of SRSCA to secure this important source of revenue for all rural counties and school districts.



Beautiful Rural Colorado

## A Picture of Rural School Districts Receiving SRSCA Funding

Statewide, there are approximately 480,000 school-aged children living in Colorado counties that received SRSCA funding in 2008. In Saguache County, one of the poorest Colorado counties, the poverty rate among school-aged children was 71% (Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Free and Reduced Lunch Statistics*). The average poverty rate for SRSCA counties was nearly 40%.

Recently, in rural Larimer County the Red Feather Lakes Elementary School, located in the Poudre School District, has been slated for closure due to inadequate funding at the District level (*The Coloradoan*, January 25, 2010: "Closing Rural Schools a Mistake"). Due to a shortage of funds, this critical link between rural families and easy access to primary education will be permanently severed, forcing the affected families to drive dozens of miles – often over hazardous, snowbound roads - in order to reach their new schools. This challenges the fundamental premise of fairness in the equal access to education between rural and urban school children, setting those in rural areas at a distinct disadvantage. One thing is certain, however: if funding from SRSCA is not maintained, this sort of scenario will become an all too familiar feature of the rural American landscape, to the detriment of rural school children nationwide.

### The Impact of SRSCA Funding on Roads and Bridges

There are over 87,000 miles of public roads in Colorado. 79% of these roads are rural and are critical to economic growth, the creation of jobs, public safety, and the social health of small communities. The number of improved road miles per capital in rural Colorado is four times higher than in urban areas (Source: Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *Public Road Length: 2004*).

The Gunnison County Road and Bridge Department is responsible for maintaining over 850 miles of rural roads, including additional snowplowing duties for 215 of these roads. In 2009, the total allocation for the Road and Bridge Department was approximately \$6.5 million. Nearly 20%, or \$1.2 million, came from Secure Rural Schools. The loss of SRSCA funding will dramatically and negatively impact the ability of the Road and Bridge Department to maintain and repair local roads.

### Value Added: Colorado Recreation Resource Advisory Committee

The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act authorized the use of the Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) as a mechanism for local community collaboration with federal land managers in recommending Title II resource-benefit projects on federal lands. In 2008, the Colorado Recreation Resource Advisory Committee approved and implemented forest- and ecosystem-health projects, making use of the \$316,264 available to it in Title II funding, channeling these funds directly into the local economy.

### Take an Active Role Now: Join the SRSCA Reauthorization Effort

A nationwide Partnership for Rural America Campaign was initiated by the National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition in 2009. Counties in Colorado affected by the Act should take a leading role in the reauthorization Campaign. Interested and impacted individuals can participate in the Campaign and the grass roots efforts by becoming member of regional Coalition Action Teams.

**Please call: Marc Kelley (877) 778-7252**



Sneffels Range