

Talking Points – Fall 2011
Legislation to Support Forest Health and Impacts of Loss of Funding

1. The 100 year + Partnership that was created between the Federal government and rural communities in 1908 compensated counties affected by placement of timber into federal ownership. The partnership stipulated that 25% of the revenues derived from the U.S. Forest Service activities (timber sales, mineral extraction and grazing fees, etc.) would be returned to the counties that housed these forests. These revenues supported schools and the maintenance of infrastructure, and the health of watersheds and ecosystems. By 2000, these revenues dwindled – as policies and lawsuits restricted much of the economic activity that supported these payments....To ensure that the terms of the Partnership were upheld – in 2000 Congress passed the *Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act* (SRSCA). This legislation sunsets in October of 2011.
2. Beginning in 2012, if reauthorization does not occur the 25% of payments formula will represent something entirely different from the historic partnership with the Federal Government. The 25% payment will be calculated on a seven year rolling average. Based on the seven year rolling average through 2010 the entire distribution for all 729 counties will be an estimated **\$62,599,380.00**. **This represents a DROP of nearly \$440,000,000 from the 2008 receipts!** So even with robust timber revenues it would take at least seven years to come close to replacing the SRSCA payments. With the loss of activity on National Forests and BLM managed forest lands, infrastructure to support harvest and production of lumber in many rural communities no longer exists. It will take a number of years to rebuild the infrastructure required for the return of economic activity associated with harvest plans.
3. If reauthorization does not occur, the financial and social implications to rural communities will be enormous! (SPECIFIC and LOCAL EXAMPLES PROVIDED BY CAT TEAMS) This funding provides for jobs that support rural economics and ecosystem enhancement projects. This funding also supports education opportunities for rural youth. However, the loss of jobs would not be contained to just construction, education and conservation efforts.
4. Effects around the uncertainty of reauthorization are already being felt (due to the difference in fiscal year end) in counties and school districts across the nation. Jobs and education opportunities for our youth are already suffering. (ESTIMATES FOR LAYOFF NOTICES SENT – OR PREPARED TO BE SENT PROVIDED BY CAT TEAMS)
5. Dr. Robert Eyler, an economist who studies the impacts of the Act, concludes that if the Act is not reauthorized, there will be **a loss of well over 11,000 jobs immediately!**
6. That same report by Dr. Eyler concludes that the loss of the Act would result in an annual loss to businesses in the receiving states of \$1.5 billion.
7. It is imperative that Congress take immediate action to ensure that counties and schools that benefit from the Act do not see a lapse in the payments. Without this reauthorization, there will no longer be funds available to support and maintain infrastructure that allows access to the forest - permanently losing an opportunity for recreation and future economic activity.

THERE IS A SOLUTION.....

8. The affected communities are willing to work with our Federal partners in developing forest management programs that will once again generate a revenue stream to rural counties.
9. The Campaign for Rural America, the grass roots organization that supports reauthorization of the Act, is committed to working with Congress to develop forest management plans that protect the ecological values of our forests while promoting economic activity.
10. Rural communities and rural citizens want to do what is right – both for the environment and for their families. We want to work with our Representative: together we must take a leading role in plans for multiple-use of our forests.
11. We support the effort in Congress to return to the policy that encourages active forest management of our National Forests and BLM managed forest lands. Returning to this policy is necessary if Rural Forested America is to regain its economic health: where activity in the forest and production in mills provide family wage employment. We must also keep the century old partnership between the Federal Government, rural forested counties and schools intact. Without reauthorization of the *Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act*, it will be nearly impossible to maintain the infrastructure required for a return to active forest management. This infrastructure includes: keeping schools open and the funding of quality education for rural youth, the maintenance of county roads, including roads in National Forests and BLM managed forest lands, snow removal, and Search and Rescue operations.