

## **US Forest Service Announces Rural Schools Funding Details**

### **More than \$320 million to be distributed under reauthorized program**

WASHINGTON Jan. 15, 2013 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that over \$323 million will be paid to 41 states and Puerto Rico in two distributions to support local schools and roads as part of the Congressional one-year reauthorization of the [Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act](#).

"These payments are part of the Department of Agriculture's long-standing commitment to rural communities, schools and American youth," said Vilsack. "Our century-long support of America's public schools and roads is one of many ways in which the Forest Service, as a good neighbor and partner, contributes to rural communities becoming self-sustaining and prosperous."

The fiscal year 2012 amounts being distributed this month:

#### **For Nevada: Nevada \$3,630,272**

The actual amount of each state's payment is determined by a number of factors written into the law, including how many counties ultimately decide to share in that payment. Each county's share of their state's payment amounts can be found on the Forest Service Web site at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/pts/securepayments/projectedpayments>.

Earlier this year the U.S. Forest Service sent letters to each state advising them of the opportunity for counties where national forests are situated to receive a share of the state's payment based on the July 6 reauthorization of the act.

New language in the reauthorization required states to inform the agency how counties plan to allocate their share of the state's payment. The payments may be used for supporting public schools and public roads, for projects to help maintain and improve the health of forests, and for county projects including "Firewise Communities" programs, reimbursements for emergency services on national forests, and development of community wildfire protection plans.

"These forest projects were reviewed and recommended by resource advisory committees made up of local residents working together to improve the environment and help provide jobs in rural communities," Vilsack said.

Nearly \$32 million in support for Title II projects will be sent out in April. The payments listed above also include \$6 million to Minnesota under 16 U.S.C. 577g, seven thousand dollars to Arkansas under Section 323 of P.L. 100-446, and six thousand dollars to Washington state under Section 4 of P.L. 100-638.

Since 1908, the Forest Service has shared with states 25 percent of gross receipts from timber sales, grazing, minerals, recreation, and other land use fees on national forests to benefit public schools and public roads in the counties in which the forests are situated.

In the late 1980s, due largely to declines in timber sale receipts, payments began to drop significantly and fluctuate widely. In 1994, Congress responded by providing "safety net payments" to counties in northern California, western Oregon and western Washington.

In 2000, Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act that provided enhanced, stabilized payments to more states through 2006. The act was extended for one year and then reauthorized in 2008 for four more years. Last year's reauthorization provides benefits for an additional year.

The mission of the U.S. Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. Forest Service lands contribute more than \$13 billion to the economy each year through visitor spending alone. Those same lands provide 20 percent of the nation's clean water supply, a value estimated at \$27 billion per year.

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