

**Anna Morrison  
Legislative Chair  
Oregon Women In Timber**

**Testimony on  
“Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization and Forest Management Options for a Viable County  
Payments Program”**

**July 14, 2011**

Chairman Bishop and Subcommittee Members,

I am Anna Morrison. I am representing Oregon Women In Timber, as well as American Agri-Women. I bring a unique perspective to this hearing in that I have a history surrounding the Secure Rural Schools legislation. Initially I lobbied for this legislation as a county commissioner from Oregon. It was always meant to be a 6 year funding stop gap until the forests were reopened to harvest levels sustaining rural schools and roads. It was never intended to be the entitlement program it has become. I chaired and served on 2 Forest Service RACS and 1 BLM RAC. The sole purpose was to find ways to spend the Title II and III entitlement monies from Secure Rural Schools Legislation that was to be used for on the ground forest projects. For years monies have been wasted, in my opinion, mostly on projects that had little merit or need. Many were “pie in the sky” projects that benefitted only those who submitted the project. I have actual USFS email documents from employees hoping they could find ways to spend the money.

We respectfully request that you **not** reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act that is in the administration’s Fiscal (FY) 2012 budget. From 1908 until 1991 the revenue sharing plan specifying 25 percent of all revenues from National Forests were to be returned to forested counties. By the late 1980’s national policies and court injunctions diminished revenue generating activity in our national forests drastically. By 1998, revenues for national forest counties had declined by 70 percent. This decline had a devastating impact on communities nationwide due to an almost total shutdown of timber harvesting in the federal forest.

Beginning in 1991, lead by Senators Hatfield and Packwood, Congress began to subsidize county payments in Western Oregon. Near the end of the decade Congress recognized its obligation to rural America. Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act of 2000, and President Clinton signed the bill. It provided six years of entitlements. In 2007, Congress extended the SRSCA for one year. In 2008, Congress once again provided a four year extension of the SRSCA for 2008-2011.

During this period of time the Forest Service was to ramp up the timber harvest program so that the entitlement was no longer needed. However, that has not happened. Under the original legislation there was also a Forest Counties Payments Committee that was formed to

report back to Congress on possible solutions. Reports were submitted to Congress in 2003 and 2006 .However nothing has ever been done with the recommendations.

As we move forward, we strongly request that you support legislative efforts that seek to provide incentives for increased timber sales and other activities on the national forest. These in turn provide jobs and socio-economic benefits, in addition to the timber receipts that are shared with local communities. In the late 1980's increased timber harvests from the federal lands generated eight times the economic benefit that is currently being provided by the Secure Rural School Payments.

New legislation should include the following basic principles:

- Long term public forest health and timber production is vitally important to the people and communities adjacent to these lands and to the public at large. We urgently need to revive the Healthy Forest Restoration Act II.
- As Congress mandated in enacting the legislation, Public forest resources on National Forests and Bureau of Land Management lands should be managed to provide the people of our nation with consumer products, jobs and a sustainable source of revenue to support local schools and counties. This is attainable while sustaining a healthy multiple use forest.
- The federal government has an obligation to return 25% of all gross receipts generated on all forest lands to the counties in which these lands lie; and/or 50% of gross receipts from O&C land (Oregon/California Railroad Lands); and/or 4% of gross receipts from Public Domain lands.
- Hard targets –Implement the maximum harvest of the volume allowed annually for timber sales in each forest under the respective forest plan.

Its' the age of **No more Entitlements!** We need Jobs, Jobs, Jobs in our rural, timber dependent communities. You must ensure a long-term forest management program and a return to actual gross timber receipts. We need to get these communities "off the Dole". **No more Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act.** At a time when about half of the Forest Service budget is spent fighting fires, due to bug infested, dead and dying

Over- crowded forests, it makes far more sense, from a fiscal and environmental standpoint, to better manage the forests by using the resource. We can harvest , provide for the people and still protect the environment. It makes perfect sense.

Thank you.

Anna Morrison,

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