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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAIRMAN
NAVAJO COUNTY, AZ

Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization
& Forest Management Options for a Viable County Payments Program
July 14, 2011

Mr. Chairman, and Committee members, thank you for the invitation to address you today. For the record, my name is David Porter Tenney, and I am a Supervisor in Navajo County, which is located in northeastern Arizona. I have nine years of experience as a former Chairman of the Show Low School Board, I am a member of the Four Forest Restoration Initiative Steering Committee, and I am currently the President of the County Supervisors Association of Arizona, which represents the 55 elected county supervisors in Arizona. It is in my capacity as a County Supervisor, and a member of the Four Forest Restoration Initiative, that I address you today on the importance of industry in forest management, and the need for the continued funding of PILT and the reauthorization of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act.

I will begin by stating that I believe the responsible use of forest products industry is the key ingredient for managing our forests. I also believe that the reintroduction of forest products industry to our forests is a key ingredient for the continuation and reauthorization of county payment programs like PILT and the Secure Rural Schools Act.

I cannot overstate how important the management of our forests has become to rural counties. The 468 thousand-acre Rodeo-Chediski Fire of 2002 burned in my county, and nearly destroyed my home. The 538 thousand-acre Wallow Fire of this year burned in two of my neighboring counties. The footprints left by these two fires could comfortably hold the cities of Phoenix, Chicago, Dallas and Los Angeles and the ecological and economic impacts are tremendous.

Mr. Chairman, and Committee members, the rural communities of Arizona were founded on, and exist due to, the use of the abundant natural resources that surrounded them. However, our combined mistakes in forest management have changed rural counties like mine, and we require the help and leadership of this body to correct the systemic mismanagement of our forests.

During my adult life, there has been a significant reduction in the harvesting of timber from the forests. In the late 1980's Arizona and New Mexico produced approximately 200 to 250 million board feet of timber each year. Between 1989 and 1996 those numbers steadily dropped until there was no forest products industry left in those forests by 1998. The dramatic reduction in wood harvesting was a result of intense disagreements over how the forests should be managed. During that period, there was no effort by industry, government or the environmental community to find common ground, and as a result, nothing productive took place. We lost our industries, we lost the revenues and jobs that came from those industries, and we have now lost millions of acres in our forests.

As you are aware, counties and schools have received a 25 percent share of timber receipts from the federal government since the administration Teddy Roosevelt. Until the 1990's, counties and schools were able to continue their work because they were compensated by the federal government for the abundance of tax-exempt federal land in their jurisdictions. However, as timber receipts declined, the solvency of rural counties and schools across the nation was also degraded. To address this challenge,

Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act in 2000, which provided payments to counties and schools to make up for the decline in timber sale revenue.

Unfortunately, we cannot go back and prevent the mistakes which have degraded our forests and the funding sources that counties and schools need. There is plenty of anger and frustration to go around on the subject. I was intimately involved in the Timber Wars of the 1980's and 1990's, and I will admit that I would not have sat in the same room with an environmentalist if you paid me. However, when I became a firsthand-witness to the massive fires that now burn in our country, and I saw their potential to destroy entire communities, I embraced the challenge to change the situation.

Mr. Chairman, and Committee members, I am here today to testify that each of these events: 1) the loss of the forest products industry (along with the hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue it created), 2) the decline of timber receipts and subsequent passage of the Secure Rural Schools Act, and 3) the destruction of homes and prized recreational areas in my county and neighboring counties are the result of the degraded condition of the forest products industry in America's forests.

Fortunately, there is a solution. The solution requires getting forest products industry back into the forest to thin the trees in an ecologically and socially responsible way. The solution involves stakeholders from the scientific, environmental, elected, forest service and industrial communities who are all at the table, and who all agree that we must reach common ground. The solution is called the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI) and it is a model for the kind of management that will end catastrophic wildfires and produce revenues for programs like PILT and the Secure Rural Schools Act.

The model that has been developed in 4FRI calls on the Federal Government to partner with private industry to thin upwards of 50,000 acres of forested land in Arizona per year at little or no cost to the Federal Government. This model, developed over the last three years by the stakeholders I have mentioned, represents America's best chance for revitalizing the forest products industry and restoring the forest, and it can be replicated throughout the country.

Mr. Chairman, and Committee members, we can and should do everything possible to revitalize the forest products industry through active forest management policies like 4FRI, but Arizona's counties cannot wait for that to happen. In addition to pursuing an active forest management policy, Congress can and must enact a full and long-term reauthorization of PILT and the Secure Rural Schools Act.

Failure to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools Act would mean that federal payments to Arizona counties would drop from \$73 million in the last four years, to barely \$1 million in 2012, jeopardizing critical education and public safety programs in Arizona's counties.

For example, Coconino County—the county that Congressman Gosar resides in—would lose nearly 80% of its search and rescue funding—a critical service for a county known as a recreation and hunting destination. Likewise, in that county's remote town of Freedonia, Kindergarten and 1st-grade classes would be eliminated, forcing those students to be bused to a school over 30 miles away.

The re-growth of our forest product industries can make a difference in the revenues necessary to fund these programs, but it is going to take time, and as tempting as it may be not to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools Act I must impress upon you that the forest products industry cannot immediately provide the federal government, rural counties and schools with the sales revenue necessary. The fact is, those efforts will take years.

In the meantime, counties like mine that have already been devastated by state budget cuts and cost shifts would be further devastated by the loss of a revenue source that compensates for the abundance of tax-exempt federal land in rural jurisdictions.

Mr. Chairman, and Committee members, as a county supervisor who has seen and experienced the consequences of a forest that is not permitted to be properly managed, I implore you to do two things:

1. Support the solution of an active forest management policy, modeled after the Four Forests Restoration Initiative, and in the meantime,
2. Support the long-term funding of PILT and the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act.

Thank you for this opportunity. I would be happy to stand for any questions.