



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

June 10, 2019

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Member of the U.S. Senate
221 Dirksen House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: S. 1643 - The Forest Management for Rural Stability Act - SUPPORT

Dear Senator Wyden:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I offer our support for S. 1643, the recently-reintroduced Forest Management for Rural Stability Act (FMRSA) pertaining to the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program. RCRC is an association of thirty-six rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those member counties.

Adopted in 1906, federal law requires the U.S. Forest Service to provide counties and schools with 25 percent of the revenues generated on federal forest lands from a variety of activities including timber harvesting, mining, and recreational activities (commonly referred to as the 25 percent receipts rule). Due to your extensive work, in 2000 Congress enacted the SRS program to provide funding for forested counties and school districts to replace revenue from dwindling forest receipts due to a national decline in timber harvesting. When first enacted, SRS provided \$90 million in 2001 (in 2017 dollars) to California's forested counties, with nearly half of the funding allocated to school districts, and the other half allocated to counties for county roads. SRS initially expired in 2006, but, again, due to your efforts, has been reauthorized multiple times; however, most reauthorization efforts have included program funding reductions.

In March of 2018, Congress enacted a 2018 federal spending bill which contained a reauthorization of SRS payments for Fiscal Year 2017 and Fiscal Year 2018. However, the on-again, off-again flow of SRS payments continues to frustrate California's forested counties. Not only are the revenue losses problematic, but the lack of certainty in receiving these payments makes it difficult for forested counties to properly build annual budgets. He recently reintroduced FMRSA creates a permanent endowment fund to provide stable and increased funding for forested counties that is separate from the current annual appropriations process.

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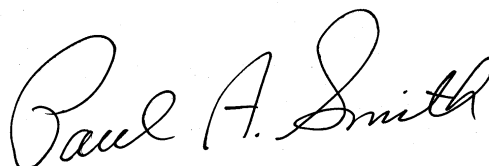
Reauthorization and funding of the Federal SRS program has, and will continue to be, a high priority for RCRC. Over the past year, RCRC leadership and staff have met with your staff and other Congressional staff members to discuss the approach reflected in FMRSA.

We are pleased to see this legislation contains many of the fundamentals that have been discussed to ensure a base level of funding to forested counties along with the flexibility to remain in the SRS payment scheme. We are also pleased that S. 1643 does not dissuade – from a financial aspect – any attempt to responsibly increase levels of timber production on federal forested lands.

We are pleased to offer our support and wish to convey appreciation to you and your staff for working on a responsible alternative to the current approach to payments to forested counties. Also, we look forward to working with you and the coauthors of FMRSA to enact its provisions and offer any assistance we can provide to accomplish this goal.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at psmith@rcrcnet.org or (916) 447-4806 or RCRC's legislative advocate in Washington D.C., Sheryl Cohen at cohen@acg-consultants.com or (202) 327-8100.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul A. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

PAUL A. SMITH
Vice President Governmental Affairs

cc: The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Member of the U.S. Senate
The Honorable Kamala Harris, Member of the U.S. Senate
The Honorable Jeff Merkley, Member of the U.S. Senate
The Honorable Jim Risch, Member of the U.S. Senate
The Honorable Michael Crapo, Member of the U.S. Senate
Jonathan Shuffield, NACo