

USDA Forest Service Update July 2007



SUBJECT: Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000

The Secure Rural Schools (SRS) and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 was enacted to provide transitional assistance to rural counties affected by the decline in revenue from timber harvests in federal lands. Traditionally, these counties relied on a share of receipts from timber harvest to supplement local funding for school systems and roads. Funding from SRS has been used to support more than 4,400 rural schools and to help maintain county road systems.

On September 30, 2006 the SRS authorization ended. The Administration is committed to providing transitional assistance to counties and States covered under the SRS Act. To provide ongoing support to rural communities that SRS has provided, we are including in our FY 2008 budget proposal, the National Forest Land Conveyance for Rural Communities Act.

The National Forest Land Conveyance for Rural Communities Act

- The President's FY 2008 Budget for the Forest Service includes legislative proposal that would provide a funding source for any future proposal to extend the SRS.
- The National Forest Land Conveyance for Rural Communities Act would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to provide a reliable source of funding for a four-year extension of SRS. To help fund this initiative, the Administration recommends selling a limited number of acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands around the nation. The proposal directs that 50% of the land sale receipts to remain within the state they were collected, to be used for the acquisition of land or interest in land for National Forest purposes, improvement of fish and wildlife habitat, restoration of NFS land and conversation education.
- The most significant change from last year's Administration proposal is that receipts from the sale of NFS lands will be used for other purposes beyond payments to States and counties.
- Last year we solicited public comments on a list of potentially eligible land parcels. This Federal Register Notice was published February 26, 2006. We received over 103,000 comments which helped us identify issues related to specific parcels. Based on the analysis of comments received, the original list of potentially eligible parcels has been reduced to approximately 274,000 acres from the original 301,000 acres. 242 parcels were removed based on public comments. There will be no additional comment period for this proposal.
- Approximately 3,000 parcels identified as potentially eligible covering 35 States and 120 National Forests and Grasslands.

The President's FY08 Budget Proposal - National Forest Land Adjustment for Rural Communities Act background information is available at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/lands/staff/rural_schools.shtml

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