

Central Idaho Resource Advisory Committee Overview 2009

The Central Idaho Resource Advisory Council (CIRAC) is one of six RACs established in Idaho in 2001 by the Secretary of Agriculture as part of the Secure Rural Schools and Community self determination Act (SRS Act) of 2000. The CIRAC was re-chartered for four years in December of 2008 under the amended SRS Act of 2008. The boundary of the CIRAC includes the Salmon-Challis National Forest and portions of the Sawtooth National Forest and Caribou-Targhee National Forest in Custer, Lemhi and Butte Counties.

The SRS Act reformed the federal payments programs to counties with National Forests within their boundaries. The law provides for counties to designate a portion of their revenues from payments to States receipts, from natural resource activities such as timber harvest and grazing permits on federal lands, to be used for projects on National Forests. The CIRAC was established to recommend projects, to the Forest Supervisor. The projects must be on National Forest System lands or benefit natural resources on those lands within the CIRAC boundary.

The 15 members of the CIRAC were selected by the Secretary of Agriculture to represent various interests and generally live within Custer, Lemhi and Butte Counties. The members represent three broad categories – A. user groups; B. conservation, historical interests, dispersed recreation; and C. state or local government representatives, teachers, the public at large. Five RAC members are in each category and a majority of votes from each group is required to approve a project (nine votes, three from each category).

If a project receives the required majority the RAC recommends the project to the Designated Federal Officer who can either approve or reject the project. The Designated Federal Officer for the Central Idaho RAC is the Forest Supervisor of the Salmon-Challis National Forest.

Between 2002 and 2008 the CIRAC recommended 78 projects totaling \$921,926 on the National Forest System lands and adjacent lands, which benefited the natural resources and provided jobs.

The 2008 legislation changed the formula which determines the amount of funding available to the counties and Butte, Custer, and Lemhi Counties started receiving much increased funding. Consequently the Title II funding available to the CIRAC also increased to \$987,753 for Fiscal Year 2009 alone. Nationally the overall SRS Act payments will decrease ten percent per year, but the allocations at the county level may vary. The RAC will continue to recommend hundreds of thousands of dollars for Title II projects each year until their authority to do so expires on September 30, 2011. Projects will be approved for three more Fiscal Years 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Some of the projects approved by the CIRAC over the years include; noxious weed control projects, sanitation facilities along the Salmon River during steelhead fishing season, fuel wood removal, streamside restoration and protection, bridge replacements, road and trail maintenance, emergency restoration activities, and a solar pump for stock watering.