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**Contact:**

Press Office  
(202) 205-1134

## **USDA ANNOUNCES \$477 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS, ROADS**

**WASHINGTON, January 15, 2009**—Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer today announced that the Forest Service is distributing more than \$477 million to 41 states and Puerto Rico for improvements to public schools, roads and stewardship projects.

This is the first year under the amended and reauthorized Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act, P.L. 110-343. Payments under the Act help fund schools and roads and create employment opportunities through projects that maintain current infrastructure and improve the health of watersheds and ecosystems on national forests.

Since 1908, 25 percent of Forest Service revenues, such as those from timber sales, mineral resources and grazing fees, have been returned to states in which national forest lands are located. In recent decades those revenues have declined significantly. The original Secure Rural Schools Act (P.L. 106-393) aimed at stabilizing the funding and transitioning to lower payments by providing assistance to affected rural counties. Under the original Act, more than \$2.5 billion was paid out over seven years. A recent report, "[Sustaining Forests and Communities](#)" summarizing activities under the previous Act can be viewed at [www.fs.fed.us/srs](http://www.fs.fed.us/srs). That Act expired in September of 2007. The reauthorized Act extends the program four more years.

The first of the reauthorized payments are shown in the [Summary of 2008](#) Forest Service payments. Oregon will receive the highest payment of more than \$133 million; California will receive more than \$57 million; Idaho and Washington will receive more than \$37 million.

The Act also provides for an additional \$52 million this year to be used by local resource advisory committees to fund projects to maintain infrastructure, improve the health of watersheds and ecosystems, protect communities, and strengthen local economies. In past years 55 committees in western states have been active in this program. The Forest Service anticipates the formation of nearly 60 more committees under the newly reauthorized Act, many of them in the Lake States, eastern states and southeastern states where national forests are located.

The Forest Service manages 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands. For more information, visit: [www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us).

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