



Date:

DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY, THOMAS J. VILSACK

JUL 25 2012

THROUGH:

*for* Harris D. Sherman  
Under Secretary, NRE

FROM:

Thomas L. Tidwell  
Chief

SUBJECT:

Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act

FILE CODE:

1350

ISSUE:

The reauthorized Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act requires resource advisory committees to review and recommend projects valued at \$35 million by September 30, 2012, allowing less than twelve weeks for the committees to complete this task.

BACKGROUND:

The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (Act) was reauthorized on July 6, 2012 (Public Law 112-141). Of the \$346 million in all three titles, an estimated \$35 million of title II funds will be available to help provide jobs in rural communities on projects that maintain or enhance the health of watersheds, wildlife and fisheries habitat, and forest ecosystems. To initiate this work, the Act requires that resource advisory committees review and recommend projects by September 30, 2012.

Paragraph 7 of Section 100101(a) of PL 112-141 amends the Act to provide that a resource advisory committee established before September 29, 2011, may be deemed by the Secretary to be a resource advisory committee for the purposes of title II and a committee charter filed on or before September 29, 2011, shall be considered to be filed for the purposes of the reauthorized Act.

Although the last payment under title I of the previous Act was made for fiscal year 2011, the committees established under title II continue to be authorized to monitor projects. One hundred eighteen (118) resource advisory committees are currently chartered. The committees all had charters filed before September 29, 2011. These charters expired in October 2011 and the Secretary approved and filed a new charter for these committees in June 2012 in order for committees to continue their monitoring responsibilities as authorized in the previous Act (PL 110-343).



OPTIONS:

1. *Deem the existing resource advisory committees authorized under PL 110-343 to be committees for the purpose of title II in the reauthorized Act (PL 112-141) and approve the current charter and the members in good standing for the purposes of the reauthorized Act to enable the committees to meet the September 30 deadline.*

This option would include expediting a minor charter amendment to cite the new Act as additional authority for the committees and expediting the recruitment and nomination of candidates for any vacant committee positions currently without members in good standing. In the meantime, this option would authorize the current committees, charter and members in good standing to immediately begin reviewing and recommending projects to be funded under title II of the reauthorized Act.

Deeming these to be committees for the newly reauthorized Act will help ensure that the new funding is available to help provide jobs in rural communities on projects that maintain or enhance ecosystem health on National Forests by the September 30, 2012 deadline.

2. *Direct the Forest Service to establish entirely new committees, charter and membership.* The alternative to authorizing the current committees also to be committees under the new Act is to establish new committees and charters and to appoint new members. When new committees were established for the previous Act, this process took more than a year to complete. The deadline under the new authorization allows less than 12 weeks for resource advisory committees to complete the work of reviewing and recommending projects. If the new committees do not complete review and recommendation of projects by September 30, 2012, the Act requires the title II funds be returned to the U.S. Treasury meaning approximately \$35 million worth of projects will not be implemented and local employment and rural community economies will not benefit.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Forest Service recommends Option 1, that the Secretary deem the existing resource advisory committees to be committees for the purposes of title II in the reauthorized Act and that by this decision memo the current charter and the members in good standing be approved for the purposes of the reauthorized Act.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve  OV

Date 7/25/12

Disapprove

Discuss with me

