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PREVIEW



Policy Scoreboard

Editor's Note: To keep SAF members informed of state society policy activities, Policy Scoreboard is a regular feature in the Western Forester. The intent is to provide a brief explanation of policy activity—you are encouraged to follow up with the listed contact person for detailed information.

Federal Land Payments to Counties Update. Authority for the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 expired in 2012 and the last payments of \$329 million to counties were made earlier this year. While the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources works on a program to replace SRS, in mid-June it passed a one-year extension of the payments that will help keep “law enforcement on the roads and teachers in the classrooms,” according to committee chairman Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR). Another bill floating through the Senate chambers (S. 101) would forbid such payments, and on August 1, Sen. Wyden placed a “public hold” on this bill in order to protect potential approval for SRS payments. Oregon stands to lose \$106 million in federal payments to counties if SRS is not extended this year. Washington and Idaho also stand to lose tens of millions each. On July 31, the House Committee on Natural Resources passed a bill titled Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities (H.R. 1526) that includes a temporary extension of SRS payments. Committee chair Rep. Doc Hastings (R-WA) called the bill “a long-term solution to put hard-working Americans back to work and to restore the economies of these rural communities.” It would renew the federal government’s commitment to manage federal forests for the benefit of rural schools and counties, improve forest health and help prevent catastrophic wildfires. The bill calls for the establishment of Forest Reserve Revenue Areas and timber targets within them for the purpose of providing 25-percent revenue-sharing payments for counties.

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