

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Grijalva
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
*“Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization and Forest Management Options for a Viable County
Payments Program.”*
July 14, 2011

Across this Nation, rural communities and the Federal Government are neighbors. A century ago, when our population was less than one-third what it is today, it made perfect sense to help support rural communities by sharing with them a portion of the returns from timber harvests on public land.

This funding created an incentive for local governments to increase timber production to fund rural schools and rural roads. Thanks to this program, along with others like the Mining Law of 1872 and the

Homestead Act, the Western United States prospered.

Unfortunately, poorly-managed logging left our forests over-cut, our water polluted, and wildlife habitats degraded. We now recognize that tying federal assistance to local communities to the level of timber produced from the area can make effective forest management more difficult and even in the best of times, lead to funding instability and uncertainty for local governments.

The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 recognized these challenges and provided a

temporary intervention to help rural communities transition to other more sustainable economic models.

In 2006, the Republican Majority allowed the program to lapse but in 2007, the new Majority provided a one-year extension and in 2008, Congress passed a four-year reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools program.

The Administration has proposed a five year re-authorization of the Secure Rural Schools program. I look forward to hearing the views of our witnesses on this proposal. It is vital that we recognize the needs of rural counties but it is also important to

**remember the lessons we have learned from
past approaches and avoid repeating the
same mistakes.**