

Robert K Weidner
Evergreen Forest County Group

*24 River Road
Gettysburg, PA 17325
703-898-6603
rkw57@mac.com
October 28, 2025*

Dear Commissioner:

My primary focus this year has been working on your behalf with the National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition, (National Coalition) to gain Congressional approval of a three year (FY 2024, 2025, 2026) extension of the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) National Forest Payments program which originated with a 1908 binding commitment when President Theodore Roosevelt signed the National Forest Act promising all public lands counties and schools 25% of the revenues generated from those National Forests. This payment protects PILT payments (due to the PILT formula) and keeps rural public lands counties financially flush so they can advocate for active National Forest management which simply stated, means cutting trees at levels which prevent fires and protect the economic and environmental health of rural communities.

To this end, on behalf of the National Forest Counties & Schools Coalition, I organized two amazingly well-attended fly-ins in 2025 with county and education officials from 17 states and then flew to Madison, Wisconsin in August to meet with leaders of the Congressional Freedom Caucus to gain their support to endorse to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Mike Johnson (R-LA) and Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R-LA) passing SRS.

Moreover, in preparation for Congress returning, I have put together a two-front approach to reach House Speaker Mike Johnson to persuade him to bring up and pass the 3-year SRS extension either as a stand-alone bill or as part of the next Continuing Resolution (C.R.) or other must-pass bill.

First, at my behest, House Public Lands Subcommittee Chairman Tom Tiffany (R-WI) has requested a group of pro SRS House members to accompany him to a dedicated meeting with Speaker Johnson to specifically request that SRS be passed in arrears for FY 2024, 2025 and now for the current fiscal year-2026. Some 15 House GOP members have RSVP'd for that meeting which has now been scheduled by the Speaker, confirmed, and postponed three times during this month of October, the most recent postponement being yesterday. The Coalition believes this dedicated SRS meeting with Speaker Johnson must

happen to give the Speaker an opportunity to focus on understanding this three-year extension. We will continue to press for this meeting to happen.

Secondly, prior to October 20, 2025, our National Coalition organized a meeting of 30 Future Farmers of America (FFA) students and 22 of their adult leaders from ten states to meet with the Speaker. The Speaker sent his staff to greet those FFA students including eight kids from Louisiana. Those students were exceptionally well-prepared and explained to the Speaker's top advisor, Bill Ball, the devastating impact on them, their schools and teachers should Congress fail to pass the 3-year SRS extension. Ball responded by telling the kids that he would advise the Speaker to pass the bill before the end of 2025.

In sum, it is up to the GOP House to pass SRS and make payments retroactive to FY 2024 so public lands counties and school districts receive the payment which is owed them under the 1908 National Forest Act as amended by the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act of 2000.

Finally, here in Washington, there is a new level of enthusiasm for timber harvesting, mining, oil and gas. To wit: On October 21st, the Senate Agriculture Committee passed the Fix Our Forest's Act in a bipartisan 18-5 vote. Moreover, the efforts to reform onerous environmental regulations including NEPA itself have been very encouraging.

I am working with key White Natural Resources Policy Advisor Jason Becker and Deputy Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources, Kristen Sleeper who presides over the U.S. Forest Service. Also, I'm working with Karen Budd-Falen who serves as Associate Deputy Secretary of the Interior and Adam Suess, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management at the Department of the Interior and perhaps, most significantly, with David Copley, White House member of the National Security Council, who heads up the President's Energy Dominance Council.

I have opened up a solid relationship with Ned Mamula, was confirmed by the Senate as the President's Director of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). He is advising the White House to make the changes to mapping and extraction policies which impact active management of the nation's forests and public lands. Ned is a strong advocate of multiple use access to federal lands.

I continue to be honored to represent you here in the National Capital City and am grateful for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Robert K Weidner
Evergreen Forest County Group