

RON WYDEN
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CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE ON
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221 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
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United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3703

August 11, 2025

COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAXATION

Chief Tom Schultz
United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

Dear Chief Schultz,

I write regarding the United States Forest Service's (USFS) implementation of the Republican passed law, signed by the president on July 4, 2025. In an effort to avoid further, unnecessary harm to rural communities in Oregon and throughout the country, I urge you to implement the timber sales and long-term timber contracting authorities under section 50301 in a manner that remains consistent with 16 U.S.C. 500 and the well-established USFS revenue sharing authorities.

For well over a century, revenue generated on USFS lands has been shared with counties that host these forests. The revenue sharing arrangement was created to support essential services in these counties that the USFS and visitors alike benefit from, like roads, schools and law enforcement. This funding proved so critical that when revenue generated on federal forest lands declined in the 1990s, it became clear a safety net was needed. In response, I authored the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (SRS) that provided stable payments to counties and mitigated vulnerability to fluctuating timber harvest volumes and markets. Unfortunately, SRS lapsed at the end of fiscal year 2023 and the Republican-controlled House of Representatives has twice failed to pass bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the program which received unanimous support in the Senate. With its lapse, the traditional revenue sharing laws remain in place. While the effort to reauthorize SRS continues, the lapse highlights the critical need to continue sharing receipts-based revenue with counties.

Unfortunately despite my best efforts, section 50301 did not reference revenue sharing. This has caused considerable angst among counties who receive revenue pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 500. Communities are afraid you may misinterpret section 50301 as overriding revenue sharing. While the concern is understandable, it can be dispelled with a response stating that the USFS will continue to share revenue generated by long-term contracting with the counties, pursuant to existing law.

The courts have decided that Congress needs to be explicit when it intends to repeal a law. In this case, Congress made no reference to 16 U.S.C. 500. While section 50301(a)(3)(C) directs "any monies" received from the long-term contracts authorized to be deposited in the general fund of the Treasury, this is not incompatible with the revenue sharing requirement in 16 U.S.C. 500.

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I ask that you provide a written response by September 8, 2025 stating your intent to continue to share revenue derived from the authorities in section 50301 in the same way you do with more traditional timber sales. I would also ask that you work diligently to clearly communicate this information directly to all affected communities. If you cannot provide that assurance because the USFS does not agree it has the authority to do so, I request a detailed explanation of the justification for departing from this longstanding practice that has been so essential to the health and vitality of the rural backbone of our nation. I also ask that this explanation be accompanied with technical assistance detailing what legislative fix would prevent that harmful outcome.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator

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