

NACo releases new Web video at 2015 Legislative Conference



More than 1,500 county officials are in Washington, D.C. to meet with members of the Administration and Congress on key issues like transportation, municipal bonds, the environment and public lands as part of NACo's annual Legislative Conference Feb. 21–25. They are taking their message to Congress and the White House emphasizing that federal policies matter to county government and county government matters to America.

"Counties and residents feel the effects of countless decisions made in Washington," said NACo President Riki Hokama, council member, Maui County, Hawai'i. "We are here to work with our federal partners since their actions profoundly impact everyday Americans on the ground, where they live and work."

Vice President Joe Biden, who began his political career as a New Castle County, Del. council member, is slated to address conference attendees on Monday, Feb. 23.

In meetings with lawmakers and Administration officials, county

leaders outlined a number of key federal policy priorities for counties including:

- preserving the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds
- fixing the Highway Trust Fund and passing a long-term surface transportation authorization bill
- ensuring full funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes and Secure Rural Schools programs
- enabling counties to collect existing sales taxes on remote and online sales
- creating a clear, workable definition of "waters of the U.S."

See CONFERENCE page 5

High court to examine use of 'excessive force'

By LISA SORONEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
STATE AND LOCAL LEGAL CENTER

Since the 1980s, the U.S. Supreme Court has been clear: a pretrial detainee's right to be free from excessive force derives from the 14th Amendment's Due Process Clause. But what does that mean exactly? The high court will lay out the specifics in *Kingsley v. Hendrickson*.

The constitutional standard for the use of excessive force depends on whether a person is an arrestee, a pretrial detainee or a sentenced inmate. The Fourth Amendment applies to arrestees, the 14th Amendment's Due Process Clause applies to pretrial detainees, and the Eighth Amendment applies to those convicted.

Not surprisingly, the standard that applies to arrestees is less deferential to law enforcement than the standard that applies to those who

See FORCE page 2



Photo by Michael Henninger Copyright (c) Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 2015, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission. Investigators look over the scene Feb. 17 in Fayette County, W.V. where a train derailed near the Kanawha River on Feb. 16.

'Work Keys' unlock job opportunities

By CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER



Counties across the country are riding the wave of a growing trend of certifying their communities as "Work Ready."

Nationwide, there are several state-based work-ready initiatives—to demonstrate that their counties' workforce has the skills needed by employers (See "Kentucky Counties Work Ready," County News, Dec. 15, 2014). These top-down efforts are initiated and supported by governors and state economic development officials.

But counties don't have to wait for their states to award work-ready credentials, according to ACT, a nonprofit trust, best known its college admissions exam.

Counties such as Gregg County, Texas and Sweetwater County, Wyo. have taken it upon themselves to get their communities recognized under ACT's Certified Work Ready Communities initiative.

When the program began in 2011, it was only open to states, which then got their counties involved. Now, since 2013, individual counties are able to apply on their own.

"We've got counties and regions that felt such a need to get this initiative up and running, that they didn't want to wait for their state," said Debra Lyons, ACT's vice president for community and economic development.

States or ACT can designate counties as work-ready based on the number of individuals in the local workforce who have earned ACT's National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC)—and the extent to which businesses recognize, prefer or recommend the certification as a factor in hiring decisions.

Using its Work Keys testing—which includes applied math, reading for information and locating information—ACT evaluates individuals' career readiness for jobs that rely on those skills, which Lyons said ACT research has shown are required for most "middle-skilled"

jobs. In the aggregate, at the workforce level, economic developers can use credential attainment numbers as a selling point.

"It's a credential that companies consider in their location and

See WORK KEY page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



America's public lands counties face challenges born of beautiful vistas, constricted tax bases and dwindling federal support. See inside to read County News' special Hot Topics report on the unique issues they face. ▶ Page 7

County officials could face lawsuits

FORCE from page 1

have been convicted. Force against an arrestee must be “objectively reasonable,” while force against a sentenced inmate must merely not be “cruel and unusual.”

The Supreme Court has never defined the substantive standard for excessive force claims by pretrial detainees.

Pretrial detainee Michael Kingsley alleges two police officers used excessive force against him when they transferred him to a different cell so they could remove a piece of paper covering the light over his bed, which he refused to remove. In the process, his feet smacked against the bedframe, an officer knelt him in the back, he was Tasered so his handcuffs could be removed, and he claims an officer smashed his head against the concrete bunk.

At trial, the jury instruction stated that for Kingsley to win his excessive force case he had to prove that the officers acted “recklessly.” Kingsley claims that the jury instruction should have been less deferential to the officers and that he should have only had to prove that they failed to act “objectively reasonable.”

The 7th U.S. Circuit Court concluded that the jury instruction was adequate. The court had previously said that force under the Due Process Clause must “incorporate some measure of subjective intent” and must be at least reckless. And the 7th Circuit, in some cases, had applied the Eighth Amendment standard.

What's at Stake

State and local government officials can be sued for money damages for constitutional violations. A legal standard more deferential to government officials, such as police, means that successful pretrial detainee excessive-force lawsuits would be less likely. More significantly, different excessive force standards for pretrial detainees and sentenced inmates, who are often housed in the same facility, would be difficult for correctional officers to comply with.

After all, correctional officers must make split-second decisions regarding the use of force and may not know whether an incarcerated person is a pretrial detainee or has been convicted.

County provides employees tools for future

By JONATHAN KADLEC
ASSISTANT TREASURER-TAX COLLECTOR
SONOMA COUNTY, CALIF.

How important is saving for retirement? It seems like we either hear about it every day on the news or see it on the Internet. All we seem to hear is how we as Americans don't save enough, that we need to save more. In both the public and private sectors, the retirement benefit landscape is transitioning to a system that is shifting responsibility away from employers towards individual employees.

Defined benefit programs are giving way to defined contribution plans which places the burden of planning for retirement more squarely on the employee. But

what seems to still be missing is a comprehensive approach to providing the education and tools needed to enable a successful transition. Employees need to take control of planning for their own future retirement needs, and employers should consider providing the tools and resources to make it happen.

In Sonoma County, Calif., we have been working for the last year to begin providing our employees with a more robust and comprehensive approach to retirement planning education—with a focus on the role that our 457-401(a) plan can play. We're all familiar with National Save for Retirement Week (or at least we should be), which provides a well deserved spotlight on the issue. However, during NSFRW

and beyond what employers do to promote the education and financial literacy of their employees is what really matters.

In Sonoma County, we've formed a working team that includes our 457-401(a) plan administration, human resources department and retirement system. Plus, we included our 457-401(a) plan provider, Nationwide. Together, the team formulated a series of 20 workshops that were given in two locations throughout the week to maximize the opportunity for employee participation. Our goal was to create a comprehensive set of workshops to address retirement health care costs, optimization of social security benefits and the role of the defined benefit and 457 plans.

In essence, we wanted to reduce the noise and confusion surrounding retirement planning and bring these issues into focus for our individual employees. Classes included Planning for Retirement 101, Retirement: Getting from Here to There, Planning for Health Care in Retirement, Approaching Retirement, and Investor Checkup. Attendance was very healthy, with 196 employees from 25 departments attending the workshops.

In addition to the workshops, starting in July 2014, Sonoma County began incentivizing individual savings with a new Incentive Retirement Savings Plan (IRSP) in which employees are able to receive a 1 percent matching contribution to their 401(a) plan account if they make at least a 1 percent contribution to their 457 account.

In the first six months of the IRSP, our employee participation rate in the 457-401(a) plan increased by 10 percent and now a total of 2,394 employees (a 64 percent participation rate of the County's 3,756 employees) are making voluntary contributions to their retirement savings account. This equates to a \$600,000 annual increase in savings contributions

See FUTURE page 5

MacArthur offers grants to spur new ways to reduce incarceration rates

The MacArthur Foundation has announced the Safety and Justice Challenge, a five-year \$75 million investment to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails. Central to the challenge is a competition that will fund 20 jurisdictions working to reduce incarceration and improve the way their local criminal justice systems function.

The challenge aims to improve local criminal justice systems across the country and safely reduce jail incarceration, with a particular focus on addressing disproportionate impact on low-income individuals and communities of color.

The number of annual jail admissions has nearly doubled since 1983, from 6 million to 11.7 million in 2013. This is 19 times higher than the number of those sent to prison. African-Americans are jailed at nearly four times the rate of white Americans, and three out of five



people in jails are legally presumed innocent—they are awaiting trial or resolution of their cases through plea negotiation but are simply too poor to post even low bail.

Selected sites will develop and showcase new and better ways of targeting resources, more effective risk-assessment to determine if confinement is appropriate and better public safety returns and social outcomes.

The competition will unfold in two phases: in May, up to 20 jurisdictions will receive a grant of \$150,000 to support an intensive six-month planning process, during which they will rigorously examine how their jails are being used and what strategies would reduce the inappropriate

use of jail without compromising public safety. Each site will produce a plan for implementing these reforms. Then, beginning in 2016, as many as 10 of these jurisdictions will be selected for a second round of funding of up to \$2 million to support implementation of their jail reduction plans.

More information about the Safety and Justice Challenge, including the competition's request for proposals and instructions on how to apply, is available at www.safetyandjusticechallenge.org. Applications are due March 31, 2015, by 9 p.m. EDT.

The MacArthur Foundation and Kathy Rowings, justice program manager, contributed.

Learn more about the competition

For further guidance, the MacArthur Foundation will host three live webinars to walk applicants through how the competition will work and answer questions about the application process. The webinars will take place on the dates below; registration is necessary to participate. To register, send an email to safetyandjustice@macfound.org and indicate which webinar you plan to attend:

- Wednesday, Feb. 25, 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. EST
- Thursday, Feb. 26, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. EST
- Tuesday, March 3, 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. EST

For further updates, follow the Safety and Justice Challenge on Twitter http://www.twitter.com/Safety_Justice and on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/SafetyAndJusticeChallenge>.

Quick Takes

Counties with Top Cow's Milk Sales

FIGURES IN BILLIONS • 2012

Tulare County, Calif.	\$1.8
Merced County, Calif.	\$1.1
Gooding County, Idaho	\$0.7
Stanislaus County, Calif.	\$0.7
Kings County, Calif.	\$0.6

Does not include counties withheld to avoid disclosing individual data.

USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture

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Custom performance management system helps counties

By **BILL HOLEN**
COMMISSIONER
ARAPAHOE COUNTY, COLO.



Bill Holen

In an era of increasing demand for quality government services and flat revenues, it is vital to enhance and optimize performance. Performance management enables government to excel at providing quality services to its citizens in the most efficient and effective way possible. Furthermore, performance management relies on measurement and data to inform decision making, which increases overall transparency and accountability.

In late 2012, the leadership of Arapahoe County decided to create an Office of Performance Management to oversee all strategy management, performance measurement and process improvement efforts for the 16 county departments and elected offices.

Building on concepts found in the Balanced Scorecard, a strategic

believe the county is headed in the right direction, a 40 percent improvement over baseline figures.

In addition to feedback from citizens and employees, the county's strategic initiatives have had some noteworthy successes as well.

For example, Arapahoe County has embarked on a comprehensive, coordinated Continuity of Operations Planning effort for emergency

The custom Arapahoe County Performance Management Capability, titled Plan-Implement-Evaluate, or PIE, fosters a proactive and continuous process that helps improve decision making on a day-to-day basis and facilitates long-term planning.

In the plan phase, departments use measurement data to help inform short-term decisions and long-term strategies (such as where are they going and what changes need to be made).

In the implement phase, departments translate their plans into action.

In the evaluate phase, departments collect and analyze data about their activities to determine progress and performance and to plan their next steps.

The county turns the PIE capability into action through the Performance Management Framework, the blueprint for developing and managing a countywide or department scorecard.

Each level of the organization — from countywide to elected office and department, to division and program — uses a scorecard for performance management. The scorecard is a tool used to define and monitor the success of an organization's operations and long-term strategy.

"Our scorecard enables us to continuously improve as we have created performance standards and targets that clarify responsibilities, set clear goals, and articulate our performance to our customers," said Matthew Crane, Arapahoe's county clerk and recorder.

The structure of the framework formalizes the process of transforming the big "pie in the sky" ideas about an organization into actionable, measureable components. The framework approaches performance from two perspectives — operations and strategy.

From the operational perspective, the organization executes core functions and programs in support of the mission; operations define what they do, how they do it and how they can improve.

From the strategic perspective, the organization identifies the goals and outcomes which lead to the

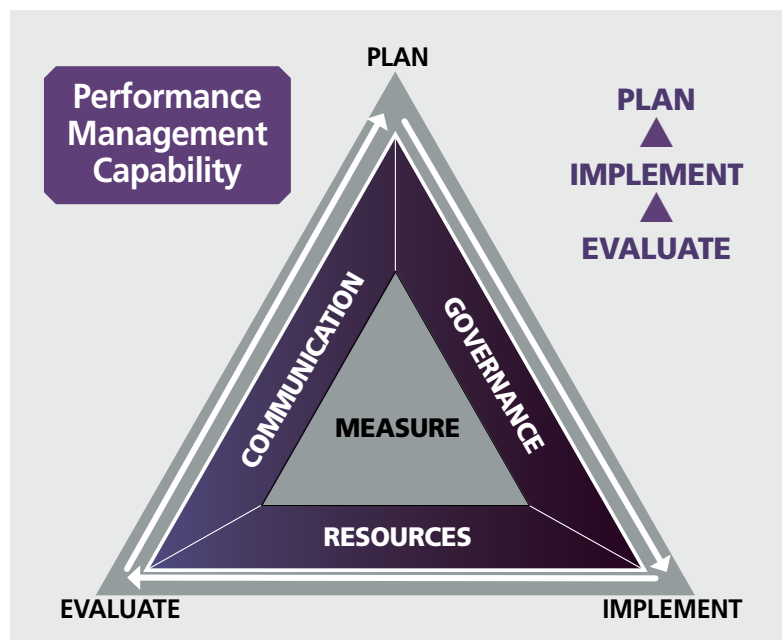
vision; strategy defines where they want to go, how they will get there and what success will look like. Both operations and strategy cascade down into result measures which provide opportunities to report and review performance.

Arapahoe County is becoming a performance-based organization where decisions are informed by measureable data. It is using performance management to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness, which is creating a new sense of awareness and is

driving decisions that are making a positive difference.

"Align Arapahoe is our way to continue to strengthen our organization through better communication, cooperation, and teamwork and by keeping the citizen's needs at the center of our work," said Commissioner Nancy Sharpe.

Arapahoe County, Colo. is a commission form of government located in the Denver metro area, with a population of more than 607,000 residents and an operating budget of \$325 million.



planning and management system, and the Baldrige Criteria, the Office of Performance Management developed a customized capability and framework.

The customization was critical to ensure the relevance of performance management to the employees and citizens.

The carefully designed strategy and scorecard — called Align Arapahoe — has already started to show strong evidence of success. Employee and citizen surveys conducted before and after performance management efforts began at Arapahoe County have provided some good insights.

For example, 91 percent of employees now understand how their work contributes to their office or department's goals and mission, which is an 82 percent improvement over baseline survey figures. Additionally, 71 percent of citizens

preparedness in all of its offices and departments, the first effort of its kind in Colorado.

The county also began pursuing economic development by pairing with local partners, and in 2014, roughly 20 percent of all jobs added in the county were through these partners. These new jobs resulted in \$106 million in initial earnings added to the economy.

The county is currently pursuing an "online, not in-line" services strategy and in 2014 added two new digital services. Through advance online ticket sales, the county generated nearly \$68,000 in revenue before the county fair opened its doors. Additionally, the county developed online property tax appeals and since its inception, 8 percent of property tax appeals have been filed online, with steady utilization growth expected in the future.

Profiles in Service

Toni Carter

Chair
Human Services and Education Steering Committee
Commissioner, Ramsey County, Minn.

Number of years active in NACo: 10

Years in public service: 13 (three as a school board member)

Occupation: Ramsey County commissioner

Education: Carleton College and Concordia University-Saint Paul, bachelor's and teacher's certificate

The hardest thing I've ever done: Among the most difficult and most meaningful of my work have been leadership of key collaborations that bring systems and community stakeholders together to review and direct critical decisions and outcomes of our broad efforts for children including co-chairing the Ramsey County Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative and the Minnesota Governor's Task Force on the Protection of Children.

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Abraham Lincoln, Zora Neale Hurston, Hubert H. Humphrey.

A dream I have is to: ensure that my grandchildren grow up interacting in strong, healthy and prosperous intercultural communities.

You'd be surprised to learn that I: am also a performing artist.

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: snorkeling in the Pacific Ocean, side-by-side with dolphins.

My favorite way to relax is: being active outdoors with family or reading a great book from cover to cover.

I'm most proud of: working together with my husband Melvin, our family and neighbors in a strong tradition of caring, engaging and building community.

Every morning I read: A message from the *Daily Bread*.

My favorite meal is: turkey, beans and quinoa.

My pet peeve is: When people say and believe the words "I can't" or "it will never change."

My motto is: "Whatever you can do, or believe you can, begin it. Boldness has genius and power and magic in it. Begin it today!" — Goethe

The last book I read was: *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson.

My favorite movie is: *Erin Brockovich*.

My favorite music is: Stevie Wonder, *Songs in the Key of Life*.

My favorite president is: Barack Obama.

My county is a NACo member because: we believe that counties working together can greatly affect our success as a nation of communities in which we want to live.

CORRECTION

► The Jan. 26 County News article, "Counties not waiting for federal minimum wage hike," erroneously listed Dona Ana County, N.M. as among the counties raising the local minimum wage or considering it. Las Cruces, the county seat, has raised its minimum wage.

Workforce certification sets communities apart in race for economic development

WORK KEY from page 1

expansion decisions, according to Mark Arend, editor in chief of *Site Selection* magazine.

"It's a quantifiable measure of how many workers there are with skills they may be looking for," he said. "States and counties really should be doing this because it separates communities that talk about their skill availability and communities that can actually demonstrate their available skill sets.

"It means that those states are applying the resources in the workforce development area at a rate that should be of interest to corporate site selectors."

There are no direct costs charged by ACT to counties to participate, but local administration of the tests is often subsidized by grants. And in some cases, employees pay to take the test, whose "wholesale" cost is about \$30 per person, Lyons said. Costs can vary from county to county.

To launch a program, counties have to form a local leadership team, comprising stakeholders and thought leaders, and other program "champions." Lyons said interested counties can apply online to be included in the next group to participate in ACT's Work Ready Communities Academy, to be scheduled for sometime this fall. The four sessions over 12 months are free, but participants are responsible for their travel and lodging. There they will learn about the

WorkKeys system, which comprises job analysis, assessments, training and curriculum, and certification.

Sweetwater County (pop. 43,800) kicked off its program in September 2014 with the support of economic development officials, the County Commission — which endorsed the program with a resolution — educational institutions, business leaders and major employers, according to Karla Leach, Ed.D., president of Western Wyoming Community College.

"We're in the process of educating our employers about this tool," she said.

Gregg County's (pop. 121,700) initiative started a few months earlier, in June. There, where Susan Gill is executive director of the Longview Economic Development Corp., the program is off to a good start, after a dry run a few years earlier.

"We started with the Work Keys assessment system in 2008 with two companies as pilots," she said, "because they were receiving a large number of applicants from the local workforce center, but they weren't really a good match. The employers would have like 50 prospects, and two of them were interview material for the position."

Gill added that in the county there are three major employers who have integrated the Work Keys assessments into their hiring process. For any participating county, ACT's Work Ready Communities website



Photo by Daniel Prioleau/Longview News-Journal

Fred McConnel, economic development liaison with ACT Work Ready Communities, speaks to a group of local business and government leaders, June 18, 2014, in Gregg County (Longview), Texas.

displays a list of employers in an area who recognize the credential, as well as the number of individuals who have achieved one of four levels of NCRC certification, based on test results: bronze, silver, gold or platinum.

Industry leaders and human resources professionals, in feedback to ACT, have described their experiences with the work ready certification program.

David Williams, a vice president with NW Natural, an Oregon natural

gas utility, said, "We have profiled all of our non-bargaining positions. We require that applicants take the assessments and pass the minimum requirements for each job. In our hiring efforts, we advertise a preference

for the ACT NCRC from applicants."

Nationally, there are eight state-led initiatives and 13 states with dozens of county-level programs, Lyons said, and more than 7,500 U.S. employers endorse the Work Ready Community Initiative.

"In order to really close the skills gap," she added, "it's going to take partners at the community and county level across the country, working together with a common framework we call link, align and match — linking education and workforce development together, aligning workforce goals to economic development and matching people to jobs."

Interested counties can contact ACT now, Lyons said. "The more time counties spend in completing the application and building their team, I think, the more prepared they are to actually start the program and launch a successful initiative. So today is the right time for a county to reach out to us."

**See this article online at www.countynews.org for links to the application process for the Work Ready Communities initiative.*

2015 ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Does your county have an innovative program that improves county government and increases services to county residents?

For 45 years, NACo has recognized outstanding efforts in county government through the Achievement Awards Program. Awards are given in 21 different categories including Children and Youth, Criminal Justice, County Administration, health and many more. For more information on this year's awards cycle and to begin your application visit: www.naco.org/achievementawards

Questions? Contact awards@naco.org
Deadline: March 27 11:59 p.m. EDT

NACo National Association of Counties

What's in a Seal?



■ Cape May County, N.J.

On March 16, 1927, Cape May Freeholder Director Joseph G. Champion presented a design for an official county seal to the Board of Freeholders. The design had been made by Edwards and Green of Philadelphia, an architectural company that went out of business in 1956. Champion wished to have the design installed in the floor of the new court house building on Main Street in Cape May Court House. The design was accepted and on May 1, 1927, it became the official seal of Cape May County.

It is believed the images depicted on the seal represent the history of the county including the *Half Moon*, Henry Hudson's ship. Hudson is credited with discovering Cape May County for the Dutch in the early 1600s. The complex section surrounding the seal includes depictions of anchors and stylized dolphins or fish to represent the rich maritime tradition in Cape May.

The images above them stand for flower blossoms, either holly or cedar, two prevalent trees in the county. Cedar also was once a significant source of industry for Cape May, back in the 1800s. This industrial mindset is reinforced by the beehives, which stand for Cape May's emphasis on a strong work ethic.

Additionally, the images of back-to-back cornucopias along the seal's border pay tribute to Cape May's history as an agricultural hub in the 1920s. On the left side in the center, a stack of books is meant to symbolize the importance of education and pursuit for knowledge.

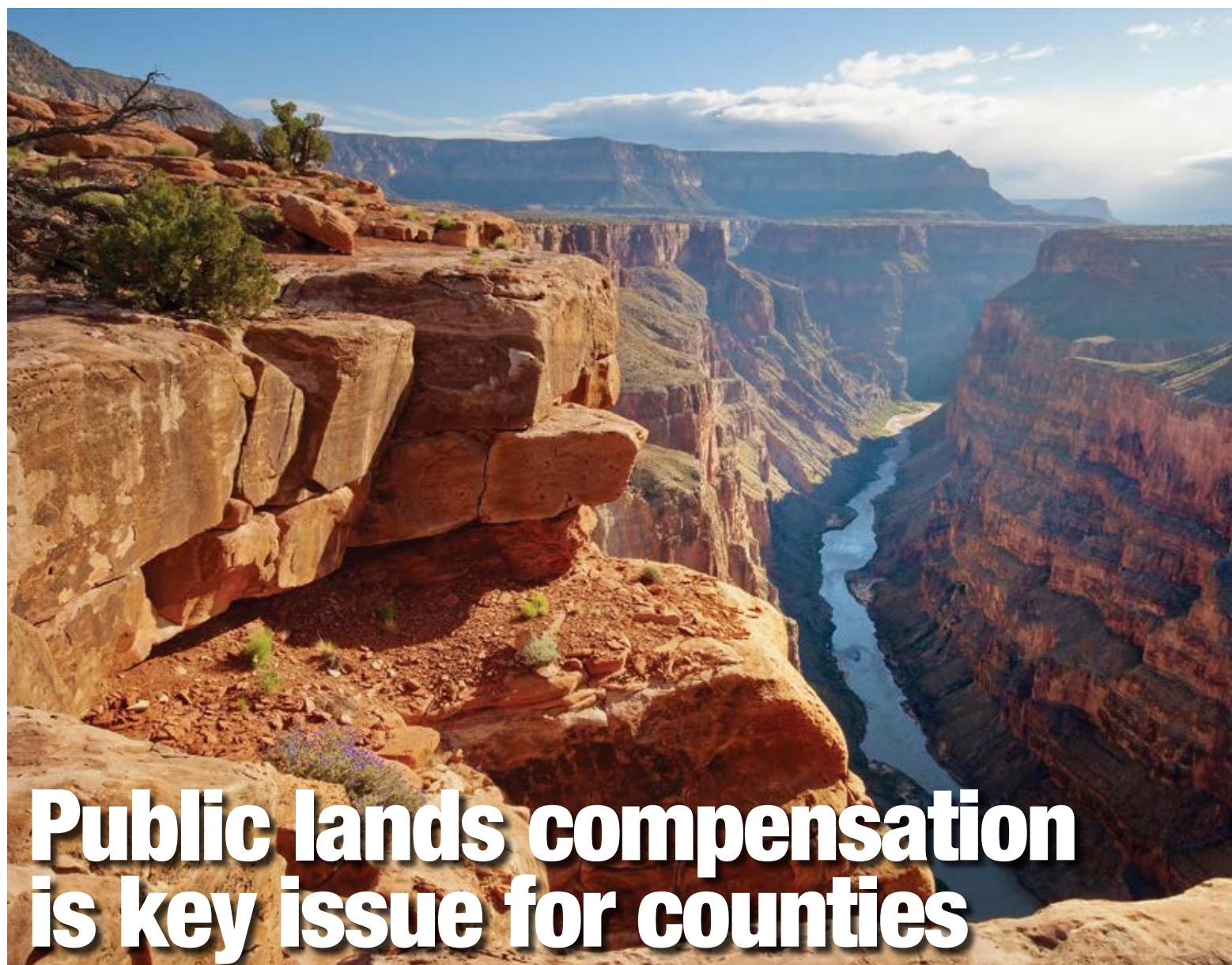
The bottom of the border is somewhat of a mystery to Cape May historians, but it is rumored that it depicts a stylized cupola that vaguely mirrors the one on the Cape May County courthouse.

The Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders contributed.

FEBRUARY 23, 2015

IN THIS EDITION →

- Changing search and rescue missions rely on volunteers ▶ PAGE 2
- Public lands a hotbed for illegal 'grows' ▶ PAGE 3
- A Necessary Relationship: Counties, FS and BLM ▶ PAGE 4
- Snapshot: Challenges and Solutions in One Public Lands County ▶ PAGE 7



Public lands compensation is key issue for counties

BY CHARLES TAYLOR
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

2014 was a good news-bad news year for public lands counties — those that receive payments from the federal government for nontaxable federal lands within their borders.

And the good news was only temporary.

Congress funded the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program for FY15 — but not beyond — to the tune of \$442 million. But it didn't make the program permanent, as counties desired, that is, a multi-year program not subject to the vagaries of annual appropriations.

PILT compensates counties containing extensive federal land holdings because that acreage is exempt from local taxation. The funds support counties' costs of providing fire protection, law enforcement and search and rescue operations, among others.

The bad news was that a related federal program, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-determination Act, SRS for short, expired last September and wasn't reauthorized. SRS "county payments" benefit counties — flush with nontaxable federal forestland — to help fund schools, roads and law enforcement, and invest in projects that enhance forest health.

"Counties are in the dilemma of already being into our budget year and having that source of funding kind of in limbo," said Ron Walter, a Chelan County, Wash. commissioner and chairman of NACo's Public Lands Steering Committee.

He said counties' short-term priority is securing SRS funding for an additional year. "But I think it's also important that we work with this new Congress for a long-term solution for both PILT and SRS, and forest management. They all tie together."

In 2014, 41 states and Puerto Rico received \$300 million in SRS payments. This year, under the 1908 Act, they'll receive payments totaling about \$50.4 million, according to the Forest Service.

In some counties, 80 to 90 percent of the land is federally owned. The federal agencies that manage the vast majority of these lands are: the Bureau of Land Management, 248 million acres; the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, 193 million acres; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 89 million acres; and the National Park Service, 80 million acres.

Instead of receiving SRS payments this year, forested counties

will get a fraction of what they did in 2014, under what's known as the 25 Percent Fund Act of 1908, a precursor of SRS. In 2014, 41 states and Puerto Rico received \$300 million in SRS payments. This year, under the 1908 Act, they'll receive payments totaling about \$50.4 million, according to the Forest Service. Unlike SRS, the 1908 Act payments can only be used for schools and roads.

"The federal government is asking counties to be innovative and creative and come up with their own revenue," said Liz Archuleta, a Coconino County, Ariz. supervisor and chair of NACo's Public Lands Steering Committee's payments subcommittee. "We can't come up with our own revenue when it comes to federal lands," she added.

■ See LANDS page H6

USFS Chief Thomas Tidwell Targets Forest Service challenges



The National Forests comprise 190 million acres in 155 sites across the country. In charge is U.S. Forest Chief Thomas Tidwell. County News interviewed the chief for this special Hot Topics report.

CN: What are the greatest opportunities and challenges facing the Forest Service as it works toward its mission to actively and sustainably manage forest lands for multiple-uses?

The greatest challenge currently facing the Forest Service is addressing the risk of catastrophic fire. There are three main challenges that require a comprehensive plan of action to fully address the risks.

The first challenge is to provide a stable source of funding for wildland fire suppression while minimizing destabilizing transfer of funds from non-fire programs. The second is to increase the capacity for active management of federal lands. Increased land management activities will have many benefits including reduction in wildland fire risks, improved water quality and quantity, and enhanced carbon sequestration.

■ See INTERVIEW page H5

Changing search and rescue missions rely on volunteers

By CHARLIE BAN
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Darkness falls on hikers too quickly after staying on a Yavapai County, Ariz. mountain to watch a sunset. A couple, stranded for six days on a Johnson County, Wyo. mountain, burns their engagement ring box for kindling as temperatures plummet. A faint call from someone's dying cell phone gives Skamania County, Wash. deputies a vague idea of where to start looking in the overgrown federal forest.

"Our main work is, despite common myths, finding good people that had a bad day. They weren't out doing stupid things," said Jason Jarrett, who coordinates Gallatin County, Mont.'s search and rescue operation, which averages 100 missions a year, primarily for snowmobilers, hikers and skiers. "They were out for a hike and took a bad step and became injured. The difference is they might be able to see town from where they are, but getting back is totally different. You can't crawl back from a lot of places in our county."

The landscape is too rugged. They need help.

What has Changed?

County search and rescue

personnel say their tasks have changed in recent years, gotten more complex, and they frequently point to technology as a catalyst.

The Los Angeles County, Calif. Sheriff's Search and Rescue program cited the social media postings of videos showing hikers performing high-risk outdoor adventures when breaking down 2014's record year for rescue missions, which saw a 20-percent increase from 2013's totals. The county worked with the Forest Service to shut off access to scenic waterfalls in Angeles National Forest after five deaths there in recent years.

In outdoors-obsessed Deschutes County, Ore., Lt. Bryan Husband, of the sheriff's office's special services unit, points to smartphone proliferation and dependence.

"As folks get more reliant on cellphones, they're feeling more secure in their thought, 'If I do get lost, I have this handy-dandy GPS device, I can dial 911,'" he said. "They're great devices, we promote GPS use, but sometimes, in our mountainous areas, there are spots that aren't covered. You might not be able to get a signal for your phone. That makes rescue missions a little more challenging, because people are pushing the envelope as to where they're going."



Photo by Rick Hawkinson

The crew of the Snohomish County Sheriff's Huey, Snowhawk 10 search and rescue helicopter, briefs before a flight.

SpeedRead » » »

- » Technology makes exploring back country more accessible and perilous
- » Federally owned land means limited property tax revenue to fund search and rescue
- » Volunteers are crucial to staffing search and rescue operations and keeping costs down

Kane County, Utah has seen its roughly 20 annual search and rescue operations get more complicated in recent years.

"We've gone from searching for lost deer hunters to having to look for people who are out there for recreation," said Allen Alldredge, chief deputy and director of emergency services for the county.

That means they're hiking with a purpose and exploring the canyons in the nearly 2.3 million acres of land owned the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service and the Forest Service.

"Our biggest problem in searching is the sheer vastness of the areas," he said. "We don't always have road access, so that means we have to use our aerial assets."

Those include fixed-wing plane drones and contracted helicopters, which run about \$1,800 an hour to scour his county's landscape, which ranges from mountains to desert.

"The situations the recreational hikers and climbers get into require a little more technical expertise," he added. "We have to rappel to get to them, haul them out on ropes."

Fortunately, Kane County hasn't had to send out any search and rescue

teams for major operations in the last six months.

Two years ago, three visitors died at the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, a rock formation known popularly as "The Wave," where temperatures reaching 115 degrees in the summer are magnified by the sandstone. The BLM only issues 20 hiking permits a day for the monument, which Alldredge said impels recipients to make use of them, regardless of conditions.

"It creates a problem that people who get a ticket are going no matter what; a lot aren't prepared for how rough it's going to be, how much they have to prepare."

Running up the Tab

With a \$300 per-search average, Alldredge said the Kane County's volunteer search and rescue corps' budget has not been stretched. That stretch would come from the fact that those federal lands don't generate property tax revenue that funds county treasuries and Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools Act (SRS) funding don't cut it.

That leaves counties footing a large portion of the bill. Like in Idaho County Idaho, when a hiker decided to stay at his camp along the Snake River, but not tell his friends — who were expecting him — that he was adding three days to his trip.

"When he didn't come back, his friends told us he was missing," said Commissioner Jim Chmelik. "We spent 36 hours looking for him until we found him at his campsite on the beach."

The search cost \$350,000, mostly for contracting helicopters, which ran several hundred dollars per hour, and three jet boats up and down the river to the tune of \$200 per hour.

"That's money we're not using for other things in the county," Chmelik said.

NACo's Public Lands Steering Committee is introducing a resolution to amend Title III of SRS to include reimbursement to counties for police patrol expenditures on eligible federal Forest Service and BLM lands.

Costs vary with territory. The local market, including the number of contractors, dictates the price, and the amount of time needed to complete a search depends on the territory being searched.

Other government agencies can provide some assistance, when available and appropriate. In the 1990s, Skamania County had plenty of help with aerial searches from nearby military installations. Overseas deployments since 2001, however, have left the county without that option.

"We'll get some help from the Forest Service, but it's not their job, nor should it be," Jarrett said of searches in Gallatin County. "They manage the forest, we do the searches."

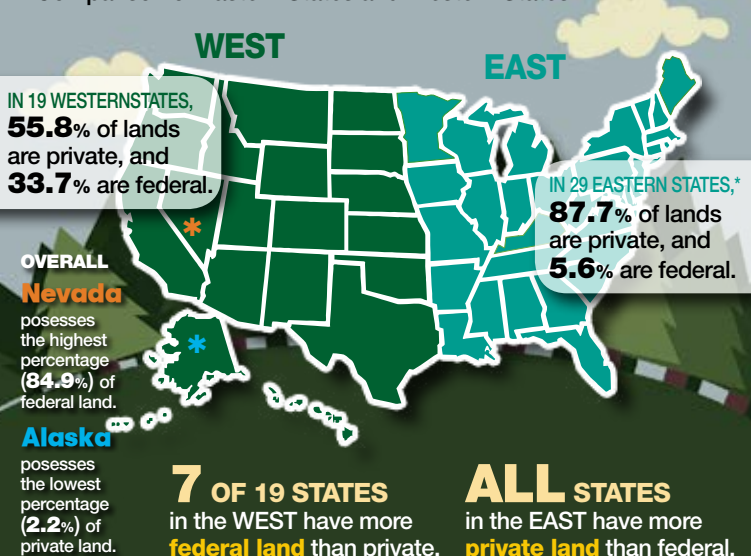
When SRS expired in 2014, a year after paying \$300 million to timber-producing counties nationwide, Skamania County lost \$1.5 million from its \$9.8 million overall budget. Only 2 percent of the county's land is fully taxable, but the rest of the more than 1 million acres is mostly dense Forest Service land. Search, rescue and recovery operations on that land are coordinated by the sheriff's office, which lost almost 20 percent of its staff due to budget cuts.

"When you have multi-day searches, it becomes a lot to pay overtime for deputies," said John Carlson, the county's director of emergency management. "We're

■ See RESCUE page H3

PRIVATE LANDS VS. FEDERAL LANDS

A Comparison of Eastern States and Western States *



* RI and CT are excluded on the basis of having no functional county government.



Public lands a hotbed for illegal cannabis 'grows'

By BEVERLY ANNE SCHLOTTERBECK
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

They have names like "Operation Mountain Sweep" or "Full Court Press." In the national forests and national parks where they occur, millions of illegal cannabis plants are destroyed, dozens of weapons seized and hundreds of arrests made.

Operation Mountain Sweep, a two-month campaign during the height of the summer growing season in 2012, involved law enforcement activity on public lands in Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington. Federal, state and local law enforcement officers eradicated more than 726,000 plants with an estimated street value of \$1.45 billion, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Altogether that year, 3.6 million plants were removed from 5,000 illegal outdoor grow sites — more than 40 percent of which were in public lands.

Hardest hit is California with its 21 National Forests and 26 National



Photos courtesy of Rick Fleming, High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew

Trash marks the camp site at an illegal marijuana "grow" on public lands.

Parks. It leads the pack for the most destroyed outdoor marijuana grow sites and seized assets, some \$11 million in 2013 from both public and private lands.

California may be the hardest hit, but it's not alone. Significant

illegal marijuana cultivation happens across the country in states like Kentucky, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.

In the West, it's often Mexican cartels that grow weed in the national forests and parks that



Volunteers get ready to remove irrigation piping and bagged trash from the same site.

sit in a county's backyard. They recruit undocumented immigrants to man and protect the plants that can grow as tall as 10 to 13 feet, yet remain hidden in the forests, only seen from the air.

These are man camps with

weapons and nasty housekeeping. The 2013 Full Court Press in Lake and Mendocino counties, Calif., home to the Mendocino National Forest, destroyed 56 sites and netted 32 guns, 23 tons of trash, more than a ton of fertilizer, 57 pounds of poisons for killing pests and rodents, and 22 miles of irrigation piping, according to a news release from the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of California.

Those who work to clean up grow sites after they've been shut down bitterly note the damage. Rick Fleming, who leads cleanups

■ See SWEEP page H6

Volunteer S&R teams crucial to meeting budgets

■ RESCUE from page H2

staffed largely by volunteers, but a law enforcement officer has to be in charge."

Help with Searches and Costs

Those volunteers help counties stay under budget for search and rescue operations. In 2012, the Deschutes County, Ore. search and rescue team went on 228 missions, and volunteers contributed 26,702 hours of work. The national per-hour rate for volunteers in 2010 was \$21.36, meaning those volunteers provided an estimated \$616,869.32 of work that the county did not have to fund.

Despite an average of 100 search and rescue calls, Gallatin County averages \$400 an operation, which brings the county in well under its \$80,000 search and rescue budget.

And where the public lands attract permanent devotees, those teams can be pretty accomplished.

The Deschutes County volunteer training program takes 40 applicants and throughout April, gives trainees 120 hours of instruction, twice a week in the classroom and practical

exercises over the weekends. That covers first aid, wilderness survival and navigation skills and prepares them for rescue in swift water, in mountain areas and on snowmobile.

All the training is done in-house and trainees get an experienced mentor.

"We have people on our team who summited Everest, been on Denali rescue missions," Jarrett said of Gallatin County's corps. Jarrett has done county search and rescue for 19 years, after spending 10 as a park ranger at Yellowstone. "We have a lot of people who enjoy the outdoor, vigorous-activity lifestyle. That's what brings them to Bozeman. Lots of times, we're researching for our own residents — two-thirds of our customers are local."

That said, more than 3 million visitors pass through Gallatin County every year on their way to Yellowstone and fall to Jarrett's crews if they get lost.

Not Just the West

Almost 30 percent of Giles County, Va. is covered by the Jefferson National Forest. Sheriff Morgan Milliron's search and rescue team,

with an active roster of 15 volunteers takes the lead.

"It's really easy to get turned around in the forest," he said. "You drop me in there and I won't know where I am. But you just keep walking and you'll eventually hit a road."

That's a common refrain in the East, where federal lands are less sprawling. In comparison to states in the West, less than 3 percent of counties have more than one-third of their land owned by the federal government and only 13 percent have more than 10 percent federally owned.

In the middle of the Monongahela National Forest, Pocahontas County, W.Va. has the largest proportion of federally owned land in the state, but Sheriff David Jones' crew, in this case, takes a back seat to the Forest Service.

"We fall back to a support role," he said. "We have a very small force, about six people."

Whatever the difficulties, living in counties with large federal land presence is, for many people, a choice.

"People don't come to Bozeman for our beaches," said Gallatin County, Mont.'s Jarrett. "They're here because they want to be active

in the outdoors. Two-thirds of our customers are locals and they get lost or stranded doing the things we value in this county. They accept that paying for search and rescue is part of that."

NATIONAL PARK VISITORS • 2013 AND POPULATIONS OF LOCAL COUNTIES



GRAND CANYON
4,564,840 visitors
• Coconino County, Ariz.
Population: 136,539
• Mohave County, Ariz.
Population: 203,030

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS
9,354,695 visitors
• Swain County, NC
Population: 14,058
• Haywood County, NC
Population: 59,183
• Sevier County, Tenn.
Population: 93,570
• Blount County, Tenn.
Population: 125,099
• Cocke County, Tenn.
Population: 35,479

A Necessary Relationship: Counties, FS and BLM

Two of the largest land managers in the nation are the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (FS), managing more than 400 million acres of between the two agencies. Many local governments, particularly counties, share a close relationship with both agencies resulting in mutual benefits, and sometimes, disparate views and challenges in the managing the nation's natural resources.

From colonial times to the late 1800s, the U.S. government's policy was essentially to dispose of all lands acquired by almost any means into private hands for settlement and development, to both create national wealth and secure sovereignty. Of the 1.8 billion acres of land in the United States, more than two-thirds was transferred from federal ownership to individuals, corporations and states during the westward expansion and settlement.

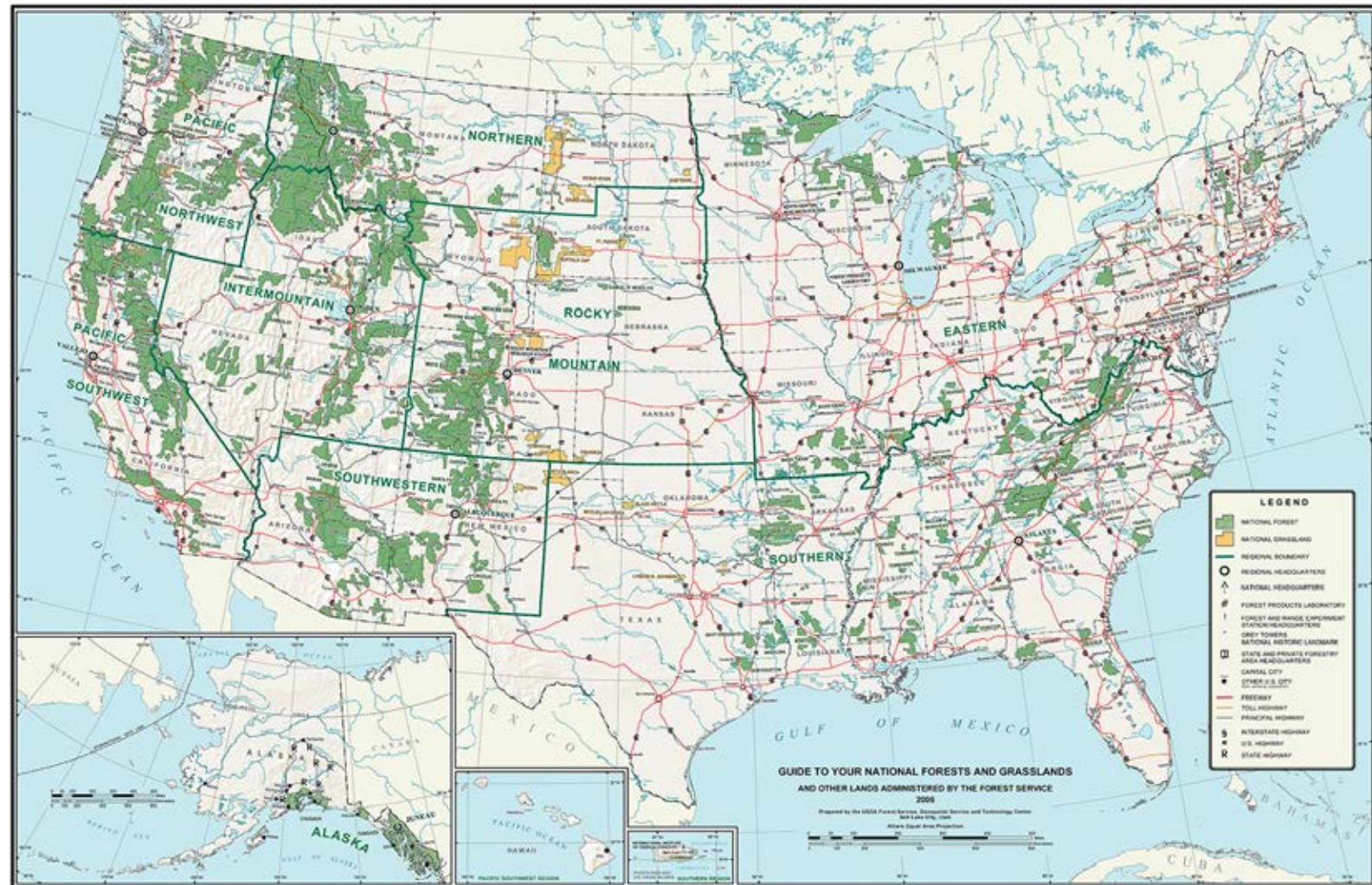
The remaining acres of the nation's "public domain," called by some "the last frontier," were to be used in the national interest and for public benefit. They became national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, military bases and holdings of other federal agencies.

The national forests comprise a 193 million-acre network of public lands that were created during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. National forests began as forest reserves that were established because of national concerns about dwindling natural resources. The majority of these lands, which lie west of the Mississippi, were never in private ownership, but were retained by the federal government to be managed for certain purposes.

The original purposes were to maintain water quality and a continuous supply of timber products. Congress later broadened those purposes to include multiple uses such as wildlife habitat, recreation and grazing. National forests in the East were purchased by the federal government after 1911. Many of these lands had been mismanaged and were in need of restoration. Today, national forests comprise about 26 percent of forested lands in the United States.

Rural Communities and National Forests

Rural communities have had a close relationship with national forests and grasslands, depending on them as a source of wood fiber, water, grazing and recreation. The national forests are not only important to rural communities,



Lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service

but provide significant value to the 83 percent of Americans that live in urban areas. As many as 60 million Americans depend on clean drinking water that originates on national forests. The national forests contribute as much as \$36 billion to America's gross domestic product and support nearly 450,000 jobs.

While many rural communities benefit from national forests, they also experience costs. With more than 160 million visits annually to these public lands, local governments can incur costs associated with search and rescue operations, road maintenance and fire suppression.

Congress recognized the costs and potential loss of revenue local governments could experience from the presence of public lands and put in place several programs to provide payments to state and local governments. These are in the form of revenue sharing from receipts, payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) and receipts from mineral leasing which are paid to states.

In 2000, Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act (SRS). This law initially provided in excess of \$450 million a year to counties adjacent to national forests and certain Oregon and California Grant lands managed by the BLM. Congress has yet to



reauthorize the law, which expired in 2014.

Loss of this program will mean significant fiscal impacts to rural schools and roads, and remove one of the most important mechanisms for local elected officials and citizens to participate in land management projects.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The BLM's roots go back to 1812 when the General Land Office (GLO) was established to oversee disposition of ceded and acquired land of the U.S. government. With homesteading and mining on the rise and increased competition for the various uses of the public lands, conditions on the public range reached such a state by the 1930s that ranchers demanded action.

A major reorganization within the Department of the Interior gave birth to the BLM in 1946 merging



GLO and the U.S. Grazing Service.

The '50s brought even more competition for public resources and by the mid-'60s, there were more than 2,600 public land laws governing the BLM's land management policy. Successive presidents Nixon and Carter had called for public land law reform. And in 1976, Congress responded with the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA), directing that America's public lands should be retained in federal ownership.

The retention policy reversed the disposal policy that dated back to the earliest days of the country. Americans realized that BLM-administered public lands would best serve the public interest in public ownership. FLPMA provided that the national interest would be best realized if the public lands and their resources were periodically and systematically inventoried, and their present and

future use projected through a land use planning process coordinated with other federal and state planning efforts.

Today, the BLM's land management responsibilities are extensive with roughly 245 million acres, primarily in the West. BLM manages more land than any other agency; along with 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate — oil, gas, coal, hard rock minerals — throughout the nation, generating \$5.2 billion in receipts from public lands in FY'14. In counties where energy production occurs, mineral leasing receipts are shared with local and state government.

A Distinct Mandate

The BLM's mission is unique, different from all of the other federal land managers. Under its mandate of multiple-use and sustained yield, it must balance managing production on the public lands with conserving those lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

This charge represents BLM's greatest strength and its biggest challenge as the agency seeks to strike a balance in managing diverse and often conflicting interests on public land — from oil and gas leasing to managing herds of wild horses and burros; renewable energy projects

A History of the Western Interstate Region of the National Association of Counties



As counties and state associations of counties began to take steps to organize a national association, the unique challenges of the western counties drove them to band together to ensure that their voice was heard. The following is an account of how the Western Interstate Region of the National Association of Counties came to be the voice for western counties.

In the mid-to-late 1930s, the National Association of County Officials (N.A.C.O.) was formed. By the 1940s, counties in the West organized a new association of counties for their region. The new organization was called the Interstate Association of Public Land Counties (IAPLC) and was headquartered in Medford (Jackson County), Ore. IAPLC was created to address the issues and concerns of western counties stemming from the massive federal ownership of public land in the West.

The *History of the Utah Association of Counties* contains a reference to IAPLC in 1941, noting that "Earl B. Day, Secretary of the Interstate

Since 1978, the Western Interstate Region has worked within NACo to promote the interests of western counties and advocate on critical public lands, community stability and economic development issues for counties within in the Western Interstate Region's 15 member states.

Association of Public Land Counties of Medford, Oregon, spoke on the work of the Association." The same history records that in 1944 F.L. Phipps of Oregon spoke to the Utah Association of Counties on the unique challenges public lands counties face. According to the *Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Convention of the Utah State Association of County Officials*, Phipps, speaking in his capacity as the executive secretary of IAPLC, said:

"Federal agencies are coming to recognize the counties should be reimbursed for lost income lands taken over by the federal government. This reimbursement must be figured on fair value for the lands, rather than on fluctuating revenue. The present revenue from national forest lands of 25 percent a year is ... varying and undependable. The Department of Agriculture has come to recognize

the weakness of this system. The revenue distribution formula also is weak, as the several counties whose lands are on federal reservations do not share equally. It is up to local officials to present accurate information on acreage of lands taken over by the federal government. County officials should be prepared to present this data."

At the same 1944 conference where Phipps spoke, the Utah State Association of County Officials' members adopted a resolution pledging the sum of \$1,000 to N.A.C.O. for the purpose of maintaining a permanent office in Washington, D.C.

Even as N.A.C.O. worked to establish its Washington, D.C. office, calls for a western regional voice within the organization continued. Representatives from seven western state associations of counties met on Nov. 17, 1953 with the purpose of initiating a Western States Regional District organization within N.A.C.O.

The group passed a motion authorizing the circulation of a petition within interested states requesting permission from N.A.C.O. to organize a regional district to focus on issues important to the western United States. A committee consisting of William McDougal of California, R.C. Watts of Washington and C.A. Grant of Utah, was selected to draft bylaws for presentation to the 1954 N.A.C.O. annual convention.

The Western Region of N.A.C.O.

(WR) was officially organized at the 1954 N.A.C.O. annual convention. The six original member states of the Western Region were: Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, New Mexico and California. A constitution and bylaws for the Western Region of N.A.C.O. were adopted and its first meeting was set for Nov. 19, 1954 in Moscow (Latah County), Idaho. Counties from 11 western states were invited to attend the first WR meeting.

By 1958, the movement to set aside federally designated wilderness areas had become controversial. *The History of the Utah Association of Counties* records opposition from N.A.C.O.'s public lands committee and IAPLC to the Wilderness Area Act, which sought to establish a National Wilderness Preservation System.

In a congressional hearing on the bill, the Utah Association of Counties voiced concerns, pointing out that counties were entirely dependent on revenue from taxes on real and personal property.

With 74.6 percent of the state of Utah containing 52.7 million acres of federally owned non-taxable land at the time, they argued the state could not sustain more acreage being taken under federal ownership. The association was not voicing opposition to wilderness areas, per se, but rather to the single-purpose use of the lands by a limited few to the potential injury of the people of the state and its counties as a whole.

In 1962, the N.A.C.O. convention was held in New York and featured an array of prominent speakers including Governors Nelson Rockefeller of New York, Terry Sanford of North Carolina and Richard Hughes of New Jersey. At this convention, the name of N.A.C.O. was changed to the "National Association of Counties" (NACo), deleting "officials" from the official name and emphasizing NACo's role as the only national organization representing the nation's counties, parishes and boroughs.

In 1978, after years of coexisting and representing the same membership on similar issues, the IAPLC and WR merged into one organization under NACo. The new organization took the name of the Western Interstate Region of NACo (WIR).

Today WIR continues as a regional affiliate of NACo and is dedicated to the promotion of western interests within NACo and advancement of its mission to be the counties' advocate for public policy issues affecting the West.

WIR's policy focuses include public land use and conservation issues, community stability and economic development, and the promotion of the traditional western way of life. WIR's membership consists of the associations of counties in 15 western states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

There are **183 National Forests** in the United States with a total of **188,211,622** acres of land.

Top three states with the most number of national forests:

CALIFORNIA
21 FORESTS
20,790,923 ACRES

IDAHO
16 FORESTS
20,416,960 ACRES

OREGON
15 FORESTS
15,555,804 ACRES

ALASKA only has two national forests, but has the most acreage (**21,956,783**) and the largest park, **Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve** (**13.2 million acres**).

Source: National Park Service

Investment in forest, grassland restoration work is critical

■ **INTERVIEW** from page H1

The third challenge is for non-federal land managers, including private landowners, to implement actions to reduce the risk of fire and increase the resilience of these lands to fire. Addressing catastrophic fire risk and increasing costs of wildland fire suppression will create significant opportunity for the Forest Service to invest significantly in non-fire programs, such as restoration efforts.

Increased investment in restoration work will help ensure that forests and grasslands continue to deliver products and services that people want and need, such as clean air and water, quality recreation settings, forest products and a full suite of habitat for plant and wildlife species.

Through our work with partners, the Forest Service's ecological restoration projects will support the growth and development of healthy ecosystems and vibrant, resilient communities.

CN: Historically, counties have benefitted from revenues generated from the active management of Forest Service lands. How can counties work with you to support the active management of our nation's forests?

Conservation begins where people live. People are proud of the natural beauty that surrounds them; they feel a sense of belonging to the places where they live. Our job at the Forest Service is to work with com-

munities for social and economic as well as ecological sustainability. Delivery of forest-related goods and services is integral to our mission at the Forest Service, stimulating tangible economic benefits to rural communities, such as private sector investment and employment opportunities.

Counties have the opportunity to shape the delivery of forest-related goods and services by taking a seat at the table alongside Forest Service employees. Greater county participation as cooperators during the planning of projects that influence communities is essential for good formulation and implementation of ventures that contribute to the health and sustainability of our forest and communities.

As you know, the Secure Rural

Schools and Community Self-determination Act of 2000 (SRS), that has provided more than a decade of payments to support predictable funding for public schools and roads, has not been reauthorized by Congress and expired Sept. 30, 2014.

In the absence of SRS, payments to states reverted to preexisting law that mandates 25-percent payments to the states from receipts from National Forests in each state. Unlike SRS, the 25-percent payments do not allow for an election to allocated funds for work similar to Title II (conservation work on National Forests), or Title III (county projects for Firewise programs, emergency services, and community wildfire protection plans.) This is unfortunate.

Think tank floats future natural resources trust idea

■ **LANDS** from page H1

“And that’s why we need support from the federal government.”

Because National Forest counties are entitled to more PILT funding if they do not receive SRS funding, the two programs are closely linked.

The Ball is in Congress’ Court

U.S. Sens. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) and Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) recently introduced bipartisan legislation to renew SRS and make PILT permanent, the Secure Rural Schools and Payment in Lieu of Taxes Repair Act. It would extend SRS for three years at 2011 funding levels, providing about \$360 million a year to more than 700 U.S. counties.

Though details are thin on how PILT would be restored, Wyden has said, “Our bill would keep the promise made to local governments in 1976 that the government would mitigate for the lost tax revenue by restoring mandatory funding status to PILT.”

Jeff Burrows is chairman of the Ravalli County, Mont. Board of Commissioners. “Our county doesn’t look the same if PILT isn’t reauthorized,” he said. “It would mean RIFs and structure changes, and spending capital reserves down to nothing. It would be an ugly situation.”

In the House, leadership and the committees with jurisdiction over the issues are working on legislation that would provide relief to the counties losing SRS payments. The challenge is how they would fund it, observers say.

Meanwhile, counties are poised to do the best they can with the 25-percent money they receive. Graham County, N.C. (64 percent forestland) received \$222,000 last year, but will get about \$45,000 for 2015. To make up the difference, the county might have to raise its millage rate by about 2 cents, according to Greg Cable, Graham County manager. His county includes the Nantahala National Forest.

The Sheriff’s Department alone spends “200 to 300 man-hours” a month on federal land, he said. And that doesn’t include EMS or local rescue squads “going out on the Appalachian Trail to rescue a fallen hiker.”

“If you look at the amount of monies that we receive per acre for federal lands,” he added, “it’s quite a bit less than what the private landowners pay in taxes. Substantially less,” Cable said. “So the federal government receives these services at a much more discounted rate than what everyone else (local taxpayers) pays.”

Local Economies Still Struggling

In Alaska, the Tongass National Forest, in Ketchikan Gateway Borough, is the nation’s largest national forest (17 million acres). “Most of our forested communities have a very difficult time getting other business to come up to a state like Alaska and do business,” said Kathie Wasserman, executive director of the Alaska Municipal League. “Even if we get some alternative timber industry to come up here, they’re always very

concerned that our energy prices are terribly high.”

The state is also running a “huge deficit,” as much as \$3.5 billion due the effects that falling oil prices have had on anticipated revenues. “Every dollar is going to mean something to us this year,” she said.

Back in the Lower 48, Arizona received \$14.9 million in SRS in 2014 and will receive less than one-tenth that amount — \$1.3 million in 1908 Act payments this year. In Coconino County, that translates to about \$360,000 in 1908 Act money this year. It netted \$4.3 million from SRS in 2014, according to Joanne Keene, the county’s government relations director.

As an example of the impact on education, Archuleta cited the fate of schools in rural areas of the 11.9-million-acre county — “larger than Switzerland” and the state’s largest. Some schools in remote parts of the county have only a

single first-grade class; absent SRS, there’d be no support for that grade level. Instead, children would have a two-hour, roundtrip daily bus ride to attend another school.

Think Tank Advocates for Trust Fund

Though providing some certainty, three years of guaranteed SRS funding would still be a medium-term solution. For the long haul, one idea that’s being discussed by some is the creation of a national Natural Resources Trust. Revenue from commercial activities on federally owned land — be it mineral extraction or timber harvesting, for example — would be invested in a trust. The fund would make payments to state and local governments, or back to the federal treasury to lower the cost of appropriations, said Mark Haggerty, an economist and policy analyst with Headwaters Economics, a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank in Gallatin

County (Bozeman), Mont.

Headwaters outlined the concept in a December 2014 policy brief, *Re-thinking Public Land Revenue Sharing: Utilizing a Natural Resources Trust to Address Volatility, Equity and Incentives*.

“That might give us the political coalition that we need to say, ‘We’re going to need 10 more years of appropriations to give us time to invest in this trust, to allow that trust to build up so that counties will be paid essentially out of the interest earned or a distribution on the principal on that natural resources trust.’”

Whatever the solution, Cable perhaps summed it up best. “We need to figure out a way to provide the necessary education to get the PILT and SRS out of the political arena and get it more into the aspect of this is a federal obligation to the local governments who are providing services to our federal agencies that are operating in these respective counties.”

Collaboration at core of BLM’s effectiveness

■ **PARTNERS** from page H4

to recreation; conservation of 27 million acres within our National Landscape Conservation System to 700 million acres of minerals. And while the challenges of managing these public lands are many, BLM generates more revenue for the U.S. taxpayer than it spends each year; contributing \$107 billion to the U.S. economy and supporting more than 440,000 jobs in 2013.

Partnership and collaboration

with counties are at the core of BLM’s ability to manage public lands effectively. In many areas, law enforcement on public lands is supported by county sheriffs who assist with patrols and enforcement activities through cooperative agreements with the land managing agencies.

Recreation on BLM public lands is at an all-time high with more than 59 million visitors now recreating on the lands once described as “the lands nobody wanted.” These lands are now considered America’s backyard,

bridging the divide between urban and rural and more accessible than ever with more than 120 urban centers and thousands of rural towns located within 25 miles of BLM lands.

Demand for county services is not likely to slow down any time soon.

(Cynthia Moses-Nedd, Department of Interior-Bureau of Land Management liaison to State and Local Government, and Randy Phillips, U.S. Forest Service liaison to NACo)

Federal funds to combat illegal cannabis farms dwindling, insufficient

■ **SWEEP** from page H3

in the Sierra region, said people who dismiss their children smoking marijuana should know that they’re likely smoking rat poison along with their THC.

It’s the environmental degradation, public safety and plain old-fashioned law enforcement that drive the officers in Tulare County, Calif. to go after public lands trespass growers. County Board Chair Steve Worthley, in his 17th year as a county supervisor, said that for more than 20 years, the county’s sheriff has been battling illegal marijuana cultivation in the hills of the Sequoia National Forest overlooking the county’s fertile Central Valley floor.

Federal support for their efforts is dwindling and has mostly been insufficient. Overtime caps restrict federal funding for investigation and eradication on public lands. “Our

choices are to use our own money, pull our officers out or let it go, it’s a public lands issue,” said Debbie Vaughn, a Tulare County senior administrative analyst who specializes in law enforcement concerns in the county.

“Our Board is passionate about this, though.”

The county spent \$250,000 of its own general fund money to support the eradication efforts, Worthley said. “Our sheriff believes in enforcing the laws throughout the entire county and our people do recreate in the forests.”

California’s Compassionate Care Act has added a new twist to the marijuana saga, both Worthley and Vaughn noted. Because Californians can now grow marijuana legally for medicinal use, illegal grows have shifted from public lands to the Valley floor. “They (drug traffickers) go around and knock on doors and offer

to pay for the plants,” Worthley said. “It’s a fluid situation. When pushed hard on the Valley floor they go back to the mountains.”

On Capitol Hill, Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) introduced new legislation, Feb. 4, intended to combat environmental damage and public safety hazards caused by illegal marijuana grows on public lands.

“Drug traffickers, motivated by greed, cannot be allowed to poison our lands and pollute our waters to produce illegal drugs,” Feinstein said in a statement announcing the introduction of the bill.

The Protecting Lands from Narcotics Trafficking Act (PLANT Act), “will give prosecutors the tools they need to address these problems, protect hikers and explorers, and reduce the illegal drugs that find their way into our neighborhoods and schools,” Hatch said.



Impact of Illegal Marijuana Growing on Public Lands

- Trees and vegetation cleared for growing areas
- Chemicals introduced (herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, fuels) pollute watersheds and kill native species
- Ditches and crude dams are created, and streams and other water sources are diverted — sometimes by as much as three miles.
- Extensive irrigation equipment is installed, leaving behind miles of irrigation tubing.
- Human waste and garbage are left by the ton after a completed harvest.
- Increased soil erosion due to cleared land, irrigation, diverted water, foot traffic and camp areas
- Unlimited poaching of wildlife and game for subsistence and trophies, while occupying the site (typically involves 2–8 people for 5–7 months)
- Damage to cultural resources within the area
- Increased visitor and employee safety risk due to heavily armed guards
- Labor intensive patrolling and restoration efforts stretch already tight budgets

Source: Proceedings of the 2009 George Wright Society Conference

Snapshot: Challenges and Solutions in One Public Lands County

By LYNN PADGETT
COMMISSIONER
OURAY COUNTY, COLO.



Ouray County is approximately 46 percent federal public lands, which includes lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Reclamation, whose Ridgway Reservoir is in turn managed by Colorado as Ridgway State Park.

Ouray County is home to approximately 4,400 people and yet we, as a county, and our citizens must provide for the health, safety and welfare of many times that in annual visitors.

The Alpine Triangle, a high country paradise with a 70-plus-mile primitive, alpine, 4-wheel drive “Jeep road” system that provides access to motorized and un-motorized trails, mountainous backcountry and wilderness, claims a million visitor-days a year between four counties, mostly during the three-month summer season.

Similarly, the Ridgway State Park is a popular gem, also claiming a similar number of visitor days and is one of the most visited state parks. Yet, Ouray County’s sales tax generates around a half-million dollars a year. We do not have significant

forestry products, energy resources extraction or a ski area generating forest income.

Facing Hurdles

We face persistent challenges such as an inability to predict whether federal lands and Secure Rural Schools (PILT, SRS) payments will be fully funded; as well as forest health, and travel management planning.

Like a marriage, the already complex relationship can be stressed and strained by competing missions of counties and public lands agencies, underfunding of collaborative priorities on both sides, and increasing demands on counties and public lands agencies. It can reach the breaking point by adding new twists to existing plans and activities such as newly listed endangered species, wildfire hazards, massive beetle kill in forests and uncertain climate change policies.

Federal Lands Payments, PILT and SRS

These federal payments are vital to small rural counties like ours being able to provide even bumpy access via county roads to public lands. Examples of why these funds are so important to us. We use them for:

- applying road base and crushed rock to county roads that are the primary access roads to public lands in our county (\$150,000 per year)
- grading, compacting and applying magnesium-chloride for dust control on county roads that are public lands access roads (\$60,000 per year)
- spring snowplowing to open the 4-wheel drive roads in the Alpine Triangle, Yankee Boy basin and other popular public lands areas (\$70,000 per year)



Image source: Lynn Padgett, using draft Parcel data courtesy of Ouray County GIS Dept.
Google Earth screen shot shows private mining claims (orange rectangles) surrounding the City of Ouray.

- providing funds and in-kind work for weed control along USFS and BLM roads (\$20,000/year);
- providing funds for portapotties and the backcountry ranger in Yankee Boy Basin area (\$6,000 per year);
- providing funds and in-kind administration and legal research into historic trails and rights of way crossing public and private lands -- in partnership with the BLM and USFS, as part of the Public Access Group, (\$25,000 per year);
- providing funds, staff, and emergency coordination services for backcountry rescues (\$10,000 per year).

In total, we spend approximately \$341,000 providing and securing access, safety and comfort to the public lands in our county.

At full funding, free of sequestration, Ouray County’s PILT payment (again, for nearly half of our entire county) is approximately \$345,000. While this is a relatively small amount compared to some coun-

ties, it is essential to us -- especially when the recession reduced our private property assessed valuations, and corresponding property tax revenue dropped about 36 percent from 2010 to 2014, making us close our county offices on Fridays. Not knowing the fate of this money, and whether we can plan on using it to fund the activities outlined above, is extremely difficult.

In 2014, Ouray County disbursed 75 percent of our National Forest Payments (SRS) to our local schools, approximately \$84,000. Just two weeks ago at a briefing by Colorado Department of Local Affairs arranged by Colorado Counties Inc., we learned that the Colorado’s eligible counties would collectively receive less than \$6 million for National Forest Payments. This is down from a collective total around \$18 million for the state in 2008.

If SRS is not funded in 2015, Ouray County would receive \$27,000 instead of \$84,000. Since we typically disburse most of our funds straight to the schools this will be a significant blow for education in our county.

Forest Health

Like many of our sister counties across the state and elsewhere in the country, Ouray County is seeing drastic beetle kill in our national forests. The effects of beetle kill impact watershed health, wildfire potential and visual blight. Visual blight has the most immediate impact on an emotional level to the residents who see the obvious distress of the forest and on the visitors who come for the feeling of pristine high mountain country and grand views of green forests and jagged mountain peaks.

According to the U.S. Forest Service specialists, the beetle kill we are experiencing is related primarily to stand conditions, weather and criti-

cal mass of beetles (large numbers). Our infected trees are Douglas Fir and white fir, somewhat different species than some of our neighboring areas. Removal of the trees and forest treatment is hampered by population proximity, extremely vertical and rocky topography, and in general, high cost of treatment with lack of offset from economical uses of the wood if harvested. The mosaic of private mining claims interspersed with national forest land exacerbates the situation.

There is a collaborative project between federal agencies, state agencies, local governments and regional organizations to address some of the devastating beetle kill in the region within the Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison National Forests.

Some Good News: Travel Management and Trails

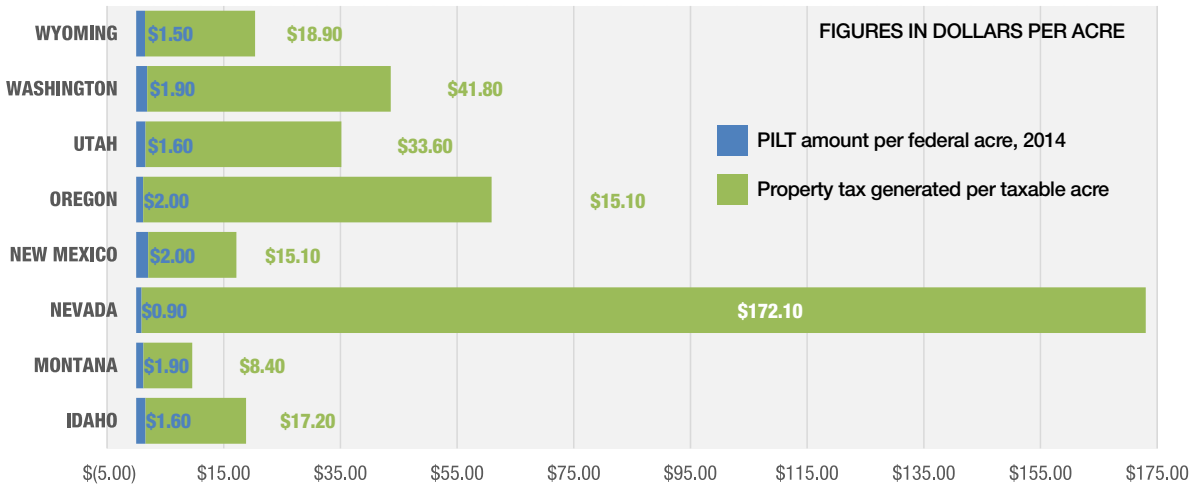
Ouray County, local jurisdictions, chambers of commerce and businesses across our region know the importance of recreational infrastructure (public access and trail systems) to enhance local economies and opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Ouray County has two active trails organizations, Ouray Trail Group (OTG) and Ridgway Area Trails (RAT) which have been persistent in working with federal lands managers to enhance and expand trail systems. OTG has been primarily working with the U.S. Forest Service to do volunteer trail maintenance of existing trails and to complete the Perimeter Trail, which circumnavigates the scenic city of Ouray.

These trail systems are eagerly anticipated by locals who wish to use the systems and business owners who understand the positive economic impacts and marketing opportunities they will bring. In 2006 the Ouray Trail Group began construction of a new 5-mile trail that, when complete, will circle Ouray following cliff bands, scree slopes and forested areas, but will also be accessible to hikers of nearly all ages and abilities. The finished trail will access four waterfalls, cross six drainages and offer unmatched perspectives of the surrounding mountains. Though now only 75 percent complete, according to OTG it attracted some 40,000 hikers last year and is already the most popular trail in the region.

RAT has been working for more than a decade to get an un-motorized trail system permitted and built on BLM lands and State

AVERAGE PER-ACRE PILT REVENUE VS PROPERTY TAX REVENUE



NOTES
• State averages reflect only the PILT-receiving counties in those states. It does include counties that have public lands, are included in the DOI PILT list, but according to the statutory formula and Congressional appropriation totals less than \$100.00, so the DOI doesn't provide them with a PILT payment.
• Taxable acres exclude federal land, but not tribal land.

Source: NACo analysis of Department of the Interior data and Census Bureau Census of Governments data.

■ See **CHALLENGES** page H8

Public lands boon for tourism, but not for county roads

By CHARLIE BAN
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

SpeedRead » » »

- » Counties maintain hundreds of miles of roads to and through public lands
- » PILT and SRS reductions are decimating county road budgets
- » Counties typically cut maintenance frequency because of funding cuts

County roads and their public lands are locked in a downward spiral.

As the federal payments to counties with public lands decrease, particularly with the expiration of the Secure Rural Schools Act (SRS), county road budgets are stretched even as they continue to make transportation to those public lands possible.

David Merriweather is seeing it in Hood River County, Ore. where he is the county administrator. Once the recipient of \$1.5 million from SRS — half of his county's roads budget — the federal allocation has plummeted the last seven years from a recent high of just over \$100 million in 2007. Last year, with SRS's one-year reauthorization, Hood River County received \$650,000 and payments in 2014 just eclipsed \$40 million for all 36 counties. Now, Merriweather is anticipating \$50,000.

"It's significantly reducing the amount of road miles we'll be able to maintain," he said. "From year to year, it's not a particularly glaring problem, but when they're strung together like this, the overall quality of our road system degrades. Over time that will become apparent and problematic."

With Mount Hood and the Mount Hood National Forest, the county attracts a tremendous number of visitors, which adds to the wear and tear.

"We've already reduced our roads staffing to less than half of what it was," Merriweather added. "Our next resort is maintaining fewer miles of road and fewer miles of drainage."

And visitors to public lands will eventually notice the ride getting

bumpier. Coconino County, Ariz.'s economy is highly dependent on tourism, particularly to the Grand Canyon and Sedona.

"We have to keep the roads in shape so they can get to the public lands that are so special in Coconino County," said Joanne Keene, the county's government relations director. "Tourists, fishers, hunters, campers, these roads connect people, even if they don't pay for themselves."

The county — the second largest in the continental United States — just lost \$2 million in SRS road funding.

"We know we won't be able to maintain the same level of service with the federal and state funding situation continuing to deteriorate," Keene said.

With that in mind, before a last-minute extension renewed SRS in 2014, the Board of Supervisors planned a sales tax ballot measure to keep the road funding status quo. It will raise roughly \$7 million annually.

"We were honest with the public that the tax wouldn't solve all our issues, that we'll still have to look at cuts in service," Keene said. "That's the situation federal funding decreases have put us in. We'll be looking at our agreements with federal partners to make sure we can keep roads

through forest service land open so people can still get to them."

For Nye County, Nev., public lands pose just as much a question of access as they do funding.

The county is close to completing a seven-year project to prove ownership of its minor roads — roads that are maintained only by use. The Forest Service's travel management plan put some of those minor roads at risk unless the county could prove it had ownership of the roads prior to the Forest Service's creation in 1908 or the Bureau of Land Management's creation in 1976. To secure all of the 5,500 miles of minor county roads in question, the county had to provide documentation to four BLM districts and two forest service districts, which have approved the plan.

The county funded the research from money allocated as part of Yucca Mountain nuclear storage planning and Secure Rural Schools, both programs have, at this point, expired.

Lorinda Wichman, chairwoman of the Board of Commissioners and president of the Nevada Association of Counties, has been working on the issue since before being elected to the board.

"Most of our people who do live out there need to have access to the roads, and if access to those roads is cut off, we won't be able to make use of land in our borders," she said. "People use that land for hunting and recreation. They travel here for that."

If the county had not been able to prove ownership of those roads in forest service lands, they would be closed to public use.

Now even the unpaved roads that the county does regularly maintain are at risk because of budget cutbacks.

"We have to rework maintenance schedules," Wichman said. "We usually get maintenance crews out to the unpaved roads every three months. Now we're looking at every six months."

Plumas County, Calif. is losing one-quarter of its maintenance budget through the loss of SRS, but Public Works Director Bob Perreault said for now, the county is in alright shape.

"My predecessor anticipated, years ago, that this funding would be challenged, so he created a reserve account that we've been dipping into the last two years," he said. "If there's no change, in about six or eight years we'll have to start looking at cutbacks."

The SRS revenue has typically been earmarked for funding winter road maintenance, and with most of the county, just northwest of Lake Tahoe, getting consistent snow,

there's no real hope of those variable costs decreasing.

"We're going to hold the status quo as long as we can," Perreault said. "Hope Congress will get SRS back to where it should be. It wasn't a gift, it was created to address a real problem that the federal government created with environmental regulations on logging. They have an obligation to stabilize the program."

While that stabilization happens, Scott Waite will be sweating it out. The public works director for Siskiyou County, Calif. lost 40 percent

of his road budget with SRS's expiration. He's down to \$6 million, and said the ideal budget for taking care of 1,300 miles of road is \$15 million.

"I honestly don't know what we're going to do," he said. "We'll be left hoping for an increase in the gas tax, but it doesn't look good."

He anticipates about two years left of cash balance before cutbacks become necessary.

"We have four county roads that climb to 6,000 feet through federal land," he said. "We have to be able to take care of that somehow."

In My View: A note from rural Washington



By JIM MCENTIRE
COMMISSIONER
CLALLAM COUNTY, WASH.

(1.5 percent).

"Land owned in the name of the state has is in the hands of a number of state agencies and universities. Each agency's management approach is determined by its jurisdiction, authorities and priorities. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and the State Parks and Recreation Commission (Parks) are three agencies that manage many acres of undeveloped public lands in the state. ... DNR is primarily responsible for managing land [to] satisfy its fiduciary duty to the various state trust beneficiaries, WDFW manages land to enhance wildlife habitat and hunting access, and Parks primarily provides recreational access. The largest number of acres, 5.6 million, is managed by DNR."

This idea has traction due to the many federal requirements that impinge on land use in Western states like my own, but primarily because DNR is able to get significant revenue to the various trust beneficiaries, within the framework of some of the most stringent forest practice and environmental rules in the nation.

In Washington, Oregon, and California, we all know of the Northwest Forest Plan's effect on timber harvest, reducing revenues coming to the states and local taxing districts. Secure Rural Schools funding, designed to make up for the loss of forest products industry activity, and reduced revenues to state and local governments, is in jeopardy. The rural West knows what's at stake — some of our state's smallest population counties (since they have a high proportion of federal land within their borders) are being

Work underway on 25 miles of new trails

■ CHALLENGES from page H7

Park/Bureau of Reclamation lands near the existing town of Ridgway Riverway trail path. A new and expanded trail system will attract an excellent visitor demographic to the area and provide local clubs with accessible terrain for a variety of user ability levels.

The process of planning has seemed excruciatingly slow and complex for these motivated groups who had to watch the closing of the county's only dedicated bike shop during the recession. To date, RAT has received approval for more than 25

miles of new trails on BLM and state parklands, and currently construction is progressing as seasonal access and BLM staffing resources allow for the volunteer work days to take place.

For this trail group, whose members prefer trail building to attending government meetings, the relationship with the land management agencies has had ups and downs.

However, all sides seem to be excited by the tens — to hopefully soon — hundreds of thousands of dollars RAT has been able to attract through grants, donations and volunteer in-kind hours to plan and build the joined trail systems.

■ See WASHINGTON page 6
of Main Paper



COUNTY INNOVATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Baltimore County, Md.

Senior Health Campaign Targets Prevention, Awareness

By CHARLIE BAN
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

Baltimore County, Md. wants active citizens, especially as they get older. The Strengthening Lives initiative in 2013 was aimed specifically at the 20 percent of the county's residents 65 years and up—totaling more than 165,000—in hopes that their quality of life would not decrease, but their need for some county health services would.

"We've found most seniors who are more prepared for senior life usually navigate it better, meet the challenge," said Joanne E. Williams, director of the county's department of aging. "It's not a given that you grow old, have aches and pains and wither away. That's far from the truth."

To prepare that population for what lies ahead, Williams' department planned a series of sessions at the county's 20 senior centers touching on a range of topics: fall prevention, memory loss, stroke awareness, financial planning, the changing family and social environment and heart health. All were



Group exercise (left) and art classes (right) are two examples of the variety of offerings Baltimore County, Md. presented to seniors in its Strengthening Lives program.

directed at seniors taking active and educated roles in their well being.

That education would have a collateral effect. Williams said the county had to set its older citizens up for success in the face of budget cuts that could endanger more comprehensive programming.

"We as an agency are facing a shortage of resources, so we felt

it was necessary to empower our constituents to better advocate for themselves," she said. "We could supply preventive information and help them avoid problems associated with aging. If we can help them take better care of their physical health, start exercising and get proper screenings, it could reduce healthcare costs for them and the county."



Photos courtesy of Baltimore County, Md.

Most of the programming approaches issues from a desire to empower, which Williams said makes all the difference in situations like deciding when it's time to stop driving.

"Rather than one of their adult children literally taking their keys away from them, we try to give them a perspective that helps them decide for themselves whether it's time to stop driving, from an assistive approach," she said. "If they make that realization themselves, it's their decision."

The program offers classes on evaluating and improving reaction times and includes a machine that simulates difficult driving conditions. To top that off, speakers who have been impacted by elderly drivers share their stories of loss.

Strengthening Lives also offers programming for family members, touching on subjects such as recognizing the signs of cognitive decline and helping guide decisions on living arrangements.

"Our place is to give the families information and resources so they make the right choice for their parents," Williams said. "That includes encouraging everyone to prepare an advance directive in case the parent can't make his or her own

choices and their wishes are made clear. There's nothing worse than a family caught up in trauma of an illness, grieving and trying to make those decisions."

Alongside the senior center programming, the department of aging also held a conference for 270 caregivers and an annual Baby Boomer/Senior Expo, which drew more than 10,000 attendees. Almost 800 people showed up to various educational sessions at senior centers. Thanks to collaboration with health care providers, nonprofits and other county departments, the entire program cost only staff time.

"We want our residents to live long lives, but we want those lives to be quality," Williams said. She touts the county's basketball team made up of 75-year-old men.

"They're playing an active sport, one that requires stamina, and they're winning national tournaments," she said. "Not everyone is doing that, but we're trying to make sure we have active, healthy older residents."

County Innovations and Solutions features award-winning programs. Strengthening Lives was named Best in Category for Health for the 2014 NACo Achievement Awards.

Awards reception slated for county alums

CONFERENCE from page 1

- protecting the federal-state-local partnership for Medicaid, and
- supporting comprehensive immigration reform.

Other members of the Obama Administration scheduled to speak include, among others, U.S. Secre-

tary of Labor Thomas E. Perez; Jerry Abramson, director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; Michael Botticelli, director of the White House Office of National Drug Policy; and U.S. Trade Ambassador Michael Froman.

Members of Congress were expected to include House Com-

mittee on Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.).

NACo will hold special Capitol Hill briefings on transportation, municipal financing, and Medicaid, as well as an awards reception honoring House and Senate county alumni.

In conjunction with the conference, NACo also launched a new online video describing top federal policy priorities and why they matter to counties and residents. "Decisions made by the White House, Congress and federal courts have a major, cascading impact on our ability to lead our communities and pursue a better future," the video states.

Rounding out the schedule were more than two-dozen educational workshops featuring county officials and other leaders in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. They focused on topics such as workforce and economic development; transportation and infrastructure; public health and safety; mental health and jails; and cybersecurity and technology.

Retirement workshops may become annual events

FUTURE from page 2

made by our employees. And, recognizing the initial success of the ISRP and training program, we're working toward making the workshops a permanent year-round program rather than a once-a-year event.

As an organization, Sonoma County plans to continue to improve upon this process of increasing employee awareness. Ideally, we want to reach a point where employees come to us, seeking out the information they need to understand and plan for

their retirement rather than having to push the information out to them.

We're considering establishing a performance measure that 95 percent of staff is aware of their individual retirement savings target and more importantly are making progress toward meeting their goal. Over the coming months, we will be strategizing how to make this goal a reality.

Ultimately, we as employers should increase the availability of employee retirement planning tools and increase savings awareness so that our employees can take control of and plan for their future retirement.

NACo ONLINE



SOCIAL MEDIA, PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING,
PODCASTS, VIDEOS AND MORE ...



Financial Services News

The Port of Miami: Secure Solutions, Secure Seas

Hosting 4.8 million cruise passengers and 1,348 cargo vessels last year alone, the Port of Miami is known as both the “Cruise Capital of the World” and the “Cargo Gateway of the Americas.”

The port includes seven cruise terminals, with most modern cruise ships accommodating approximately 5,000 passengers. Security is a top priority.

“In the mid-2000s, we hosted approximately 3 million passengers each year,” says Louis Noriega, former port operations official at the Port of Miami. “Now we’re at 4.8 million passengers each year, and the number continues to rise.”

From cruises to cargo ships, ensuring passenger safety, monitoring the premises and minimizing crime is no easy task.

Dock Dilemma

As an active port, Miami faced a number of security and operational issues ranging from theft to “slip and fall” passenger lawsuits. Security

personnel, for example, struggled to monitor the port at night — darkness made it difficult to identify who or what was approaching the docks. Luxury boats would tie up to restricted docks, stealing water space reserved for cruise and cargo vessels and delaying the flow of vessel traffic.

The Port of Miami needed to find a way to ensure the safety of civilians and maximize efficiency on both land and sea.

Chaos Control

To update its surveillance system, the port partnered with UNICOM Government under the U.S. Communities contract. UNICOM Government, a division of UNICOM Global, works with federal, state and local government organizations to deliver IT solutions, services and financial options.

Leveraging the U.S. Communities contract, the Port of Miami expedited project planning and outsourcing without compromis-

ing quality, completing a 14-month process in 45 days.

“For a typical grant-funded project, you must navigate through several stages and departments before you can start work,” Noriega said. “You choose a bidder then play a back-and-forth game of timeline extension, budget expansion and scope of work alteration. Couple this with lack of communication and you have a chaotic, confusing process.”

The U.S. Communities contract eliminated the need for multiple vendor contract procurements, allowing the Port of Miami to select tried-and-true U.S. Communities’ subcontractors in a hassle-free, efficient manner. Working under one contract allowed for UNICOM Government and subcontractor accountability throughout the duration

of the project, streamlining the process without complications typically found in the traditional RFP process.

Intrusion Interception

The project, valued at \$6 million, expanded the port’s existing video surveillance system from 450 cameras to 1,000 cameras, and integrated an advanced video management system (VMS) into security controls.

New facilities and terminals were built with newly manufactured mounts and poles, power cabling infrastructure and network video recording (NVR) software integrated within the control system.

The U.S. Communities contract accelerated the process of acquiring electrical permits for underground boring and trenching prior to physical construction of the terminals.

UNICOM Government installed state-of-the-art radar technology and a coastal automatic identification system to provide surveillance of the waterway that surrounds the Port of Miami.

Waterway Watch

The physical security alarm and water surveillance system is monitored via video on the port security wall. Integrated with the port’s physical security alarming systems, the wall enables officers to control and modify everything placed on the system. The video wall is designated for alert systems, intercom use, analytics and cabling. Most importantly, however, it was configured to multi-task: operators

See FSNEWS page 11

The H.R. Doctor Is In

Every Day a Holiday

Forest counties seek to chart own destinies

■ WASHINGTON from page H8

severely hurt by the lack of federal follow-through on the Northwest Forest Plan.

State and federal actions to preserve and restore other endangered salmon and bird species have impacts on private land use and development. In my Clallam County, the Washington Department of Ecology put a rule into effect in January 2013 to protect stream flows in the eastern third of the county, despite the major river’s flow having averaged an increase since 1988.

This rule restricts all water use, even for residential wells unless mitigation water is purchased from a water bank. This has tended to chill land sales and development for folks who have not historically used water beneath their land. No one disputes the need to preserve endangered species, but do we need to harm the economy in the process?

Many people think the forest fires last summer in eastern Washington were to a large extent the result of poor forest health, resulting from management failures by federal land managers. They may be on to something. “Doc” Hastings, a long serving congressman from eastern

Washington, and who chaired the House Natural Resources committee before his retirement last year, thought the same thing, and tried to move a bill requiring better federal land management.

I am fortunate to have been elected to a seat on our state’s Board of Natural Resources, a part of the DNR, representing 21 Washington counties having within their borders, forest lands managed by DNR.

The board recently received a report from the department’s staff, saying that “DNR’s leasing and natural resource product sales on state trust lands produced nearly \$265 million for public school construction, county services, state universities, and other beneficiaries” last year. That revenue coming from 3 million acres compares very favorably with the U.S. Forest Service’s revenue of \$6.6 million coming from 9.6 million acres of federal forest land in my state.

It’s no wonder then that we Washingtonians think that if we assume ownership of federal natural resource lands, we can do a much better job of managing those publicly owned lands for both revenue for roads, schools, and universities, and for all the environmental values that we hold equally dear.

Practically every day is a holiday — especially if you are retired. The month of February, however, offers some particularly interesting opportunities to admire the creativity of the greeting card industry or to explore some of the folklore or religious origins of some holidays.

Of course, there are officially recognized holidays such as Presidents’ Day on the third Monday of February each year. It was derived from a consolidation of George Washington’s birthday and Abraham Lincoln’s birthday, but expanded to celebrate the achievements of every president. Public offices are closed on those days and, I am sure, every government employee spends most of the day reflecting back on the importance of presidential achievements in our country’s history — that is, when they are not watching TV or shopping all day.

February also contains many nongovernmental and perhaps more user-friendly holidays. My favorite is Valentine’s Day. However, there are also days marked as national days set aside for the celebration of such things as Cherry Pie Day, National Pistachio Day, National Tortilla Chip Day and National Gumdrop Day.

There are also many other February holidays, and I apologize to the lovers of groundhogs, dog biscuits, kite flying, umbrellas and

“ The idea of a brief pause to think about and appreciate something or someone very special in our lives is a wonderful activity for all of us to follow.

plum pudding if I have in any way offended by not mentioning their commemorations.

One of the more obscure days to think about, especially for elected officials, is National Lame Duck Day. The 20th Amendment to the Constitution took effect on that day in 1933 and of course solved the problem of who might be in charge if some evil befell both the president and the vice president.

The Winter Olympics also open every four years — usually in February — next time in 2016. They represent a reminder for all of us of the importance of putting aside the issues of the moment in favor of longer lasting principles. International sport can be a metaphor for honorable behavior and exciting competition, notwithstanding our the many substance-abusing, behaviorally-impaired sports persons we read about every day.

Getting lost in those headlines — and the stories about the extraordinarily high pay of some

sports “heroes” — detract our attentions from the real heroes of society like teachers, doctors, letter carriers, police, fire and other public employees. It is important not to forget that there is real wonder in athletic competition by the tens of millions of kids, seniors and others who enjoy the exercise and the comradeship of sports.

Looking at the array of holidays we have created every month should lead us to appreciate how important it is to celebrate. It almost doesn’t matter what we celebrate. The idea of a brief pause to think about and appreciate something or someone very special in our lives is a wonderful activity for all of us to follow.

In the HR Doctor’s view, a regular dose of appreciation for all that we have and all the reasons we have to celebrate, is every bit as important to a long and joyful life as losing weight, cutting out tobacco and exercising every day.

Finally, with regard to being thankful on Valentine’s Day, I have to pause, as I try to do every day, to appreciate how incredibly lucky I was on June 29, 1968 when I first met the beautiful HR Spouse Charlotte. On that day I won the “companion for life” lottery, and I hope I always pause for that appreciation.



Phil Rosenberg • The HR Doctor



News From the Nation's Counties

► ARIZONA

• The **COCONINO COUNTY** Board of Supervisors has entered into an agreement with Northern Arizona University's College of Arts and Letters (CAL) that will **create an artist-in-residency program** at a 240-acre county-owned property in Flagstaff.

The land was bequeathed to the county in 2011; since then, county officials have been exploring "revenue-generating" uses for it, unsuccessfully. After evaluating responses to a request for proposals, the supervisors concluded that an artist residency is "prime opportunity to showcase one of our most beautiful conservation areas in Coconino County," said Mandy Metzger, chair of the Board of Supervisors.

In addition to hosting resident artists, the property will be the site of a center for art education, conservation, cultural events and activities focused on the unique natural resources and landscape of Rogers Lake.

The proximity of the property to the Grand Canyon and Sedona make it "a natural draw for artists looking for inspiration," said CAL Dean Michael Vincent. "Together, CAL and Coconino County can create something which gives back to the community while supporting the arts."

• The state Legislature is considering a bill that would require rural counties, when requested by state or county party chairmen, to provide daily updated totals of voters who have cast their ballots early.

A law passed in 2009 requires



Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of the Interior

► CALIFORNIA

It's being called the world's largest solar power plant, and federal land in **RIVERSIDE COUNTY** is its home. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell (center right, above) visited recently for the ceremonial launch of the 550-megawatt **Desert Sunlight Solar Farm**. That's enough energy to power 160,000 average California homes, according to *The Desert Sun*.

NextEra Energy Resources and GE Energy Financial Services and Sumitomo Corporation of America co-own the project. It sits on 4,100 acres of federal land managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The BLM oversees more than 1.5 million acres in Riverside County.

"The debate's over — we're going to be moving to more renewable energy," Riverside County Supervisor John Benoit said. "We are ideally situated, here in eastern Riverside County, to host this kind of development in the future."

During the project's early stages, the county negotiated an agreement with solar farm's owners to pay for \$400,000 in improvements to the community center in the nearby Desert Center community.

counties with more than 800,000 residents — **MARICOPA** and **PIMA counties** — to do so, Cronkite News reported.

The state's other 13 counties might have difficulty complying, according to Jennifer Mason, executive director of **ARIZONA**

ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES. She told state lawmakers that counties already scramble to send early ballots to voters who request them within 48 hours, as required by state law.

► CALIFORNIA

SAN DIEGO COUNTY has designed and rolled out a new **smart building automation system** that gathers data from various facilities, enabling them to be monitored and controlled remotely.

Thus far, it's saved one county building complex \$58,000 in utility costs. Countywide implementation is projected to save up to \$1.4 million a year in electricity consumption alone.

Real-time monitoring also catches maintenance problems before onsite staff reports them.

Technicians can now detect where a malfunction is taking place and repair it, either remotely or by contacting the building's maintenance crew.

► HAWAII

Legislation has been introduced during the current legislative ses-

sion that would limit counties' ability to regulate agricultural uses of **pesticides and genetically modified crops (GMO)**, *The Olympian* reported.

One proposed bill, HB 849, would bar counties from imposing their own regulations on the farming industry. It was introduced in response to several counties' banning or limiting the use of pesticides and GMOs.

KAUAI COUNTY Councilman Gary Hooser opposes the measure. "Neither the state nor the federal government is truly aware of what happens on the ground within each county," he said. "And to strip away the county's authority to protect its own citizens is in my opinion unconscionable."

► LOUISIANA

ST. JAMES and **ASCENSION parishes** have asked the EPA to delay implementing more stringent, **new ozone standards**.

The EPA proposed, Nov. 25, to lower the threshold of acceptable ozone levels to improve public health and the environment.

But parish officials, joined by business groups and other com-

munities, want EPA to wait and gather more data on its 2008 ozone standards, which have yet to be fully implemented nationwide, according to *The Advocate*.

"It's going to make it very, very hard for any new industry to expand, as we see them doing now," said Ascension Parish President Tommy Martinez.

Michelle Octave, St. James Parish's chief administrative officer, cited a recent National Association of Manufacturers study that estimated the standards would cost Louisiana \$189 billion over 20 years.

The EPA's comment period on the new standards closes March 17.

► MARYLAND

Some **300 heroin overdoses** occur each year in **ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY**, and one fatality per week, County Executive Steve Schuh recently told WBAL-AM news. He declared a "heroin public health emergency" in the county last month.

The county has created a Heroin Action Task Force whose members include officials from law enforcement, schools, public health and the state's attorney's office.

"By declaring this county in the midst of a heroin public health emergency, our county departments can shift their resources to address this mounting crisis," Schuh said at the declaration's announcement on Jan. 27.

► MICHIGAN

"Bella" and "Buddy" are the top two names for dogs registered in **OTTAWA COUNTY** in 2014. The Top 10 list is a fun way to remind residents that state law requires pet owners to license their furry companions.

The next **most popular dog name**, Max, is followed by Sadie, Bailey, Molly, Charlie, Maggie, Lucy and Daisy, according to Treasurer Bradley Slagh's office.

► NORTH CAROLINA

Two mountain counties in the western part of the state are thinking of joining together to establish a **regional animal shelter**.

SWAIN COUNTY does not have a shelter and **JACKSON COUNTY's** is more than 40 years old. Swain County relies on a limited-acceptance shelter that can only house 15 dogs and 16 cats at a time. A former furniture plant, the proposed location, would be able to accommodate 300 animals, WLOS News reported.

NACo on the Move

► NACo Staff



Sarah Lindsay

• **Sarah Lindsay**, marketing specialist, has been promoted to program manager for the U.S. Communities program. U.S. Communities, sponsored by NACo, is a leading national government purchasing cooperative. Lindsay has been with NACo for six years and has been working exclusively with U.S. Communities for the last three years.

• **Emilia Istrate**, research director, hosted a briefing on NACo's 2014 County Economic Tracker for the U.S. Economic Development Administration on Feb. 13.

► Coming Up

• **Andrew Goldschmidt**, director of membership marketing, will be exhibiting on behalf of NACo at the Association of Oregon Counties' Legislative Conference in Marion County on March 8–10.

Allegheny County exploring drop-in center for homeless kids

NEWS FROM *from page 7*

► OREGON

A bill in the state Legislature would let counties decide whether to allow **hunting of cougars with dogs**.

The large cat was nearly eradicated in the 1960s but now numbers around 6,000 in Oregon.

In 1994, Oregon passed a measure banning the use of dogs and bait to hunt black bears and cougars. Two House bills and one Senate bill would decriminalize such activity. The measures would allow county commissions to put the question on a ballot, or it could get on the ballot through the initiative process, *The Bulletin* reported.

► PENNSYLVANIA

• The **ALLEGHENY COUNTY** Department of Human Services is planning a Downtown Pittsburgh-area drop-in center for **homeless people ages 16-24**.

The effort is the result of recommendations that came from a study on unaccompanied youths — homeless young adults between the ages of 18-24 — commissioned by the department and work already underway by the human services staff

to help young adults transition from foster care to independent living, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported.

The study estimated there are about 240 unaccompanied youths in that age range in Allegheny County and recommendations included providing food, phones, laundry services, showers and bathrooms, computers and transportation or bus tickets. Annual funding is estimated at between \$2.5 million to \$3 million, from a combination of state and federal funding, and private fundraising.

• Pending a physical, **Harley the bison** has been sent by **LEHIGH COUNTY** to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo in **ONONDAGA COUNTY**, N.Y. (Syracuse).

The move was timed to avoid conflict, because Harley, born in 2013, is reaching the point at which he would challenge his father, Big Boy, for dominance of their herd in the Lehigh Valley Zoo.

In the wild, a younger bison would likely lose a challenge and have to leave the herd, *The Express-Times* reported.

Now that the zoo has found a home for Harley, officials can turn their attention toward finding another

zoo in need of another young male bison, officials said.

► SOUTH DAKOTA

YANKTON COUNTY department heads may no longer need to run **individual travel requests** by the County Commission.

Under a proposed resolution they wouldn't need to have such travel approved beforehand as long as it falls within their allotted budget, the *Press & Dakotan* reported.

► VIRGINIA

CAROLINE COUNTY drivers won't be charged a penalty whenever they **change vehicles** without notifying the county.

The penalty — 10 percent of the personal property tax bill — was imposed if a person did not register a new vehicle with the county within 60 days after purchasing it. Previously, residents had to tell the commissioner of the revenue's office, in addition to updating their records with the state department of motor vehicles, according to the *Free Lance-Star*.

► WASHINGTON

Reports of fighting dogs and other violations in parks is prompting

KING COUNTY to hire off-duty sheriff's deputies to conduct **random patrols** of parks and trails in their jurisdiction.

Though he didn't know how many violations there were recently, parks spokesman Doug Williams said there were enough to cause concern.

The parks department is paying for deputy patrols, which will involve

random visits to popular parks and trails during weekends and times of high-volume traffic, according to MyNorthwest.

(News From the Nation's Counties is compiled by Charles Taylor and Charlie Ban, senior staff writers. If you have an item for News From, please email ctaylor@naco.org or cban@naco.org.)

Port officials can monitor and secure vast area

FSNEWS *from page 6*

are able to modify and view specific sections of the wall, while the remaining layers stay untouched.

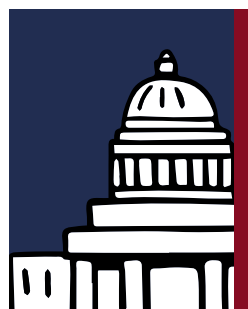
With ships coming in at all times of the day and night, the video wall is accessible 24/7 — a mission-critical component of the port's operational and security functioning.

Miami Momentum

The Port of Miami and UNICOM Government worked together to find a security solution that

mitigates many of the significant risks the port previously faced — from unauthorized intrusions to false "slip and falls."

Thanks to these solutions, port officials are now able to monitor and maintain security control of the vast area, allowing for smooth operation through one of our nation's busiest ports. The team continues to monitor and update security processes and tools to keep passengers on their cruises safe, and their cargo en route to its destination.



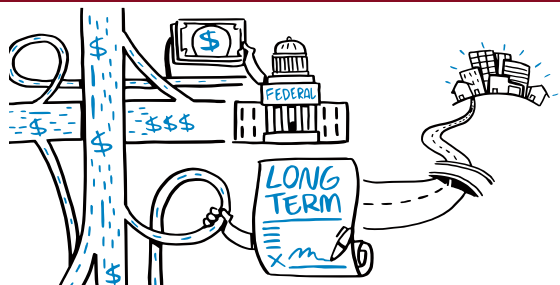
FEDERAL POLICIES MATTER TO COUNTY GOVERNMENT MATTERS TO AMERICA

The public service mission of our nation's 3,069 county governments is clear: foster safe, healthy and vibrant communities. To achieve this shared goal, members of the National Association of Counties stand ready to work with our federal partners to:

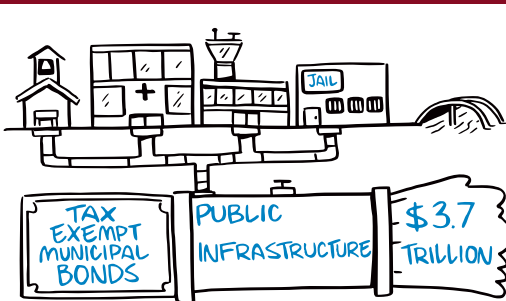
ENSURE FULL FUNDING FOR THE PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES AND SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS PROGRAMS



FIX THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND AND PASS A LONG-TERM SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORIZATION BILL



PRESERVE THE TAX-EXEMPT STATUS OF MUNICIPAL BONDS



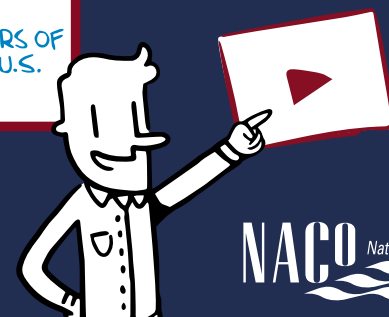
ENABLE COUNTIES TO COLLECT EXISTING SALES TAXES ON REMOTE AND ONLINE SALES



CREATE A CLEAR, WORKABLE DEFINITION OF "WATERS OF THE U.S."



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