AGENDA ITEM or FINAL CONTRACT REVIEW SUBMITTAL FORM

Agenda Item: Ratification of Correspondence; US Secretary of th

Action Requested: Motion

Parties to the Agreement:

Term Begins: **Term Ends:** **Grant Contract #:**

Summary:

The attached correspondence was signed and distributed on 4/28/2017.

Fiscal Impact:

Submitted by: Katherine Haase **Submitter's Email Address:** khaase@gunnisoncounty.org

Finance Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reviewed by: Discharge Date:

County Attorney Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reveiwed by: Discharge Date: Certificate of Insurance Required

Yes ○ No ○

County Manager Review:

Comments:

Reveiwed by: GUNCOUNTY1\mbirnie Discharge Date: 4/28/2017

◉ Consent Agenda ○ Regular Agenda ○ Worksession Time Allotted: 0

Agenda Date: 5/2/2017

Revised April 2015

Gunnison County
COLORADO

Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners
Phone: (970) 641–0248 • Fax: (970) 641–3061
Email: bocc@gunnisoncounty.org • www.GunnisonCounty.org

April 28, 2017

US Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, https://www.doi.gov/contact-us/
US Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell, https://www.fs.fed.us/about-agency/contact-us
Senator Michael Bennet, john_whitney@bennet.senate.gov
Senator Cory Gardner, cory.gardner.senate@state.co.us
Representative Scott Tipton, scott.tipton.house@state.co.us
Senator Kerry Donovan, kerry.donovan.senate@state.co.us
Representative Barbara McLachlan, barbara.mclachlan.house@state.co.us
Representative Millie Hamner, rephamner@gmail.com

Dear Secretary Zinke, Chief Tidwell, Senators and Representatives,

Re: Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination (SRS) Act Funding

As the Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners, we are concerned that the SRS program, which expired on September 30, 2015, has yet to be reauthorized for FY 2016 and beyond. The availability of future SRS payments remains in jeopardy, and we strongly urge you to enact a long-term, sustainable legislative solution for continued revenue sharing payments to forest counties through this program.

Because Congress has failed to renew the long-standing federal obligation to forest counties and to the lands managed by the federal government by not improving forest management and reauthorizing the SRS program, counties across the United States are facing dramatic budgetary shortfalls. When the authorization for SRS lapsed in FY 2014, federal forest payments to counties decreased by over 80 percent on average.

Gunnison County and the Gunnison RE1J School District rely heavily on this funding to provide safe roads and quality K-12 education to our citizens. A total of 43 Colorado counties have historically received SRS funding and, while the reversion to payments under the 1908 Act equated to an average reduction of 52.2% for those counties during the 2017 payment year, Gunnison County's funding decreased by 77.2%, representing a local loss of $722,534.30.

The funding available to maintain Gunnison County roads has not increased for 20 years, while the cost of materials, supplies and construction contracts has increased significantly. Our Public Works Department maintains and improves roads for both our residents and the increasing number of visitors from the Front Range coming to recreate in our area. Our current funding, especially on a heavy snow year, is not adequate to do basic maintenance. We have had to reduce our snow plowing routes and minimize the amount of dust retardant used on busy gravel roads to stay within the budget. SRS funding is used to do needed projects above and beyond basic maintenance. It provides funding for asphalt overlays to rebuild the basic shape of existing roads and for paving gravel roads that have traffic exceeding 500-1000 cars per day. Funding is also used for bridge rehabilitation when we can upgrade an existing bridge before it becomes necessary to replace the structure.

Please give this issue your full consideration. For the sake of our economy and our forests, we need to reform forest management practices to improve forest health, increase production, and ensure robust revenue sharing to all forest counties.

Best Regards,

Phil Chamberland, Chairperson | Jonathan Houck, Commissioner | John Messner, Commissioner

cc: Gunnison RE1J School District