



NACo's Support for Colorado Timber Counties

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
of COUNTIES

NACo[®]



Through NACo, counties engage with our intergovernmental partners, share best practices, develop leaders and save resources, building stronger counties that result in a stronger America.

3,069

County Governments

40,000

County Elected Officials

3.6M

County Employees



Join NACo Today!

Members Get More

Your Membership Team! *Email membership@naco.org for support!*



Tammy Tincher

Director of Member
Engagement
ttincher@naco.org



Grace Dunlap

Associate Director of
Membership
gblanchard@naco.org



Priscila Chrappah

Membership Manager
pchrappah@naco.org



Deonte Monroe

Membership Assistant
dmonroe@naco.org

The National Association of Counties
660 North Capital St. NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20001 | 202.393.6226 | www.naco.org

Today's Agenda

- 1. Overview of NACo's National Center for Public Lands Counties**
- 2. NACo's Work on 3-year SRS Reauthorization**
- 3. Review of Colorado Counties' SRS Funding and Impact of Recent Lapse**
- 4. Review of Upcoming Payment Election and Allocation Decisions**



National Center for Public Lands Counties (NCPLC)

Mission and Goals

Mission

Advance the policy and practice study for America's public lands counties

Imperative

Elevate the long-term policy and practice research, capacity and knowledge exchange of elected and appointed leaders from America's public lands counties, including with federal and state policymakers, key influencers, the media and the public.

Objectives

-  Enhance intergovernmental policymakers' grasp of unique challenges faced by county officials in areas with federal lands
-  Conduct research, case studies, public forums and facilitate networks to inform policies and practices impacting public lands counties
-  Foster dialogue between federal, state, tribal and local governments on key issues including landscape health, wildfire mitigation and economic development in public land counties

Secure Rural Schools



Key Policy Considerations for Secure Rural Schools

- The Secure Rural Schools program was created in 2000 following declines in timber revenues from National Forests
- The SRS program has never been permanently authorized and has lapsed previously, creating ongoing uncertainty for counties
- Program authorization lapsed after FY 2023, but was recently reauthorized through FY 2026
- When SRS is not authorized, counties generally receive much smaller timber revenues (25% payments)
- Counties use SRS funding to support public education, transportation infrastructure and public safety
- The SRS formula currently does not adjust for inflation

2025 Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization

- The Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization Act of 2025 (S. 356) was co-sponsored by Sen. Elissa Slotkin and Reps. Shri Thanedar, Jack Bergman and Debbie Dingell (H.R. 1383)
 - U.S. Senate passed bill unanimously on June 18, 2025
 - U.S. House of Representatives passed bill 399 – 5 on Dec. 12, 2025
 - Bill was signed into law on Dec. 18, 2025, by President Trump as Public Law 119-58
- NACo member advocacy played a major role in securing bipartisan co-sponsors and raising the measure's profile
- NACo Gov. Affairs is involved with key coalition partners including the National Education Association and state associations of counties
- Act authorized payments for FYs 2024, 2025 and 2026

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 3, 2025

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries,

With broad bipartisan support in both chambers, we urge swift consideration of S.356, the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Reauthorization Act of 2025. On June 18, 2025, the Senate unanimously passed this bipartisan legislation, which is co-sponsored by 27 U.S. Senators, and companion legislation (H.R. 1383) is co-sponsored by 75 Members of Congress. We request prompt action to advance this measure in an end of year vehicle or as a standalone bill, to uphold the federal government's responsibility to communities impacted by federal land ownership.

Since 1908, federal law has required the U.S. Forest Service to share 25 percent of revenue generated on federal land with local governments for "public schools and public roads of the county or counties in which the forest reserve is situated."¹ For decades, timber sales were the largest source of revenue for local jurisdictions in these areas. However, as revenues declined, this created unexpected and prolonged fiscal challenges for local governments home to untaxed National Forest lands. In response, Congress enacted the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, giving counties the option to receive SRS payments to support public services like road maintenance, infrastructure, education, wildfire mitigation, and other efforts to address public safety. Congress has consistently reauthorized these payments with overwhelming bipartisan support, with the most recent reauthorization expiring at the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2023.

In FY 2023, the SRS program provided \$281 million to more than 700 counties across 41 states supporting rural communities across Republican and Democratic districts, underscoring the program's broad, bipartisan importance to local governments that are home to federally managed land. However, following the program's expiration at the end of FY 2023, counties and school districts across 41 states have seen a 63 percent cut in funding.² This \$177 million loss is devastating for rural communities, leading to school closures, delayed road and bridge maintenance, and reduced public safety services. These are not abstract policy debates; they are tangible consequences for local governments and the communities that steward untaxed federal lands. Failing to reauthorize the SRS program also jeopardizes the critical Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which provides federal assistance for local governments home to large amounts of U.S. Department of Interior lands.

We urge the U.S. House of Representatives to advance S.356 for immediate consideration as a standalone measure or as part of a broader end of year legislative funding vehicle. Rural counties, parishes, and boroughs across the country are already facing the impact of the program's expiration. The SRS program underscores the vital partnership between federal land management and local government services, supporting everything from wildfire mitigation and forest health to the maintenance of roads and support of public schools. With longstanding and strong bipartisan support behind SRS, Congress must reaffirm its commitment to these rural counties.

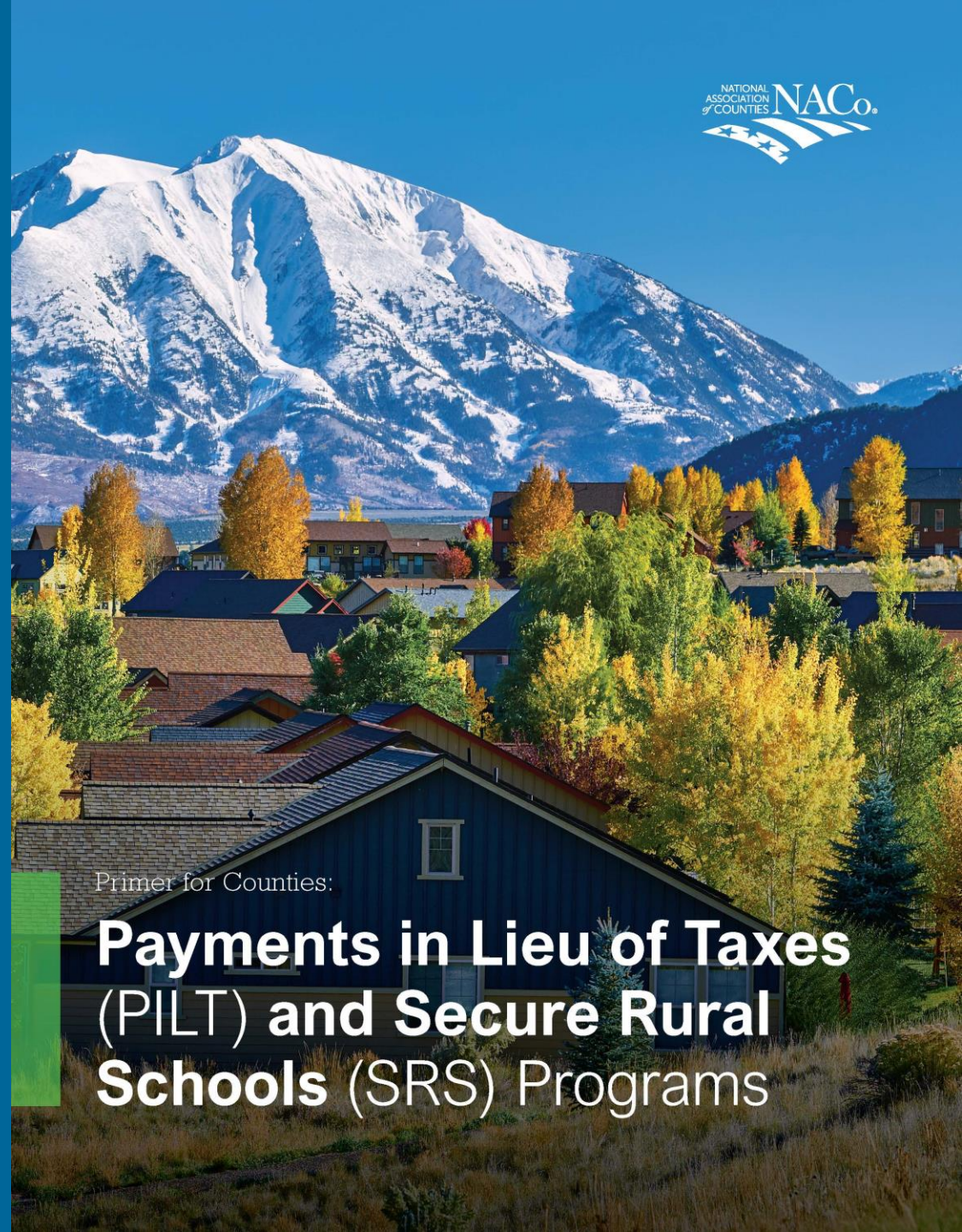
¹ 16 U.S.C. § 500 (1908).

² National Association of Counties, "Primer for Counties: Payments in Lieu of Taxes and Secure Rural Schools Program," 2025.

Bipartisan/Bicameral Letter to
House Leadership Citing NCPLC
Primer

Primer for Counties: Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS)

Colorado Counties, Inc.
May 20, 2026

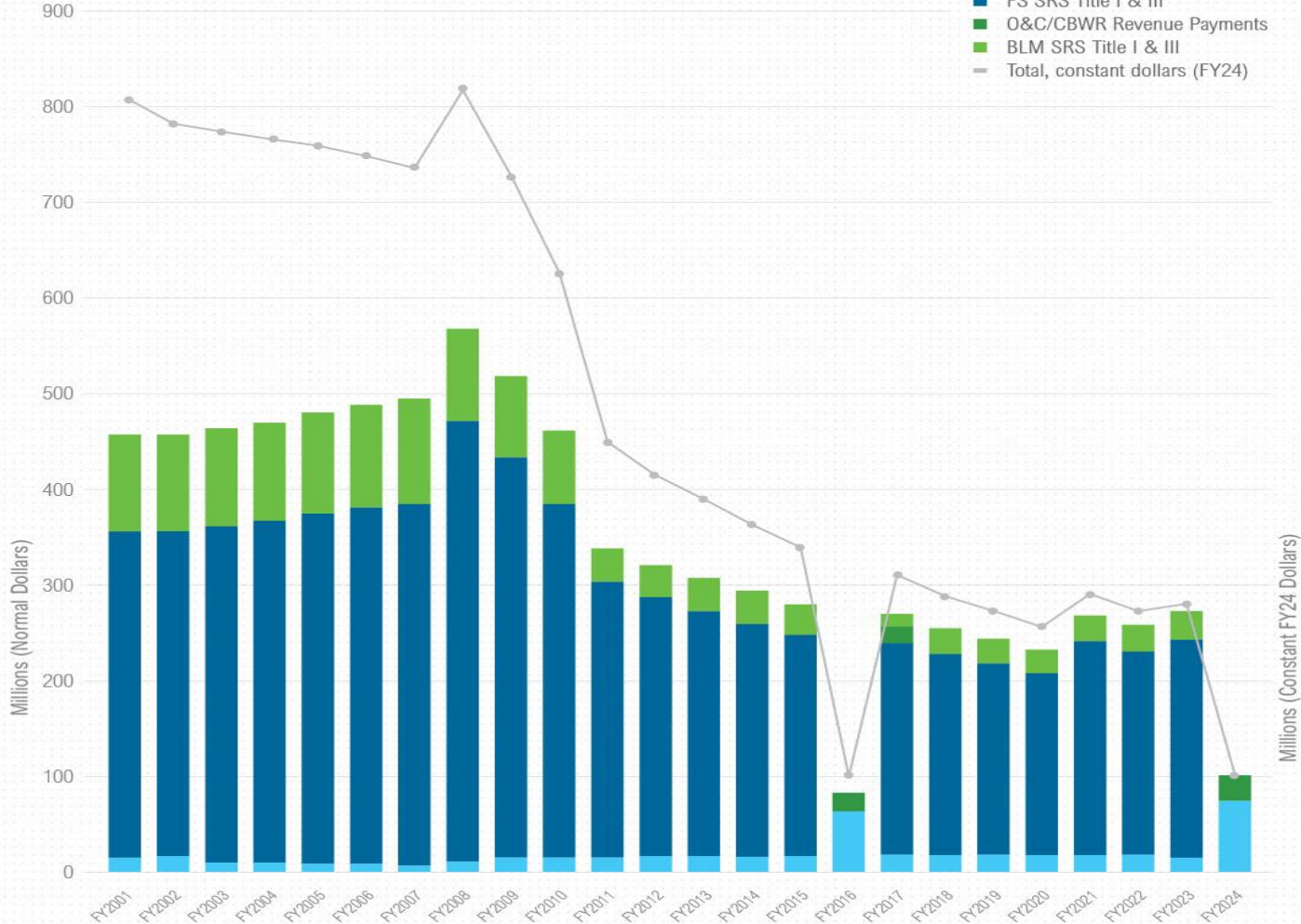


Primer for Counties:

Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Programs

\$281 million in SRS FY23 payments dropped to \$103 million in FY24 when SRS was not authorized

FY 2001 - FY 2024 SRS BLM AND FS PAYMENTS^{xix}



Source: NACo Analysis of Payment data reported in Congressional Research Service, “The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act: Background and Issues.” Available at <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R41303> (March 27, 2025).

Notes: Payments from both the FS and BLM for O&C and CBWR lands are included, along with comparisons to traditional revenue-sharing programs—FS 25% and BLM 50%. Only Title I and III SRS payments are reflected, as Title II funds are retained by the agencies. In years when SRS was authorized, FS 25% payments are minimal by comparison. In years where SRS was authorized but a small number of O&C and CBWR counties elected to receive the 50% revenue payments, this data is not shown due to it being indistinguishable due to scale. To account for the higher payments in earlier years, especially when adjusted for inflation, the total inflation-adjusted value is expressed in constant FY 2024 dollars, with payment values exceeding \$800 million in some years.

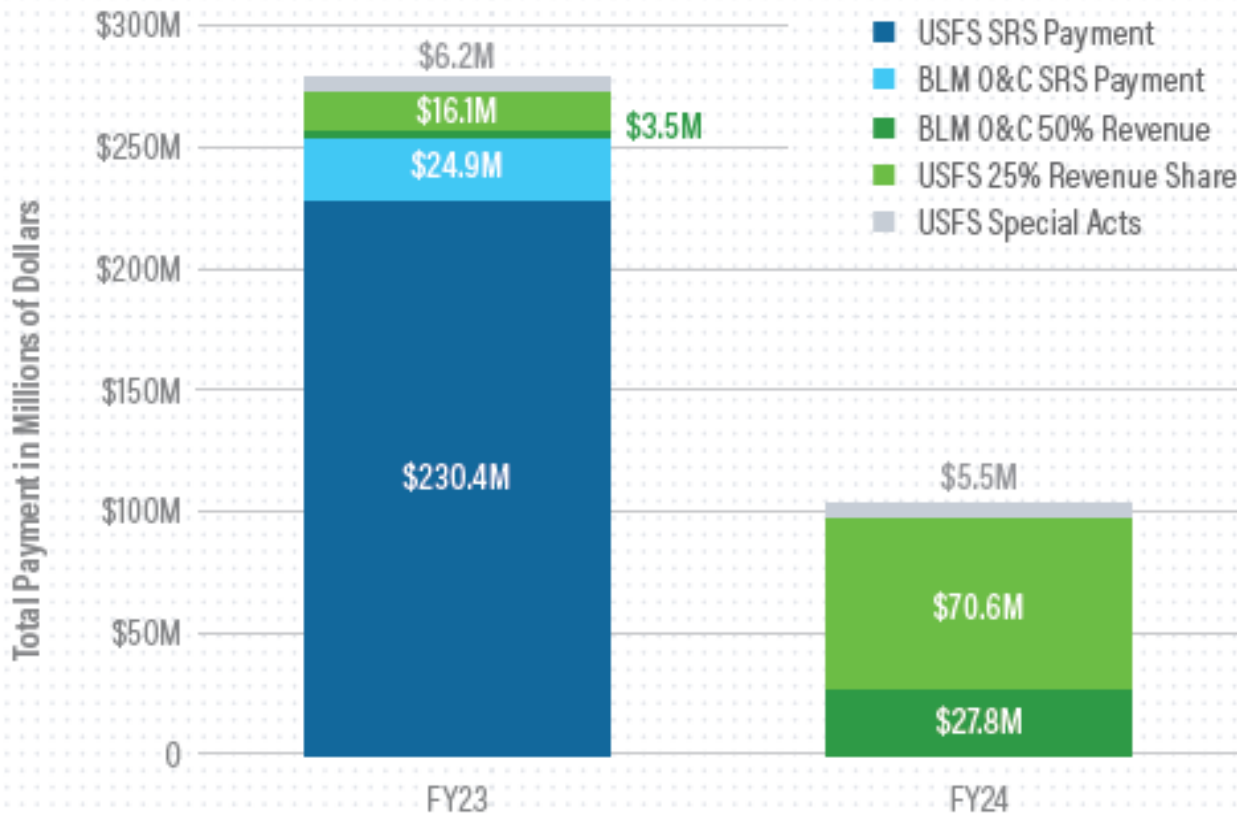


- **When SRS expired after FY2023, counties saw substantial reductions in funding**

National Center for Public Lands Counties



NATIONWIDE COMPARISON: FY 2024 COUNTY REVENUE SHARE PAYMENTS TO FY 2023 SRS TOTAL PAYMENTS^{xvii}



Without SRS reauthorization, payments to counties are reduced by

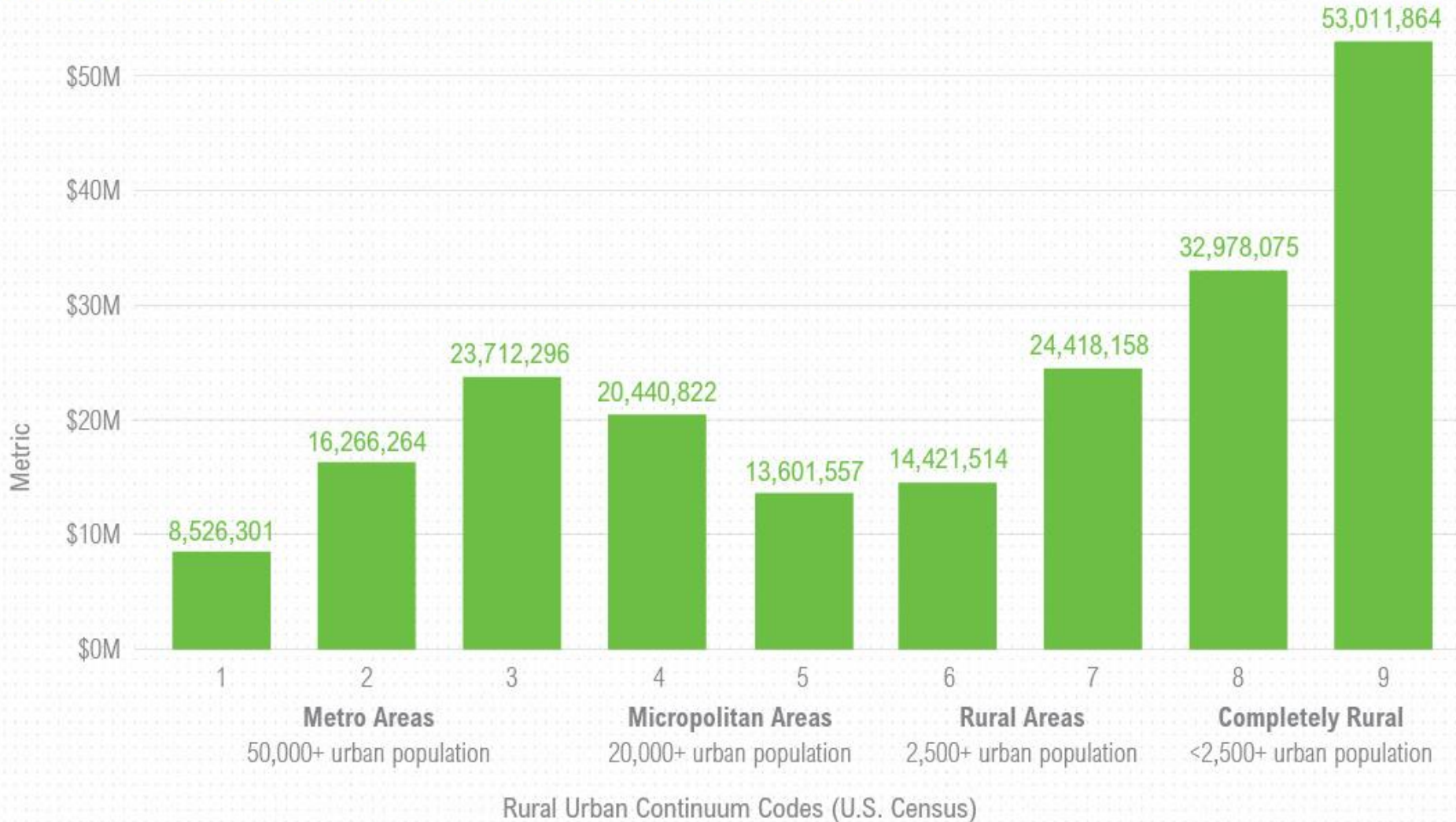
~63%

dropping from \$281.0M in FY 2023 to just \$103.9M in FY 2024 through the revenue share programs.

Source: NACo analysis of FS and BLM Payment Data

LOSS OF SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS PAYMENTS DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS RURAL COUNTIES^{xxi}

Loss of financial support for county governments and school districts due to lapse in SRS funding for FY 2024 based on Urban-Rural Continuum Code Classifications



- **Completely Rural Counties (<2,500 urban residents) lost nearly \$86 million when SRS expired**

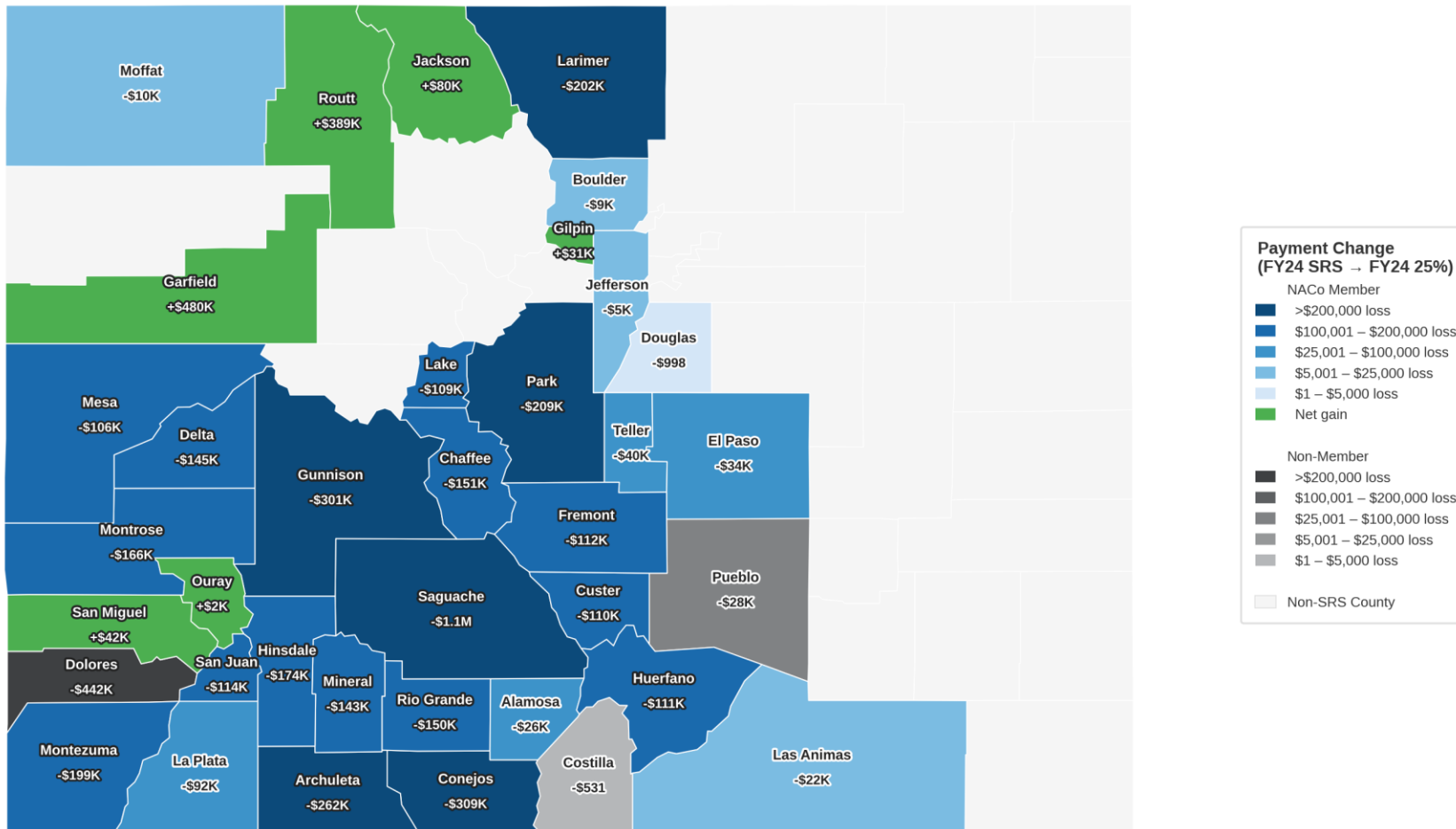
Source: Haggerty, Mark, "Rural Counties Lost the Most When Funding for the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act Ended." Center for American Progress, August 11, 2025.

National Center for Public Lands Counties



FY2024 SRS vs 25% Timber Payments: Colorado County Losses

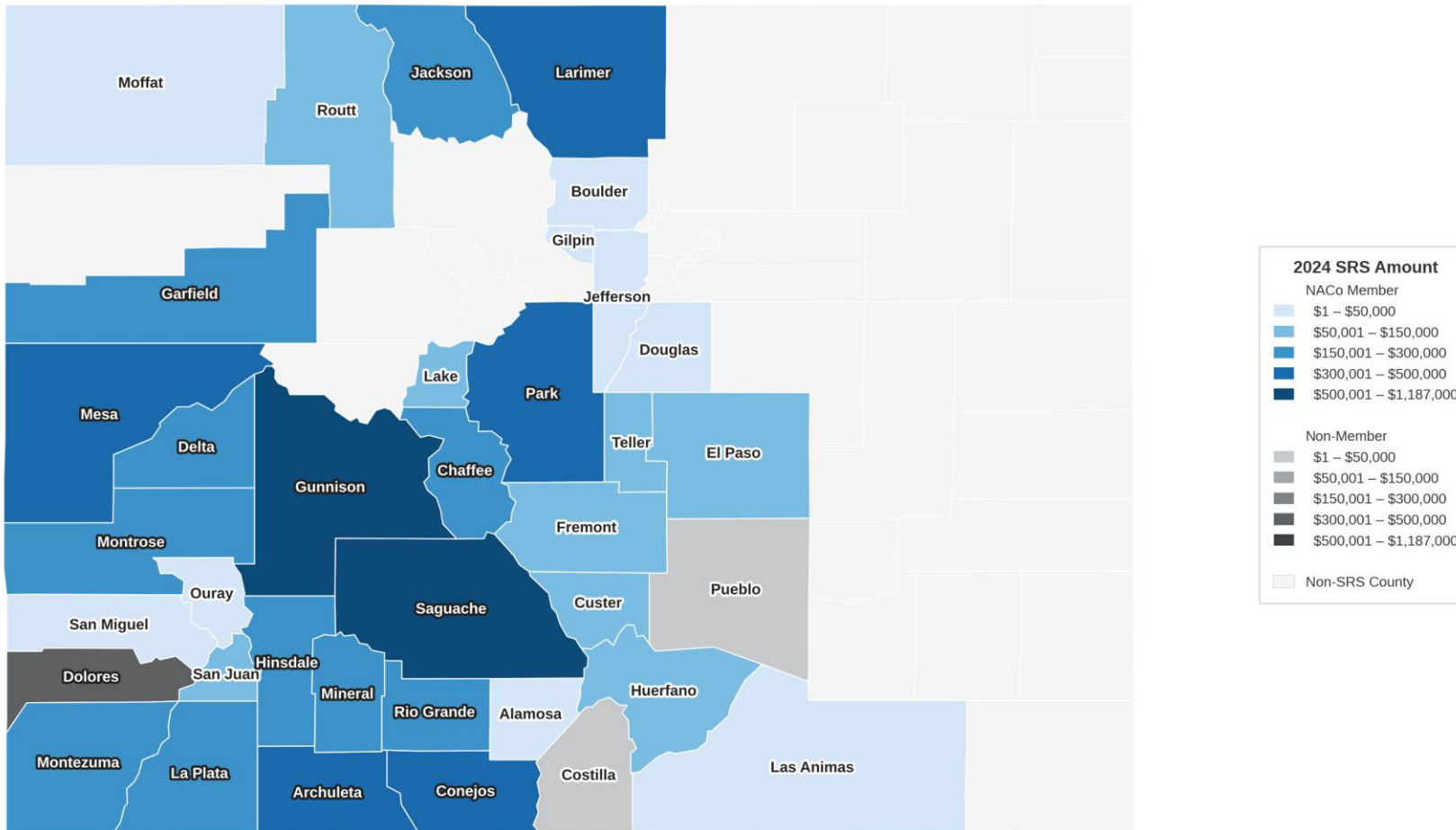
Net loss of \$3,815,153 across 37 SRS counties (50.6% decline) | Title II payments excluded



- Net loss of \$3,815,153 across 37 SRS Counties when FY24 payments were not authorized
- 51% decline
- 21 counties — no national forest land, not in either program

FY2024 Colorado SRS Counties

Title I + III Payments Only (Title II Excluded)



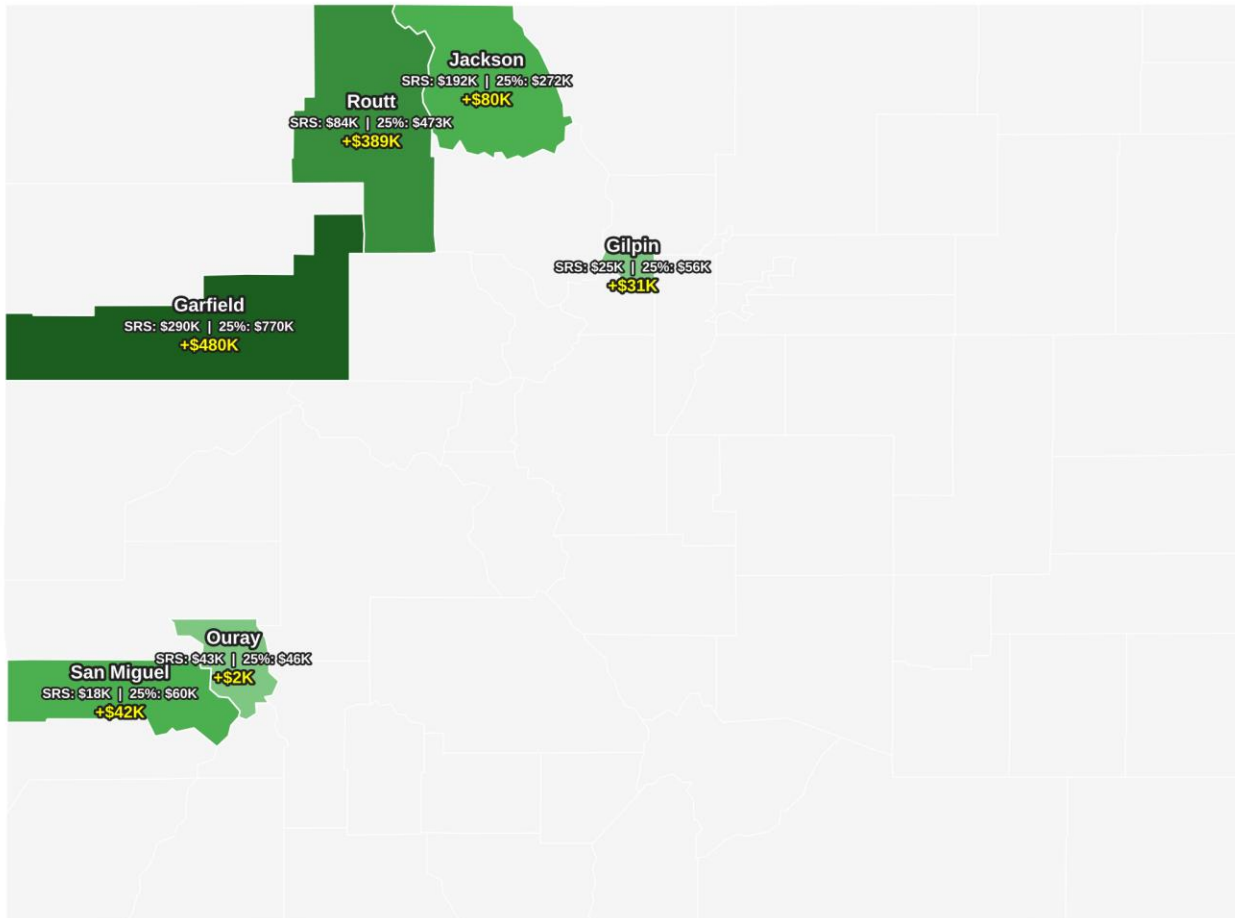
- Colorado's 37 SRS counties received **\$7,535,559** in Title I & III



- Scan the QR Code: Check out your county's SRS Profile on NACo's County Explorer

SRS-Enrolled Counties That Gained Under 1908 Act Reversion

6 counties gained \$1,022,335 when SRS lapsed and payments reverted to 25% formula

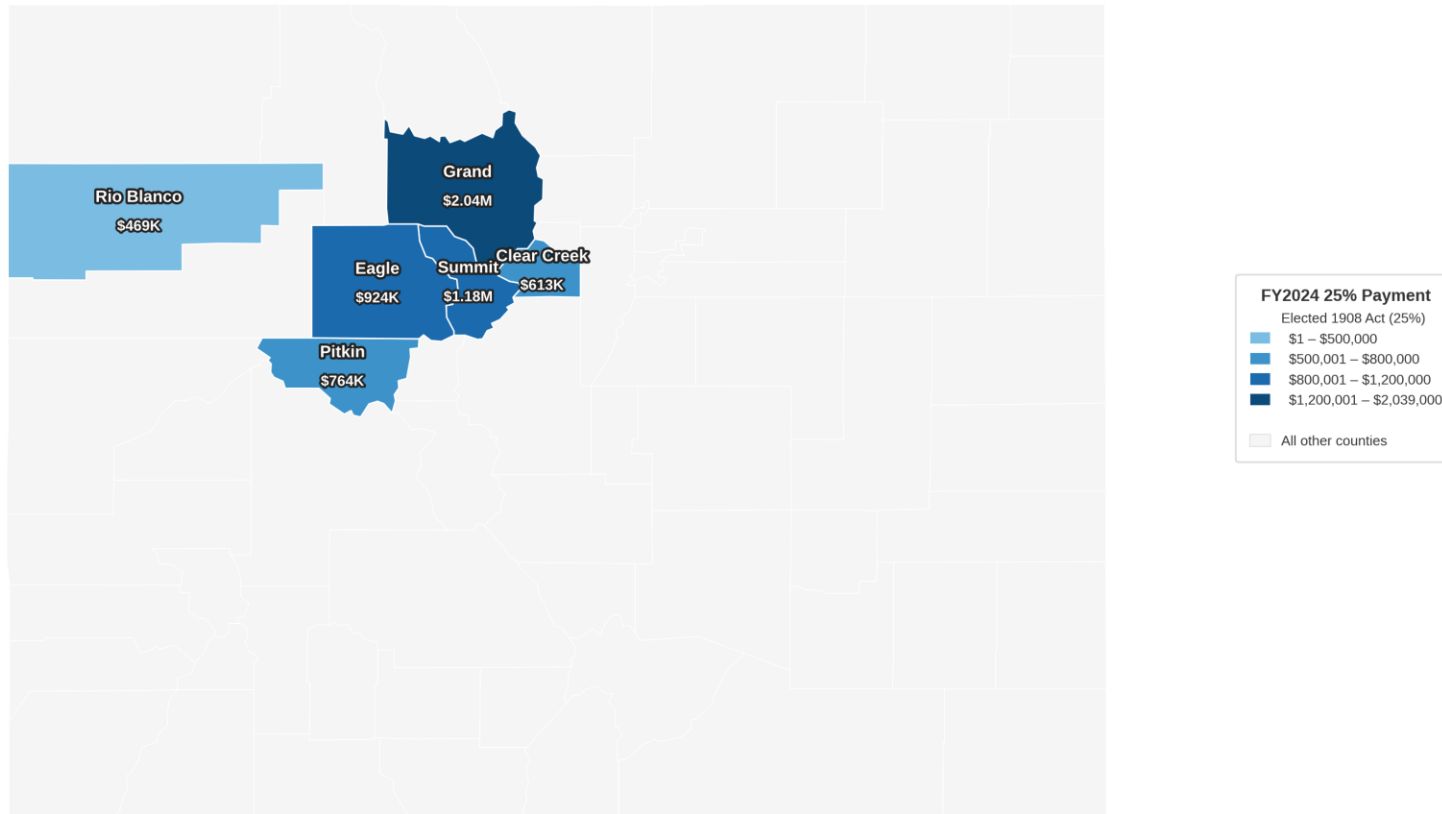


Six Colorado SRS counties received more under the 1908 Act 25% payment than under SRS in FY24:

- **Garfield** — +\$479,657 (+165%)
- **Routt** — +\$388,577 (+462%)
- **Jackson** — +\$79,551 (+41%)
- **San Miguel** — +\$41,614 (+228%)
- **Gilpin** — +\$30,834 (+123%)
- **Ouray** — +\$2,102 (+4.8%)

Colorado Counties That Elected 1908 Act (25%) Over SRS

6 counties receiving \$5,991,024 in FY2024 25% timber payments



Six Colorado Counties that Elected 1908 Payment over SRS

- **Clear Creek**
- **Eagle**
- **Grand**
- **Pitkin**
- **Rio Blanco**
- **Summit**

SRS Payment Formula

Secure Rural Schools — How County Payments Are Calculated

1

High-Three Average

Average the 3 highest revenue-sharing payments from FY1986–FY1999 for each eligible county.



2

Payment Proportion

Divide each county's high-three average by the total of all eligible counties' high-three averages.

3

Acreage Proportion

Divide each county's Forest Service acreage by total FS acreage across all eligible counties.



4

Base Share

Add the payment proportion (Step 2) and acreage proportion (Step 3) and divide by 2, for counties with FS lands.

5

Income Adjustment

Divide county per capita income by the median for all eligible counties, then square the result.



6

Adjusted Ratio

Divide each county's base share (Step 4) by its income adjustment (Step 5).

7

Adjusted Share

Divide each county's Step 6 result by the total for all eligible counties.



8

Final Payment

Multiply each county's adjusted share by the full funding amount.

Upcoming Decisions:

FY26 USFS Payments to States

Payment Elections (Usually August 1)

Payment Allocations (Usually September 30)



County Decision Points (when USFS opens process)

- **Payment Election** – Accept either 1908 Act 25% Payment or SRS, Last Opened in 2023
- **Payment Allocation** – Based on Distribution Amounts – Allocate Between Titles

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS PAYMENT ALLOCATION REQUIREMENTS^{xxv}

Title Number	Minor Distribution (<\$100,000)	Modest Distribution (\$100,000-\$349,999)	Major Distribution (\$350,000 and above)
Title I	100% OR 80%-85% AND	80%-85% AND	80%-85% AND
Title II	15%-20% between Titles II & III	15%-20% between Titles II & III	8%-20%
Title III	15%-20% between Titles II & III	15%-20% between Titles II & III	<7%

Colorado Process

- USFS provides notification to Colorado State Treasurer's Office
- USFS provides estimated payment report to states to aid counties in determining best decision
 - Report does not contain actual amounts, but rather best-case estimates
- Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Collects County Decisions
- DOLA Transmits County Decisions to USFS

State Name: <u>Colorado</u>	Election to Receive Payment		Allocation of the Secure Rural Schools Act State Payment				
	25-percent of 7-year rolling average receipts	Secure Rural Schools Act State payment	Percent for Public Schools & Roads (Title I)	Percent for Title II, Special Projects	Percent for Title III, County Funds	Percent to Return to U.S. Treasury	Total of Column D, E, F, G
County Name	<i>For each county enter X in one of the columns below</i>		<i>For each county with an X in Column C, enter a percentage (number) in the columns below, not to exceed 100 total</i>				
Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	Column G	Total
Alamosa (003)							0
Archuleta (007)							0
Boulder (013)							0
Chaffee (015)							0
Clear Creek (019)							0
Conejos (021)							0
Costilla (023)							0
Custer (027)							0
Delta (029)							0
Dolores (033)							0
Douglas (035)							0
Eagle (037)							0
El Paso (041)							0
Fremont (043)							0



- **Example Overall Election Form from FY23 Process**
- **Form is Submitted by the State**
- **DOLA shares information with counties**

Estimated Payment Report



Fiscal Year: 2023	National: Yes	Run Date : 05/25/2023	
PNF Lands Data: 2022	PCPI Data: 2021	Base Amount:	
BLM Lands Data: 2022	***Note*** Payment amount is rounded to the nearest \$100. If there is a \$0.00 dollar amount then payment would be less than \$50.00.		

State	County	SRS Full Payment Amount	25% 7 Year Rolling Average
COLORADO(08)	Alamosa(003)	\$ 23,800.00	\$ 2,600.00
COLORADO(08)	Archuleta(007)	\$ 329,300.00	\$ 56,600.00
COLORADO(08)	Boulder(013)	\$ 35,700.00	\$ 21,500.00
COLORADO(08)	Chaffee(015)	\$ 252,200.00	\$ 72,100.00
COLORADO(08)	Clear Creek(019)	\$ 83,800.00	\$ 540,500.00
COLORADO(08)	Conejos(021)	\$ 308,500.00	\$ 36,400.00
COLORADO(08)	Costilla(023)	\$ 400.00	\$ 100.00
COLORADO(08)	Custer(027)	\$ 126,300.00	\$ 25,900.00
COLORADO(08)	Delta(029)	\$ 193,300.00	\$ 56,300.00
COLORADO(08)	Dolores(033)	\$ 450,700.00	\$ 44,400.00
COLORADO(08)	Douglas(035)	\$ 37,400.00	\$ 31,100.00
COLORADO(08)	Eagle(037)	\$ 163,200.00	\$ 844,400.00
COLORADO(08)	El Paso(041)	\$ 57,300.00	\$ 21,200.00
COLORADO(08)	Fremont(043)	\$ 120,900.00	\$ 15,900.00
COLORADO(08)	Garfield(045)	\$ 294,500.00	\$ 696,100.00
COLORADO(08)	Gilpin(047)	\$ 24,000.00	\$ 48,600.00
COLORADO(08)	Grand(049)	\$ 429,800.00	\$ 1,790,100.00
COLORADO(08)	Gunnison(051)	\$ 756,900.00	\$ 283,400.00
COLORADO(08)	Hinsdale(053)	\$ 372,000.00	\$ 85,900.00
COLORADO(08)	Huerfano(055)	\$ 122,700.00	\$ 22,800.00
COLORADO(08)	Jackson(057)	\$ 202,900.00	\$ 184,700.00
COLORADO(08)	Jefferson(059)	\$ 38,100.00	\$ 29,100.00
COLORADO(08)	La Plata(067)	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 53,800.00
COLORADO(08)	Lake(065)	\$ 138,800.00	\$ 25,900.00
COLORADO(08)	Larimer(069)	\$ 325,400.00	\$ 101,000.00
COLORADO(08)	Las Animas(071)	\$ 23,500.00	\$ 3,700.00
COLORADO(08)	Mesa(077)	\$ 453,200.00	\$ 296,300.00
COLORADO(08)	Mineral(079)	\$ 226,900.00	\$ 64,800.00
COLORADO(08)	Moffat(081)	\$ 41,300.00	\$ 24,600.00
COLORADO(08)	Montezuma(083)	\$ 210,000.00	\$ 34,500.00
COLORADO(08)	Montrose(085)	\$ 266,400.00	\$ 90,900.00
COLORADO(08)	Ouray(091)	\$ 47,000.00	\$ 39,000.00
COLORADO(08)	Park(093)	\$ 404,200.00	\$ 156,600.00
COLORADO(08)	Pitkin(097)	\$ 32,200.00	\$ 698,000.00
COLORADO(08)	Pueblo(101)	\$ 30,500.00	\$ 5,200.00
COLORADO(08)	Rio Blanco(103)	\$ 302,000.00	\$ 406,600.00
COLORADO(08)	Rio Grande(105)	\$ 181,100.00	\$ 33,400.00
COLORADO(08)	Routt(107)	\$ 144,800.00	\$ 321,200.00
COLORADO(08)	Saguache(109)	\$ 1,047,900.00	\$ 126,600.00
COLORADO(08)	San Juan(111)	\$ 111,800.00	\$ 24,000.00
COLORADO(08)	San Miguel(113)	\$ 30,400.00	\$ 51,400.00
COLORADO(08)	Summit(117)	\$ 123,800.00	\$ 1,042,100.00
COLORADO(08)	Teller(119)	\$ 66,300.00	\$ 27,300.00

Example Estimated Payment Report

Key Considerations For Counties:

- Dollar amounts represented on this report are the Forest Service's best estimates during this election cycle
- Report does not confer actual dollar amounts
- Actual dollars earned and distributed will be different based on future factors and variables not currently available

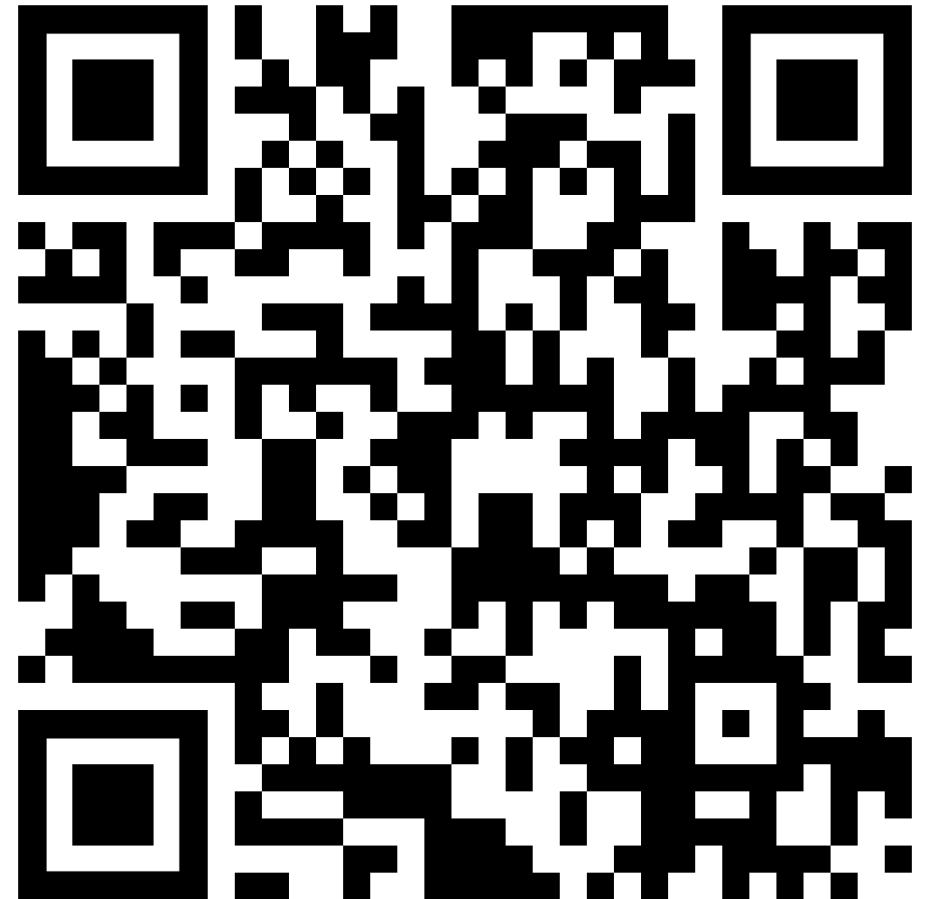
Key Considerations for County Leaders

- **SRS income adjustment squares county income ratio** — counties with higher incomes receive disproportionately lower payments
 - Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) income data shifts annually — SRS payments can change even when acreage stays constant
- **SRS requires Congressional reauthorization; 25% is permanent** — SRS lapses expose counties to sudden funding cuts
- Title III (wildfire, search and rescue) only available under SRS
- **25% payments depend on a 7-year rolling average of timber receipts** — harvest levels, market conditions and federal land management decisions can shift this baseline unpredictably

USFS FY23 Video Training



USFS SRS Website



Thank you!

READ
FULL PILT AND SRS
PRIMER



JOIN THE NCPLC
KNOWLEDGE HUB



gnelson@naco.org
ttincher@naco.org

