JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

WORKSHOP AGENDA REQUEST

TO: **Board of County Commissioners**

FROM: **Mark McCauley, County Administrator**

DATE: **September 6, 2022**

SUBJECT: **County Distribution Percentages for Secure Rural Schools Monies**

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

Periodically the Washington State Treasurer gives counties the option to change the distribution percentages for Title I, II and III monies made available under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. Jefferson County's current allocation percentages, elected by the county last in 2013, are 85%, 13% and 2% for Titles I, II and III, respectively. We have been asked to confirm our existing distribution percentages or chose another distribution scheme. Failure to do this will result in these monies being distributed using the following default percentages: 80% to Title 1 and 20% to be distributed between Titles II and III (most likely to Title II).

ANALYSIS:

The Secure Rural Schools Act breaks payments into three distinct categories:

Title I - Roads & Schools
Counties generally receive the majority of Secure Rural Schools funds under Title I, which is designated for the benefit of public schools and public roads. In years when the Secure Rural Schools Act is reauthorized by Congress, Title I payments are made from the USDA Forest Service to states. States then distribute the payment to all eligible counties. The funds must be passed through to local governmental entities for use at the county level (but not necessarily to county governments themselves). Each state must spend the funds on road and school programs, and state law sets forth how the payments are to be allocated between road and school projects. The state laws differ widely, generally ranging from 30% to 100% for school programs.

Title II - Special Projects on Federal Lands
Counties typically receive 20% or less of Secure Rural Schools funds under Title II, which are used by willing Federal agencies, State and local governments, private and nonprofit entities, and landowners for protection, restoration and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat, and other natural resource objectives on Federal land and on non-Federal land where projects would benefit these resources on Federal land.

Rather than being distributed to the State, Title II funds are retained by the Forest Service and are allocated to specific projects that have been reviewed and recommended by a local Resource Advisory Committee.

Resource Advisory Committees must initiate (recommend) Title II projects by September 30, 2025. Project funds must be obligated by Sept. 30, 2026

Title III - County Projects
Funds received under Title III are used to:

- carry out activities under the Firewise Communities program
- reimburse the participating county for search and rescue and other emergency services, including firefighting and law enforcement patrols
- cover training costs and equipment purchases directly related to the emergency service
- develop and carry out community wildfire protection plans.
- provide or expand access to broadband telecommunications services

In years when the Secure Rural Schools Act is reauthorized by Congress, Title III payments are made from the Forest Service to states. States then distribute the payment to all eligible counties.

Public Works relies heavily on the Secure Rural Schools Title I revenue which has been steadily reduced over time. The County makes up for some of these lost revenues by sharing PILT revenues received every year. Public Works recommends that the County keep the existing distribution percentages.

Title II monies are retained by the Forest Service and are allocated for specific projects recommended by a local Resource Advisory Committee.

Title III monies have heretofore not been used by the County, however, staff will be recommending that some of the accumulated Title III funds be used to hire a consultant to help us prepare Community Wildfire Protection Plans for our various communities.

FISCAL IMPACT:

If the Board of County Commissioners approve staff's recommendation this request will preserve the status quo and will have no fiscal impact. Should the Board choose to reduce the Title I distribution percentage, staff recommends consulting school districts who receive 50% of Title I funds. Said schools include Queets-Clearwater, Brinnon, Quilcene, Chimacum and Port Townsend.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board approve maintaining the County's current Secure Rural Schools distribution percentages and authorize the County Administrator to complete the "WA Combined Instructions and Elections Form" confirming our decision.

REVIEWED BY:

Mark McCauley, County Administrator

Date 8/26/22