

**WHATCOM COUNTY
EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE**

County Courthouse
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Satpal Singh Sidhu
County Executive

Memorandum

To: Whatcom County Council
Finance and Facility Advisory Board

Through: Randy Rydel, Finance Director

From: Riley Sweeney, Policy and Communications Specialist

Date: July 7, 2026

RE: Resolution designating the revenue distribution from forest service payments

In February 20, 2026, the United States Forest Service announced that counties will receive payments through the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program for the first time in nearly two years. The SRS program provides funding for critical local government services like education, transportation, and public safety to counties with National Forest System land. Federal land is untaxable but the counties are still responsible for services on and around federal land.

Since 1908, federal law has directed 25 percent of all revenue from timber in national forests to counties, and that funding supported county budgets for decades. After federal land management priorities changed and timber harvests declined, Congress created the SRS program in 2000 to alleviate financial challenges faced by rural counties.

Funds must be distributed between Title I uses which includes schools and roads, and Title II uses which include habitat-related projects on Federal lands. Previously, Whatcom County dedicated 80% of the funds for Title 1 uses, and 20% for Title II uses, however shifting to an 85/15 split would net an estimated \$24,000 for county priorities.

The Community Self Determination Act of 2000 requires that funding allocations for the SRS program must be submitted to the Washington State Treasurer by July 20th.

Staff requests that Council adopt the attached resolution directing an 85/15 split so that decision can be communicated to the State Treasurer by the July 20th deadline.