

Secure Rural School Program of 2008-2011

Resource Advisory Committees Overview

The Secure Rural Schools Act authorizes the use of Resource Advisory Committee (RACs) as a mechanism for local community collaboration with federal land managers in recommending Title II projects on federal lands or projects that will benefit resources on federal lands. RACs established by the original SRS Act and in existence before September 29, 2006, have been renewed by the Secretary of Agriculture and members have reappointed to a new four-year term.

Officers and Membership

- Each RAC shall consist of 15 members appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. Committee members shall be representative of the interests of the following three categories:

Category A

- Organized labor or non-timber forest product harvester groups
- Developed outdoor recreation, off highway vehicle users, or commercial recreation activities;
- Energy and mineral development interests; or commercial or recreational fishing interests
- Commercial timber industry
- Federal grazing or other land use permittee or represent nonindustrial private forest land owners, within the area for which the RAC is organized

Category B

- Nationally recognized environmental organizations
- Regionally or locally recognized environmental organizations
- Dispersed recreational activities
- Archaeological and historical interests
- Nationally or regionally recognized wild horse and burro interest groups, wildlife or hunting organizations, or watershed associations

Category C

- State elected official or their designee
- County or local elected official
- American Indian tribes within or adjacent to committee area
- School officials or teachers
- Represent the affected public at large.

- RAC members shall serve a four-year term.
- The Chairperson of each RAC shall be elected by the RAC from among its members for a term of 1 year.
- The Secretary of Agriculture shall appoint a Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for each RAC.
- Equal opportunity practices, in line with USDA policies, shall be followed in all membership appointments to the committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by the Department, membership shall include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.
- If a RAC member fails to attend (in person or by telephonic or electronic means) two consecutive official meetings, the Secretary may remove that member from the RAC.
- The Secretary shall appoint one replacement for each membership category. Should a vacancy occur, the replacement shall be available to fill the vacancy immediately. Replacement members may not vote until moved up to fill vacancy and serve as a RAC member.
- A vacancy on a RAC shall be filled in the manner of the original appointment. Any member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring before the expiration of the term for which his/her predecessor was appointed shall be

appointed for the remainder of such term. A replacement shall fill the vacancy as soon as practicable after the vacancy occurs.

- RAC Members shall reside within the State or States in which the RAC has jurisdiction. To the extent practicable, each of the three categories shall be composed of local representatives.

Duties

- Each RAC shall review projects proposed under Title II of the Act by participating counties and other persons.
- Each RAC shall provide early and continuous coordination with appropriate Forest Service officials in recommending projects consistent with Title II of the Act.
- Each RAC shall provide frequent opportunities for citizens, organizations, tribes, land management agencies, and other interested parties to participate openly and meaningfully, beginning at the early stages of the project development process under Title II of the Act.
- Consistent with applicable laws and Department regulations, each RAC may adopt such by-laws or rules of operation, as it deems advisable.
- Each RAC shall monitor projects that have been approved under the Act and advise the designated Federal official on the progress of the monitoring efforts and
- Each RAC shall make recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture for any appropriate changes or adjustments to the projects being monitored by the RAC.
- The authority to initiate Title II projects terminates on September 30, 2011. Funds not obligated by September 30, 2012, will be returned to the U.S. Treasury.

Meetings

- The RACs will meet as often as is necessary to complete their business.
- RAC meetings shall be opened to the public and announced in the local newspaper of record one week in advance and in the Federal Register.
- A majority of the members of a RAC must be present to constitute an official meeting of the committee.
- The approval of majority of the members of each of the three membership categories of the RAC shall be required to approve a project for recommendation to the Secretary.
- Records of RAC meetings shall be maintained and made available to the public.

Support

- The RACs report to the Secretary of Agriculture through the appropriate Forest Supervisor.
- The Forest Service shall provide support for the RACs.
- Members of the Committee serve without compensation. Reimbursement for travel and per diem for attendance at RAC meetings called by the Chairperson and with an agenda approved by the DFO will be determined on a forest-by-forest basis with a view to budgetary constraints and the need to achieve adequate representation of necessary groups.