

**Opening Statement
Chairman Raul Grijalva
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Building Success: Implementation of the Secure Rural Schools Program
July 29, 2010**

The Subcommittee will now come to order. Thank you.

Across the country, rural communities and the Federal Government are neighbors. In many cases, that relationship leads to good opportunities for economic partnerships, as we heard during our last hearing. It can also create challenges for rural communities, when they are continually exposed to the boom and bust cycles of extractive industries on public lands, such as timber.

The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 was originally designed to help rural communities weather the storm of declining timber receipts on public lands. The timber industry has not recovered, and the recent economic recession has further depressed the struggling market.

Congress intervened again in 2008 and granted a four-year reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools program. One of the components of the reauthorization was a gradual ramp down of funds to local communities, with an expectation that local governments would begin to move away from federal dollars toward more sustainable budgets.

We are now two years through the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools program, and it is a good time to review the successes and challenges of the program.

It is our hope and intention that the Federal Government will always be a good neighbor to the country's rural communities. However, we know that the best help we can give will lead to long term sustainability.

I want to thank all the witnesses for traveling so far today to join us. I look forward to hearing from all of you. And I now turn to the Ranking Member, Mr. Bishop, for any opening comments he may have.