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January 26, 2023

TO: CSAC Executive Committee

FROM: Supervisor John Peters  
Graham Knaus, Executive Director

**SUBJECT: National Center for Public Lands Counties**

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As part of the ARPA investments, Congress has invested record sums in programs to support public lands counties and granted new authorities to federal lands agencies to broaden the scope, pace and scale of their on-the-ground resource management work with local governments. These investments, particularly the \$1.5 billion to the new Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund, create a once in a generation opportunity to build a more promising future for counties with substantial federal public lands. In fact, these funds include a one-time \$750 million augmentation primarily benefiting counties heavily dependent on federal payments-in-lieu-of-taxes, or PILT.

To truly benefit from these unique opportunities and investments, counties must accelerate evidence-based research, peer information exchanges, and overall understanding of lessons learned, emerging trends analysis, and priority public policy issues around federal public lands and impacts to the counties where they reside.

The NACo and WIR Boards of Directors therefore established the National Center for Public Lands Counties (The Center) to give public lands counties an enhanced opportunity to demonstrate how prosperous public lands counties create a prosperous America. *The Center’s sustainable funding model emanates from a requested amount equivalent to one percent of each county’s allocation and is requested as a one-time only contribution to create the Center.* The Center will utilize traditional and new media—such as podcasts and video interviews—to tell these stories and also develop detailed, individual research and written county profiles focused on:

- County partnerships with federal agencies, states, tribes and other counties to reduce wildfire risk, responsibly develop energy and minerals, improve public access to federal lands, protect watersheds, conserve species and their habitat, and protect national parks and other natural treasures.
- County investments of PILT, SRS and other natural resource revenue payments to benefit residents, visitors and surrounding public lands.
- The different economic drivers in rural vs. urban public lands counties.
- Development and implementation of county natural resource management plans and baseline socioeconomic data for environmental analyses.
- Resource values of federal lands compared to nearby privately owned lands.
- Meeting the unique challenges facing public lands counties, such as housing affordability for residents and federal employees, ensuring a stable tax base to deliver critical services, and managing infrastructure on federal lands.

For the Center to meet its mission and serve as a long-term tool for public lands counties, a voluntary investment of \$15 million is sought over the next two years to hire the necessary staff to conduct this critical research and keep the Center on a sustainable financial course. ***The requested amount is equivalent to one percent of each county's allocation and is requested as a one-time only contribution to create the Center.***

Center's governing body:

- WIR Executive Committee
- NACo Public Lands Policy Steering Committee Chair and Vice Chairs
- State association executive from the WIR Immediate Past President's home state
- NACo CEO/ Executive Director

The Center will report to the NACo and WIR Board of Directors on its financial health and issue an annual report on its research and progress at the annual WIR Conference. Additional information about this effort can be found on the NACo National Center for Public Lands resources page at: <https://www.naco.org/blog/treasury-releases-local-assistance-and-tribal-consistency-fund-payments-eligible-counties>.

NACo Article: [Treasury releases Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund payments to eligible counties \(naco.org\)](#)

CSAC Bulletin Article: [Treasury Launches Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund; Formula Benefits Counties with Federal Lands - California State Association of Counties](#)