

May 2, 2005

The Honorable Charles Taylor
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
B-308 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Taylor:

The Payments-in-Lieu-of-Taxes program (PILT) enacted by Congress in October, 1976 and signed into law by President Gerald Ford has never been fully funded.

Enactment of PILT represented recognition by Congress of the burden our nation's public lands place on public lands counties and the citizens who live there. While the funding level of PILT has never been adequate, increased usage of the public lands is requiring a greater level of services than ever before. As you know, the federal land management agencies and citizens generally expect—even demand--the same services for the public lands that are enjoyed on private lands.

Yet, in the face of this inadequate funding of PILT, Congress continues to appropriate large sums of money to acquire additional lands to add to the federal land inventory. Western Counties Alliance (WCA) believes it is time for this indefensible and senseless practice to end.

We understand that mark up on Fiscal Year 2006 Department of Interior and related agencies budgets will begin shortly. WCA strongly urges your Interior Appropriations Subcommittee to fully fund PILT by shifting the necessary revenue to achieve this end from the various federal land acquisition programs for both the Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service and from other sources.

We appreciate your leadership in rejecting the President's suggested budget cut in PILT for Fiscal Year 2006 from the current year by \$29 million. We believe that the President's FY 2006 recommended funding level is callous, insensitive and irresponsible.

WCA believes it is past time to fully fund PILT and to end the practice of unfairly placing the burden for the public lands on the citizens who live in public lands counties.

Sincerely,

Mark O. Walsh
Executive Director