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## 2023 Farm Bill Re-authorization Priorities for Rural County Representatives of California

### Rural Title

- Simplify the definition of “eligible” communities for USDA programs by raising and standardizing the eligibility population cap for most programs to 50,000 (Note: bill language & # to be included once introduced).
- Rural broadband: update language that would allow for program dollars to be used as Loan Loss Reserve, as well as for direct deployment. Doing so will allow leverage of public dollars to encourage private investment.
- Include language on funding scoring criteria for projects that partner directly with Joint Power Authorities (JPA’s), local governments, rural cooperatives, or local telephone companies as eligible entities in all broadband programs.
- RCRC supports the language originally proposed in the House version of Build Back Better (section: 12008) – the Rural Partnership Program (RPP). The RPP would invest \$887 million for development grants targeted directly to partnerships of local governments and qualified for-profit and nonprofit entities in low-income rural regions and \$97 million for innovation grants for regional institutions that can help build capacity in targeted counties.

### Forestry Title

- Expand Good Neighbor Authority to include the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service.
- Include language from S.21 Senators Feinstein & Daines, that would amend the *Healthy Forests Restoration Act’s* definition of an “at-risk-community” to include any community at high risk for wildfire that would significantly threaten human life and property. Current law limits eligibility for federal grants to communities adjacent to federal lands or those listed in an outdated notice in the Federal Register from 2001. This technical change would allow more communities to access federal grants and reduce their wildfire risk.
- RCRC supports language that would make forest lands available for federal employees/forest service workers.
- Identifying opportunities to fund/expand wood product innovation, i.e. cross-laminated timber.

### Energy Title

- Improve rural community resiliency by providing micro-grids or similar technologies for use in the event of multi-day power outages as a result of power safety strategies designed to minimize wildfires.

### **Conservation Title**

- This Title is an important resource for the land managers in California's rural counties. From a local government perspective, continued funding of these programs provides an effective tool in meeting overarching resource goals, as contemplated in California's climate strategy, while keeping the land on the property tax rolls of a county.

### **Nutrition**

- Many of California's rural county communities suffer from socioeconomic challenges similar to those in urban areas of the State. Similarly, these communities depend on this Title to meet basic nutritional intake needs. While not a direct local government program, nonetheless, RCRC recognizes the Title serves a valuable role in keeping our from devolving into hunger.