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RESOLUTION 2020-14

PUBLIC LAND USE SUSTAINABILITY

It is the intent of the Montana Association of Counties to seek legislation to authorize the State to reimburse counties for lost property taxes as a result of the acquisition of real property or property held in trust by either the State or Federal government.

WHEREAS, when Montana formed in 1889, Federal law envisioned an even 6% distribution of State trust lands among townships (which became counties); and

WHEREAS, State trust lands are tax-exempt, which reduces the tax base of contributing counties; and

WHEREAS, the highest contributing counties are mostly rural and have limited prospects for boosting taxable values; and

WHEREAS, trust land revenue is distributed statewide, without preference to the amount of a county's contribution; and

WHEREAS, 20 counties with the highest percentage of tax-exempt State lands struggle to sustain their economies and provide public services; and

WHEREAS, 13% of Montana's residents living in 20 counties generate 41% of State Trust land revenue; and

WHEREAS, county road departments bear the bulk of maintenance costs to provide public access to State lands; and

WHEREAS, Montanans value their rural counties and public use of State lands; and

WHEREAS, PLUS (Public Land Use Sustainability) is a proposed financial partnership to support rural sustainability; and

WHEREAS, PLUS is a permanent solution to share State land lease revenues with counties maintaining a surplus of tax-exempt State trust lands; and

WHEREAS, any county maintaining more than 6% of total county acres of tax-exempt State trust lands would be known as a PLUS county and qualify for PLUS funds.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Montana Association of Counties seeks legislation to establish and fund a permanent lease revenue-sharing account for the benefit of 20 Montana counties with more than 6% acreage in the State Trust land program.

SPONSOR:	DANIELS COUNTY
RECOMMENDATION:	DO PASS
REFERRED TO:	MACO PUBLIC LANDS COMMITTEE
ADOPTED:	ANNUAL CONFERENCE – OCTOBER 1, 2020