University of Nevada, Reno
Extension
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Payments in Lieu of Taxes

Churchill County

2026

An Analysis of Federal Payments for Public Lands in Lieu of Taxes to Nevada's Counties.

Summary

Implementing public policy often involves steps and procedures that can be challenging to digest for policy-makers themselves, researchers and laypeople alike. This fact sheet outlines the procedures for calculating the level of federal payment from the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Program. Approximately 87% of Nevada's total land acreage is federally administered, and local governments can't legally tax these lands. Former Bureau of Land Management Director Jim Baca stated, "While federal lands provide important local recreational and economic opportunities, their tax-exempt status can have fiscal impacts on the governmental units that surround them. These payments are beneficial to local governments, especially for sparsely populated counties that contain large acreage of tax-exempt federal lands. These payments help provide vital services such as fire and police stations, search and rescue operations, and road construction."[1]

Inflation Adjustments

Per acre and population variables used in the payment formulae to compute payment amounts are subject to annual inflation adjustments using the Consumer Price Index (CPI), per the 1994 amendments to the PILT Act. CPI inflation rose 2.64% from FY 2025 to FY 2026. This creates the following changes from the previous fiscal year.

Table 1. FY 2026 Inflation Adjustments

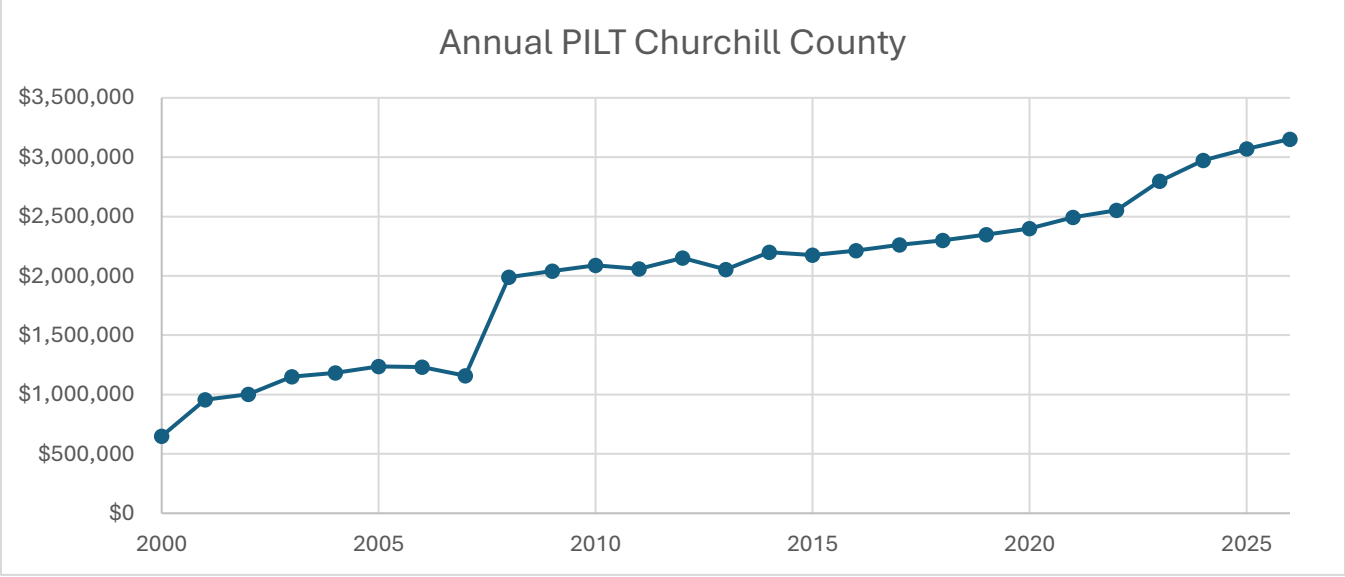
	FY 2025	FY 2026	YoY Change
Alternative A Acreage	$3.46	$3.55	$0.09
Alternative B Acreage	$0.50	$0.51	$0.01
Population MIN	$93.09	$95.55	$2.46
Population MAX	$232.73	$238.87	$6.14

Source: Fiscal Year 2026 Payments in Lieu of Taxes National Summary, U.S. Department of the Interior

Payments, 2010 to 2026

Churchill County should expect to receive $3,152,215 for FY 2026 PILT.

Figure 1. Churchill County, PILT Amounts, FY 2000 to FY 2026



Amounts shown are in nominal dollars.

[1] News Release, Bureau of Land Management, July 27, 1993.

Background and History

In 1976, Congress authorized federal land management agencies to share income with states and counties and provide the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Program to help offset lost tax revenues (Public Law 94-565). Due to its distinction as the largest federal land management agency, the BLM was chosen by the Secretary of the Interior to administer the PILT Program.

The 1976 Act has undergone several changes since initial passage. By 1994, there were three sections in the Act that distributed money to the states: Section 6902, Section 6904, and Section 6905.

Section 6902 authorizes payment to local government entities for "entitlement land" using one of two alternative payment schemes (Alternative A and Alternative B, as described later in this document.) "Entitlement lands" are federal lands within the county including National Forest System and the National Park System, lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, lands in Federal water resource projects, dredge areas maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, inactive and semi-active Army installations, and some lands donated to the Federal Government.

Section 6904 authorized payments for lands acquired after Dec. 31, 1970, that were additions to the National Park System or National Forest Wilderness Areas. These lands must have been subject to local real property taxes within the five-year period preceding the acquisition by the federal government. Payments are made annually for five years following the acquisition and are 1% of fair market value for these lands at the time of acquisition. The annual payments may not exceed the amount of taxes levied on the property during the year before the purchase. The Act stipulates that Section 6904 payments must be distributed to local governments and school districts that have incurred losses of real property taxes prior to the acquisition of these lands. Payments are distributed proportional to tax revenues that were levied by local governments and school districts in the year prior to the acquisition of these lands.

Section 6905 payments pertain to government-held interests in the Redwood National Park or Lake Tahoe Basin after the passage of (P.L. 96-586, 94 Stat. 3383) in 1980. These payments continue until they total 5% of the fair market value of the lands at the time of their acquisition and cannot exceed actual property taxes assessed and levied on the property during the fiscal year prior to federal government acquisition.

Over 99% of total payments in Nevada are covered under Section 6902.

Statutory Authority for PILT

The original law is Public Law 94–565, as amended. That law, known as the Payments in Lieu of Taxes Act (PILT Act), is codified at Chapter 69 of Title 31 of the U.S. Code. Applicable regulations are in 43 CFR Part 44.

On January 23, 2026, the President signed the Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment Appropriations Act, 2026 (Public Law 119–74), which provided full funding for the PILT program.

Payment Calculation Steps

Step A: Calculate County Entitlement Acreage

Entitlement acreage for Section 6902 payments can be calculated by summing the total acreage of each entitlement lands category.

Entitlement Lands are comprised of lands administered by:

1. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
2. National Forest System (FS)
3. Water resources development projects land; Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
4. National Park System (NPS)
5. Dredge disposal areas for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE)
6. Army installations (ARMY)
7. National Wildlife Reserve Areas withdrawn from the public domain; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)
8. Land located in the vicinity of Purgatory River Canyon and Pinon Canyon, Colorado, acquired after Dec. 31, 1981, to expand the Fort Carson military reservation (URC)

Table 2 shows the composition of entitlement acreage by land manager.

Table 2. Churchill County, Entitlement Land Acreage by Agency Administration, FY 2026

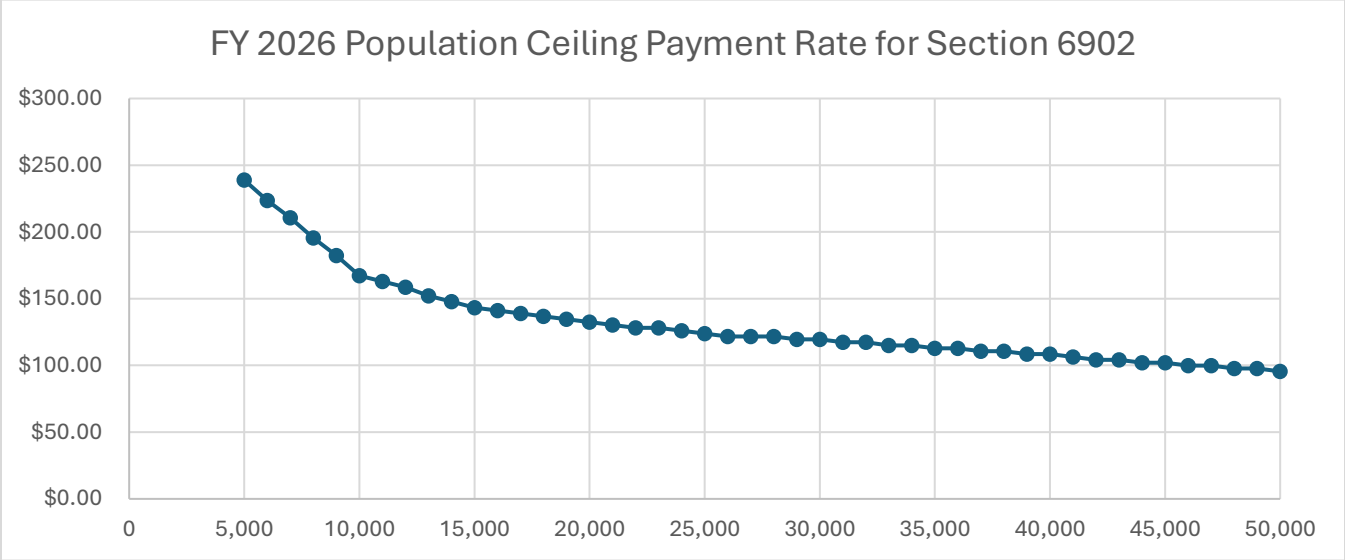
Land Administrator	Entitlement Acres	Percent of Total Acres
BLM	2,033,482	63.2%
Forest Service	0	0.0%
Bureau of Reclamation	25,250	0.8%
National Parks Service	0	0.0%
Corps of Engineers	0	0.0%
Army Installations	0	0.0%
Fish and Wildlife Service	76,365	2.4%
URC	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%
Total Entitlement Acres	2,135,097	66.4%
Total County Acreage	3,215,440	100.0%

Source: U.S. Department of the Interior, Payment in Lieu of Taxes Website; PILT Acres by Agency; USGS PADUS

Step B: Calculate Ceiling Payment Based on Population

There are sliding scale-based payment ceilings starting at $95.55 for populations over 50,000 to $238.87 per capita for populations less than or equal to 5,000. If the standard calculation for all counties in the PILT program calculation ($3.55/entitlement acre*# of entitlement acres) is greater than the ceiling, payment is then based on the ceiling. Below is a graph of the 2026 rate schedule for the ceiling payment calculation from Table 2 of the Department of the Interior's 2026 PILT National Summary. There is a steeper drop-off in dollars per person received using the ceiling calculation for counties with populations between 5,000 and 10,000, shown below in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Population Ceiling Payment Rate; Section 6902; FY 2026



The administrators of the program use the latest population count as provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. Population figures of 5,000 or more are rounded to the nearest thousand. The maximum population count for purposes of the Act is 50,000.

Table 3. Churchill County; Population Ceiling Payment Rate Calculation; FY 2026

	Churchill County
Census Population Estimate2024	26,033
Rounded Population Estimate 2024, If Over 5,000	26,000
Apply 50,000 Population Cap, If Applicable	26,000
Population Unit	26,000
Population Unit Rate	$121.62
Population Cap x Population Unit Rate	$3,162,120
Less Deduction for Prior Year Revenue-Share Payment	$7,567
Population Limit - Prior Year Revenue-Share Payment	$3,154,553

Source: Fiscal Year 2026 Payments in Lieu of Taxes National Summary, U.S. Department of the Interior; Population is from the U.S. Census Bureau's County-Level Population and Component Estimates: co-est2024-alldata

Step C: Choose the Greater of Alternative A or Alternative B

The amount to be paid to each unit of general local government is the higher of the following two alternatives:

> **Alternative A**: $3.55 for each acre of entitlement land within the boundaries of the unit of government, reduced by the amount of certain Federal land payments that were received by the unit in the prior fiscal year.
>
> - or -
>
> **Alternative B**: $0.51 for each acre of entitlement land within the unit of government. In this case, no deductions are made for the Federal land payments received by the unit of government in the prior fiscal year.

Alternative A

Table 4. Churchill County, Alternative A Calculation, FY 2026

	Churchill County
Entitlement Acreage	2,135,097
Standard Rate, Dollars per Acre	$3.55
Alternative A Gross Amount	$7,579,594
Prior Year Revenue Share	$7,567
Alternative A Net, Prior to Population Limitation	$7,572,027
Lower of Alternative A Net and Population Ceiling Amount (Table 3)	$3,154,553

Source: Fiscal Year 2026 Payments in Lieu of Taxes National Summary, U.S. Department of the Interior

Due to Churchill County's population ceiling payment being lower than the Alternative A calculation, the population ceiling figure is chosen for Alternative A, $3,154,553.

Alternative B

Table 5. Churchill County, Alternative B Calculation, FY 2026

	Churchill County
Entitlement Acreage	2,135,097
Minimum Rate per Acre	$0.51
Minimum Rate Gross Amount	$1,088,899
Lesser of Population Limit and Minimum Rate Gross	$1,088,899

Source: Fiscal Year 2026 Payments in Lieu of Taxes National Summary, U.S. Department of the Interior

Churchill County's Alternative B minimum rate payment is less than the population ceiling calculation, so the minimum rate calculation is chosen for Alternative B, $1,088,899.

The Section 6902 payment amount is the larger of Alternatives A and B.

For Churchill County, this is Alternative A at $3,154,553.

Step D: Appropriate Funds and Calculate Proration Amount

In FY 2026, $733,591,949 was allocated for the funding of the PILT Act. $550,000 was authorized for the administration of the funds. This leaves $733,041,949 of funding available for PILT payments nationally. Each County's payment will be reduced by a proration of this difference.

733,041,949 / 733,591,949 = 99.92502644%

Step E: Pay Each County a Prorated Share of Full Amount

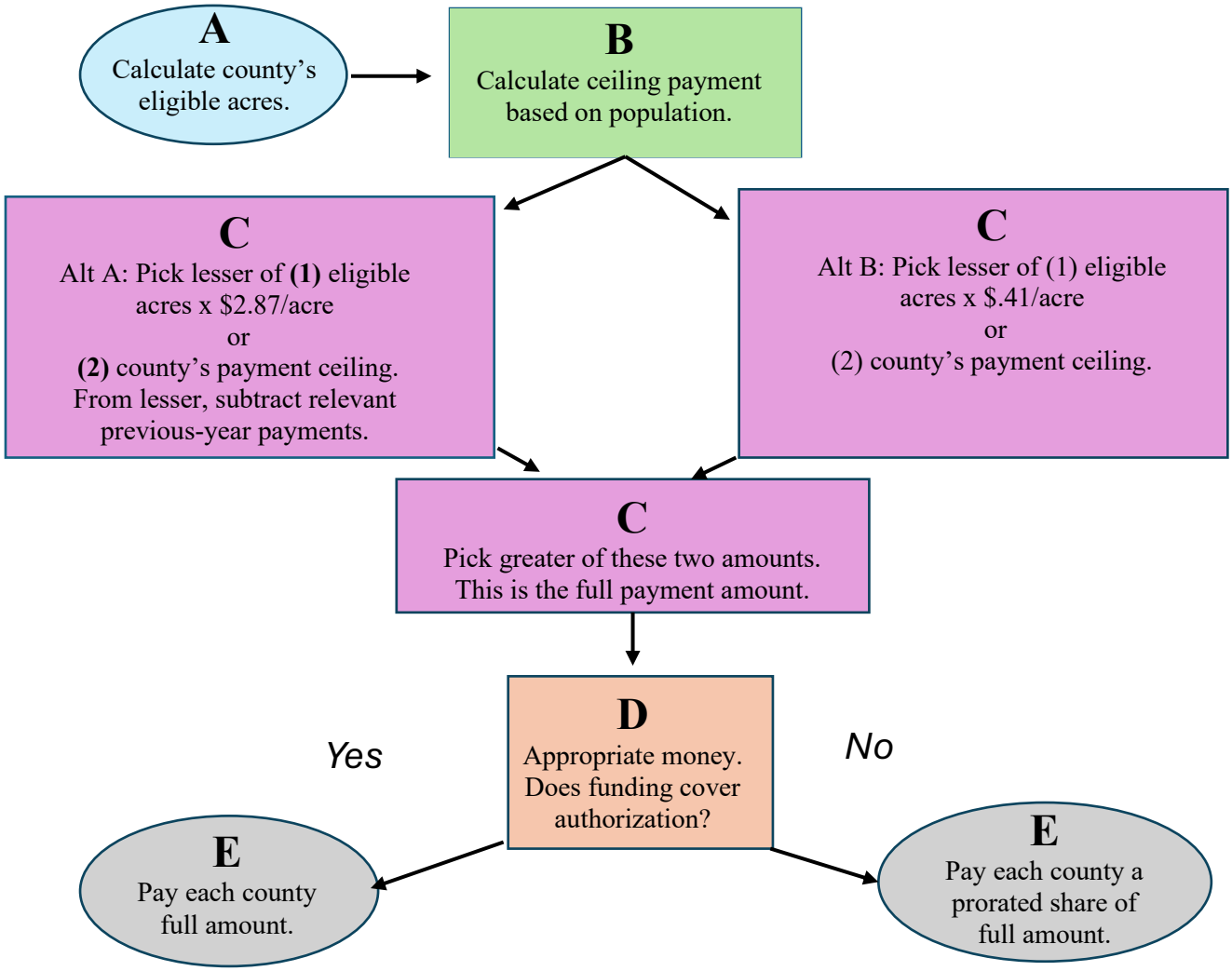
Table 6. Churchill County, Prorated and Adjusted Total PILT, FY 2026

	Churchill County
6902 Payment	$3,154,553
6904 and 6905 Payments	$0
Total Gross	$3,154,553
Proration Percentage	0.9992503%
Prorated Amount	$3,152,215
Prior Year Adjustments	$0
Total PILT, FY 2026	$3,152,215

Source: Fiscal Year 2026 Payments in Lieu of Taxes National Summary, U.S. Department of the Interior
Note: Proration percentage is an estimate and may not multiply to exact amount.

Churchill County should expect to receive $3,152,215 for Fiscal Year 2026 PILT.

Flowchart



References

1. U.S. Department of the Interior; Payment in Lieu of Taxes Website; PILT Acres by Agency
    a. https://pilt.doi.gov/counties.cfm?term=agency&state_code=NV&fiscal_yr=2026&Search.x=50&Search.y=18
2. U.S. Department of the Interior; Payment in Lieu of Taxes Website; Payments and Acreage By State / County
    a. https://pilt.doi.gov/counties.cfm?term=county&state_code=NV&fiscal_yr=2026&Search.x=41&Search.y=10
3. Fiscal Year 2026 Payments in Lieu of Taxes National Summary; U.S. Department of the Interior
    a. https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2026-06/2026nationalsummarypilt-508.pdf
4. Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) to Nevada Counties in 2021: (Various Counties)
    a. Harris, Chicola; University of Nevada, Reno Extension and the University Center for Economic Development. Published 2022.
5. Population Figures
    a. https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/datasets/2020-2024/counties/totals/

Appendix

Table 7. Annual PILT Amounts for Figure 1

Year	PILT Amount
2000	$649,397
2001	$955,700
2002	$1,003,277
2003	$1,151,139
2004	$1,183,436
2005	$1,236,886
2006	$1,230,360
2007	$1,157,509
2008	$1,988,750
2009	$2,039,796
2010	$2,088,531
2011	$2,060,410
2012	$2,151,359
2013	$2,053,174
2014	$2,199,782
2015	$2,174,236
2016	$2,213,454
2017	$2,260,796
2018	$2,298,812
2019	$2,346,920
2020	$2,398,974
2021	$2,492,770
2022	$2,552,647
2023	$2,797,457
2024	$2,973,815
2025	$3,071,354
2026	$3,152,215

Table 8. Population Ceiling Rate for Figure 2

Population	PILT Amount
5,000	$238.87
6,000	$223.70
7,000	$210.64
8,000	$195.48
9,000	$182.40
10,000	$167.16
11,000	$162.89
12,000	$158.54
13,000	$152.03
14,000	$147.70
15,000	$143.31
16,000	$141.15
17,000	$138.94
18,000	$136.81
19,000	$134.65
20,000	$132.54
21,000	$130.31
22,000	$128.14
23,000	$128.14
24,000	$125.97
25,000	$123.80
26,000	$121.62
27,000	$121.62
28,000	$121.62
29,000	$119.47
30,000	$119.47
31,000	$117.28
32,000	$117.28
33,000	$115.07
34,000	$115.07
35,000	$112.88
36,000	$112.88
37,000	$110.74
38,000	$110.74
39,000	$108.60
40,000	$108.60
41,000	$106.39
42,000	$104.25
43,000	$104.25
44,000	$102.04
45,000	$102.04
46,000	$99.91
47,000	$99.91
48,000	$97.73
49,000	$97.73
50,000	$95.55

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