



# Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) Overview

## Developed for U.S. Forest Service Northern Region/ DNRC State of Montana

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### Background:

The Farm Bill, Pub. L. 113-79 (Section 8206) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 (Section 417) provide the authority for the Forest Service to enter into sole source contracts and Good Neighbor Agreements with state agencies to perform forest, rangeland and watershed restoration services, including timber sales, when similar and complementary activities occur on and off federal land.

- The Farm Bill *permanently* authorizes the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) for both FS and BLM, with specific limitations. The Farm Bill extends the authority nationwide and Puerto Rico, but *excludes* construction, reconstruction, repair, or restoration of paved or permanent roads or parking areas and construction, alteration, repair, or replacement of public buildings or works; as well as projects in wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, and lands where vegetation removal is prohibited.
- The FY14 Appropriations Act renews and expands the expired Colorado Good Neighbor Authority to all states with NFS lands through FY18. It allows for states to perform watershed restoration and protection services on NFS lands when similar and complementary services are performed by the state on adjacent state or private lands. This authority will primarily be used for road reconstruction work in connection with other restoration activities. Sideboards to this authority are: excludes new construction of paved or permanent roads, parking areas, or public buildings or works, and projects in wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, or lands where removal of vegetation is prohibited or restricted.

### The Goal:

The primary goal of GNA is to provide another tool to increase the pace and scale of restoration at a watershed scale and to strengthen partnerships between state and federal agencies to get more done across jurisdictional boundaries. Specifically, GNA allows for the ability to:

1. Work across jurisdictional boundaries and treat the landscape in a mixed ownership setting
2. Increase collaborative opportunities to address land management challenges
3. Leverage state resources (and Federal funding if available) to increase capacity to accomplish work on National Forest System lands
4. Strengthen the federal/state partnership

### Important Details:

- The FS will implement the Farm Bill authority as the primary authority when entering into Good Neighbor Agreements with willing states, but make the Appropriations authority available to States upon request. When necessary, the two authorities can be blended together on a project.
- GNA allows for a broad range of forest, watershed and rangeland restoration:
  - Project planning including environmental analysis (ex. Botany surveys, wildlife surveys, state ID team member)
  - Project preparation work: treatment area design and layout and sale preparation (ex. Unit layout, timber marketing, property line surveying)
  - Fuel reduction, commercial timber removal and reforestation
  - Road **reconstruction** (Appropriations Act ONLY)

- Road maintenance and decommissioning (ex. BMP work)
  - Noxious weed treatment
  - Other restoration work (fish passage improvements, aspen fencing...)
  - Monitoring of restoration activities
- Forest Service retains responsibility for all NEPA decisions and must approve silviculture prescriptions and marking guides
1. The Forest Service developed four Good Neighbor Authority agreement templates which can be found [here](http://www.fs.fed.us/farmland/gna.shtml). (<http://www.fs.fed.us/farmland/gna.shtml>)  
Each template has the following common themes:
    - Has elements of partnership agreements *without* a matching requirement
    - Allows states to follow their own procurement policies for sub-contracts; the state will have primary oversight of the work performed under the agreement.
    - Allows program income from GNA timber sale receipts to fund restoration work within a watershed on all ownerships (does not have to be adjacent to the project.
    - Authorizes States to act on behalf of the FS to perform work on NFS lands. In turn, using program income the USFS could also accomplish work on state land, where appropriate.
    - Allows flexibility in funding the project(s) using FS, State, and third-party contributions to perform work collaboratively.
  - The State of Montana is currently working with U.S. Forest Service Northern Region staff to explore how this new Authority can best be used to meet cross-boundary goals and objects across the state.

**Resources:**

2. The National Forest Foundation hosted a webinar with the Washington Office on 7/10 and 7/13 titled “Rollout of the Good Neighbor Authority Agreement Templates. That webinar can be found [here](https://nationalforestfoundation.adobeconnect.com/_a961852781/p1m6tf4mebz/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal).  
[https://nationalforestfoundation.adobeconnect.com/\\_a961852781/p1m6tf4mebz/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal](https://nationalforestfoundation.adobeconnect.com/_a961852781/p1m6tf4mebz/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal)
3. U.S. Forest Service Q&A Factsheet <http://www.fs.fed.us/farmland/gna.shtml>