

Good Neighbor Authority (GNA)

Background:

- The GNA allows the Forest Service and BLM to enter into cooperative agreements or contracts with States and Puerto Rico to allow the States to perform watershed restoration and forest management services on NFS lands. This authority had previously been limited by statute to Colorado and Utah, which each had slightly different versions of the authority.
- Congress passed two laws expanding GNA – the FY 2014 Appropriations Act and the 2014 Farm Bill. Each law contains slightly different provisions.
- The Farm Bill permanently authorizes the GNA for both the Forest Service and BLM and extends it to all 50 States 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 removal of vegetation is restricted.
- The FY 2014 Appropriations Act included a five year authorization of the use of GNA to perform watershed restoration and protection services on NFS lands in all states when similar and complementary services are performed by the state on adjacent state or private lands. Other than the adjacency requirement, there were no exclusions as to the type or location of work.

Talking Points:

- The Forest Service will use both the Farm Bill and Appropriations GNA authorities, with sideboards on the Appropriations authority, to provide States with the flexibility to best address restoration work on NFS lands.
 - The sideboards exclude 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 Forest Service intends to generally use the Farm Bill authority, but make the Appropriations authority (with sideboards) available to States upon request.
- This approach will allow the Forest Service and States to address critical restoration needs related to roads and parking areas and public buildings or works.
- The Forest Service is developing a GNA agreement template, which will ensure that the Forest Service maintains its land management stewardship and oversight responsibilities while authorizing States to act on behalf of the agency to perform work on NFS lands. This agreement will also allow flexibility in funding the project(s) using Federal, State, and third-party contributions to perform work collaboratively.
- The Forest Service GNA templates are subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act process, which includes OMB review of the information collection forms and the associated

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burden on the States. On December 9th, the Forest Service published a 60-day Federal Register Notice necessary to initiate this process. The comment period closed February 9th.

- The Forest Service GNA templates are subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act process, which includes OMB review of the information collection forms and the associated burden on the States. On December 9th, the Forest Service published a 60-day Federal Register Notice necessary to initiate this process. The comment period closed February 9th. The agency is reviewing and incorporating comments into an updated set of templates that will undergo a 30-day comment period initiated by USDA.
- The final approval of the GNA templates is anticipated from OMB later this spring. Upon approval, the agency can begin to enter into agreements with states to carry out projects under the GNA authority.
- WI State Forester and Chequamegon-Nicolet Forest Supervisor are coordinating to complete an exercise to discuss possibilities to use a Good Neighbor Agreement that is workable. The meeting is scheduled for March 16-18 in Madison, WI