

May 11, 2023

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Scott,

The undersigned organizations write to you today in support of the Treating Tribes and Counties as Good Neighbors Act and thank you for your support in moving this important legislation forward in the House Agriculture Committee. We appreciate the bipartisan support and leadership from Representatives Fulcher (R-ID) and Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA) and others to make this a priority for the 2023 Farm Bill Forestry Title.

Since Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) was first authorized by Congress with the 2014 Farm Bill, 38 states have broken ground on over 380 GNA projects with the Forest Service. Through these GNA projects, states are contributing to the restoration of federal forests on an unprecedented scale. According to the Congressional Research Service, the amount of Forest Service timber sold under GNA agreements increased from 14.4 million board feet in fiscal year (FY) 2016 to 182.6 million board feet in FY 2019. Timber volume awarded under GNA agreements tripled from 2018 to 2022, and Forest Service completed over 178,000 acres of restoration-based activities through GNA agreements in 2022.

In the 2018 Farm Bill, Congress expanded GNA to make Tribes and counties eligible entities to enter into Good Neighbor Agreements. Forest Service has since entered into GNA agreements with 16 Tribes and 15 counties. However, Tribes and counties were not afforded the same authority as states to retain GNA project revenues to reinvest in conservation, greatly reducing a significant incentive to engage and partner on critical management projects including wildfire mitigation, invasive species management, and habitat maintenance.

Further, the 2018 Farm Bill removed the ability to carry out restoration services that were agreed to under Good Neighbor Agreements that would take place off federal lands. As a result, adjacent state, tribal, county, and other land that is essential to the health and productivity of National Forests can no longer be restored as a comprehensive landscape with revenues generated from GNA projects.

The undersigned organizations support authorizing counties and Federally Recognized Tribes to retain and expend GNA project revenues, as well as restoring the cross-boundary nature of GNA by removing the requirement that GNA timber sale revenues must be spent solely on federal lands.

We appreciate your leadership in moving this important bipartisan legislation forward and ask for your continued support to ensure its inclusion in the 2023 Farm Bill Forestry Title.

Sincerely,

American Forest Foundation

National Wild Turkey Federation

National Association of Counties

Society of American Foresters

National Association of State Foresters