



Good Neighbor Authority in Idaho

Frequently Asked Questions

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What is the Good Neighbor Authority?

A partnership between the Forest Service and Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) to accomplish authorized restoration services across land jurisdictions. Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) was authorized by Congress in the 2014 Farm Bill. A similar GNA law that applied in Colorado and Utah only was extended to the rest of the nation, also in 2014.

What are the Goals of the GNA in Idaho?

- To contribute to healthy forests by increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration
- To provide additional fiber to Idaho markets
- To develop a self-sustaining program in 3-5 years

What is the benefit to the Forest Service for the State to complete work on the agency's behalf?

The Good Neighbor Authority (among other things):

- Provides the ability to work across jurisdictional boundaries and treat the landscape in a mixed ownership setting i.e., all lands approach to address land management challenges
- Fosters a collaborative approach to address land management challenges
- Provides the ability to leverage state resources and efficiencies to increase capacity to accomplish work on National Forest System lands
- Provides the opportunity to strengthen the Federal/State partnership

What is the benefit to the State to enter into this type of agreement?

- By adding external capacity to help with the enormous and complex job of restoring our National Forests, the State is contributing to improvement of forest and watershed resilience and contributing to the strength of the forest products industry infrastructure and vitality in Idaho.
- Improving forest health may result in reduced risk of insects and diseases and wildfire impacts on State endowment lands.
- Utilization of state procedures and processes to achieve the desired outcomes described in Forest Service NEPA decisions may lead to some efficiencies. For example, some state procurement features may produce a higher bid value for timber, resulting in more revenue (program income) to conduct even more forest restoration over time.

What authorities and responsibilities does the Forest Service retain?

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decisions, approval of the silvicultural prescriptions and marking guides. Essentially, the Forest Service retains their stewardship authority and responsibility. The State acts as a "trusted agent" to implement restoration projects, by agreement.

Will federal laws be followed by the State?

Projects proposed for completion under GNA agreement will be in accordance with requirements of:

- Forest Land Management Plan
- NEPA decisions
- Other applicable laws including Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act
- State procedures and processes will be in compliance with federal laws to achieve the described outcome

What is the GNA Master Agreement?

A fully executed 10-year agreement between the Forest Service, Intermountain (Region 4) and Northern (Region 1) Regions and IDL. This Idaho Master Agreement frames the intent for how the agencies will work together in a partnership fashion, and lays out the broad provisions for how we will conduct our forest restoration work. This Master Agreement covers all of the National Forests in Idaho.

What is a Supplemental Project Agreement?

Multi-year agreement between a Forest Service National Forest and IDL at the National Forest scale, i.e. Nez-Perce Clearwater NF, Payette NF, Idaho Panhandle NF's, etc. This instrument outlines the details for the working relationship. It includes operational and financial plans, reporting and monitoring requirements, and other details.

What kind of Supplemental Project Agreements (SPA) are being developed in Idaho?

There are three models evolving in Idaho:

- *Nez-Perce Clearwater National Forest has asked IDL to auction and administer a timber sale that is NEPA-cleared.*
- *Payette National Forest has asked IDL to assist with several aspects of forest restoration, the first project is likely to help with cone collection this autumn.*
- *Idaho Panhandle National Forests has asked IDL to collect data, provide field reconnaissance, and support the NEPA process for a new project area that was not previously on their 5-year action plan. The IDL may contribute cooperative funds to support NEPA, and will likely administer the implementation phase of the project. This project is truly “additive” above and beyond the normal scheduled Forest program, helping us lean into the “increase pace and scale” objective.*

What is program income?

- *Income earned by the State that is directly generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the federal award. It might be useful to think of program income as revenue above the costs for project implementation.*
- *It is the sold value of timber that exceeds the appraised value and any required deposits that must be returned to the Forest Service. An example of work that could be a “required deposit” may be the reforestation cost if the Service wanted to hold back and perform that work.*

How might program income be generated and used?

- *Program income may be generated from the sale of forest products (timber)*
- *The State may use program income to defray program costs*
- *Income is not monies of the United States and therefore not subject to payments to counties.*
- *Program income may be utilized for any future restoration projects on national forests or private lands. This determination will be made in a collaborative fashion between IDL and the Forest Service.*

Are any monies in these federal/state transactions subject to “payments to counties”?

The monies paid to the Forest Service by the State for forest products are subject to the county payment program.

How might the GNA initiative impact the primary mission for endowment land management?

We anticipate minimal impact to the endowment mission once the legislatively approved 2.3 additional full time positions (Full Time Equivalents or FTE) are in place. Staff time and expertise will be utilized to help initiate the GNA program.

Could IDL administering the federal projects to federal standards impact how we administer the Forest Practices Act and manage the resources of the endowment lands?

There will be no adverse impacts from the State administering Forest Service requirements on federal land. We will continue to follow the State Forest Practices Act on endowment and private lands as in the past.

May other state agencies enter into GNA agreements with the federal agencies?

Yes. Other state agencies may develop similar GNA agreements with the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

What is the road reconstruction barrier and what is the fix?

Forest restoration projects often require road reconstruction. Road reconstruction was omitted from the 2014 Farm Bill GNA authority but was authorized in the 2014 Appropriations Act. Program income funds generated from Farm Bill authorized projects may not be used to conduct road reconstruction under the Appropriations Act authority. This effectively excludes many FS projects from consideration as GNA projects. Inclusion of road reconstruction as an authorized restoration activity with Farm Bill GNA projects would be a useful fix to this barrier.

Will Forest Service employees be displaced by IDL employees?

No. The intention is to treat more lands as an addition to the regular Forest Service program. This additive work may require more capacity. The IDL is additive, external capacity to augment Forest Service capacity, not to replace it.

How does this GNA initiative fit with the “federal lands takeover” proposal?

In 2015, after two years of study, the Idaho legislature interim committee on federal lands ended up endorsing GNA in the Senate Concurrent Resolution 126. This GNA initiative, we believe, is a positive way to influence federal land management in Idaho. Increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration is a winning option for the environmental, social and economic well being of the State and our communities.