

## National Policy Summary Analysis

### Expansion of Good Neighbor Authority in the EXPLORE Act

The EXPLORE Act (P.L. 118-234) was signed into law on January 4, 2025, to improve recreation opportunities and access across Federal lands and neighboring jurisdictions. The Act also expanded the use of Good Neighbor Authority, a collaborative tool that Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations (collectively referred to as Tribes in the EXPLORE Act) are increasingly using to advance stewardship and restoration of important landscapes. Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) was originally established by Congress in the 2014 Farm Bill to allow the Forest Service and other Federal agencies to partner with Tribes, states, and counties to perform restoration projects on Federal lands. The EXPLORE Act expands the use of GNA to include recreation projects, extends authority to Tribes to sell federal timber and retain revenues from those sales, and allows GNA projects to occur on non-Federal lands, including Tribal lands.

#### What are the implications for Tribes?

This broad expansion of GNA enables Tribes to reinvest receipts in authorized restoration and recreation projects and enables Tribes to restore land and enhance recreation opportunities on Tribal or non-Federal lands. Specific updates to GNA provided through the EXPLORE Act include:

- Expands GNA to provide technical assistance and financial support for recreation projects, including:
  - establishing, repairing, improving, restoring, relocating, constructing, or reconstructing new or existing facilities; and
  - creating, improving, or restoring access to existing recreation facilities or areas.
- Allows leftover revenue from GNA timber sales and restoration projects to be used by Tribes, states, and counties for recreation projects (this revenue authority expires on October 1, 2028).

- Extends the authority to sell federal timber and retain revenue to Tribes and counties (prior GNA only provided states with this authority).
- Authorizes projects *on and off* Federal land (prior GNA applied only to projects located on Federal lands).

#### How will agency guidance change?

To ensure consistent application of the expanded authority in the EXPLORE Act, the Forest Service is updating its guidance for GNA agreements found in Forest Service Handbook 2409.19, chapter 80. The updates will clarify how national forest and grassland supervisors can use the new authority to enter into agreements with Tribal governments, states, and counties to implement projects as outlined in the EXPLORE Act. Tribes may have an interest in consulting on these updates.

#### How can Tribes request consultation?

Tribal governments may request consultation with national, regional, and local Forest Service consulting officials. The National Office of Tribal Relations will coordinate consultation requests by email at [SM.FS.otrtribalcon@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.otrtribalcon@usda.gov).

#### Where can I find more information?

This summary analysis, and information regarding other agency actions, is available on the Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations website:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/tribalrelations/national-consultation>.

For other questions or comments, please email: [robert.barnhart@usda.gov](mailto:robert.barnhart@usda.gov)