



RVCC
Rural Voices for
Conservation
COALITION

AUGUST 2021

USE OF GOOD NEIGHBOR AUTHORITY ACROSS THE WEST

Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Funding Acknowledgement

This project was made possible through support provided by the Forest Service, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition and Wallowa Resources under the terms of Cooperative Agreement #16-CA-11132544-032 supporting an All Lands Learning Network. Wallowa Resources is an equal opportunity employer.

About RVCC

RVCC envisions healthy landscapes and vibrant rural communities throughout the American West. We are committed to finding and promoting solutions through collaborative, place-based work that recognizes the inextricable link between the long-term health of the land and the well-being of rural communities. By bringing rural leaders together to share their work, we serve as a vital peer learning and capacity building network that accelerates the practice of land stewardship and aligned economic development. To learn more about our work, visit: www.ruralvoicescoalition.org

Authors

Emery Cowan

Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition

Tyson Bertone-Riggs

Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition

Reviewers

Heidi Huber-Stearns, *Ecosystem Workforce Program*

Chelsea Pennick, *University of Idaho*

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people for providing valuable feedback and edits on this document:

(in alphabetical order by last name)

Rob Barnhart, *Forest Service Region 6*

Mo Bookwalter, *Forest Service Region 1*

Matthew Etzenhouser, *Forest Service Region 2*

John Galvan, *Pueblo of Jemez*

Trevor McConchie, *Washington Department of Natural Resources*

Len Nielsen, *CAL FIRE*

Lynne Sholty, *State and Private Forestry Washington Office*

Jon Songster, *Idaho Department of Lands*

Kyle Sullivan, *Oregon Department of Forestry*

Laura Wagner, *Wyoming State Forestry Division*

Layout & Design

Jessica Brothers

Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition

Cover Photo: Through GNA, Idaho Department of Lands is using unmanned aircraft to assess insect defoliation on the Boise National Forest. This information will help inform the Sage Hen Integrated Restoration Project, which aims to improve resiliency to insect, disease, and wildfire. Photo *courtesy of Idaho Department of Lands*

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Key Findings	2
Key Implications	4
Commonly Used Terms and Acronyms.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Good Neighbor Authority vs. Stewardship Authority	7
Background.....	8
Overview of Good Neighbor Authority.....	8
Legislative History.....	9
Agreement Structure	10
Revenue	11
Research Methods.....	12
Research Findings.....	13
Agreement Structure and Partner Type	13
Project Type and Activities	14
“Similar and Complementary” and Cross-boundary Use	16
GNA Decision-making & Opportunities for Collaborative Input	17
Revenue Generation and Expenditure	19
Tracking and Reporting	20
Partner Contributions	21
GNA Staffing.....	22
Additional Benefits	23
Conclusion.....	24
Appendix A: GNA Data Table by State	26

Executive Summary

The Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) expands capacity and creates new partnership opportunities for accomplishing forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration projects on federal lands. The authority allows the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to partner with states, counties, and tribes to implement authorized restoration services on lands managed by those federal agencies. It also authorizes states to retain revenues from restoration-focused GNA timber sales and use those funds to accomplish additional restoration work through the authority.

As part of the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition's (RVCC) dedication to partnership-based approaches to land stewardship, we have tracked the use and expansion of GNA since it was permanently authorized in 2014. In the following report, we review the current scope and status of GNA use on Forest Service-managed lands in 12 Western states, noting both region-wide trends as well as important differences between states. For our research, we conducted 21 interviews with state, federal, tribal, and county representatives who oversaw or coordinated GNA projects. We also reviewed Good Neighbor agreements, Forest Service tracking documents, federal statutes, agency directives, and grey literature on the authority. We hope the following findings and associated interpretations provide practitioners and policymakers a ground-level perspective on how the authority is being used by the Forest Service and its non-federal partners across the West.



State agencies in Idaho used GNA to provide support to BLM and Forest Service prescribed fire operations in the form of state fire personnel and equipment. *Photo courtesy of Idaho Department of Lands*

Key Findings

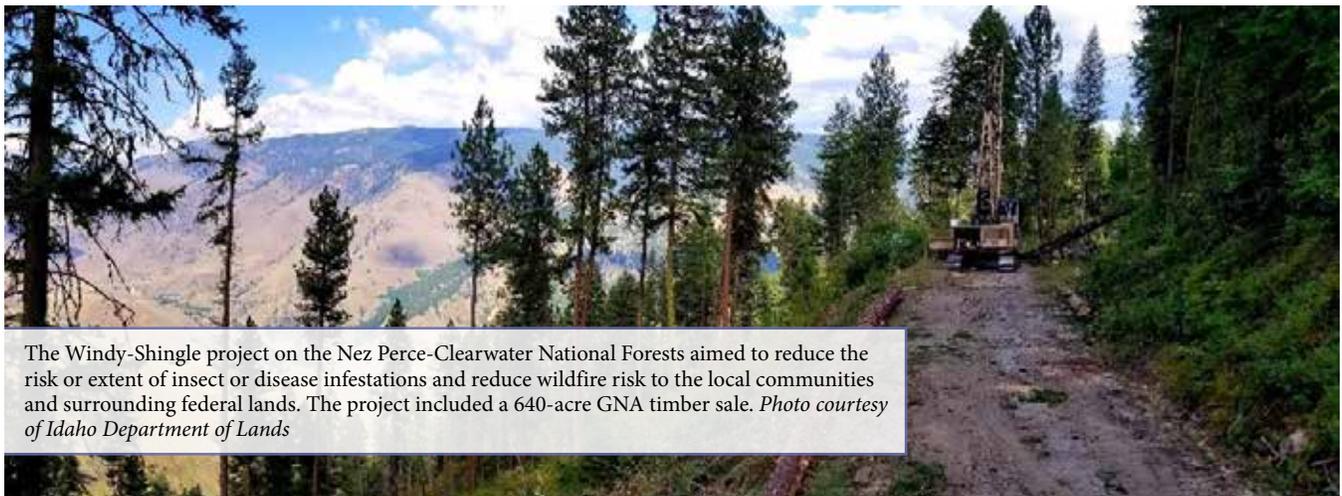
- As of 2020, Good Neighbor Authority had come to be widely used by states across the West. GNA agreements were in place between state agencies and the Forest Service in all 12 Western states we reviewed. In seven of those states, GNA agreements were in place on every forest in the state.
- Many state and Forest Service representatives saw the authority as a key tool to operationalize the Forest Service's Shared Stewardship initiative.
- There was a trend in four states toward structuring Good Neighbor agreements in ways that are broad and flexible enough to incorporate the addition and evolution of multiple projects, activities, and funding sources year after year.
- Timber and fuels reduction projects were the most common types of activities accomplished under GNA agreements, though there were state-to-state and forest-to-forest variations in the balance between commercial restoration projects (restoration projects that involve the sale of timber) and non-commercial restoration projects (projects that do not involve a commercial component, also known as service work).
- Factors such as forest type, state agency capacity, state and federal agency priorities, and funding type and availability have influenced state-by-state and forest-by-forest differences in the amount and types of GNA projects pursued.
- As of late 2020, Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming had generated or expected to generate enough revenue from commercial restoration projects to fund subsequent restoration activities. These states were generally the more active users of the authority, in part because GNA revenues provided a means of funding additional state staff capacity for developing and implementing more restoration projects under the authority.
- States that were the most frequent users of the authority also generally shared characteristics of having substantial existing forest management capacity and supplementing that capacity with investments in agency staff dedicated to GNA as well as state-federal partnerships more broadly.
- Among the activities states expected to fund with GNA revenues were forest thinning and fuels reduction, GNA timber sale preparation and administration, invasive weed treatments, road decommissioning, aquatic organism passage improvements or replacements, and environmental surveys, analysis and documentation required to complete National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis for other restoration projects.

Key Findings

- Decision-making about projects to pursue through the authority as well as activities to fund with revenues usually occurred between state and Forest Service officials. However, in eight states, at least some GNA projects and revenue expenditures originated from plans and priorities informed by forest collaborative groups or other prioritization processes that involve a broader range of stakeholders.
- Processes for forest collaborative groups and other local stakeholders to have a direct say in aspects of GNA such as project selection and revenue prioritization generally appeared to be limited, though approaches and opportunities for input were evolving and varied forest by forest.
- Information related to GNA activities, contributions, and revenues were tracked in a variety of ways. Activities accomplished through GNA and revenues generated through GNA timber sales were recorded through existing national-level processes and databases. Processes for tracking other financial data such as revenue expenditures and partner contributions, had been developed by state agencies and Forest Service regional staff and varied somewhat region to region.
- While partner match is not required under the authority, interviewees indicated that most states contributed their own resources to GNA projects. Contributions took the form of direct funding for certain projects and activities, state-funded positions to support GNA, indirect support from other parts of the state agency, and equipment and supplies needed for project implementation.
- States with revenue-generating commercial restoration projects still expected that Forest Service and partner funds would remain important sources of support for the planning and implementation of GNA activities, at least in the near term.
- Since the 2018 Farm Bill allowed tribes and counties to enter into Good Neighbor agreements, those entities have only used the authority in a handful of instances in the West. Representatives from tribes and counties that had entered into agreements said they saw opportunities for continued use of the authority to support goals such as workforce development, stewardship of tribes' ancestral lands, and accomplishment of community or county-scale restoration priorities.
- Forest Service staff in Regions 1, 2, 4, 6, and 10 reported that GNA has, in various ways, increased the agency's capacity to accomplish commercial and non-commercial restoration activities.
- Interviewees pointed to a range of more specific advantages associated with GNA as well, including the expansion of coordination and cooperative work between the Forest Service and partners; the ability for the Forest Service to tap the expertise and capacity of state specialists for activities such as timber sale administration, engineering, and NEPA data collection; and the potential for some aspects of state timber contracting processes to be easier to work with or more flexible than federal processes by, for example, allowing the addition of restoration work during the contract period or enabling use of a wider variety of contracting mechanisms.

Key Implications

- Use of GNA will likely continue to look different across states and forest types due to differences in timber value, proximity to market, state capacity, existing agency programs and priorities, restoration needs, and other factors.
- The frequent inclusion of commercial restoration in Good Neighbor agreements among states most actively using the authority suggests the ability to generate and retain revenue is contributing to greater engagement with authority.
- State and region-level variation in GNA tracking and reporting, as well as trends toward writing agreements broadly and flexibly, could make it difficult to evaluate and report accomplishments and outcomes associated with GNA in a unified way. Such reporting may be important as the statute governing state management of revenue is set to expire in 2023 and would need reauthorization to continue.
- Across the states we examined, the authority was largely being used as a tool to implement projects that had been planned under NEPA, as opposed to state and federal partners planning projects with the express intent of implementing them through the authority. This trend suggests that thus far, GNA has not generally been used or considered as an avenue for collaborative planning.
- Counties and tribes were largely just beginning to explore the authority's utility for accomplishing restoration and capacity-building goals.
- Positive perceptions among state and Forest Service employees about GNA's potential to increase capacity for implementing restoration activities on federal lands, utilize and leverage specific expertise and capabilities of state agencies, increase treatment efficiency, and strengthen relationships between states and the Forest Service suggest the tool itself and the state-federal partnership it perpetuates will remain strong.
- There remains a need to more systematically evaluate and define the additive benefits of GNA. This could be aided by new or modified systems for tracking revenue generation and expenditure, partner contributions, and non-commercial restoration accomplishments associated with GNA timber sales.



The Windy-Shingle project on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests aimed to reduce the risk or extent of insect or disease infestations and reduce wildfire risk to the local communities and surrounding federal lands. The project included a 640-acre GNA timber sale. *Photo courtesy of Idaho Department of Lands*

Commonly Used Terms and Acronyms

- **Commercial restoration project:** Restoration project that includes the sale of timber or other forest products. This term does not imply that the commercial component will pay for all restoration needs within a project area, as some sales generate little if any revenue.
- **Non-commercial restoration project:** Restoration project that does not include a commercial component, also known as service work.
- **Revenue:** Money generated from the sale of forest products in a GNA project.
- **NEPA:** National Environmental Policy Act, the 1970 law requiring federal agencies to evaluate the environmental impacts of proposed actions and provide opportunities for the public to weigh in on potential impacts prior to making decisions.
- **GNA:** Good Neighbor Authority.
- **SPA:** Supplemental Project Agreement. SPAs are used in conjunction with a Master Agreement and include more specific information about projects to be implemented such as scope of work, financial plan, and partner roles and responsibilities.



Commercial restoration projects implemented through GNA can produce revenues that can be used for non-commercial restoration projects like aquatic restoration and road decommissioning.
Photo courtesy of USDA Forest Service - Pacific Northwest Region

Introduction

Collaborative, community-based strategies for public lands management have become increasingly common over the last 20 years, as have partnerships between federal agencies and non-federal partners, including states, counties and Indian tribes. This cooperative approach was reaffirmed through the U.S. Forest Service's (Forest Service) 2018 Shared Stewardship initiative, which promotes partnerships between the agency and states, tribes, and collaborative partners on the prioritization, coordination, and leveraging of resources related to land management activities.¹ In line with these trends, the past two decades have seen an increase in programs and authorities such as Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) that intend to operationalize cooperative approaches and support partners working together.

The following report explores how GNA is being used on national forests in the West, with the goal of advancing learning and innovation among both federal and non-federal partners. While the authority also applies to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), this report was funded by the Forest Service and therefore focuses only on that agency's use of the authority. The most recently available data also show that the Forest Service is the more frequent user of the authority, indicating our conclusions will be relevant to a broad audience.²

In addition to providing a general overview of the authority's use in the West, this report aims to explore topics that are of particular interest to community-based organizations and collaborative groups, who are among our intended audience. Those include opportunities for collaborative input in GNA decision-making, revenue use, and the similarities and differences between GNA and stewardship authority, which is another implementation tool with which many community-based partners are familiar (See key comparisons of GNA and Stewardship Authority on the following page). We chose to explore these topics because they were mentioned frequently during interviews RVCC staff conducted with representatives of collaborative groups in Oregon and Washington for previous research on aspects of the authority that were of particular interest to forest collaboratives. Lastly, we note that while the use of GNA is often an integral part of state-federal partnerships that support restoration, our report does not address the full scope of these partnerships and associated state programs that address federal restoration beyond use of the authority.

¹ USDA Forest Service. (2018). *Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes: An Outcome-Based Investment Strategy*. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/toward-shared-stewardship.pdf>

² Congressional Research Service. (2020). *The Good Neighbor Authority*. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11658/3>

Good Neighbor Authority and Stewardship Authority

Among our key intended audiences for this report are collaborative groups and community-based organizations, many of which are familiar with the stewardship authority and the stewardship end-results contracting (stewardship contracting) it enables. While both authorities expand the set of tools available to accomplish restoration on public land, they also have distinct provisions that we believe are helpful for community-based practitioners to understand. Below are key comparisons between the authorities:

- Requirements for collaboration differ between the two authorities. Interim Forest Service directives for GNA emphasize the importance of collaboration between agreement partners, with other interested parties involved “as appropriate.”³ In its directives for stewardship authority, however, the agency directly requires its staff to attempt to “involve a variety of local interests and engage key stakeholders in collaboration throughout the life of the project...”⁴ Referencing these differing requirements for collaboration can be helpful for local stakeholders looking to understand why the agency’s approaches to decision-making for GNA projects may differ from those related to stewardship projects.
- Local and regional priorities inform timber revenue decision-making on both Good Neighbor and stewardship projects. However, unlike stewardship retained receipts, which are typically used on the administrative unit where they were generated, at least three regions reported that decision-making about the use of GNA timber sale revenues occur primarily at the forest levels. This trend holds potential implications for stakeholders and collaborative groups more used to working with district-level staff. Shifts in venue for decision making may, for example, require locally-focused collaborative efforts to build new relationships.
- GNA revenue is managed by the states while timber receipts from stewardship projects are retained by the Forest Service. As such, tracking and management processes for GNA revenue differ from those the agency has in place for stewardship receipts.

³ USDA Forest Service. (2015). Good Neighbor Timber Sales Interim Implementation Instructions Enclosure with Forest Management Director’s Letter to Regional Foresters.

⁴ USDA Forest Service. (2016). FSH 2409.19 Renewable Resources Handbook Chapter 60 – Stewardship Contracting.

Background

Overview of Good Neighbor Authority

GNA provides an avenue for federal agencies to work in partnership with non-federal entities to better address shared priorities like fire risk, invasive species, and watershed restoration. The authority allows states, counties, or tribes to enter into Good Neighbor agreements with the Forest Service or BLM to undertake forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration services on most lands managed by those federal agencies.^{5,6} Components of the National Wilderness Preservation System and wilderness study areas are not included in the authority.⁷ Additionally, under the newest version of the authority, states – but not counties or tribes – can retain revenue from the administration of restoration-focused timber sales and use revenue from those sales to perform additional restoration activities under a Good Neighbor agreement. States, counties, and tribes all have the flexibility to perform authorized restoration activities either directly with their own staff capacity or through administering contracts to other public or private entities. Regardless of how they accomplish the work, statute requires that the activities these non-federal partners pursue on federal lands must be “similar and complementary” to work they are undertaking on non-federal land.

Activities allowed under the authority include hazardous fuels treatments, insect and disease control, tree planting, habitat improvement, road improvement or decommissioning related to restoration, treatment monitoring, and project planning and preparation. Agreements can be written to include commercial restoration projects (projects that involve the sale of timber), non-commercial restoration projects (those that do not involve a commercial component, also known as service work), or a mix of both in order to achieve desired restoration goals. Funding and other support for these can come from the Forest Service (either appropriated or trust funds); state, tribal or county agreement partners; revenue from GNA timber sales; or other sources such as private industry.

Interim Forest Service directives published in 2015 emphasize the need for close cooperation between the Forest Service and state partners through all stages of project development and implementation. Collaboration with other interested parties is called for “as appropriate.”⁸ Final manual and handbook directives that would reflect changes to the authority implemented through the 2018 Farm Bill were still under development at the time of this report.

⁵ Agricultural Act of 2014, Publ. L. No. 113–79, 128 Stat. 649 (2014). <https://www.congress.gov/113/plaws/publ79/PLAW-113publ79.pdf>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Congressional Research Service. (2020). The Good Neighbor Authority. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11658/3>

⁸ USDA Forest Service. (2015). Good Neighbor Timber Sales Interim Implementation Instructions Enclosure with Forest Management Director’s Letter to Regional Foresters.

Legislative History

Congress first authorized GNA on a limited and temporary basis in the 2001 Interior Appropriations Act in response to early efforts between state and federal agencies to work in partnership. The authority was initially approved as a 5-year pilot for lands managed by the Forest Service in Colorado.⁹ In 2005, the Interior Appropriations Act expanded the authority to BLM-managed lands in Colorado and established another pilot on Forest Service-managed lands in Utah.¹⁰ In 2010, Congress renewed the Colorado pilot through fiscal year 2013 through the 2010 Interior Appropriations Act.¹¹ Good Neighbor was authorized permanently and on a national scale in 2014.¹² At that time, Congress passed two different versions of the authority: one through the Farm Bill and another through the Appropriations Act. Importantly, only the Appropriations version of the authority contained an “adjacency” requirement, where services to be performed on federal land needed to be coupled with similar projects on adjacent state or private ground.¹³ This discrepancy between the Farm Bill and Appropriations versions of GNA caused some confusion until the Appropriations version expired at the end of 2018.

In the 2018 Farm Bill, Congress expanded the authority to include not only states but also counties and federally recognized Indian tribes.¹⁴ The new law also included a five-year authorization for states to retain GNA timber revenue for use on additional GNA projects. The authority to retain revenue was not extended to counties or tribes, though those entities can administer a sale. The 2018 Appropriations Act included language that further broadened the Farm Bill GNA by allowing for reconstruction, repair, restoration or decommissioning of a National Forest System (NFS) road if such work supports authorized restoration activities.¹⁵



U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue holds a town hall meeting in Pennsylvania where he rolled out USDA's 2018 Farm Bill and legislative principles, January 24, 2018. USDA Photo by Preston Keres

⁹ Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act 2001, Publ. Law. No. 106–291, 114 Stat. 922 (2000). <https://www.congress.gov/106/plaws/publ291/PLAW-106publ291.pdf>

¹⁰ Congressional Research Service. (2020). The Good Neighbor Authority. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11658/3>

¹¹ Cook, P.S., & Wilson, P. (2015). Policies Affecting Implementation of Landscape-scale Treatments on National Forest System Lands at High Risk of Insect and Disease Mortality. University of Idaho College of Natural Resources Policy Analysis Group. <https://www.uidaho.edu/-/media/UIDaho-Responsive/Files/cnr/research/PAG/Research/PAGReport36.pdf?la=en&hash=11D847110D0BE623B882BEC8971B097D6503F06B>

¹² Congressional Research Service. (2020). The Good Neighbor Authority. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11658/3>

¹³ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014, Publ. L. No. 113–76, 128 Stat. 5 (2014). <https://www.congress.gov/113/plaws/publ76/PLAW-113publ76.pdf>

¹⁴ Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Publ. L. No. 115–334, 132 Stat. 4490 (2018). <https://www.congress.gov/115/plaws/publ334/PLAW-115publ334.pdf>

¹⁵ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, Publ. L. No. 115–141, 132 STAT. 348 (2018). <https://uscode.house.gov/statutes/pl/115/141.pdf>

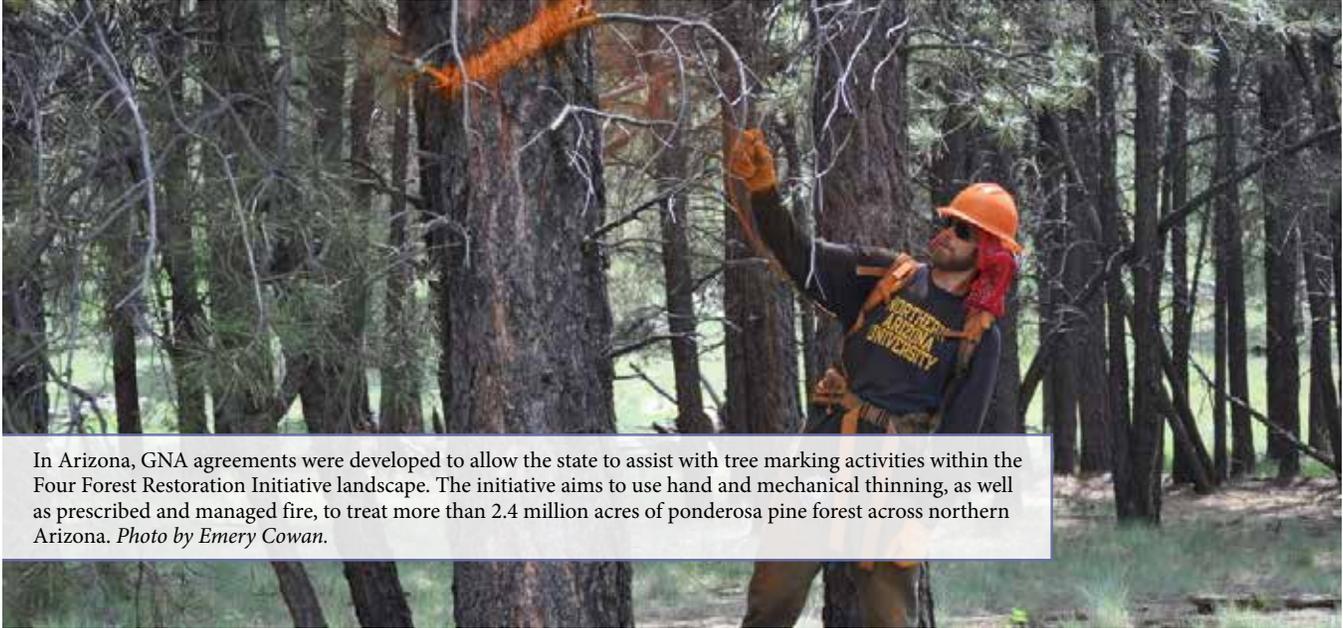
Agreement Structure

GNA is operationalized through agreements between the Forest Service and tribes, states, or counties. These agreements provide the legal and financial framework for the parties to work together and delineate roles and responsibilities. Agreements can be pursued using two structures: Master Agreements with tiered Supplemental Project Agreements (SPAs) or Standalone Agreements. Master Agreements establish the legal framework (e.g. liability, responsible parties, etc.), purpose, and general objectives for the partnership but do not allocate funding or specify individual projects. SPAs tiered to the Master Agreement contain more specific information, including scope and location of agreed-upon work, partner responsibilities, financial plans and funding commitments, and technical specifications. The other structure, Standalone Agreements, combine the broader partnership framework typically included in Master Agreements and the project details that are found in SPAs. Both agreement types can be modified to add new project work and/or additional sources of funding.

Master Agreements and Standalone Agreements may cover a span of up to 10 years while SPAs may cover any timeframe within the life of the Master Agreement. Master Agreements and Standalone Agreements are usually signed by a Forest Supervisor or a Regional Forester and the appropriate state, tribal, or county authority. Other entities may participate in a Good Neighbor project through a subcontract or third-party relationship with the agreement signatories.



A GNA timber sale was implemented in this area of national forest near Helena, Montana, after this photo was taken. *Photo courtesy of USFS Northern Region*



In Arizona, GNA agreements were developed to allow the state to assist with tree marking activities within the Four Forest Restoration Initiative landscape. The initiative aims to use hand and mechanical thinning, as well as prescribed and managed fire, to treat more than 2.4 million acres of ponderosa pine forest across northern Arizona. *Photo by Emery Cowan.*

Revenue

The authority did not come with dedicated federal funding, so revenue generated through GNA timber sales represents a key source of support for non-commercial restoration work accomplished through Good Neighbor agreements, in addition to both programmatic and project-specific contributions provided by partners and the Forest Service. The 2018 Farm Bill made a substantial change in the structure and classification of this revenue, which was previously referred to as program income. The legislation states that revenue from GNA timber sales shall be retained by states for use on authorized restoration services performed under Good Neighbor agreements. That revenue can be used by states to cover their costs for preparing and administering the GNA timber sale and to fund other non-commercial restoration activities, though funds may only be used on federal lands.¹⁶ The authority for states to manage GNA revenue will expire October 1, 2023 unless renewed by Congress.¹⁷

Required Restoration

The funding and implementation of reforestation and other post-harvest work normally paid for through trust funds are handled differently in a GNA timber sale. States and the Forest Service collaboratively determine how to complete and fund these legally-required tasks. The restoration work – essential reforestation, brush disposal and surface rock replacement – is funded through either GNA timber sale revenue or appropriated funding if revenue is not available. The former is preferred, and the latter is an option only available in select Forest Service regions. States can implement required restoration directly, or if both parties agree, a Collection Agreement can be used to transfer revenue from the state to the Forest Service to pay for the work. No matter the approach, GNA timber sale revenue does not contribute to Forest Service trust funds. This could have long-term implications for trust funds given that they rely on established overhead rates associated with revenue collections in order to fund their management and oversight.

¹⁶ USDA Forest Service (2019). Guidance for Developing Forest Management Projects through Good Neighbor Authority with States, Counties, and Tribes Based on 2018 Farm Bill Changes (draft).

¹⁷ Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Publ. L. No. 115–334, 132 Stat. 4490 (2018).

Research Methods

Our research focused on the use of GNA in 12 western states (see data table on p. 26 for more detailed information on GNA activities in the region studied). Our primary method of data collection involved interviews with state, federal, county, and tribal employees who coordinated or oversaw GNA agreement development and implementation. To capture state-level perspectives, we interviewed the state official most involved with GNA at seven state agencies, each in a different state. The agencies selected were those that had signed the most agreements – either Master Agreements with SPAs or Standalone Agreements – with the Forest Service in their respective states. We also interviewed a total of 11 Forest Service staff who were responsible for GNA oversight and coordination in our study area, including nine Forest Service regional staff representing Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10, one State and Private Forestry representative, and one Washington Office representative. We spoke with at least one state or federal interviewee in each of the 12 states in our study. Additionally, we interviewed representatives with two tribal entities and one county that had developed GNA agreements with national forests. Topics addressed in these interviews included agreement structure, activities implemented through GNA agreements, revenue generation and expenditure, project decision-making, tracking processes, partner contributions, and interviewees’ overall impressions of the authority. In addition to interviews, we examined a range of existing GNA agreements and Forest Service project and funding tracking spreadsheets maintained by regional office staff. We also reviewed federal statutes, agency guidance, and grey literature on the authority, and solicited feedback on the report from two academic partners familiar with GNA. Most of our data collection occurred in the summer and fall of 2020.



The first GNA project in Montana undertook the removal of hazard trees near the Jumping Creek Campground on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. Tomentosus root rot caused the campground to close due to hazard trees. The GNA project enabled the campground to reopen. *Photo courtesy of USFS Northern Region.*

Research Findings

Agreement Structure and Partner Type

Findings

In the states reviewed, we found the majority of Forest Service Good Neighbor agreements are made with state agencies with focuses on forestry, fire, agriculture, wildlife and natural resources (See data table on p. 26 for specific agencies involved in GNA agreements in each state). Though the 2018 Farm Bill extended the authority to tribes and counties, we found only a handful of instances of those entities entering into Good Neighbor agreements with the Forest Service. Among these few examples are the Nez Perce Tribe in Idaho; the Pueblo of Jemez in New Mexico; Chugachmiut, an Alaska Native nonprofit agency; the county of Taos, New Mexico; and Humboldt County and Kern County Fire Department, both in California.

Among the state agencies reviewed in our research, most signed Master Agreements with Forest Service regional offices, as opposed to with individual forests, and then used SPAs with modifications to develop specific projects and activities. State-by-state variation was more common in the scope and structure of the SPAs themselves. One structure we found in our research involved writing SPAs to encompass a scope of work specific to an individual project, with modifications made as the project advanced. Another structure involved forest-wide SPAs that included a range of potential activities, with modifications made to add specific activities and funding amounts. States in two Forest Service regions (Region 2 and Region 6) also entered into SPAs to specifically support GNA-focused staff that work across one or multiple forests. Standalone Agreements, which fuse elements of a Master Agreement and SPA, continued to be used to support restoration work, but were less common.

Officials in California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington described a trend toward writing agreements broadly to include a range of potential activities – commercial and non-commercial – in order to allow for different projects and funding sources to be added and adapted over the life of the agreement. Federal and state agency interviewees shared that this flexibility is often needed to adapt to differences between projected and actual revenue amounts or restoration costs, as well as shifts in non-commercial restoration needs between the time when a timber contract is issued and when revenue is available to fund restoration activities. Interviewees expressed that such an approach relies on a high level of trust between agreement partners.

Interpretation

- Agreement structures are being developed differently across states and regions, based on the preferences, capacity, and priorities of the state and federal managers involved.
- Use of the authority has been limited among tribes and counties, which could be due to several factors. It could reflect a more limited capacity – both in terms of staff and experience – to implement restoration activities on nearby public lands, or it could reflect a lack of knowledge about the authority, given that it is still a relatively new tool for these entities. It could also indicate that the authority has less utility and appeal for these entities, given that they do not have the ability to retain revenue.

Project Types and Activities

Findings

Agreements that included or supported commercial restoration made up the majority of GNA agreements in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, and Washington, about half of the agreements in Oregon and Alaska, and about one third of agreements in Wyoming. In these agreements, non-commercial restoration activities or objectives were either included as part of the timber sale package or included as additional, distinct projects in the agreement. Among the other states studied, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah had only non-commercial restoration GNA agreements while one out of the nine agreements in California involved a GNA timber sale. Variation in project type between states, and across forests in each state, was influenced by a variety of factors including forest type and condition, NEPA decision associated with each project, timber value, distance to existing or emerging forest products markets, access to available contractors, funding type and availability, state agency capacity, and state and federal management priorities.

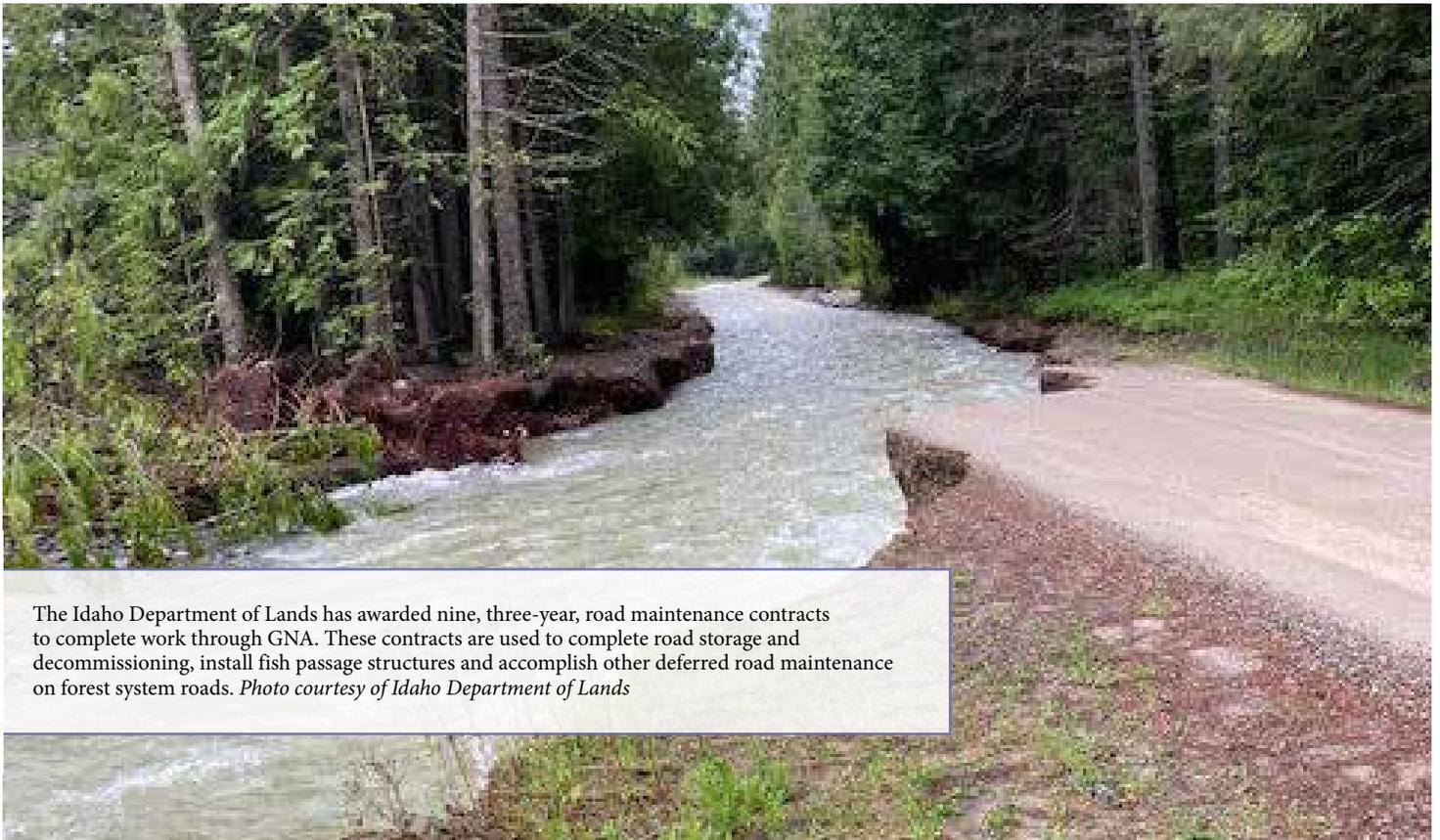
Among the agreements studied, tree thinning and hazardous fuels reduction, construction of aquatic organism passages, road decommissioning and repair, weed treatments, and habitat improvement were among the most common restoration objectives accomplished through the authority. Interviewees said they also used the authority to complete sale preparation tasks and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) activities. While decision-making authority continues to rest with the Forest Service, the ability to delegate NEPA data collection such as archaeological or biological surveys was seen by interviewees as a way to speed the planning process and address a reported shortage of NEPA shelf stock in some states.

Monitoring, such as a stream monitoring and forest plan monitoring, was included as an activity in a small number of agreements in Oregon, Idaho and Washington. Using GNA for prescribed fire was not common, though Washington had undertaken pile burning through GNA and Idaho had used the authority to provide support to BLM and Forest Service prescribed fire operations in the form of state fire personnel and equipment. An interviewee with the Idaho Department of Lands said the state used GNA revenue to reimburse its costs associated with prescribed fire support, which was perceived to be a more streamlined process than getting reimbursement from the federal agencies.

The tribal and county GNA projects we reviewed encompassed only non-commercial restoration, given that these entities cannot retain revenue. For example, the Chugachmiut, an Alaska Native non-profit agency, had an agreement with the Chugach National Forest and State and Private Forestry to accomplish forest treatments related to beetle kill. In Idaho, the Nez Perce Tribe was in the process of developing an agreement with the Nez-Perce Clearwater National Forest to undertake mastication and white-bark pine cone collection and in New Mexico, the Pueblo of Jemez had a GNA agreement with the Santa Fe National Forest to conduct forest, riparian, and cultural protection on portions of the tribe's ancestral lands. Examples of agreement activities to be undertaken by counties included implementation of fuels reduction and forest restoration projects prioritized by local collaborative groups (through an agreement between Taos County and the Carson National Forest) and implementation of hazardous fuels treatments envisioned in local Community Wildfire Protection Plans (through an agreement between Humboldt County and the Six Rivers National Forest).

Interpretation

- GNA was used by states for a range of different purposes, though some regional trends are emerging related to the balance of commercial and non-commercial restoration activities states pursue through the authority.
- Good Neighbor was mostly being used as a tool that land managers selected to implement a project already planned under NEPA, as opposed to state and federal partners planning projects from the ground up with the end goal of accomplishing them through GNA. This trend suggests that thus far, GNA has not generally been used or considered as an avenue for collaborative planning.
- In general, states with a higher proportion of agreements containing a revenue-generating commercial restoration component were also those with the most overall GNA activity. This connection indicates that revenue generation is likely important to the development of more robust GNA programs.
- Counties' use of the authority could prove a useful avenue for accomplishing restoration priorities generated at more localized, community scales.
- Along with authorities exclusively available to tribes, such as the Tribal Forest Protection Act and the 638 authority, GNA may be a useful tool to enable tribes to undertake stewardship of their ancestral lands, including management related to reserved treaty rights and protection of ancestral sites.



The Idaho Department of Lands has awarded nine, three-year, road maintenance contracts to complete work through GNA. These contracts are used to complete road storage and decommissioning, install fish passage structures and accomplish other deferred road maintenance on forest system roads. *Photo courtesy of Idaho Department of Lands*

“Similar and Complementary” and Cross-boundary Use

Findings

GNA has been promoted by the Forest Service as a tool to “work across jurisdictional boundaries and treat the landscape in a mixed ownership setting.”¹⁸ However, with the exception of Wyoming, we found the authority was only occasionally used by state and federal partners to implement restoration projects that crossed land ownerships. As of now, the authority’s “similar and complementary” provision, which has contributed to its perception as a cross-boundary tool, has not been taken as a requirement that all work completed via GNA be cross-boundary or adjacent to similar work on non-federal land. Instead, that provision has been interpreted by the agency to mean GNA projects should undertake activities similar to those that have been or will be implemented on non-federal ownerships within the same general area.¹⁹

Though uncommon overall, we found GNA had been used in at least one cross-boundary project in Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, and California. When asked about the authority’s potential for accomplishing cross-boundary projects, interviewees in four states said they hoped to increase use of GNA for that type of work. Those interviewees said they saw the potential for a cross-boundary approach to maximize efficiency by using a single contract and a single agency’s resources to perform restoration activities across ownerships.

Interpretation

- The statutory requirement that GNA be used to perform “similar and complementary” work across federal and non-federal land has not led to widespread use of the authority for cross-boundary restoration work in most states.
- The authority offers potential benefits and efficiencies for accomplishing restoration work across boundaries.
- Increased efforts on joint planning and prioritization between federal and non-federal partners could help identify additional opportunities for GNA to be used in cross-boundary implementation.

¹⁸ Geddes, J., Sawyer, S., Smith, T., & Sholty, L., (2016) Good Neighbor Agreements: Grants and Agreements ACT Training [PowerPoint slides]. USDA Forest Service.

¹⁹ USDA Forest Service. (2015). Good Neighbor Timber Sales Interim Implementation Instructions Enclosure with Forest Management Director’s Letter to Regional Foresters.

GNA Decision-making and Opportunities for Collaborative Input

Findings

State and Forest Service interviewees said it was most common for state agency staff to work with Forest Service staff at the forest or district level to propose, evaluate, and decide on projects to pursue through GNA, including those to pursue using GNA revenues. Interviewees described project ideas coming about through informal conversations between state and federal agency staff as well as through more official steering committees or work groups. In Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington, Forest Service and state staff maintained and referenced forest-level lists of shared restoration priorities that guided decisions on how to spend revenue from commercial projects. In evaluating projects for implementation through the authority, state and Forest Service interviewees said they considered factors such as alignment with each partners' priorities, primary intent (which must be restoration), state expertise and capacity, costs for the state and Forest Service, revenue potential, and opportunities for leveraging additional funding or capacity. At least five interviewees indicated that both states and the Forest Service would benefit from earlier, more strategic, and more frequent engagement on planning and evaluating projects for implementation under the authority. One interviewee noted that earlier discussion of project costs and activities would help ensure GNA would be the best implementation tool and another said more strategic planning could help identify more cross-boundary GNA projects.

While direct decision-making about GNA projects and revenue expenditures most frequently occurred between federal and non-federal agreement partners, state and Forest Service interviewees said that in making decisions about which projects to pursue under the authority, they often referenced plans and processes that involved broader stakeholder or collaborative group input. Those included state forest action plans, other state-level prioritization processes, and shared stewardship priorities. Additionally, state and federal interviewees from eight states said at least some projects that state and federal managers decided to implement through the authority either addressed priorities of collaborative groups, had express support from local collaborative groups, or had been developed through NEPA processes that had involved collaborative group engagement. State and federal agencies also said they provided updates to collaborative groups on different aspects of GNA projects as part of their overall engagement with those groups.

We also found some limited instances of states creating new processes through which collaborative groups or other stakeholders were directly involved in helping prioritize or otherwise inform GNA project decision-making. In Wyoming, for example, the state's GNA coordinator held meetings on every forest and invited non-agency stakeholders such as counties, conservation districts, and nonprofits to brainstorm potential Good Neighbor projects that were put forward for future consideration by the state and Forest Service. State and Forest Service partners working on Oregon's Willamette National Forest took another approach. They provided collaborative groups with a list of potential projects that could be funded with revenue and gave them the opportunity to provide input on which projects should be prioritized.

In two GNA agreements signed with tribes or tribal entities that we examined in our research, tribal interviewees said that the Forest Service approached them with proposed projects, as opposed to developing a scope of work more collaboratively. Even so, interviewees said the projects did incorporate objectives that were priorities for both the agency and the tribes, such as tribal workforce development or stewardship of the tribe's ancestral lands. A GNA project to remove invasive plants near the Jemez River, for example, was a priority area for both the Pueblo of Jemez and the Forest Service, complemented past work, and enabled the tribe to satisfy its desire to do more work on nearby ancestral lands.

Interpretation

- Most GNA project development and revenue expenditure were made at the forest level and in many cases were reported to align with established state, federal, or perceived collaborative group priorities. Additionally, some states and regions have started to think about taking a strategic state-wide or regional approach to these decisions. Such a strategy could create new opportunities to pool revenue and spend the money in more strategic ways across the landscape. It would also represent a more programmatic than project-oriented approach to the authority.
- Considering factors like state and federal capacity, proposed restoration activities, and expected restoration costs early in project development can help the Forest Service and partner entities determine if GNA is the right tool for a particular scope of work.
- Most forests and states have not yet created official processes for collaborative groups and other stakeholders to help inform GNA project decision-making or revenue expenditures. Inviting community-level input on lists of restoration priorities represents one potential avenue for incorporating collaborative approaches.
- Creating avenues for open communication between collaborative groups and state and Forest Service partners about GNA projects could help broaden support for the authority's use, identify opportunities for leveraging resources, or inform more strategic approaches to revenue expenditures.
- Earlier and more involved Forest Service engagement with tribes on developing GNA projects could enhance the degree of mutual benefit, strengthen relationships between the agency and tribes, and promote greater tribal engagement in stewardship on federal lands.

Revenue Generation and Expenditure

Findings

As of late 2020, Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming had implemented GNA timber sales that generated or were expected to generate enough revenue to fund subsequent project preparation or non-commercial restoration activities. States reported that revenues were first used to cover some or all state staff costs associated with preparing and/or administering the timber sale. Revenue above and beyond what was needed to cover those state costs was used to fund non-commercial restoration projects or preparation activities associated with future commercial or non-commercial restoration projects. Non-commercial restoration activities funded with revenues included fuels reduction, road decommissioning, project monitoring, invasive weed treatments, stream restoration, and construction of aquatic organism passages. Environmental surveys, analysis, and documentation required for NEPA analysis were also commonly funded through GNA revenue. In Oregon, GNA revenue twice covered all or the majority of NEPA tasks needed for a subsequent GNA timber sale, and state officials expected that to continue.

While state and Forest Service interviewees in several states said GNA revenue offered a promising means of supporting more non-commercial restoration on federal lands, they noted that revenue generation potential varied widely between states, between forests within the same state, and across individual forests. Project design, timber value, distance to existing or emerging forest product markets, and contractor availability were named as important determinants of revenue potential. Revenue from commercial restoration projects also is not available until purchasers make payments for timber, so it can take up to several years for these funds to become available to fund, recover, or recoup the state's preparation and administration costs or to fund non-commercial restoration activities. Interviewees reported that state, federal and private funding have been important for covering preparation and administration costs or supporting some priority restoration activities, both in general and before those activities could be covered by revenue.

When state and Forest Service staff did anticipate revenue, they tended to write agreements that included a range of restoration activities that could be pursued with the available funding. That approach allowed partners to wait until revenue was in hand to define the specifics of what non-commercial service work to pursue, to pool revenues from multiple projects to fund non-commercial activities, or to decide mid-project to address a restoration need if the opportunity arose.

Interpretation

- Given the trend of developing agreements with a number of potential restoration activities that could be incorporated into GNA timber sales or funded with revenue generated from one or more projects, it may be important to evaluate revenue generation and expenditure at the project level as well as the programmatic level.
- The practice of writing agreements that reference potential restoration activities – as opposed to specific work commitments – to be funded by revenues and the pooling of revenue from multiple projects to support non-commercial restoration could make it difficult to track the non-commercial work accomplished in association with a particular set of commercial GNA activities. Such tracking could be useful for local stakeholders such as collaborative groups or counties wishing to know whether GNA revenue generated in their area of interest is being spent on restoration in that same area.

Tracking and Reporting

Findings

The 2018 Farm Bill model for state-managed revenue has required new systems for tracking and reporting revenue generation and expenditure. Regions, forests, and states have developed their own processes for tracking and conveying this information, as opposed to receiving specific direction from the national office. For example, Region 1 and Region 6 set up standard systems of folders accessed by state and Forest Service staff to store and simplify the sharing of important documents, including spreadsheets that track state GNA costs, commercial and non-commercial accomplishments, and revenue generation and expenditures. In other regions, the states and forests used their own approaches for collecting data and relaying it up to the region level. States and regions also varied in how or whether they tracked state resources (cash or non-cash) put toward GNA agreements. Given the rapid development of the authority and associated best practices and policy guidance, state and federal interviewees indicated it was likely that tracking and reporting systems will continue to adapt and evolve over time.

Other information related to GNA, including data on accomplishments and timber volume and value, already integrate with established Forest Service tracking and reporting databases. However, multiple databases must be queried to capture the full scope of commercial and non-commercial restoration accomplished through the authority. It is also important to note that in most cases the expenses and activities outlined in GNA financial plans do not include the planning activities, including NEPA, that are necessary precursors to the implementation of management activities on federal lands. Similarly, interviewees reported that the full scope of Forest Service non-cash contributions and contributions from outside partners may not always be captured in agreement financial plans. Tracking based only on agreement financial plans thus may not reflect all the resources required to implement GNA projects.

We found that most public-facing reporting on GNA projects and accomplishments has come from the states. For example, state agencies in Idaho and Montana produce reports for the public and for state legislative bodies while Oregon contracts with university researchers to track some aspects of its GNA work and produce public reports.

Interpretation

- Systems and processes for tracking and conveying information on aspects of GNA such as revenue expenditures and partner contributions are evolving in different ways by state and region. The fact that the use of the authority continues to increase with these somewhat organically-developed processes shows the strength of the Forest Service-state relationship.
- Because some GNA tracking processes are not aligned or standardized on a national level, it could be difficult to compare and evaluate some aspects of GNA use across states.
- Expenses outlined in GNA financial plans shouldn't be taken as the sum-total of all costs involved in implementing restoration activities through GNA. A full financial accounting of activities accomplished through the authority must include the costs associated with planning activities and agreement development, as well as other partner contributions.

Partner Contributions

Findings

In addition to Forest Service appropriated and trust fund dollars and revenue from commercial restoration projects, contributions from states have provided key programmatic and project-specific support for GNA. State funding, combined with Forest Service and private industry dollars, helped kickstart GNA programs in several states, including Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. That money helped cover the upfront costs to hire and pay staff to develop and implement GNA projects before revenue from commercial restoration projects became available to reimburse some of those state expenses.

In the years since, we found many states had continued to invest in GNA. As of 2021, seven states had partially or completely funded staff positions that increased their capacity to use the authority. These positions, which included GNA foresters, GNA bureau chiefs, or state-federal partnership coordinators, were tasked with developing, administering, coordinating and/or implementing GNA programs and activities. Besides investing in GNA staff capacity, states also contributed funding used to contract out restoration activities, the time of state personnel such as fuels crews to work on specific projects, and the use of state supplies and equipment. Interviewees said state funding had supported both non-commercial GNA activities such as fuels reduction work, NEPA surveys, and stream monitoring as well as activities associated with commercial restoration such as sale preparation, administration, or associated activities such as road obliteration.

While the authority itself and individual agreements were important for encouraging or enabling use of state resources on federal lands, we found that states varied in how or if they recorded their contributions in GNA agreements. Because the authority does not have a match requirement for non-agency partners, this sort of accounting is not mandated. Additionally, in several states, we found that state investments in and use of GNA were part of and intertwined with broader state-federal forest health partnership programs such as Shared Stewardship, Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative, and Oregon's Federal Forest Restoration program. GNA was often seen as one tool for operationalizing these partnerships.

Interpretation

- States where the authority has been most widely used already had forestry agencies experienced in timber management, but also put substantial resources toward expanding their capacity to administer and implement GNA projects on federal lands. These factors suggest that initial capacity, as well as additional investment in GNA were important contributors to more active use of the authority.
- Variability in how state contributions are recorded in GNA agreements could make it challenging to capture the full scope of these contributions across states and forests.
- The fact that the use of GNA is often integrated into broader state-federal partnerships makes it complicated to disentangle state investments specifically associated with GNA from those associated with state-federal partnerships more generally.
- Even in places that have generated and expect to continue generating revenue from commercial restoration projects, partner and Forest Service contributions will likely remain important sources of support for the planning and implementation of GNA activities in the near term.

GNA Staffing

Findings

Since 2014, state agencies in Colorado, California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Wyoming, and Washington had added staff positions whose duties included carrying out GNA project development, coordination, and implementation. Those positions were funded through a mix of federal and state appropriated dollars, private funding, and revenue from timber sold on GNA projects. Idaho had the largest number of GNA-specific staff with 15 full time positions in its GNA bureau (though three spent half of their time on private and state lands) and 12 seasonal employees. State agencies in Idaho, as well as Montana, Oregon, and Washington expected GNA revenue to increasingly support at least some of those positions—an indication of the potential for that revenue to expand the ability for state agencies to implement restoration on federal lands. Interviewees with the Pueblo of Jemez similarly viewed GNA as a potential mechanism to build capacity within tribal crews to complete more forestry and fire work off tribal trust lands. Interviewees with the tribe said allowing tribes to retain GNA revenue would further enable this capacity building.

We found the Forest Service had only scaled up its GNA staff capacity to a limited extent. The agency added GNA-specific grants and agreements staff in at least one region but generally had not created new staff positions dedicated to managing Good Neighbor agreements. Instead, agreement oversight and management was assigned to a range of personnel including timber sale specialists, program managers, and shared stewardship coordinators. Three Forest Service interviewees noted that GNA responsibilities such as developing agreements and reviewing and approving work sometimes overwhelmed, or seemed to overwhelm, the capacity of federal agency staff.

Interpretation

- Though Good Neighbor allows the delegation of some Forest Service responsibilities to non-federal partners, substantial Forest Service staff time is still required to oversee agreement development and management, as well as project oversight and administration. As the use of the authority increases, partners should evaluate the associated need for federal grants and agreements and project management capacity.
- While some may view GNA as an authority to be used on a project-by-project basis, state and Forest Service partners in several states are approaching it as an ongoing program requiring, and supporting, additional staff capacity. At least one tribe has noted this staff capacity-building potential as well. Such a model benefits from some degree of funding certainty, whether that be through consistent Forest Service appropriations, state contributions, generation of revenue, or a combination.

Additional Benefits

Findings

State and Forest Service staff in a majority of states said GNA was increasing capacity and bringing efficiencies to restoration work on national forest lands. Interviewees in Regions 1, 2, 4, 6, and 10 named benefits that included the completion of commercial and non-commercial restoration activities that the agency would not otherwise have had the capacity to do, the ability to complete planned projects on shorter timelines, and the accomplishment of cross-boundary timber projects that possibly attracted higher bid premiums. The ability to use state contracting processes, which have some different features than federal processes, also enabled some projects to be managed more nimbly or garner higher bids, according to state and federal interviewees. Additionally, having a GNA agreement in place reportedly allowed Forest Service staff to solicit help from state specialists or more seasoned state foresters when they lacked capacity or expertise in a specific area. Less tangible benefits of the authority included increased cooperation and relationship-building between state and federal agencies.

Several states noted ancillary benefits for their own programs as well. For example, GNA-funded state foresters were able to help the state lands department on an as-needed basis in Idaho. Similarly, the availability of GNA projects allowed the Oregon Department of Forestry to keep its seasonal crews employed for more months of the year, helping with retention and allowing them to be available as a resource for prescribed fire during seasons when the Forest Service and BLM lack their seasonal employees.

Interpretation

- Interviewees named a range of unique advantages and efficiencies associated with GNA that could help improve or increase restoration outcomes. While this potential for “additionality,” or the ability to accomplish more or improved outcomes with the same level of resources or funding, is important in the context of shared stewardship approaches like GNA, there continues to be a need to better define the concept and what it should consider.
- The improved relationship that GNA appeared to foster between federal land managers and states, counties, and tribes aligns with the goals of the Forest Service’s Shared Stewardship initiative.
- Given that the authority is still a relatively new tool for states, counties, and tribes, partners’ ability to evaluate and utilize the authority’s unique advantages will likely continue to grow.



GNA projects can include activities such as planting seedlings in areas that had been burned by wildfire. *Photo courtesy of USFS Northern Region.*

Conclusion

As use of the Good Neighbor Authority expands and diversifies across the West, a number of trends are emerging. For one, Good Neighbor agreements appear to be most frequently used for non-commercial fuels reduction and restoration-focused timber sales. Use of the authority also tends to vary with geography, with the majority of commercial restoration activities taking place in forests in the northern Rockies and in the Pacific Northwest, while agreements without a commercial component are more common in states in the Southwest. While the authority was made available to tribes and counties in the 2018 Farm Bill, the large majority of Forest Service Good Neighbor agreements continue to be between the agency and states. We also found that cash and non-cash contributions from state, federal, and private sources continue to be crucial sources of support for GNA programs and restoration work.

The ability for states to generate and retain revenue for use on future restoration activities is a key part of the authority's appeal and could continue to be influential in where and how the authority will be used into the future. For instance, we expect use of the authority to continue to expand in states that have seen potential for revenue and, in response, invested resources and staffed up programs dedicated to developing and implementing GNA projects. This programmatic use of authority contrasts with a project-oriented view of GNA as one additional implementation tool, without the assumption of an ongoing program supported by dedicated staff capacity.

The authority's shift to a model of state revenue retention also created a need for new systems to track the generation and expenditure of those dollars. Thus far, states and Forest Service regions have developed slightly varied practices for tracking certain financial information, including revenue expenditures. Standardizing systems of accountability around important elements of GNA could facilitate evaluation efforts before the revenue provision goes up for renewal in 2023.

States and Forest Service units are also taking varied approaches to incorporating collaborative input on decision-making about GNA projects and revenue expenditures. A few models of formal collaborative processes have been carried out in Oregon and Wyoming. In the absence of national direction, there could be opportunities for local-level stakeholders and collaborative groups to influence how state and federal partners approach this topic. An increase in tribal and county use of the authority, which may be influenced by Congress deciding to allow those entities to retain revenue, could further shift perceptions of the authority as more than a state-federal tool.

Seven years after national authorization, Forest Service interviewees in all but two regions covered in this report reported that states are adding to the agency's capacity to accomplish commercial and non-commercial restoration projects. Advantages of the authority include opportunities to leverage state and partner dollars and the ability to utilize partner contracts as well as the expertise and capabilities of non-federal staff. As use of the authority continues to expand, it remains important to understand the circumstances under which GNA is the best implementation tool as well as benefits and potential drawbacks of the authority as compared to other approaches such as stewardship contracting or traditional timber sales. Counties, for example, have expressed concern that absent Secure Rural Schools or other funding to counties with significant public lands, the return to revenue-sharing from timber payments would be negatively impacted if GNA projects supplant traditional timber sales. Collaborative groups may also have cause for concern should GNA projects displace some stewardship contracting, which contains a "best value" provision that allows for greater consideration of local benefit. Though if GNA projects are truly additive (as opposed to being used instead of other approaches) some stakeholder concerns may not be as warranted. Ultimately, it is up to Forest Service line officers to weigh the costs and benefits associated with various implementation pathways.

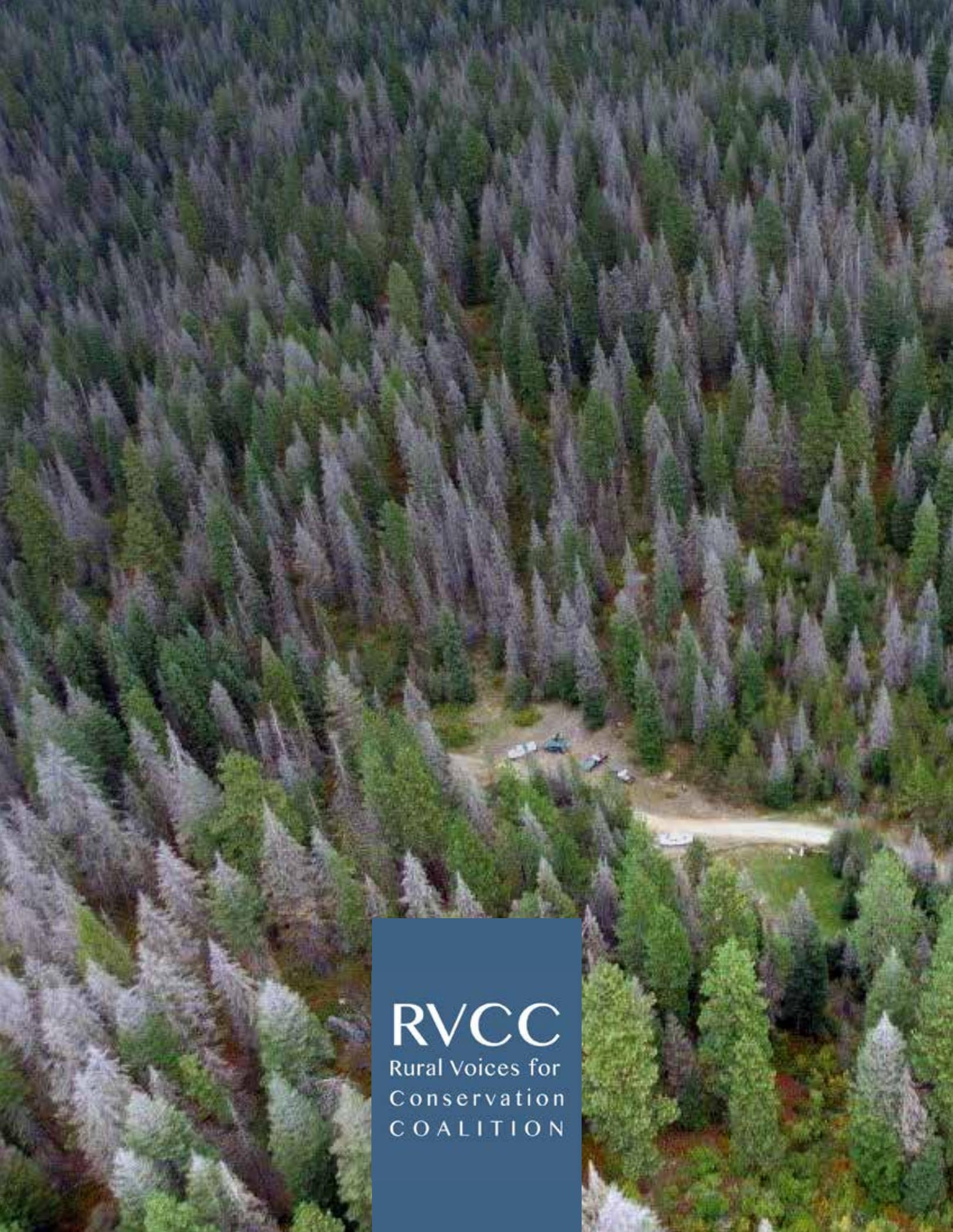
RVCC will continue to track evolving uses of GNA across diverse local contexts, with an eye toward how it plays a role in all-lands management. Given the authority's use in operationalizing Shared Stewardship and its relatively strong adoption in a number of states, it will likely continue to be an important mechanism for commercial and non-commercial restoration on national forest lands.

SPA= Supplemental Project Agreements

State	Agreement structure: Master agreements with SPAs or Standalone agreements	SPA agreement structure: Project-specific, forest-wide, or state-wide	# of national forests covered by a GNA agreement (out of total forests in the state)	# of agreements, either SPAs or Standalone, that include or support commercial restoration (out of total agreements)	# of state positions dedicated to GNA	Revenues generated for non-commercial restoration?
Alaska	Both	Project-specific	2 of 2	2 of 4	0	Yes
Arizona	Master	Project-specific	4 of 6	0	0	No
California	Both	Project-specific	9 of 19	1 of 9	0	No
Colorado	Master	All	7 of 7	19 of 23	3 positions fully or primarily focused on GNA	Yes
Idaho	Master	Forest-wide	5 of 7	4 of 5	13.5 FTE and 12 seasonal employees	Yes
Montana	Standalone	Forest-wide standalone agreements	7 of 7	7 of 7	10	Yes
Nevada	Standalone (one Master with no SPAs)	Forest-wide standalone agreements	1 of 1	0	0	No
New Mexico	Both	Project-specific	3 of 5	0	0	No
Oregon	Master	All	11 of 12	17 of 36	5 program staff with part-time GNA duties, 2.5 full-time and 2 seasonal GNA foresters, 3.3 FTE GNA implementation crew	Yes
Utah	Master	Both	5 of 5	0	0	No
Washington	Master	Forest-wide, state-wide	5 of 5	7 of 11	15.75 FTE	Yes
Wyoming	Master	All	5 of 5	11 of 26	2 seasonal GNA foresters, 1 GNA coordinator, 1 GNA forester	Yes

SPA= Supplemental Project Agreements

Common activities completed via GNA agreements (not all-inclusive)	Unique activity or agreement	Partner entities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial restoration Hazardous fuels reduction and bark beetle mitigation activities 	Agreement between the Chugach National Forest, State and Private Forestry, and Chugachmiut, an Alaska Native nonprofit agency, was one of the first GNA agreements with a tribal entity in the West.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska Division of Forestry Chugachmiut, an Alaska Native nonprofit agency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timber sale preparation activities Hand thinning and piling 	Master agreement and SPA were written to enable work across four national forests in Arizona.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree thinning Hazardous fuels reduction Fuel breaks 	Humboldt County entered an agreement with Six Rivers NF, which gave the county more autonomy to implement its Community Wildfire Protection Plan. It was among the first counties in the West to sign a GNA agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CALFire California Tahoe Conservancy Kern County Fire Humboldt County Sierra Nevada Conservancy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial restoration Non-commercial fuels reduction 	Project-specific GNA agreements have covered diverse service work, including mine reclamation and Tussock moth spraying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colorado State Forest Service Colorado Parks and Wildlife Colorado Department of Agriculture Colorado DNR, Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial restoration NEPA-related surveys Timber sale preparation 	Used GNA revenue to pay for state resources to support Forest Service prescribed burning operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idaho Department of Lands Idaho Fish and Game
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial restoration Fuels reduction Weed treatments 	A GNA timber sale on the Bitterroot NF was sold alongside an adjacent project on state lands, exemplifying the authority's use for cross-boundary work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sage grouse monitoring Habitat and vegetation monitoring 	Forest-wide agreements enable flexibility in monitoring activities such as sage grouse lek surveying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nevada Department of Wildlife
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invasive species treatment Aquatic organism passage work Landscape prioritization for state forest action plan update 	Agreement between the Santa Fe NF and the Pueblo of Jemez was one of the first GNA agreements with a tribal entity in the West.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pueblo of Jemez Ute Creek Soil Water Conservation District Taos County New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial restoration Non-commercial thinning and fuels reduction Roadwork (e.g. decommissioning, construction of fish passage) 	Forest collaborative groups on the Willamette NF were involved in prioritizing projects for funding with GNA revenue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oregon Department of Forestry Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazardous fuel removal Pinyon-juniper removal Aspen restoration Stream/riparian restoration Data collection for planning activities 	Used GNA to transfer Forest Service funding to cooperative projects under the state's existing Watershed Restoration Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utah Department of Natural Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial restoration Non-commercial hazardous fuels treatments Aquatic Organism Passage design 	Designed an agreement modification to encompass three years of commercial, non-commercial, and NEPA work on the Colville NF, avoiding the need for more frequent modifications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Washington Department of Natural Resources Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial restoration Pre-commercial thinning and fuels reduction Conifer removal for aspen regeneration 	Most of the state's GNA agreements are part of larger, cross-boundary projects that include Forest Service, state, private, and/or BLM lands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wyoming State Forestry, Wyoming Game and Fish Department Wyoming Department of Agriculture"



RVCC
Rural Voices for
Conservation
COALITION