



May 10, 2018

The Honorable Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
United States House of Representatives
2057 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Gosar:

On behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo) the only organization representing the nation's 3,069 counties, parishes, and boroughs, I write to express support for your proposed amendment to H.R. 2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 to expand Good Neighbor Authority. This amendment would allow the federal government to partner with counties and Indian tribes to improve the health of the National Forest System. Thank you for your efforts to promote collaborative approaches to make ecosystems resilient and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

As you are aware, the 2014 Farm Bill authorized the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to enter into Good Neighbor Authority agreements with all 50 states to improve forest and watershed health. Counties believe the USFS should have the ability to enter into the same Good Neighbor agreements with counties, who are in a unique position to conduct restorative work and treat landscapes.

Counties have a long history of working closely with the USFS through Resource Advisory Committees, forest collaboratives, cooperating agency status and coordination in the planning process. County elected officials and land management staff around the country already maintain working relationships with forest supervisors and other federal officials. Counties have proven to be reliable, responsible partners of the USFS in public lands policy, and would support granting local governments new opportunities to assist our federal partners in improving landscapes and watersheds.

NACo stands ready to work with you to promote locally supported, consensus-driven solutions to address forest management challenges and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. NACo encourages the U.S. House of Representatives to adopt your amendment to H.R. 2, and give counties the opportunity to assist our federal partners to make our national forests healthy again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew D. Chase". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

Matthew D. Chase
Executive Director
National Association of Counties