

Sen. Baldwin: Proposes bipartisan reform to enhance American timber economy

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin is continuing her advocacy for the forest products industry by introducing the bipartisan Good Neighbor Authority Improvement Act that would amend the 2014 Farm Bill to allow the Forest Service's Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) to cover forest management efforts that require road repair, improve forest access and complete stalled Forest Service projects. The bipartisan legislation is cosponsored by Senators Ron Johnson (R-WI) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN).

The Good Neighbor Authority Improvement Act proactively addresses the need to conduct road repairs in order to complete Forest Service projects in the next few years. This modification also supports ecosystem goals by improving forest health, restoring wildlife and fish habitat, and improving water quality.

"Good Neighbor Authority has proven to be a very useful tool to accelerate the pace of work done on our national forests. We have made real progress in recent years both in forest restoration and in increasing timber sales. In order to keep moving forward, we need to update Good Neighbor Authority and I'm proud of the bipartisan coalition we have built in support of that effort," said Senator Baldwin. "This needed update will lead to more gains in forest health and wildlife habitat, while continuing the increased timber sales we've seen in recent years and meeting long-term forest stewardship goals for our national forests."

“While having the GNA program in place since 2016 has boosted the logging economy across northern Wisconsin, we need to remove the program’s current exemption on the use of GNA funds to fix permanent forest roads. When a bid turns into a sale and a cut is lined up, we can’t let a forest road in need of repair slow down the process,” said Senator Johnson. “I’m proud to partner with my colleagues to push for an improvement in a program that is helping Wisconsin loggers not just survive, but begin to thrive.”

“Minnesota’s forests don’t just provide recreational opportunities and environmental benefits. They can also sustain rural economies,” said Senator Klobuchar. “This bipartisan bill will continue to encourage collaboration between the U.S. Forest Service and state agencies to undertake forest management projects, which will help protect water resources, enhance wildlife habitat, restore forest health, and strengthen our local economies.”

During her time in the United States Senate, Senator Baldwin has worked to ensure the U.S. Forest Service has the tools it needs to work with the timber industry and wildlife advocates to meet goals the Forest Service has for sustainable timber harvest, forest restoration, and wildlife habitat. In October 2014, she hosted Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell for a discussion of forest management issues in Wisconsin, and pressed him to ensure that tools including stewardship contracting and “Good Neighbor Authority” were used in Wisconsin.

“The Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association (GLTPA) is very appreciative for Senator Baldwin’s commitment to ensure full utilization of the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill,” said GLTPA President Max Ericson. “We are confident this legislation will greatly enhance the productivity of Wisconsin’s already successful GNA program.”

“We fully support and appreciate Senator Baldwin’s efforts to amend the Agriculture Act of 2014, addressing necessary language changes regarding forest roads integral to the continued success of Good Neighbor Authority in the State of Wisconsin,” said Norman K. Bickford, President, Wisconsin County Forests Association Board of Directors.

“We expect this bill will provide numerous additional opportunities for state forestry agencies to work together and more efficiently with our federal partners on federal forest lands. It is simply good government,” said George Geissler, President of the National Association of State Foresters and Oklahoma State Forester.

“As the management budget of the Forest Service is depleted by larger and more devastating wildfires, it is increasingly important to allow states to lend a hand in federal forest restoration,” said Ben B. Hollingsworth Jr., President of the Boone and Crockett Club. “The Good Neighbor Authority Improvement Act will allow states to work on a broader array of projects to create healthier forests. This is good for the health and vitality of our federal forest public lands, our water quality, the wildlife living there, and everyone who relies on these lands for outdoor recreation.”

“The Good Neighbor Authority Improvement Act represents a mid-western, common sense improvement to the Good Neighbor Authority, which will benefit our National Forests and surrounding rural communities,” said Steve Kariainen, Forest Resources Association Lake States Coordinator.

The Good Neighbor Authority Improvement Act is supported by the Federal Forest Resource Coalition, Forest Resources Association, National Association of State Foresters, Hardwood Federation, Boone and Crockett Club, Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, Wisconsin County Forests Association, LP Building Products, Flambeau River Paper Mill, Futurewood Corporation and Johnson Timber Corporation.

Senator Baldwin supported the 2014 Farm Bill that authorized the use of Good Neighbor Authority. The bill also permanently authorized Stewardship Contracting, which allows the Forest Service to partner with stakeholder groups to accomplish forest management and wildlife habitat restoration projects.

As a strong supporter of Wisconsin’s timber economy, Senator Baldwin championed the use of Good Neighbor Authority in Wisconsin. The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest and the Wisconsin DNR established an agreement to work together under the authority in 2015.

Since then, Good Neighbor contributed to a substantial increase in timber harvest in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, along with Stewardship Agreements and the work of the Forest Service. Timber sales on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest have risen steadily in recent years, from 77.1 million board feet (mmbf) in 2014 to 81.1 mmbf in 2015 to 114.8 mmbf in 2016. The Good Neighbor Authority Improvement Act will allow increased sales and forest restoration projects to continue.

Read the full text of the Good Neighbor Authority Improvement Act [here](#).



An online version of this release is available [here](#).