

CHAPTER 50

GOVERNMENT - STATE

HOUSE BILL 26-1205

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) Velasco and Mauro, Smith, Suckla, Bacon, Boesenecker, Brown, Camacho, Clifford, Duran, Froelich, Goldstein, Hamrick, Lieder, Lindsay, Martinez, McCormick, Nguyen, Rutinel, Slauch, Stewart K., Titone, McCluskie; also SENATOR(S) Cutter and Baisley, Exum, Marchman, Catlin, Kipp, Roberts, Snyder, Wallace, Coleman.

AN ACT**CONCERNING CHANGES TO STATE LAW TO REFLECT THE FEDERAL EXPANSION OF GOOD NEIGHBOR AUTHORITY AGREEMENTS.**

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly finds and declares that:

(a) The expansion of good neighbor authority through the federal "Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act," Pub.L. 118-234, enhances Colorado's ability to partner with federal agencies, local governments, and tribes to improve the health and accessibility of Colorado's forests; and

(b) The expansion of good neighbor authority supports the state's goals for wildfire risk reduction, rural economic development, sustainable outdoor recreation, and wildlife habitat by incorporating recreation infrastructure, cross-boundary project authority, and flexible reinvestment of project revenue into good neighbor authority agreements.

(2) It is therefore the intent of the general assembly to modernize references to good neighbor authority in the Colorado Revised Statutes to reflect these federal advancements and ensure that the Colorado State Forest Service and its partners can fully utilize the broadened federal authority to protect and enhance Colorado's forested landscapes and communities.

SECTION 2. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-31-311, **amend** (2) introductory portion and (2)(c)(II)(A) as follows:

Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material added to existing law; dashes through words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law and such material is not part of the act.

23-31-311. Watershed protection projects and forest health projects.

(2) The Colorado state forest service shall collaborate with water providers; federal, state, and local governments; educational institutions; landowners; and other interested public and private entities to recommend the use of ~~moneys~~ MONEY made available pursuant to section 37-95-112.5. ~~C.R.S~~ This process shall consider:

(c) (II) In identifying such watershed protection projects and forest health projects, consideration shall be made to effectively use available resources by:

(A) Applying the principles of the state of Colorado good neighbor authority programs entered into between the Colorado state forest service and the United States forest service and between the Colorado state forest service and the United States bureau of land management DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, OR AGENCY OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR OR UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

SECTION 3. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-31-313, **amend** (3)(e) and (6)(a)(IV) introductory portion as follows:

23-31-313. Healthy forests - vibrant communities - funds created - outreach working group - loan program - legislative declaration - definitions - repeal.

(3) **Definitions.** As used in this section, unless the context otherwise requires:

(e) "Good neighbor authority" means the authority of the state of Colorado pursuant to ~~section 331 of the federal "Department of Interior and Related Agencies Appropriation Act of 2001", Pub.L. 106-291, 114 Stat. 922, 16 U.S.C. sec. 2113a, 16 U.S.C. sec. 8571,~~ or any analogous successor authority.

(6) **Community watershed restoration.**

(a) In order to support communities and land managers in efforts to reduce risk to people and property and increase firefighter safety, and in support of long-term ecological restoration so that the underlying condition of Colorado's forests supports a variety of values, including public water supply and high-quality wildlife habitat, the forest service shall:

(IV) Conduct, or contract with one or more entities to conduct, one or more demonstration projects that utilize Colorado's good neighbor authority ~~with the United States forest service~~ to implement forest management ~~treatments~~ PROJECTS that improve forest health, ~~and~~ resilience, WILDLIFE HABITAT, OR OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES, and supply forest products to Colorado businesses. In overseeing a project, the forest service shall:

SECTION 4. Act subject to petition - effective date. This act takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly (August 12, 2026, if adjournment sine die is on May 13, 2026); except that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect

unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in November 2026 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.

Approved: April 13, 2026