

Forest Service Flexible Partnerships Act of 2017

Purpose: Allow the Forest Service to partner with local entities to develop sites in rural communities while simultaneously addressing Forest Service management and facility needs.

What: This bill would authorize Forest Service to lease under-utilized properties and accept in kind considerations (such as maintenance, employee housing, repair, or restoration) as payment. This authority would allow for the creation of public-private or federal-local partnerships to help meet needs in rural communities and allow Forest Service to better address management needs across different regions.

Why: The Forest Service Facilities Realignment and Enhancement Act of 2005 (FSFREA), which expired at the end of 2016, provided the authority to convey administrative sites, but not the authority to receive in-kind consideration for leases. This has limited the Forest Service's ability to work with towns, counties, and states to make the best use of under-used facilities and land.

Benefit: This new authority would:

- Build new partnerships to solve housing and other needs in communities with limited available land.
- Help keep Forest Service regional offices open in the face of compounding maintenance costs and decreased budgets.
- Repurpose and improve underutilized property, while providing opportunities for construction or renovation of Forest Service properties to reduce the existing deferred maintenance backlog.
- Support local jobs in construction and service industries, and provide foundation for economic growth in rural communities through affordable housing and new business opportunities.

Additional Information RE: Forest Service Flexible Partnerships Act of 2017

Thank you for your patience with getting you more information regarding the USFS leasing bill. Below are the answers to your questions that came up at the MMC meeting last week. Our D.C. team is still working on finalizing language.

Is this another layer of bureaucracy?

No. The idea of this bill came from the Forest Service Realignment Act that expired at the end of 2016. Instead of simply reauthorizing this bill, we wanted to introduce something that is better. The reason why this bill is better is because it enables the Forest Service to lease administrative properties and accept in kind donations as payment, thus making it easier for counties and municipalities to partner with developers (not harder) in order to build affordable housing on these otherwise vacant USFS administrative lots.

Does this make it easier for communities to obtain properties or create more red tape?

This should make it easier for communities to obtain these administrative properties, when before they couldn't because of price or other factors. While working with the USFS will almost always have "red tape" hoops to jump through, this bill will make it more realistic for counties/communities to be able to work with developers to lease from the USFS to build on - while it is more difficult now.

Without funding, does this really work?

The funding would come from public/private partnerships between communities/counties and developers to lease USFS administrative properties. Without this bill, as it is standing it is difficult and expensive to partner with the USFS to build on these sites.

What does underutilized mean? Is this just administrative properties?

Underutilized is referring to the underutilized USFS administrative properties that could be used to build affordable housing on. And yes, this is just for administrative properties.

What does buy and sell at appraised value mean?

This simply means the USFS administrative property sites will be leased at the appraised value decided on by the county.

Let me know if you have more questions - we understand that without everything finalized if you are not comfortable supporting just yet, that is completely fine, but first and foremost we want to make sure you are in the loop about this bill that we will inevitably be introducing in the next few weeks.