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The Forest Service Flexible Housing Partnerships Act

The American West faces a housing crisis, and our mountain and rural communities are at the center of it. In many of these communities, including in resort communities where available land is both scarce and prohibitively expensive, the Forest Service owns administrative sites that are usually located outside of forest boundaries and are either vacant or underutilized.

To address the housing shortage, the 2018 Farm Bill gave the Forest Service the authority to lease its administrative sites for local needs, including building affordable housing. The authority provided greater flexibility for the Forest Service to lease such sites in exchange for in-kind contributions such as construction of housing and improvement or maintenance of federal facilities. To date, the Forest Service has not fully implemented this authority partially due to their lease terms, which are not long enough to provide certainty to local communities.

To provide towns and counties with the certainty needed to begin projects on Forest Service land, the Forest Service Flexible Housing Partnerships Act strengthens the provision passed in the 2018 Farm Bill by lengthening the administrative site's lease authority to up to 100 years and allowing it to be renewed at the end of its term.

The Forest Service is required to consult with local officials to identify and propose sites eligible for leasing, and local municipalities and counties hold a right-of-first-refusal to develop the eligible administrative site.

If passed, the Forest Service Flexible Housing Partnerships Act will enable Western communities and the Forest Service to work together to build more housing for residents – so people can work where they live. It will also help the Forest Service provide housing for its firefighters and other essential positions, as well as address its backlog of maintenance projects.

Support: Summit County, Grand County, Eagle County, Colorado Association of Ski Towns (CAST), the City of Aspen and Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG).