

Endowment Announces Selection of Forest Investment Zones

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The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (the Endowment) today announced the selection of three areas as “Forest Investment Zones” under a multi-million dollar initiative designed to advance healthy working forests and vibrant forest-reliant communities across America.

The organizations and areas identified as Forest Investment Zones are: **Mountain Association for Community Economic Development** in Berea, Kentucky focusing on Appalachian communities and forests in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and Ohio; **The Northern Forest Center** in Concord, New Hampshire, representing a 30-million acre swath of forests and communities across northern New York, New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine; and **Sustainable Northwest** of Portland, Oregon that will work on “dry-side primarily publicly-owned forests” stretching from northeastern Oregon to northern California.

“As a new entrant in the sustainable forestry arena we’ve solicited expert input and given a great deal of thought about how we can best achieve our vision of seeing that *‘America’s forests are sustainably managed to meet broad societal objectives...while ensuring healthy and vibrant forest-reliant communities,’*” said the Endowment’s Board Chairman Dick Molpus. “We landed on the concept of “forest investment zones” – real places where we can work together with local and regional organizations as well as citizens in innovating and learning that could serve as living laboratories to benefit all forest types and communities across the nation,” he continued.

From a cache of nearly 60 pre-proposals stretching literally from Alaska to Florida and from California to Maine, the Endowment identified three projects that capture a significant slice of the array of forest types, ownerships and challenges facing rural America.

Under the Endowment’s Forest Investment Zone initiative, each partner will be granted up to \$2 million over five years that will be leveraged with other funds to test and implement strategies that yield healthier working forests as well as local wealth creation and economic opportunity while assisting rural communities in charting paths to a more productive future.

One third of the U.S. is forested. “Those forests are an important national asset, whether owned by the public and managed by federal, state or local land management agencies or Tribal entities, or whether held privately,” said Endowment President Carlton Owen. “The pressures facing forests and forest-reliant communities are immense and growing, yet we believe that it is not only possible but vitally important that we find ways to ensure that forests continue to produce marketable products, clean water, wildlife habitat and other ecological services,” he said.

More about the Forest Investment Zone Initiative

The Endowment announced that its signature programmatic initiative to implement the organization’s mission, which is to: *work collaboratively with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation’s working forests and forest-reliant communities*, will be through Forest Investment Zones. The Endowment sees these specific areas as a means of co-creating innovation and learning at the regional rather than single community level. The Endowment founds its work in a “theory of change” where the maintenance and restoration of healthy working forests provides multiple economic and social value streams that can be captured in ways that promote regional connection and increase social and economic health. Endowment Vice President for Community Development Diane Snyder noted that “This program hits squarely on all three legs of forest sustainability: ecological, economic and social health.”

More about the Three Forest Investment Zone Partners

The Northern Forest Center’s proposed Forest Investment Zone is located in the northern regions of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York where they are partnering with Coastal Enterprises, Inc., Biomass Energy Resource Center, Community Forest Collaborative, and Sustainable Forest Futures. According to the Center’s President Robert Riley, “Our proposal responds directly to our concern about changes in forest ownership,

increased overseas competition and the impacts of climate change and the end of cheap energy. We are excited to have the opportunity to further our learning and share it among our peers both inside and outside the boundaries of our zone.”

Sustainable Northwest’s President, Martin Goebel, said, “This is a great opportunity to demonstrate how an integrated and holistic approach to forest management can create jobs, strengthen communities and improve forest health.” This zone includes portions of 13 counties in Eastern Oregon and 2 in Northern California in partnership with Wallowa Resources in Wallowa County, Oregon and the Watershed Research and Training Center in Hayfork, California. The bulk of the forests in the zone are publicly owned.

Mountain Association for Community Economic Development is working in partnership with Appalachian Sustainable Development and Rural Action, all members of the Central Appalachia Network in their Forest Investment Zone. “We’ve been working for 32 years to create economic opportunity, strengthen democracy and support the sustainable use of natural resources. Our partnership with the Endowment allows us to expedite our demonstration of the strength of market-driven approaches to sustainable forestry,” stated the organization’s President Justin Maxon. This Forest Investment Zone represents the central Appalachian regions of Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, West Virginia and Ohio.

“We are very excited to launch this new program. Our desire is to create a ripple effect that has positive impact on numerous forested areas across the nation, not just within the zones. We’ve spent months preparing for this journey,” said Diane Snyder.

Desired Outcomes

Highlights of some outcomes from the proposed partnerships include:

- expanding community forest ownership,
- enhancing market connections for ecological services,
- creating models that use woody biomass energy production at appropriate scales,
- promoting technology that will advance forest health,
- creating new market distribution channels for green products, and
- applying forest and forest product certification systems.

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The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit chartered at the request of the governments of the United States and Canada in accordance with the terms of the Softwood Lumber Agreement 2006 between the two countries. The Endowment was endowed with \$200 million. The Endowment works collaboratively with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities. It has offices in Greenville, SC and Enterprise, OR. For more information visit the Endowment's website: www.usendowment.org

Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED) works with people in eastern Kentucky and Central Appalachia to create economic opportunity, strengthen democracy and support the sustainable use of natural resources. For more than 30 years, MACED has engaged in research, business development and demonstrations to promote a multi-benefit forest economy in Appalachia. The organization provides financial investments and technical assistance that helps local people and communities prosper, conducts research to inform and support good public policy that is inclusive and crafts effective development tools that make a difference. www.maced.org

The Northern Forest Center mobilizes people to build healthy communities, economies and ecosystems by working through networks and partnerships across the Northern Forest region of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine -- the largest region of intact forest ecosystem remaining in the eastern United States, spanning 400 miles, and 30 million acres. The Northern Forest Center was founded in 1997 upon recognition that land conservation alone, pursued without equal attention to the people and communities surrounded by that land, could not produce sustainable places. From its roots in the environmental community, the Center sought to expand existing networks of regional conservation organizations to engage new and important partners from the economic, community, education and cultural sectors. www.northernforest.org

Sustainable Northwest helps people and communities restore and maintain ecological health, balance diverse interests, and promote economic opportunities. Founded in 1994 and headquartered in Portland, Oregon, the organization works through collaboration to bridge rural and urban interests, encourage entrepreneurship and build trust in sustainable natural resource management and utilization in the western U.S. They engage in partnerships with organizations and communities throughout the West to build local capacity, find common ground, strengthen self-reliance and pursue projects that are economically viable and environmentally sound. By maintaining an ever-growing network of professionals, community leaders, public officials and others pursuing sustainable efforts and enterprises, the organization helps translate the lessons of local sustainability into public policy and institutional reform. www.sustainablenorthwest.org