

## NEWS

---

### REPORT CHRONICLES FAILED HARDWOOD COMMODITY CHECK-OFF *-Focus is on recording history and capturing lessons learned-*

**U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Greenville, SC**  
For IMMEDIATE RELEASE (March 18, 2016)

“You win a few, you lose a few. Some get rained out. But you got to dress for all of them.” Baseball legend Satchel Paige’s quote is especially apropos to a new report released today by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (Endowment).

[Lessons From the Attempted Hardwood Check-off](#) reviews the ups, downs, and lessons learned from a more than five-year effort to advance a research and promotion program for America’s hardwood lumber and hardwood plywood segments of the forest products industry.

“A group of executives from the hardwood industry approached the Endowment seeking funds for a ‘grow the market promotion program’ in 2010,” said Endowment President and CEO Carlton Owen. “We welcomed the opportunity to work with them collaboratively, as we have with the softwood lumber and paper & packaging segments of the industry, to develop sustainable means to enhance markets for trees and the wide range of beautiful products that they yield.”

Despite joint investments of more than \$600,000 and untold hours of work from a host of industry representatives, the effort was ultimately unsuccessful. The Endowment’s review notes at least five major barriers to success including the highly fractured nature of this segment of the industry and a general anti-government feeling exploited by opponents.

Commodity check-offs, officially known as USDA Research and Promotion Programs, allow producers of certain agricultural products to voluntarily assess themselves to create sustainable funding for investments in product research and promotion designed to grow markets for their products. First adopted in the 1930s, some of the better known public faces of the highly-successful tool can be seen in the beef industry’s “Beef. It’s what’s for dinner!” and cotton growers’, “Cotton, the Fabric of our Lives.”

“We at the Endowment do not regret our lengthy engagement or our matched quarter-million dollar investment in this effort...We take seriously the importance of learning from our failures just as much as we take pride in our successes,” notes the report.

While the ill-fated hardwood check-off feel short of its objective of creating a \$10 million annual program, the Endowment collaborated in successful efforts leading to creation of Softwood Lumber and Paper Check-offs that collectively generate more than \$40 million annually to aid their sectors.

###

**For more information contact:**

**Carlton N. Owen**, President & CEO, 864-233-7646, [carlton@usendowment.org](mailto:carlton@usendowment.org)

The **U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities** (the Endowment) is a not-for-profit public charity working 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 – [www.usendowment.org](http://www.usendowment.org)