

## NEWS

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### UNITED NATION'S WORLD WATER DAY 2018, MARCH 22

*-- Endowment Celebrates Successes/Addresses Challenges of Ensuring Fresh Water through Forests --*

#### **U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Greenville, SC**

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE (March 22, 2018)

**Greenville, S.C.** – Benjamin Franklin wisely noted, “When the well’s dry, we know the worth of water.” In less than 90 days a city of nearly four million people could be without fresh water. That city, Cape Town, South Africa, is surrounded by the ocean yet suffers from an extended drought that has all but exhausted its potable water supply. Could that happen in the U.S.? Recall Atlanta? Just over a decade ago that great southern city faced a similar water crisis.

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (Endowment) is celebrating [World Water Day](#) by convening nearly 50 watershed protection experts from across the country to acknowledge successes and address future challenges in an effort to plan for the inevitable – a time when many areas “outgrow” or face life without a dependable water supply. The event is the first gathering of grantees for the Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program, a partnership that is co-funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

“An estimated two-thirds of the fresh water in the U.S. originates in a forested watershed,” notes Carlton Owen, the Endowment’s President and CEO. “Healthy, well-managed forests produce cleaner, more reliable water flows, reducing drinking water treatment, transportation, and storage costs.”

Protecting forested watersheds from conversion to other uses that may be detrimental to drinking water supplies, and ensuring that those forests are well-managed, is a priority for the Endowment. These same forests also generate family-supporting jobs associated with the forest industry and provide a wealth of other ecosystem services, such as flood control, wildlife habitat, and climate regulation.

One focus for the Endowment is helping local communities create funding programs that allow them to finance watershed protection and management. In Raleigh, North Carolina, for example, the Endowment and NRCS helped the City create a watershed protection fee that now generates more than \$2 million annually. Those funds go to private landowners for forest management, restoration, and protection that benefit the City’s water supply -- a locally-driven approach being replicated across the country.

The Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program annually provides funding to local groups through a competitive process. To date, 25 projects have been funded, totaling \$4.15 million in combined EPA, NRCS, and Endowment funds. Project selections for 2018 will be announced soon. Grantees from the program's first two years are gathering in Seattle with agency partners this week to learn from each other and build support networks that will ensure progress continues long after grant funds are expended.

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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)