Family Forests: Rural America's Superpower

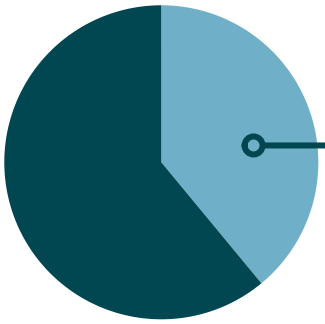
American Forest Foundation



FAMILY FORESTS ARE CRITICAL TO THRIVING RURAL ECONOMIES, U.S. PRODUCTS, COMMUNITIES, AND LANDSCAPES.

Family forest owners are 21 million strong and steward the largest portion of America's woodlands. One in four rural Americans own forests, with an average forest of 80 acres. These small-acreage assets supply more than 50 percent of the wood processed in U.S. mills supporting the $300 billion forest product sector that host 2.5 million rural jobs.

These lands fuel the recreation industries like hunting, fishing, and wildlife. They also help clean our air and water and store carbon in their trees.



39%

of U.S. forests are owned by families & individuals

50% **of the wood in the forest products industry comes from family forests**

But far too often, these landowners struggle to keep their land healthy and productive. 1 out of 3 family forest owners make less than $50,000 annually and grapple with the high cost of active forest management.

FAMILY FORESTS ARE UNDER THREAT

Every year family forests face increasing risks that threaten their health and productivity. In addition to typical costs of owning land, family landowners now also face:

- Rising costs of land management
- Shifting forest products markets
- Increasing natural disasters including catastrophic wildfires, invasive species, drought, hurricanes, and floods
- Broader changes in weather patterns
- Forest lost to conversion and development

57 million acres of private forest

at risk of development by 2030

(larger than the state of Utah)



MARKETS: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RURAL AMERICA

Strengthening existing markets like the $300 billion forest products industry and unlocking innovative markets, like the renewable fuels and voluntary carbon market, which could contribute another $50-100 billion to the U.S. economy, will create renewed rural economic opportunities, increase U.S. products, diversify landowners' revenue to manage their land, and support working land conservation.

Unlocking market opportunities

- Protect and grow existing wood products industry
- Expand markets for new wood products such as renewable fuels and biochar
- Expand markets for non-wood products such as carbon and water

How can Congress support these markets?

- Support the Rural Forest Markets Act
- Continue implementation of bipartisan Growing Climate Solutions Act
- Modify the Renewable Fuel Standard
- Support the Jobs in the Woods Act
- Advocate for removal of EU deforestation barriers that will limit US wood product exports to EU markets

CREATING A SAFETY NET FOR FOREST OWNERS

In addition to scaling these markets, family landowners need continued support in the face of increasing risks, often fueled by mother nature. Family lands are often interlaced with public lands and communities, making them essential to reducing wildfire and forest health risks.

- Support Disaster Reforestation Act and successful implementation of recent disaster assistance
- Support thinning of wildfire prone forests on all lands with cost-share and market-based solutions for family forests
- Advocate for tax incentives like capital gains treatment of timber, reforestation deductions, and carbon sequestration credits to incentivize forest ownership
- Unfreeze working lands conservation funding and align programs with market-based strategies
- Pass a farm bill that includes strong support for working family forests

Scaling Impact

AFF is partnering with USDA to leverage USDA funds with market-based strategies by as much as **10x** through Climate Smart Commodities and USDA Forest Service grants. These programs leverage partnerships and market opportunities for rural forest owners.

The American Forest Foundation
www.forestfoundation.org

Questions?
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