



NEWS RELEASE

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Grants award \$259,000 to Northern Forest projects

The Northern Forest Partnership Program has awarded grants to 19 projects that will strengthen local forest-based economies, communities and the environment in the Northern Forest. The \$259,000 awarded to non-profits, local government and for-profit businesses will leverage more than \$1 million of investment. Many of the funded projects will help sustain or create jobs in Northern Forest communities.

The projects funded this year include creating marketing and business plans for forest product businesses, protecting critical bird habitat, developing plans for a “forest-to-fuel” plant and creating an affordable housing manufacturing facility that uses local materials.

The competitive grant program is a collaboration of the Northern Forest Center, the North East *State* Foresters Association (NEFA) and the USDA Forest Service. Funding for the program was made possible by a grant from the Forest Service’s Economic Action Program and the support of U.S. Senator Judd Gregg of New Hampshire.

“I’m pleased that we’ve been able to provide a third year of funding for the Northern Forest Partnership Program,” said Senator Gregg. “I believe it’s very important to support local projects that can strengthen the economy of the region while ensuring the sustainability of the forested landscape.”

More than 100 organizations and businesses from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York applied to the Northern Forest Partnership Program for funding this year. Grants ranging from \$2,475 to \$22,500 were awarded to the following groups:

NEW HAMPSHIRE

- **Northern Forest Canoe Trail** (*multiple counties*), to create a three-part project to generate community-level economic development in the Northern Forest region by increasing tourism dollars in the area;

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- **New Hampshire Audubon** (*Grafton County*), to work with forestland owners and volunteers to protect critical breeding bird habitat through forest management and education;
- **Hubbard Brook Research Foundation** (*Grafton County*), to use “ecosystem thinking,” to bring together leaders of business, academia, government and public interest groups to explore vexing environmental, economic and land-use problems facing the Northern Forest;
- **Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire** (*Grafton County*), to create a “Guide to Visual Arts in Northern New Hampshire” based on the economic-development approach that connects culture with place-based tourism;

MAINE

- **The Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands** (*Aroostook County*), to create additional market incentive for certified forest products by developing a credible chain-of-custody tracking system and to prepare harvesters for the demands of certified forest product purchasers and third-party programs;
- **Millinocket Area Growth & Investment Council** (*Penobscot County*), to support specific market research for one of the region’s best business clusters—the forest product industry in the Katahdin region;
- **Forest Guild** (*Penobscot County*), to use Guild Model Forests and professional members to train foresters and landowners in the latest ecologically-based silvicultural techniques and promote an ecological conscience with foresters, landowners and wood users;
- **FDC Ventures** (*Oxford County*), to develop a business plan and resource acquisition strategy to commercialize a bio-oil production system in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont that will displace oil and gas with forest materials while creating jobs;
- **Coastal Enterprises, Inc.** (*Penobscot County*), to develop and launch a \$10 million flexible investment fund for Maine’s rim counties, the poorest and most rural in the state;
- **Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments** (*Oxford County*), to perform a feasibility study to rehab vacant mills that dot the landscape, encouraging niche manufacturing activities and offering new beginnings to mill sites that have long been considered a burden to communities;

VERMONT

- **Vermont Natural Coatings, LLC** (*Caledonia County*), to conduct branding analysis for environmentally friendly wood finish, and to use those results to add value to Northern Forest wood products;
- **Northeastern Vermont Development Association** (*Caledonia County*), to develop a replicable and scalable non-profit housing manufacturing facility to produce needed low-cost panelized homes for low- to moderate-income individuals and families in Vermont and New Hampshire;
- **Center for Woodlands Education** (*Caledonia County*), to develop and publish a trade paperback that will serve as an essential reference manual for all owners of forestland in the Northeast, providing information on forest management, conservation, wildlife habitat, rural culture and the economy;
- **Brighton Community Forum** (*Essex County*), to bring together businesses and citizens of the Nulhegan region “gateway communities” to learn about various established marketing opportunities in the changing forest products industry;

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NEW YORK

- **Traditional Arts in Upstate New York** (*St. Lawrence County*), to help 30 North Country woodworkers increase opportunities to market their products by providing individual portfolios, a website and a showcase in a regional art gallery;
- **Residents Committee to Protect the Adirondacks** (*Warren County*), to greater protect open space resources and to build sustainable economies as well as to strengthen community viability by building a local wood industry through Forest Stewardship Council;
- **New York Forest Owners Association** (*St. Lawrence County*), to develop and promote a website that connects private non-industrial forest owners in northern New York with businesses that seek access to a variety of primary forest products;
- **New York Folklore Society** (*Franklin County*), to provide assistance in forming a Mohawk Basketmakers' Alliance;
- **Brushton-Moira Future Farmers of America** (*Franklin County*), to turn the land behind the community's K-12 school into a sugarbush and build a sugar house and working museum with full student participation in every step of the project.

“This year’s grant program was very competitive,” said Stephen D. Blackmer, president of the Northern Forest Center. “Applicants requested almost \$1.6 million toward projects valued at more than \$6 million. That’s an exciting indication of the amount of energy and creativity out there for finding sustainable ways to bolster our economy, communities and landscape.”

The Northern Forest Partnership Program is open to business, government and non-profits in 29 counties in the Northern Forest, the largest contiguous forest remaining in the East. A review committee with representatives from all four states selected the grant recipients. Using detailed criteria, reviewers looked for projects that could enhance the capacity of rural communities to develop or strengthen sustainable forest-based local economies; promote environmentally sensitive uses of the forest and other natural resources; promote local history, culture and working connections to the landscape; or be part of sustaining and helping to create new jobs in these areas.

“These projects will play a significant, positive role in the region,” said Charles Levesque, executive director of The North East *State* Foresters Association. “The Northern Forest Partnership Program is leveraging a significant investment in the Northern Forest by helping to get these projects off the ground.”

The Northern Forest Center has requested increased funding for the Northern Forest Partnership Program for next year to help meet the growing need across the region. If Congress renews funding for the program, application information will be available at www.northernforest.org.

“We’re very grateful to Senator Gregg for getting this program started and for helping it grow to meet the needs of the Northern Forest,” noted both Blackmer and Levesque.

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The **North East *State* Foresters Association** is the State Foresters of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York cooperating with the US Forest Service State & Private Forestry. NEFA works to encourage sound decisions about the management and use of forest resources across Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York by identifying significant regional trends, broadening awareness of forest health and sustainability issues, providing a regional context for state and local decisions about forest resources, and analyzing the environmental, social and economic impacts of forest land use.

The **Northern Forest Center** was founded in 1997 to mobilize people to build healthy communities, economies and ecosystems by working together across the Northern Forest region. The Center believes that by building partnerships and working together, people and organizations can attract the resources, build the capacity, and take the actions needed to establish the Northern Forest as a model for living sustainably and well in a rural, forested place.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Please call or email Shelly Angers at the Northern Forest Center (603-229-0679, ext. 109; sangers@northernforest.org) for detailed contact information pertaining to your local grant recipients.