



USDA Partners with States to Conserve 168,000 Acres of Private Forestlands as part of Investing in America agenda

USDA Press Release

CLE ELUM, Wash., May 13, 2024 - Today, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Xochitl Torres Small announced that the USDA Forest Service is partnering with States to conserve nearly 168,000 acres of economically and ecologically significant forestlands across the nation as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda.

USDA's Forest Service is providing more than \$154 million through its [Forest Legacy Program](#) for 26 projects to conserve working forests that support rural economies in 17 states. This conservation work is made possible by more than \$84 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and nearly \$70 million from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act – the largest climate investment in history and part of the Investing in America agenda.

“Public and private forests give us clean water and air, places to connect with the outdoors, good paying jobs, physical and spiritual renewal, habitat for threatened species, and so much more,” said Deputy Secretary Torres Small. “Joining with state partners to invest in conservation, we are making a real difference in the communities that depend on these forests.”

Through the Forest Legacy Program, States work with local communities to identify private forestlands and develop proposals to conserve these lands as forests for their values as places for recreation, as wildlife habitat, and as sustainable sources of wood and other forest products. The Forest Service then selects the top proposals for funding through an entirely voluntary competitive process and provides grant funding to States. Some of this land will stay in private ownership and will be permanently protected and conserved as forests, while States will purchase other parcels to be managed as public land.

The Forest Legacy Program is also part of President Biden's [Justice40 Initiative](#), which sets the goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution. Communities around the nation depend on forests, and the effort to conserve private forestlands will benefit Tribal Nations and other disadvantaged communities. Nearly 50% of these investments will go to conserving forests near disadvantaged communities identified by the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#).

For a complete list of projects, or to learn how States can apply for fiscal year 2025 funding, visit [the program webpage](#). States can also contact their Forest Service regional office for more information.

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