

NEWS

\$2.2 MILLION IN GRANTS ANNOUNCED FOR *INNOVATIVE FINANCE FOR NATIONAL FORESTS PROGRAM*
—Eleven awards support development of finance models that seek to leverage private sector capital to support resilience of the National Forest System and surrounding lands—**U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Greenville, SC****National Forest Foundation, Missoula, MT**

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE (October 11, 2021)

Eleven new grants will support local stakeholders and project developers to connect private capital to unfunded environmental challenges in National Forests and surrounding landscapes across the United States.

These 11 awards represent the second round of funding from the *Innovative Finance for National Forests Grant Program*. This partnership is funded and administered by the USDA Forest Service National Partnership Office's Conservation Finance Program and the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (Endowment), with technical support provided by the National Forest Foundation (NFF).

"Innovative approaches to funding wildfire risk reduction and other needs on our National Forests are needed now more than ever," said Pete Madden, the Endowment's President and CEO. "We are impressed by the ingenuity of the proposed approaches from our grantee partners, and we commend the USDA Forest Service for their commitment to exploring new financial vehicles that tap into private sector resources."

"Our National Forests are one of our county's greatest assets," said Mary Mitsos, President and CEO at the NFF. "The selected IFNF grantees represent the bold and forward-looking solutions that can help us rise to the challenge of conserving and restoring these lands so that they continue benefiting all visitors and the connected communities."

"The Innovative Finance for National Forests program is advancing the Forest Service's efforts to think outside the box when it comes to financing critical work to promote watershed health and sustainable recreation infrastructure," said Jacqueline Emanuel, Director of the Forest Service National Partnership Office. "This program supports our efforts to test new ideas, demonstrate proof of concept, and refine and scale innovative approaches that leverage private capital to finance priority work."

Innovative Finance for National Forests is a five-year, competitive grant program. Additional information is available at ifnfgrants.org.

Eleven projects were selected for funding for the 2021 Innovative Finance for National Forests Grant Program:

Spurring Collective Action for Resilient Watershed Investments: A Blended Finance Strategy to Unlock Corporate, Utility, and Public Funds -- \$470,000 to World Resources Institute and Bonneville

Environmental Foundation to scale and accelerate corporate participation in conservation finance mechanisms across investment-ready projects, and to chart a new pathway for future corporate target-setting to link with conservation finance projects on National Forests and adjacent lands in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8.

Financing Innovative Partnerships for Rural Recreation Infrastructure -- \$376,811 to Quantified Ventures to continue IFNF support for piloting an innovative approach to financing recreation infrastructure improvements that provide greater access to and absorb tourism on the Inyo (California) and Mount Baker-Snoqualmie (Washington) National Forests by leveraging project revenues through permit negotiations, and securing external financing through local recreation councils and public funds.

Defueling the Fire: Piloting a Resilience Fund for the Weber River Watershed Communities -- \$295,020 to Summit County, Utah to develop a pilot Resilience Fund that pools funding commitments from local public and private entities to leverage state and federal funds for watershed health and wildfire resilience on the Unita-Wasatch-Cache National Forest and state and private lands.

Piloting Wildfire Resilience Insurance -- \$249,000 to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to build on the success of their first IFNF award, which demonstrated that ecological forestry can reduce insurance premiums and considered the extent to which premium savings could fund or finance ecological forestry. TNC and their partner, global risk advisor Willis Towers Watson, created a new insurance product, wildfire resilience insurance. They will now pilot wildfire resilience insurance by structuring and placing the product for one or more buyers.

Leveraging Private, Public, and Philanthropic Partnerships to Finance the Mount St. Helens Lodge & Education Center -- \$99,495 to The Mount St. Helens Institute to continue IFNF support for a pilot project to finance recreational and educational opportunities through upgrades to the Coldwater Visitor Center at Gifford Pinchot National Forest and Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument in Washington.

Linking Public and Forest Health: Developing a Cost Benefit Model to Reduce Wildfire Smoke Impacts with Forest Management -- \$149,973 to Blue Forest Conservation and the California Council on Science and Technology for a research and development project on the Eldorado and Stanislaus National Forests to help make explicit the connection between forest management and stakeholders that pay high healthcare costs, and to motivate investment in activities that reduce wildfire risk and smoke impacts from fires on National Forests.

Central Oregon National Forest Dedicated Recreation Funding -- \$150,000 to ECONorthwest for research and development to characterize the recreation benefits and beneficiaries on Oregon's Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and to propose a comprehensive, locally-managed and dedicated funding program to enhance recreation assets based on the beneficiary profile.

Driving Conservation Outcomes through Innovative Finance for Recreation Management: A Learning Laboratory in Gunnison, Colorado -- \$149,632 to Western Colorado University for research and development to explore avenues to mitigate landscape impacts and to improve recreation experiences by developing finance models that will bring vital recreation infrastructure and services to the Gunnison National Forest, achieve sustainable socio-ecological and financial outcomes, and train a new generation of land managers.

Scaling Biomass Energy Implementation in USFS Regions 5,6, and 10 -- \$115,500 to Wisewood Energy to continue IFNF support to launch Biomass Utilization Funds across the Sierra Nevada and Pacific Northwest to address the biggest barriers to the widespread adoption of community-scale biomass energy in the U.S. West: capital costs, continuity across project stages, and dependable operations.

CalForest WRX - Stimulating Investment in Forest Health and Community Well-being --\$84,986 to Humboldt County for research and development on Six Rivers National Forest to explore the feasibility of a Forest Health Fund to subsidize forest thinning and biomass removal to help reduce severe wildfire risks from overstocking of small diameter timber and biomass on public and private lands in northwestern California.

Watershed Protection Rapid Response Fund: Leveraging Private & Public Investment for Emergency Storm Damage Repairs --\$63,717 to Trout Unlimited for exploration into the feasibility of a public-private investment vehicle that will pay for prompt repairs to storm related damages to the road system in North Carolina's Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests and adjacent communities, and make strategic upgrades at vulnerable locations to prevent future damage, using existing federal government funding vehicles as the payback mechanism.

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The **U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities** (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-rich communities — usendowment.org.

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The Conservation Finance Program at the USDA Forest Service **National Partnership Office** (NPO) works to increase and unlock new sources of funding and financing to support agency priorities, with a focus on return-driven investment opportunities that engage private capital by aligning environmental, social and financial outcomes — usda.gov.