



Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation

Interdepartmental Report for Executive Order 14072 Section 2(d)(iii)



Departments of Agriculture, the Interior, and Commerce

Cover Images:

Front (clockwise): Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska/Photo by Lisa Hupp, USFWS; Muir Woods National Monument, California/Photo by NPS; Confederated Tribes of Salish Kootenai whitebark pine greenhouse/Photo by BIA; Idaho Timber/Photo by BLM; Acadia National Park, Maine/Photo by Kent Miller, NPS; Trust Lands of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation/Photo by BIA

Back (clockwise): Great Smoky Mountains along the Tennessee–North Carolina/Photo by Chris Mobley; Crater Lake National Park, Oregon/Photo by NPS; Missouri Headwaters/Photo by BLM; Gardner Mountains WSA, Wyoming/Photo by Sam Cox, BLM; Utah Forests and Woodlands/Photo by BLM

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Contents

Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation	i
Executive Summary – Overall Findings	1
List of Acronyms	5
Introduction.....	6
Challenges for Forests, Communities, and Local Economies.....	6
About the Departments.....	7
Federal Land Management.....	7
Intergovernmental Initiatives	8
Technical and Financial Assistance	9
Opportunities for Communities to Obtain Federal Support and Enable Community-Led Economic Development	10
Recommendations.....	15
Recommendations to Advance Community-Led Economic Development Across Sectors.....	15
Recommendations to Support Outdoor Recreation-Based Economic Development.....	17
Recommendations to Support the Sustainable Forest Product Sector	20
Coordination and Collaboration	25
Appendix A. Relevant Programs Providing Direct Technical and Financial Assistance to Communities Adjacent to Federally Managed Forestland.	27
References.....	38

Executive Summary – Overall Findings

In April 2022, Executive Order 14072, *Strengthening the Nation’s Forests, Communities, and Local Economies* (the executive order), directed Federal agencies to inventory mature and old-growth forests, accelerate reforestation, and provide recommendations to create and sustain forest-related jobs. This report was prepared in response to section 2(d)(iii) of the executive order that directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to:

“develop, in coordination with the Secretary of Commerce, with State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments, and with the private sector, nonprofit organizations, labor unions, and the scientific community, recommendations for community-led local and regional economic development opportunities to create and sustain jobs in the sustainable forest product sector, including innovative materials, and in outdoor recreation, while supporting healthy, sustainably managed forests in timber communities.”

This report reflects discussions within and among the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, the Interior, and Commerce regarding economic challenges faced by forest-dependent communities and potential economic development opportunities. This interdepartmental report contains recommendations to support community-led economic development, including through the sustainable forest products sector and outdoor recreation. The wide-ranging scope of these recommendations reflects the Departments’ varied missions, authorities, and direction. However, there are several overarching themes across Departments:

- **Federal agencies have significant resources that can be directed to support local and regional economic development through sustainable forest products and outdoor recreation.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act, and Great American Outdoors Act—in addition to annual appropriations—all provided funding that can be leveraged by communities and their partners to support development through the sustainable forest products industry or outdoor recreation. These efforts include support for restoration and forest management, infrastructure investments, and research and development programs.
- **While there is promise in the growth of the outdoor recreation economy¹ and stewardship economy,² researchers and practitioners inside and outside the Federal Government have identified capacity constraints as barriers to capitalizing on these opportunities.³** Capacity constraints range from a lack of management capacity (staff to understand, identify, and apply for funding or plan, implement, and report on projects), financial capacity (including cost-share and matching funds), and workforce capacity (labor supply, with sufficient housing and public services

¹ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. 2022. Outdoor recreation satellite account, U.S. and states, 2021: new statistics for 2021; 2017–2020 updated. <https://www.bea.gov/news/2022/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2021> (accessed March 28, 2023).

² Christoffersen, N.D.; Riley, R. 2021. Fostering rural prosperity through the stewardship economy. In: Investing in rural prosperity. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. <https://www.stlouisfed.org/-/media/project/frbstl/stlouisfed/files/pdfs/community-development/investing-rural/chapters/chapter14.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2023).

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2019. Rural America at a glance, 2019 edition. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/95341/eib-212.pdf?v=3949.6> (accessed March 28, 2023).

Cain, C. 2021. Developing climatic capacity in rural places. In: Investing in rural prosperity. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. <https://www.stlouisfed.org/-/media/project/frbstl/stlouisfed/files/pdfs/community-development/investing-rural/chapters/chapter33.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2023).

to attract and retain talent).⁴ Aligning funding that supports community capacity⁵ with investments in sustainable forestry and outdoor recreation could help expand equitable access to Federal resources. Removing barriers at the program level may not be sufficient. Collaboration with State and local officials, partner organizations, and community members is critical for identifying local barriers and opportunities, understanding the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and promoting buy-in.

- **Coordination across government and with partners can help communities tap into resources to pursue their economic development plans and address bottlenecks or barriers to delivering support while providing communities with tools and information to address climate-related risks and impacts.** Various agencies and departments manage tools and programs to support community-led economic development. The recommendations in this report identify opportunities to leverage these programs and, where appropriate, coordinate across agencies to help support climate-informed community-led economic development for communities dependent on the nation's forests and woodlands.

This report provides more detail on the available resources as well as opportunities and challenges that influence interactions among the three Departments and forest-dependent communities. The report identifies potential investment opportunities and authorities to inform the Federal budget development process but is not a budget document and does not imply approval of any specific action or investment. All activities and recommendations included in this report are subject to resource constraints and weighing of priorities as part of the annual budget formulation process, as well as the availability of appropriations provided by Congress. Recommendations included in this report are sorted into three sections:

⁴ Chaskin, R. 1999. Defining community capacity: a framework and implications from a comprehensive community initiative. The Chaplin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. https://www.lisc.org/media/filer_public/27/0f/270f0aa3-a66d-4f57-ad8c-f733584dca64/08102018_resource_defining_community_capacity.pdf (accessed March 28, 2023).

Lobao, L.; Kelly, P. 2021. Local governments across rural America: status, challenges and positioning for the future. In: Investing in rural prosperity. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. <https://www.stlouisfed.org/-/media/project/frbstl/stlouisfed/files/pdfs/community-development/investing-rural/chapters/chapter05.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2023).

⁵ Several programs across the government support capacity. Those related to nature-based solutions, or in this context, forms of sustainable forestry and outdoor recreation that benefit both the environment and rural communities, are summarized in the [Nature-Based Solutions Resource Guide](#). USDA Rural Development manages several: the [Rural Community Development Initiative](#) provides flexible funding for building capacity in rural communities or nonprofit organizations; [Rural Business Development Grants](#) do not have a cost share requirement and fund technical assistance for small businesses; and the [Community Facilities Technical Assistance and Training Grant](#) Program does not have a matching requirement and provides funding for rural communities to plan or improve community facilities such as schools, hospitals, or other public facilities and infrastructure that would complement regional economic development efforts. The Strategic Engagement Division of the [Rural Development Innovation Center](#) also provides guidance and technical assistance for rural communities, including cross-agency collaboration. Flexible funding sources managed by other parts of the Federal Government include the Department of Health and Human Services' [Community Services Block Grant](#), which provides services related to housing or employment that are identified as community needs, as well as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's [Community Development Block Grant](#) Program.

Overarching recommendations to advance community-led economic development across sectors

- Coordinate capacity support across Federal agencies to better align resources that address gaps or remove barriers with those that provide sector-level support in sustainable forest products or outdoor recreation.
- Connect communities with existing networks for economic development support.
- Evaluate and improve existing programs that provide support to communities based on a triggering event, such as a disaster or major employer closure.
- Explore opportunities to support housing construction to attract and retain workers in rural communities, particularly the utilization of building materials sustainably harvested through forest resilience projects (mass timber).
- Invest in developing assessments, metrics, and data applications that capture the value of stewardship.

Specific recommendations to support outdoor recreation-based economic development

- Continue to work with communities to identify and address barriers to growth through the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation and other initiatives.
- Implement provisions of the MAPLand Act and 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act to inventory assets and improve public access to Federal lands.
- Utilize available authorities to support maintenance and adaptation of recreation facilities through long-term planning that incorporates evaluations of climate risk and corresponding adaptation strategies.
- Reauthorize the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act and the Great American Outdoors Act.
- Work with partners and communities to find innovative ways to adapt public recreation facilities and sustain local recreation economies facing climate change impacts and related shifts in recreation demand and opportunities.
- Integrate climate adaptation and equity considerations into guidance and selection criteria for existing and proposed financial assistance and grant programs.
- Increase U.S. Department of Agriculture contributions to the Strengthening Recreation Economies in Gateway Communities initiative.
- Coordinate across the Federal Government to utilize available authorities, such as the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Program, to support economic development for underserved communities and resilient infrastructure.
- Leverage the Innovative Finance for National Forests Grant Program (and other existing authorities) to provide funding and technical assistance for development of local governance structures and add dedicated capacity for local efforts.
- Invest in collection and management of data on recreation, in consultation with communities and the public, to help inform agency and community understanding of current demand, emerging needs, patterns, and trends.
- Invest in research and development for outdoor recreation, such as the Economic Development Administration's program evaluation of the Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Program, and disseminate lessons learned to help the sector grow.

Specific recommendations to support the sustainable forest products sector

- Align investments in the full range of stewardship actions, particularly reintroduction of fire, hazardous fuels reduction, insect and disease control, and reforestation of areas affected by wildfire and large-scale mortality due to massive outbreaks, to help achieve ecological and production goals and support local economies.
- Convene a joint task force with Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners to identify and address workforce barriers in the forest products sector.
- Establish an updated U.S. Department of Agriculture strategy for using sustainably harvested wood as a green building material.
- Expand research and development on sustainable forest products and the socioeconomic benefits of forest restoration across Federal agencies.
- Broaden Forest Service and Rural Development financial instruments, such as green bonds, that support public and private partnerships and long-term investments in fuel reduction and forest health treatments.
- Consider options to stabilize wood supply.
- Use co-stewardship, Good Neighbor Agreements, and other relevant authorities to enhance Tribal capacity to drive and complement a sustainable forest products sector.
- Improve the forest products workforce pipeline through development of key roles such as truck drivers, equipment operators, and nursery developers.

List of Acronyms

BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
BIL	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
BLM.....	Bureau of Land Management
EDA	Economic Development Administration
FICOR.....	Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation
GDP	gross domestic product
IRA	Inflation Reduction Act of 2022
MAPLand Act.....	Modernizing Access to our Public Land Act
OSMRE.....	Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation and Enforcement
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey

Introduction

In April 2022, Executive Order 14072, *Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies* (the executive order), directed Federal agencies to inventory mature and old-growth forests, accelerate reforestation, and provide recommendations to create and sustain forest-related jobs. This report was prepared in response to section 2(d)(iii) of the executive order that directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to:

“develop, in coordination with the Secretary of Commerce, with State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments, and with the private sector, nonprofit organizations, labor unions, and the scientific community, recommendations for community-led local and regional economic development opportunities to create and sustain jobs in the sustainable forest product sector, including innovative materials, and in outdoor recreation, while supporting healthy, sustainably managed forests in timber communities.”

Challenges for Forests, Communities, and Local Economies

A range of factors influence the potential for community-led local and regional economic development efforts to take root in forest-dependent communities. Climate change-driven disturbances, impacts, and risks affect recreation opportunities and infrastructure and are changing forest ecosystems, forest products, and the industry that supports sustainable forest management. At the same time, populations of many forest-dependent communities are growing and their demographics are shifting, leading to increasing demand for and use of Federal lands, natural resources, and recreation opportunities.

While a variety of Federal programs exist to provide support to communities, they often lack capacity, resources, and authorities to engage in or facilitate collaborative planning and management, secure public and private funding, and collect and distribute funds from a range of sources. Communities also need better access to data to identify and evaluate the specific gaps that impede realization of outdoor recreation and forest product opportunities. Attracting labor to communities presents its own challenges. The composition of the local workforce for recreation, restoration, and forestry work has changed and is mismatched with the type and scale of available work in many places. In addition, high housing costs and limited availability have strained the ability of employers, including Federal land management agencies, to attract and retain talent.

These trends have impacted forest-related benefits, goods, services, and jobs in many rural areas and may amplify challenges for communities with environmental justice concerns. Underserved communities do not always have meaningful voices in the planning, financing, and development of programs. This can leave them excluded from the economic benefits of Federal programs and vulnerable to environmental justice issues, including the disproportionate impacts of climate change on clean air, clean and affordable water, food security, as well as economic and cultural ties to land through activities like hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. For example, Tribal governments hold treaty rights and ties to landscapes managed by numerous Federal agencies. Tribal governments are frequently invited to consult on decisions that affect these landscapes but are often overextended and lack the staff capacity or other resources necessary to fully engage with Federal agencies on these projects. This inequitable access to resources can impede effective collaboration and co-stewardship.

In addition to the challenges faced by communities, Federal agencies face challenges and administrative barriers in providing support for communities. Legal authorities and capacity to deliver technical and financial assistance to local communities vary by agency. Key legal authorities that have provided sizable investments in Federal lands and community assistance, such as the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund and the Great American Outdoors Act, are anticipated to expire in the coming years. In accordance with section 2(d)(iii) of the executive order, the Departments of Agriculture, the

Interior, and Commerce have conducted inventories of existing Federal programs and projects, evaluated opportunities and challenges, and made recommendations to their respective Secretaries for supporting community-led economic development.

About the Departments

The **U.S. Department of the Interior (Interior)** supports regional economic development in several ways, including managing nearly 500 million acres of Federal lands and providing financial and technical assistance. Interior bureaus and offices can also support sustainable forest products and outdoor recreation using various tools, including direct investment in projects and infrastructure on Federal lands, loans and grants for business development, and applied research. The types of support vary by bureau.

The **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)**'s Forest Service, in collaboration with other USDA agencies including Rural Development and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, oversees and supports numerous initiatives to catalyze equitable and sustainable economic development in the outdoor recreation and forest and wood products sectors at local and regional scales. These efforts involve applied research, technical assistance programs, land management strategies, and public-private partnerships. Forest Service programs and land management activities contributed 410,400 full-time, part-time, temporary, and seasonal jobs and \$44.3 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022. Forest products from national forests and grasslands support 47,200 jobs and contribute \$5.2 billion to the nation's GDP on an annual average basis.

Housed within the **U.S. Department of Commerce**, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) leads the Federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness to prepare regions in the United States for growth and success in the worldwide economy. Across the nation, EDA investments support industries and sectors that create globally competitive regional economies, including the nation's forest economies. The EDA's work in supporting forest-related and outdoor recreation economic development ranges from early capacity-building, such as providing strategic planning and technical assistance grants, to implementation grants in workforce development, entrepreneurship support, and infrastructure modernization to promote high-quality job creation and generate private investment in communities. Guided by the basic principle that sustainable economic development should be locally driven, the EDA works directly with communities and regions to help them build the capacity for economic development based on local business conditions and needs. The EDA's grants investments are designed to leverage existing regional assets to support the implementation of economic development strategies that make it easier for businesses to start, and grow, and advance new ideas and creative approaches to promoting economic prosperity in distressed communities.

The three Departments manage a wide range of programs that provide direct technical and financial assistance to communities adjacent to federally managed forestland. These programs reflect the Departments' varied missions and authorities. Appendix A lists relevant programs conducted by the Departments.

Federal Land Management

Federal lands—including those managed by Interior bureaus and the USDA's Forest Service—play important roles in local economies. These lands store significant amounts of carbon (Merrill et al. 2018) and are home to numerous fish and wildlife species, other resources, and important ecosystems.

Public access to Federal lands underpins the outdoor recreation economy for many western communities. The Departments of Agriculture and the Interior coordinate with other Federal land management agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Defense, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, on recreation policies and programs. In recent years, the Federal Government turned its attention to outdoor recreation in new ways, including investing \$750 million from the EDA to support travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation projects; the reinstated Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR); and new outdoor recreation funding through the Great American Outdoors Act, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA), John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019, and America the Beautiful Challenge grants. These investments support outdoor recreation access for people of all ages, abilities, and interests.

Forest restoration and stewardship activities also support economic activity (Headwaters Economics 2019). The Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are accelerating restoration of degraded lands and waters to build resiliency to climate and other environmental change. Key to this priority are the BIL (Pub. L. No. 117–58) and the IRA (Pub. L. No. 117–169). These laws include support for:

- Wildfire risk reduction activities (BIL, section 40803).
- Ecosystem restoration projects (BIL, section 40804) including stewardship contracts and agreements, Good Neighbor Agreements, and Tribal Forest Protection Act agreements.
- Reforestation on National Forest System lands (BIL, section 70301-70303, REPLANT Act).
- Investments in resiliency and conservation of BLM lands (IRA, sections 50221 and 50222, shared between the BLM and the National Park Service).

Intergovernmental Initiatives

Collaboration among the Departments of Agriculture, the Interior, and Commerce contributes to economic development in the outdoor recreation and forest and wood products sectors at a national scale. Current collaborative efforts include coordinated Federal support for travel, tourism, and recreation programs; ecosystem restoration; and resilience of Federal lands and reforestation. A few notable initiatives include:

- Coordination of investments and technical assistance programs that support nature-based solutions, which include some forms of sustainable forestry and outdoor recreation. Along with other agencies, they contributed to the Nature-Based Solutions Roadmap for America¹ (response to Executive Order 14072, section 4(a)), which reinforces several of the recommendations made in this report and includes additional recommendations on removing barriers for investments in nature that benefit both the environment and communities.
- The National Climate Resilience Framework² identifies the Federal Government's key values, priorities, and objectives for expanding and accelerating nationally comprehensive, locally tailored, and community-driven resilience strategies. The National Climate Resilience Framework identifies specific objectives and actions that are critical to strengthening the nation's protection against the

¹ White House Council on Environmental Quality, et al. 2022. [Opportunities to accelerate nature-based solutions: a roadmap for climate progress, thriving nature, equity, and prosperity.](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nature-Based-Solutions-Roadmap.pdf) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nature-Based-Solutions-Roadmap.pdf>.

² The White House. 2023. National Climate Resilience Framework. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/National-Climate-Resilience-Framework-FINAL.pdf>.

impacts of climate change and making communities safe, healthy, equitable, and economically strong.

- To improve public access to nature and expand outdoor recreation opportunities, the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior participate in FICOR, reestablished in July 2022,³ to coordinate actions across Federal land management agencies with State, Tribal, territorial, and local governments and agencies, communities, recreation organizations, visitor service providers, and stewardship partners. FICOR's goals include (1) promoting equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities; (2) engaging youth and providing training and career opportunities in resource management; and (3) providing comprehensive visitor information and education. Most relevant to this report, FICOR's 2023–2024 workplan calls for cross-boundary coordination on outdoor recreation management and community-based tourism.
- Agencies across the Federal Government, including the Departments of Agriculture, the Interior, and Commerce, are developing and updating new knowledge products that help communities and policymakers better understand the world and their decisions. The Fifth National Climate Assessment was released in November 2023 and provides an updated comprehensive look at climate trends and projections and their implications for communities.⁴ Chapter authors for the first-ever National Nature Assessment (NNA) were announced in March 2024.⁵ The National Nature Assessment is scheduled for completion in 2026 and will provide insights on the status and trends of nature across the United States. Federal agencies are also contributing to the Natural Capital Accounting Strategy, which will develop a system to account for the economic implications of changes in the condition of nature.⁶ All of these initiatives provide high-quality information for communities to consider as they plan for their futures.

Technical and Financial Assistance

Federal land management agencies, in addition to the U.S. Department of Commerce's EDA, provide financial and technical assistance to communities for planning and implementing projects related to forest product or outdoor recreation development. These agencies also provide job opportunities in communities through direct employment, contracts, and workforce service and training programs that constitute the American Climate Corps.⁷ The following section highlights technical and financial assistance programs that communities can use to support their economic development.

³ The Biden-Harris Administration relaunched FICOR to create more safe, affordable, and equitable outdoor recreation opportunities. A fact sheet on FICOR is available online at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/21/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-launches-effort-to-create-more-affordable-and-equitable-outdoor-recreation-opportunities/>.

⁴ U.S. Global Change Research Program. 2023. Fifth National Climate Assessment. <https://nca2023.globalchange.gov/>.

⁵ Information about the National Nature Assessment is available online at <https://www.globalchange.gov/our-work/announcements/us-global-change-research-program-announces-first-national-nature-assessment>.

⁶ Office of Science and Technology Policy, et al. 2023. National strategy to develop statistics for environmental-economic decisions: a U.S. system of natural capital accounting and associated environmental-economic statistics. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Natural-Capital-Accounting-Strategy-final.pdf>.

⁷ Specific elements of the American Climate Corps coordinated through the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior include the Forest Corps and the Indian Youth Service Corps. A fact sheet on the American Climate Corps is available online at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/09/20/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-launches-american-climate-corps-to-train-young-people-in-clean-energy-conservation-and-climate-resilience-skills-create-good-paying-jobs-and-tackle-the-climate/>.

Opportunities for Communities to Obtain Federal Support and Enable Community-Led Economic Development

The Departments of Agriculture, the Interior, and Commerce manage technical assistance programs and provide funding opportunities that can support community-led local and regional economic development.⁸ The Departments also have direction (for example, Executive Order 14091, section 6) to work with rural communities to identify and access resources to create economic opportunities. Several of these programs, described, support planning and training for communities and provide funding for improving the supply chain, workforce development, industry transition, infrastructure development, or preparing for future disruptions to the economy.

The EDA has numerous funding opportunities to support communities based on their specific needs for economic development, including:

Public Works: Empowers distressed communities to revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, and generate or retain long-term, private sector jobs and investment.

- Project example: Menominee Tribal Enterprises. This public works investment supports upgrading Menominee Tribal Enterprises' current timber and sawmill processing capacity with new equipment in the Menominee Indian Reservation. The project will include an 8,000-square foot metal building, an automated green lumber stacker with automated placement, fire protection sprinklers, and related appurtenances. Once completed, the project will bolster job creation, attract private investment, advance economic resiliency, and assist with recovery efforts from pandemic-induced losses.

Economic Adjustment Assistance: Assists State and local interests in designing and implementing strategies to adjust or bring about change to an economy through construction and nonconstruction activities.

- Project example: Mid-State Technical College. This Economic Adjustment Assistance award supports the development of Mid-State Technical College's Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering Technology, and Apprenticeship Center. The center prepares students for careers in critical industry clusters such as manufacturing and teaches timber industry-related skills that are necessary to fill in-demand jobs. The EDA's investment provides cutting-edge advanced manufacturing equipment for students.
- Project example: Town of Skowhegan. The Town of Skowhegan, Maine, is building the new Skowhegan River Park by converting an industrial downtown river corridor into a whitewater attraction. This project will provide a unique opportunity to expand visitors' ability to experience

⁸ Several programs across the Federal Government support capacity. USDA Rural Development manages: the Rural Community Development Initiative, which provides flexible funding for building capacity in rural communities and nonprofit organizations; Rural Business Development Grants do not have a cost share requirement and fund technical assistance for small businesses; and the Community Facilities Technical Assistance and Training Grant Program does not have a matching requirement and provides funding for rural communities to plan or improve community facilities such as schools, hospitals, or other public facilities and infrastructure that would complement regional economic development efforts. The Strategic Engagement Division of the Rural Development Innovation Center also provides guidance and technical assistance for rural communities, including cross-agency collaboration. Flexible funding sources managed by other parts of the Federal Government include the Department of Health and Human Services' Community Services Block Grant, which provides support services related to housing or employment that are identified as community needs, as well as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Program.

Maine's natural splendor and is expected to create 40 jobs, retain 136 jobs, and generate \$38 million in private investment.

University Centers: Enables institutions of higher education and consortia of these institutions to leverage university assets to build regional economic ecosystems that support innovation and high-growth entrepreneurship, resiliency, and inclusiveness.

- Project example: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The NCGrowth program provides a wide range of technical assistance to businesses and local governments in economically distressed communities across North Carolina. Areas of practice include agriculture and natural resources, manufacturing, outdoor industry, real estate, tourism, healthcare, business incubator development, disaster recovery, downtown development, food systems development, economic development in Black and Indigenous communities, and workforce development.

Build to Scale: Builds regional economies through scalable startups by supporting entrepreneurship and increasing access to risk capital across regional economies.

- Project Example: Oregon State University. The Tallwood Design Institute established an independent peer review program for mass timber construction that improved the pathway for innovation and entrepreneurship in cross-laminated timber, glued-laminated timber, and laminated veneer lumber—all relatively new forest products at the time.

Planning: Supports local organizations with short- and long-term planning efforts.

- Project Example: The Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council. The Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Maryland Department of Commerce, and the EDA to develop an economic adjustment strategy to counter the economic impact of numerous mill closures across the State of Maryland by supporting a variety of initiatives including improving supply chain coordination, enhancing Maryland's competitiveness in exporting forest product, and supporting entrepreneurial success in wood products.

The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs has a range of programs to support Tribal business and infrastructure investments at different financial scales and in ways that support community priorities, including:

- The **Office of Indian Economic Development** has two divisions. The Division of Capital Investment provides loan guarantees up to 90% (between \$500,000 and \$55 million) and loan insurance (up to \$250,000) for enrolled members of federally recognized Tribes, tribally owned businesses, and tribally run enterprises. The Division of Economic Development provides technical assistance, training, and funding to assist Tribes and Tribal members with starting and sustaining businesses, including those in the tourism industry. The Office of Indian Economic Development provides funding in five broad areas: the Living Languages Program, community planning, tourism, business development, and infrastructure. The office's funding supports locally led projects by entrepreneurs within communities. Loan guarantees and loan insurance are available through approved lenders, including Native Community Development Financial Institutions,⁹ which provide affordable financial products and services and build financial assets in the low-income populations they serve.

⁹ More information on Native Community Development Financial Institutions is online at <https://nativecdfi.net> and <https://www.cdfifund.gov/>.

- Federally recognized Tribes can build internal capacity to operate programs through **638 contracts** with the Federal Government that serve Tribal members and other eligible persons.¹⁰ The passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act into law granted greater autonomy to Indian Tribes through the ability to secure contractual agreements—referred to as “638 contracts”—for the operation of Federal programs that provide services to Tribes and their members.
- At the Department level, Interior has a newly established **Office of Partnerships**, which will develop guidance and best practices for Department bureaus and offices for working with external partners, including states, communities, and philanthropic organizations, to achieve their missions.

The Forest Service collaborates with other USDA agencies and Federal partners to manage programs that support a wide range of activities related to economic development, including for outdoor recreation and sustainable forest products-focused projects, including:

Partnership programs and authorities that allow the Forest Service to enter into agreements and provide technical assistance:

- The **Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Program**, through which the Forest Service partners with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Northern Border Regional Commission, and the Appalachian Regional Commission, delivers planning assistance to rural communities to leverage outdoor recreation for strategic economic development. In 2020, 10 communities created action plans with this interagency assistance. Communities developed holistic visions for using recreation opportunities to enliven their main streets and expand their local economies or to address specific challenges like sparse affordable housing and overused recreation sites. The funding has been highly leveraged with more than \$10 million in known funding secured by program participants. A second request for applications in October 2021 received nearly 300 applications; available funding permitted the selection of 25 additional communities for planning assistance. Local planning workshops and action plans for those 25 communities were completed in 2023.
- The **Strengthening Recreation Economies in Gateway Communities Initiative** is an intra-USDA collaboration among the Forest Service, Rural Development, and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture to support economic development in rural forest gateway communities by providing technical expertise and funding from existing budgets for development of recreation infrastructure and capacity. This collaboration gives the Forest Service a direct line of communication with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, which provides direct technical assistance through the National Extension Tourism network (university extension agents), and with the business services and funding and loan opportunities available through USDA Rural Development.
- **Conservation finance partnerships:** The Forest Service Conservation Finance Program applies innovative funding and financing approaches (such as debt financing, user fees, voluntary surcharges, and environmental markets) to address challenges and opportunities related to forest restoration, forest product markets, and recreation access and infrastructure. The Conservation

¹⁰ The Forest Service and the Intertribal Timber Council maintain a library of Tribal Forest Protection Act resources and templates and offer technical assistance for developing 638 contracts. See the Division of Wildland Fire Management at <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots/dwfm>.

Finance Program has invested \$5.6 million in this work as of January 2023, leveraging \$48 million in upfront financing and \$82 million in external funding.

Financial assistance programs, including:

- The **Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Program** (BIL, section 40805(b)) provides \$400 million for the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to (1) prioritize Federal lands at risk to wildfire; (2) invest in restoration on high-priority Federal lands; and (3) provide loans and guarantees to sawmills where their operations and the demand for wood may lower the cost of restoration. Supporting local sawmill capacity and other forest products infrastructure enhances the Federal Government’s ability to remove hazardous fuels at the scale needed to effectively reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and to conduct a wide range of other restoration activities that promote ecosystem integrity.
- The **Wood Innovations Grants Program** and **Community Wood Grants Program** provide financial and technical assistance to State and Tribal governments, industry, and other partners to increase manufacturing capacity for wood products, strengthen markets that support ecological restoration, and enable development of community wood energy systems and other innovative wood product manufacturing facilities.
- The **Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Program** uses authorities and appropriations from the BIL to provide financial assistance for facilities that purchase and process byproducts from land management projects on Federal and Tribal forests that are designated as high-priority areas for restoration.
- The **Innovative Finance for National Forests Grant Program** is managed by the Forest Service and the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. The program provides financial and technical assistance to non-Federal organizations to develop and implement partnership models that leverage external capital to enhance the resilience of National Forest System lands. The program has supported the incubation of a range of financial innovations tied to wood product markets, as well as recreation access and infrastructure.
- Land acquisition programs, including the **Forest Legacy Program**,¹¹ the **Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program**,¹² and the **Urban and Community Forestry Program**,¹³ support sustainable timber and recreation opportunities through land acquisitions, working forest easements, and tree planting.

Several Interior bureaus and the Forest Service received significant funding through the BIL and the IRA that is supporting forest restoration, fuels management, recreation infrastructure improvements, and other work on Federal lands that is benefiting communities and supporting related businesses. Concurrently, Federal land management has been evolving to include increased investments in forest restoration. Forest restoration typically involves activities beyond those undertaken by commercial timber operations, including noncommercial thinning, application of prescribed fire, road decommissioning, and rehabilitation of bridges and culverts. These noncommercial activities have different labor requirements

¹¹ More information on the Forest Legacy Program is available online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/forest-legacy>.

¹² More information on the Community Forest Program is available online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest>.

¹³ More information on the Urban and Community Forestry Program is available online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf>.

than commercial timber operations. Federal agencies can work with communities to develop and maintain the labor force needed to support their land management activities. The potential for stewardship to support rural economic development can generate sustained local benefits and support the types of management (thinning, prescribed fire, and stream restoration) that have been (1) funded in the BIL, including direction to maintain or restore old-growth characteristics; and (2) identified in the Forest Service's 10-Year Implementation Plan for Confronting the Wildfire Crisis¹⁴ and Interior Wildfire Risk Five-Year Monitoring, Maintenance, and Treatment Plan.¹⁵ Other workforce services and training programs, including the newly launched American Climate Corps and the Indian Youth Service Corps,¹⁶ can also help build and diversify local workforces.

¹⁴ The Forest Service Wildfire Crisis Implementation Plan is available online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Wildfire-Crisis-Implementation-Plan.pdf>.

¹⁵ The Interior Wildfire Risk Five-Year Monitoring, Maintenance, and Treatment Plan is available online at https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/bil-5-year-wildfire-risk-mmt-plan.04.2022.owf_final.pdf.

¹⁶ More information about the Indian Youth Service Corps is available online at <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1098/indian-youth-service-corps.htm>.

Recommendations

The Departments of Agriculture, the Interior, and Commerce identified several overarching recommendations to advance community-led economic development, including establishing or strengthening interagency coordination, as well as specific recommendations to support the outdoor recreation and sustainable forest products sectors.

Recommendations to Advance Community-Led Economic Development Across Sectors

Federal agencies have significant resources that can be directed to support local and regional economic development through sustainable forest products and outdoor recreation. However, capacity constraints are barriers to capitalizing on these opportunities. Aligning funding that supports community capacity with investments could expand equitable access to Federal resources. In addition, coordination across the Federal Government and with partners can help communities tap into resources to pursue their economic development plans and address bottlenecks or barriers to delivering support.

Coordinate capacity support across Federal agencies

Coordinate capacity across Federal agencies, including agencies that prepared this report and USDA's Rural Development, to better align resources that address gaps or remove barriers with those that provide sector-level support in sustainable forest products or outdoor recreation, including:

- Work through the Rural Partners Network to develop a community network that focuses on expanding models for community-led regional economic development that have potential to advance the climate-smart and nature-based principles in Executive Order 14072. Examples include:
 - Stewardship economies that address wildfire and forest restoration.
 - Outdoor recreation economies in geographies or forest types that do not support sustainable forest products.
- Elevate resources for forest communities to pursue technical assistance grants or other forms of financial assistance to plan for investments in sustainable forest products or outdoor recreation businesses and infrastructure. Examples include:
 - The EDA's networks of economic development representatives strategically placed to assist communities with project development and implementation.
 - The network of Native Community Development Financial Institutions.¹⁷
- Coordinate Federal agencies and partners at the Federal, State, Tribal, and community levels to discuss barriers to access Federal financial and technical assistance and solutions Federal staff and communities could pursue to address gaps and barriers.¹⁸
- Continue to provide financial assistance for feasibility studies, planning, and technical assistance through the EDA and other Federal agencies to support communities in identifying and addressing insufficient capacity.

¹⁷ More information about the network of Native Community Development Financial Institutions is available online at <https://nativecdfi.net/about/what-is-a-native-cdfi/>.

¹⁸ For example, the Forest Service implemented interim policy changes for partner and cooperator agreements: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/inside-fs/leadership/interim-policy-changes-partnership-and-cooperator-agreements>.

- Provide dedicated resources to identify and support potential applicants for financial and technical assistance in the recreation and sustainable forest product industries.¹⁹
- Where feasible and appropriate, implement memoranda of understanding with agencies to formalize collaboration to optimize allocation of resources to support community-led economic development.²⁰

Connect communities with networks for economic development

A variety of local networks assist communities with creating economic development strategies and preparing proposals for Federal and local funding. For example, the EDA supports a network of more than 400 economic development districts throughout the United States that assist with project development and technical assistance. In coordination with local economic development districts, communities can improve their economic development opportunities by integrating sustainable forest products and outdoor recreation into their comprehensive economic development strategies and by receiving technical assistance, including developing competitive proposals for Federal funding.

Evaluate and improve existing programs that provide support to communities after a triggering event

- **Communities impacted by disasters:** Annual disaster supplementals provided to the EDA allow communities that have been affected by a presidentially declared disaster to apply for funding under a unique eligibility criterion. These disaster supplementals can be used to help communities recover from and prepare for wildfires, flooding, and other extreme weather events that may have affected forests and green areas or supporting infrastructure.
- **Major employer closures:** Communities that have been affected by a major employer closure are encouraged to apply for EDA funding to recover from the economic shock. Examples of eligible projects could include proposals to modify processing facilities to diversify the region's economy.

Explore opportunities to support housing to attract and retain workers in rural communities

Lack of affordable housing affects recruitment and retention of employees in the forestry and recreation sectors (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2022). Increases in wildland firefighter pay have been proposed as a solution for this portion of the workforce and other tools remain available. For example, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (commonly known as the 2018 farm bill) authorizes the Forest Service to enter into leases for administrative sites subject to certain conditions and based on their market value in cash or certain types of in-kind services, including leases with local governments for housing development close to (or within) communities whose identities and economies are linked to Federal lands.

¹⁹ In addition to resources identified in footnote 8 of this report, several emerging programs and networks at the Federal, State, and local levels may serve as models or partners. The Environmental Protection Agency has a range of [grant and technical assistance programs](#) available for environmental justice communities, including a network of [technical assistance centers](#). The National Association of Counties launched the [Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities](#) program with the EDA to support and host the [Resilient Counties Initiative](#). And California's [Transformative Climate Communities Program](#) provides resources to help communities pursue their own development and investment projects to address pollution and its effects.

²⁰ One example coordinates technical assistance, funding, and partnership activities conducted by USDA's Rural Development, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and Forest Service to expand outdoor recreation in gateway communities of national forests and grasslands. The memorandum of understanding is available online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDA-Interagency-Outdoor-Recreation-Economy-Memorandum-of-Understanding.pdf>.

Invest in developing assessments, metrics, and data applications that capture the value of stewardship

Federal agencies have expertise in developing metrics and collecting data and are investing in new tools and approaches (for example, the Natural Capital Accounting Strategy and the National Nature Assessment) to enhance their understanding of the consequences of Federal actions and investments. Increasing engagement in critical assessments, as well as the amount of data collected and the accessibility of the data, could inform actions to support community-led regional economic development.

Recommendations to Support Outdoor Recreation-Based Economic Development

Recreation sustains more jobs than any other activity on National Forest System lands and is second to only energy and mineral development with respect to supporting jobs on lands managed by Interior bureaus. Associated visitor spending supports local businesses that provide outfitting and guiding, transportation, food, lodging, and other services. Recreational visitor use on National Forest System lands supported about 177,800 jobs and contributed \$15.2 billion to the nation's GDP in 2022.²¹ On lands managed by Interior bureaus, recreation supported 484,000 jobs and \$37.9 billion to GDP in FY 2021.²² Recreation visitation to National Forest System lands alone has increased greatly over the past decade, presenting increased opportunities and challenges. A changing climate and demographic shifts in many communities, as well as corresponding shifts in outdoor recreation use patterns, create uncertainty for local communities that depend on economic contributions from visitation. Better spatial data on visits to public lands, along with consistent definitions and standards for data collection and metrics across agencies, are needed to ascertain patterns and help communities understand and capitalize on trends. In addition, several recent Federal funding programs are set to expire in the coming years. The following recommendations highlight opportunities for investment, intergovernmental coordination, and partnership to address these challenges.

Work with communities to identify and address barriers to growth

Continue working through FICOR to advance development of outdoor recreation economies and promote investment in climate-resilient recreation infrastructure. Use FICOR, the BLM's Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation Strategy, and the Forest Service's Reimagine Recreation Initiative to engage communities in identifying and addressing barriers to expanding outdoor recreation economies, including infrastructure needs, gaps in data collection on visitation, lack of affordable housing, and knowledge and capacity gaps.

Implement the Modernizing Access to our Public Land (MAPLand) Act and 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act on inventorying assets and improving public access

Inventory BLM and Forest Service assets—including their condition and location—to improve public access opportunities. Invest in maintenance and upgrades and ensure they are resilient to hazards presented by climate change.

²¹ USDA Forest Service. 2024. Forest Service briefing paper: Economic Contributions from the Forest Service (Feb 7, 2024), consistent with economic contributions in USDA Forest service, Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Justification. Job, income, and GDP contributions are derived from USDA Forest Service estimates of outputs and outcomes (e.g., recreation visits and visitor expenditures) and regional economic impact models developed using IMPLAN® model [2022] data using inputs provided by the user and the IMPLAN Group LLC, IMPLAN System (data and software), Huntersville, NC.

²² U.S. Department of the Interior. 2023. U.S. Department of the Interior Economic Report – FY 2021, available at <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/fy-2021-doi-econ-report-final.pdf>.

Utilize available authorities to support maintenance and adaptation of recreational facilities

Pursue long-term planning for recreational infrastructure that incorporates evaluations of climate risk and corresponding adaptation strategies. Examples of programs that could continue to advance these efforts include the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund and the Great American Outdoors Act, which are authorized through 2025. Job corps programs, including the American Climate Corps and Indian Youth Service Corps, help strengthen and diversify the workforce, supporting recreation and the natural and cultural resources that draw people to public lands. Forest restoration authorities, such as those provided in the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003, can also be leveraged to support sustainable, inclusive access to outdoor recreation opportunities as an ancillary objective that complements a project's restoration-related purpose.

Extend or make permanent the authority in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act authorizes, through October 1, 2025, Federal agencies to collect recreation fees for recreational use of public lands and provides for most of the recreation fee revenues to be spent where they are collected to support and improve the recreational facilities used by the public.

Adapt recreational facilities to climate change impacts and related shifts in recreation demand and opportunities

Work with partners and communities to find innovative ways to adapt recreational facilities and sustain local recreation economies facing climate change impacts and related shifts in recreation demand and opportunities. For example, consider social vulnerability, environmental justice, inclusive accessibility, and climate change-informed recreation planning as a component of post-fire emergency response activities to address impacts on community vitality from damage to recreation assets and scenic resource values. Through the EDA's FY 2023 disaster supplemental funding, new language introduced in the notice of funding opportunity clarifies that the EDA expects every project it funds to be resilient to future disruptions, including the impacts of climate change, to the greatest extent possible. Projects funded through this program are frequently driven by the need to update and adapt infrastructure to withstand future disasters.

Integrate climate adaptation and equity considerations into guidance and selection criteria for financial assistance and grant programs

Proposals for competitive funding should examine climate risks and include adaptations to account for current and future impacts of climate change to the greatest extent possible. Investment decisions should prioritize communities that take climate-informed action to ensure local recreation economies are sustainable. All proposals should, to the extent practicable, discuss their impacts on underserved communities, consider how to ensure access for people with disabilities, and incorporate these populations into the development of their proposals. Agencies whose primary mission is not directly related to conservation could implement these criteria into their investment priorities and selection process.

Increase USDA contributions to the Strengthening Recreation Economies in Gateway Communities Initiative

Align the full resources of USDA—including those of the Forest Service, Rural Development,²³ and National Institute of Food and Agriculture—to drive implementation of the Strengthening Recreation Economies in Gateway Communities Initiative.

Utilize available authorities to support economic development for underserved communities and resilient infrastructure

Enhance the Forest Service’s ability to stimulate economic development in underserved communities and to make recreation infrastructure more resilient to the impacts of climate change, through nature-based solutions using available authorities. Examples of programs that could advance these efforts include:

- Forest Service authority for financial and technical assistance to State and Tribal forestry, parks, and recreation agencies and other partners (such as local governments) to support forest-dependent communities and advance local climate-resilient recreation economies.
- Technical and financial assistance programs that support underserved communities’ development of inclusive and accessible outdoor recreation-based economic opportunities and infrastructure improvements, such as the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Program, which encourages economic diversification through recreation and tourism.
- Coordinate across and within agencies to provide direct assistance grants, which support forest gateway communities as they adapt to a changing climate, cultivate public land stewards, and establish innovative partnership models to build sustainable funding streams and inclusive, accessible, climate-resilient recreation management approaches.
- Collaborate and coordinate across agencies and branches to use existing authorities to establish a pilot program within the Forest Service that allows private entities to make capital improvements to federally owned campgrounds, resorts, and cabins.

Leverage the Innovative Finance for National Forests Grant Program and other existing authorities

Provide funding and technical assistance for the development of local governance structures, such as joint powers authorities, councils of governments, and multicounty recreation councils, to promote recreation projects. These governmental or quasi-governmental entities have authority to apply for grants and loans, aggregate and deploy funding, and negotiate and execute contracts and agreements. These entities also can add capacity and facilitate planning, decision-making, and management across multiple land ownerships and with a range of stakeholders.

Modernize the permitting system for commercial recreation opportunities on Federal lands

Modernize and improve the permitting system to facilitate applicants access to obtain permits for commercial recreation opportunities on Federal lands. For example, the Forest Service is exploring the development of a web-based application system that would increase access and improve the application process for these permits.

²³ These efforts could include inconsistency between Rural Development directives prohibiting recreation investments and farm bill language encouraging coordination between the Forest Service and Rural Development on outdoor recreation investments.

Invest in data on recreation trends, in consultation with communities and the public

Help communities understand opportunities to support or promote outdoor recreation to enable locally led plans. Data collection on visitor use and trends are valuable, and public input can help determine which data are most useful. As Interior expands access to digital passes, it will become increasingly important for data systems to inform agency and community understanding of visitation trends.

Invest in research and development for outdoor recreation

With shifting economies, unstable supply chains, and challenges exacerbated by climate change, research and development are key to the ability of outdoor recreation industries to continue to thrive economically. The EDA's Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Program made a one-time investment of \$750 million in American Rescue Plan Funding to support communities across the United States whose recreation economies were significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. With 185 awards in every State and territory, EDA investments are rebuilding the travel and tourism sector and creating a more equitable, competitive, and resilient industry. A first-of-its-kind investment, the EDA's Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Program may prove pivotal in developing and strengthening the outdoor recreation sector in local communities. The EDA is evaluating the impact of this program and is anticipating results in 2025.

Recommendations to Support the Sustainable Forest Product Sector

The forest products industry has been changing steadily over the past three decades, as changes in the economy have contributed to numerous sawmill closures across the United States. At the same time, commitments to ensuring forests are climate-adapted and fire-resilient have created new opportunities for stewardship. Funding through the BIL and IRA reflects that emphasis and highlights opportunities to advance climate-informed forest management. Restoration practices and wood product innovations can result in new, equitable, and expanded opportunities for sustainable forest products that can provide for renewed economic development and improved climate adaptation. The following recommendations reflect this dynamic and outline steps agencies can take to support local and regional economic development for the sustainable forest products sector.

Align investments in the full range of stewardship actions

Several activities complement the harvest and removal of biomass for sustainable forest products to support stewardship of forests generally. Other aspects of restoration, including the reintroduction of fire and the reforestation of areas affected by severe wildfires, help achieve ecological and economic goals and can help support workforce capacity. Some options to support these activities include:

- Establish a structure for coordination between the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior to support seed supply and nursery capacity for climate-informed reforestation through efficient procurement, better data on regional seed supply needs, and support for workforce development. These efforts could include collaboration with the Intertribal Nursery Council to promote and expand Tribal nurseries, as there are estimated to be more than 500,000 acres of Tribal land that could be reforested (U.S. Departments of the Interior and Agriculture 2023). Communities that are developing or strengthening their regional seed supply or workforce can apply for funding from the EDA to invest in the workforce pipeline. These initiatives should promote native plant supplies, thereby increasing the adaptation potential of reforested areas and enhancing recreation opportunities.
- Implement the Department of the Interior's Wildfire Risk Five-Year Monitoring, Maintenance, and Treatment Plan (April 2022) and the Forest Service's 10-year Implementation Plan for the Confronting the Wildfire Crisis, including developing strategic partnerships to target investments in restoration and resilience for optimal impact.

Work with Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners to address policy and workforce barriers

Convene a joint task force of the Forest Service, Department of the Interior, and other interested Federal agencies to develop and implement programs that support needed skillsets including sustainable timber harvest and trucking capacity, native plant nursery and seed supply development, and other skills needed to facilitate Federal forest management objectives. Engage core partners, including the American Loggers Council, Intertribal Timber Council, Forest Resources Association, Society of American Foresters, National Association of State Foresters, Federal Timber Purchasers Committee, and Federal Forest Resource Coalition, to support and maintain these skills across the United States. Recommendations and program delivery include:

- New training and certification programs to address labor shortages, speed onboarding of new employees, and create more high-quality timber harvest, trucking, and nursery sector jobs that incorporate Department of Commerce workforce development principles.²⁴
- A national tiered logger training and development program to prepare graduates to start their own business or purchase an existing operation that generates additional high-paying jobs.
- Incentives for logging apprenticeship programs to develop and certify operators through their employers in places that do not offer formal vocational training programs. For example, establish direct reimbursement for logging businesses that establish formal apprenticeship programs and demonstrate that they have developed skilled workers through on-the-job training.
- Creation of investment pools for logging equipment to improve efficiency, reduce processing costs, strengthen business economics, and support sustainable growth in this sector.
- Grants and financial incentives for equipment manufacturers to participate directly in technical training related to the use, operation, and maintenance of modern logging equipment and new logging systems, including winch-assisted systems for steep slopes.
- Collaboration with the Forest Service’s Job Corps Program to identify and support workforce development opportunities in conservation for underserved youth, while supporting their communities.
- Investments that support research and development for new or alternative sustainable wood products such as cross-laminated timber, biofuels, and engineered wood products.

Update USDA’s strategy for using wood as a green building material

To accelerate net-zero climate goals and reinvigorate an initiative Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack first launched in 2011, update the strategy for using wood as a green building material.

- Qualify and document sustainability of Federal forest management to support construction certification programs including the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Rating System.
- Support a joint Forest Service and Rural Development Rural Housing Service team to identify potential projects to accelerate development of affordable workforce housing with an emphasis on the use of mass timber.

²⁴ Information about the Department of Commerce’s Workforce Development Strategy is available online here: [Workforce Development | U.S. Department of Commerce](#).

- Engage States and counties to identify new attainable housing opportunity zones and provide incentives to developers to use factory-built wood housing, with an emphasis on sustainable mass timber or prefabrication.
- Prioritize use of hybrid, mass timber and light-frame construction for all new USDA buildings to establish a model for other government agencies. Emphasize wood products sustainably produced with material from Federal lands to support sustainable forest management and wildfire risk reduction.
- Strengthen the USDA BioPreferred Program to support expanded domestic production of sustainable wood products across all categories, such as lumber, engineered wood products, cross-laminated timber, and biochar.
- Expand investment in research initiatives to support innovation and development of new sustainable wood products and renewable wood energy.
- Encourage the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to explore mass timber’s potential as a lower embodied greenhouse gas alternative to steel and concrete for use in Federal building construction and renovation projects. Considerations should include forest management practices and opportunities for design for disassembly or reuse.
- Collaborate with the U.S. Department of Energy and other partners to evaluate inclusion of sustainably harvested wood as a renewable energy source for replacing fossil fuel sources in both the residential and commercial International Building Code.

Expand interdepartmental research, development, and other coordination supporting forest product-sector expansion

Initiate a cross-departmental effort to generate recommendations that support the national forests and other forested lands through research and development for innovative, sustainable wood products, expansion of workforce capacity, industry investment, market expansion, and policy reforms.

- Identify additional investment pools from Rural Development, non-USDA agencies, and the private sector to expand investment in new markets, sustainable wood products, and domestic sustainable wood energy manufacturing facilities.
- Collaborate with the U.S. Department of Energy to complete an accurate, comprehensive financial assessment of the renewable wood energy sector and advanced bioenergy technologies to identify barriers and recommend solutions. This could include pyrolysis, gasification, and carbon capture and storage technologies. Compare like assessments conducted for fossil energy and other renewable sectors that include a complete carbon lifecycle assessment of raw material extraction and associated impacts to produce, distribute, and maintain the renewable energy source.
- Collaborate with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy to evaluate contemporary, peer-reviewed lifecycle analyses related to woody biomass-based biofuels and other related products.
- Establish an intergovernmental working group to emphasize research, development, technological innovation, and investment in sustainably produced biochar, that can be made from woody biomass and used as a charcoal soil amendment in forestry, agriculture, and horticulture, or for numerous applications in other sectors. Participating agencies could include the Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Development, Farm Service Agency, Foreign Agricultural Service, Agriculture Research Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA Office of the Chief Scientist, Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy, and others.

- Engage the U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Department of the Treasury to identify opportunities to promote and support combined heat and power, especially in rural markets.
- Expand investments in development and demonstration of carbon accounting methodologies, helping to prioritize the integrity of carbon markets, promoting project structures that stimulate local economic development while ensuring these initiatives account for additionality, as well as risks such as drought, wildfire, pest outbreaks, and other threats to durability. For example, conduct initial demonstrations of leveraging partnerships in high-priority carbon stewardship projects on National Forest System lands.

Broaden Forest Service and Rural Development financial instruments and related authorities such as green bonds

Support public and private partnerships and long-term investments in fuel reduction and forest health treatments, including long-term maintenance treatments. Develop financial incentives to expand the sustainable wood products industry and create new investment in areas of critical need. Establish new kinds of agreements among Federal agencies or with non-Federal land managers to attract investment in restoration work at the landscape scale. Examples could include:

- Coordinate across agencies, including the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce, to increase forest management and wood product industry supply chain investments that address critical climate and economic needs.
- Coordinate across agencies, including the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce, to evaluate dedicated zero-to-low interest loans for the needed wood products and wood processing infrastructure.
- Leverage purchasing authorities and funding to convert Forest Service facilities in rural areas to sustainably sourced wood heat or distributed-scale combined heat and power where appropriate.
- Expand the Innovative Finance for National Forests Grant Program to accelerate incubation of new financial instruments that support long-term investments in fuel reduction and forest health treatments.
- Pursue opportunities to sustainably transport hazardous fuels to facilities that can convert them to higher-value end uses, such as using data from the Forest Service timber transport pilot program,²⁵ which is authorized under a 20-year Forest Service stewardship partnership agreement with the National Wild Turkey Federation, to inform broader-scale implementation.
- Expand Rural Development's Community Facilities Program to include direct loans, loan guarantees, and grants for construction and implementation of district energy systems in addition to water and sewerage systems, which are currently eligible. These systems would reduce energy demand from the grid and provide markets for low-value biomass material to replace fossil fuels.
- Continue implementation of a pilot program for conservation finance agreements within the Forest Service to provide incentives for external investment in large-scale restoration projects, with the goal of helping guarantee certainty of raw material from national forests.

25 More information about the timber transport pilot project is at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r2/news-events/?cid=FSEPRD1092626>.

Consider options to stabilize wood and biomass supply

The wood products industry is sensitive to fluctuations in supply, and inconsistent availability of wood fiber from Federal lands affects investment. There are near-term and medium-term opportunities to address this issue on Federal lands.

- In the near term, use funding from the BIL to support restoration of high-priority Federal lands at risk of wildfire, including through support for sawmills that can lower the cost of restoration through the commercial use of wood harvested during restoration.
- As the inventory is completed and agencies develop policies to institutionalize climate-smart management and conservation strategies (per section 2(c)(iii) of the executive order and recommendations in the report responsive to section 4(a) of the executive order), the agencies should consider development of collaborative tools that enable restoration appropriate to forest type and that conserve mature and old-growth forest characteristics.²⁶

Use co-stewardship, Good Neighbor Agreements, and other relevant authorities to enhance Tribal capacity to drive and complement a sustainable forest products sector

Encourage use of co-stewardship, Good Neighbor Agreements, 638 contracts, and other relevant authorities supporting Tribes that operate programs serving Tribal members and identify opportunities for expanding their use. For example, the Department of the Interior’s Restoration Program has used 638 grants to support Tribes participating in assessing and restoring impaired natural resources. Promote and support use of 638 contracts by developing a library of resources and templates similar to those in the Forest Service and Intertribal Timber Council library for the Tribal Forest Protection Act agreements and offering technical assistance for developing the contracts.²⁷

Improve the workforce pipeline

One of the biggest challenges in the forest products industry is the workforce pipeline. Workforce development for key roles such as truck drivers, equipment operators, fellers, and nursery developers must be addressed to improve the supply of high-quality candidates in these sectors. Communities seeking to expand their workforce in these areas are encouraged to apply for support through the EDA’s Economic Adjustment Assistance and Disaster Supplemental programs where relevant and eligible. Long-term coordination and commitment of job placements from employers are key to a successful project under these programs.

²⁶ These tools could include enabling partnerships or implementing authorities available to the Forest Service under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003.

²⁷ See the Intertribal Timber Council and USDA Forest Service joint statement on the “638 authority” available online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/638-FS-ITC-Joint-Statement-SEP2020.pdf>.

Coordination and Collaboration

The Departments of Agriculture, the Interior, and Commerce routinely engage with Tribal governments and external stakeholders in the recreation and wood products sectors, including land managers and public agencies at all levels of government, nonprofit groups, industry, universities, and communities. In addition, government-to-government consultation and collaboration with Tribes and inter-Tribal organizations have supported and improved several programs highlighted in this report.

Recommendations outlined in this report were partially informed by prior and ongoing consultation and engagement sessions supporting similar or related initiatives, including:

- **Forest Service Wildfire Crisis Strategy Roundtables (2022):** Virtual roundtable events²⁸ were convened in each of the nine Forest Service regions and nationally to engage employees and partners. A Tribal roundtable was also hosted by the [Intertribal Timber Council](#).
- **Tribal Consultation (2022–2023):** The Forest Service consulted with federally recognized Tribes on a national platform and at regional and administrative unit levels when requested, to inform implementation of the BIL and IRA.
- **Industry Roundtables on Biomass Utilization and Wastewood Disposal (2023):** Forest Service Research and Development and the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities conducted roundtables in each Forest Service region and nationally with the Intertribal Timber Council to address barriers to biomass utilization, markets, and wood waste disposal, as well as related opportunities for community economic development.
- **Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (2022):** The Forest Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Northern Border Regional Commission, and the Appalachian Regional Commission hosted a learning event with past and present participants in the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Program. Discussion focused on outdoor recreation infrastructure development, downtown revitalization, and identification of common obstacles.
- **Forest Service Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (2023):** In an advance notice of proposed rulemaking, the Forest Service requested public comment on how the agency should adapt current policies to conserve and manage the national forests and grasslands for climate resilience, including how the Forest Service can foster social and economic climate resilience.
- **BLM Conservation and Landscape Health Rule (2023):** The BLM published the proposed Conservation and Landscape Health Rule in the Federal Register on April 3, 2023, and held three in-person and two virtual public meetings during the comment period to provide information and answer questions about the proposed rule. The BLM received more than 216,000 comments on the proposed rule.
- **The BLM’s Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation (2023):** The BLM updated its recreation strategy to better invest in recreation that equitably meets public demand while protecting resources.

The Departments of Agriculture, the Interior, and Commerce also previewed the interdepartmental recommendations in this report at a public listening session in October 2023. Comments raised during that engagement, as well as written comments the Forest Service received in response to the 2023 advance notice of proposed rulemaking for climate resilience, included the following feedback:

²⁸ More information about the roundtables is available online at <https://www.nationalforests.org/collaboration-resources/wildfire-crisis-strategy-roundtables>.

- Federal agencies and others should work together on policy planning and implementation to bridge natural resource management and traditional economic development at community and national levels.
- Tribal and non-Tribal gateway communities are challenged by rising costs of living and a lack of affordable workforce housing in rural communities.
- Indigenous stewardship and Indigenous perspectives warrant greater consideration and funding, particularly for Tribal conservation and co-stewardship priorities related to research and monitoring.
- Sustainable forestry and restoration concepts should be better defined and explained and should account for the drivers and impacts of climate change.
- Developing local and regional sustainable economies for wood products and recreation is consistent with Federal objectives for improving forest resilience by managing, protecting, restoring, and expanding mature and old-growth forests.

Forest-based industries require longer-term certainty of supply to support urgent forest restoration priorities. The Forest Service also provided a brief preview of the recommendations in a December 2023 Tribal forum on Executive Order 14072. However, no feedback was received on this topic during the forum. The Forest Service invited Tribes to request government-to-government consultation on the executive order in 2022. To date, no such consultation has been requested.

Following publication of this report, further engagement with Tribal, governmental, and nongovernmental stakeholders will inform implementation of the recommendations. Prior to implementation, all actions that may affect Tribes or Tribal treaty rights will undergo Tribal consultation in accordance with each Department's policies.

Appendix A. Relevant Programs Providing Direct Technical and Financial Assistance to Communities Adjacent to Federally Managed Forestland.

Department	Bureau/Office	Program Name	Program Description	Program Type	Links
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Reimagine Recreation	The Forest Service's Reimagine Recreation strategic planning effort aims to re-engage, reinvest, and reinvent recreation on America's national forests and grasslands and develop a 5-year national recreation action plan that sets priorities for agency work to be implemented with local communities, States, Tribes, and other governments and nongovernmental partners.	Land management	https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/recreation/reimagine-recreation
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Igniting Research for Outdoor Recreation: Linking Science, Policy, and Action	Forest Service Research and Development is a national leader in the assessment and quantification of the economic, social, and physical benefits of outdoor recreation. This effort brought together researchers, managers, industry leaders, and other practitioners in 2018 and resulted in a national strategy for outdoor recreation and tourism research focused on public lands. Equity in access, economic benefits and challenges, and the underlying context of climate change are central to much of the proposed research agenda.	Research/Science	https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/treesearch/59715
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Climate change vulnerability assessments	The Forest Service completed assessments of socioeconomic, recreation, or infrastructure vulnerability to climate change in the Southwest Region, Sierra Nevada ecoregion, and Mark Twain National Forest. Socioeconomic or recreation-related topics are also included in numerous regional and ecoregional vulnerability assessments. Vulnerability assessments determine sensitivity and ability to adapt to climate change and provide valuable information that can be used to develop responsive management actions. Using these assessments (and through additional assessments in new areas), the Forest Service will develop new ways of communicating risk and opportunities to the recreating public and develop adaptation actions that increase recreation infrastructure resilience and accessibility, and advance equity and environmental justice.	Research/Science	https://usfs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=f09164baef5d47d3ad728deaa1a28e7b

Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation: Interdepartmental Report

Department	Bureau/Office	Program Name	Program Description	Program Type	Links
Interdepartmental		Nature-based Solutions Roadmap for America	The Departments of Agriculture, the Interior and Commerce coordinate on investments and technical assistance programs that support nature-based solutions, which include some forms of sustainable forestry and outdoor recreation. Along with other agencies, they contributed to the Nature-Based Solutions Roadmap for America (responsive to EO 14072, section 4(a)) that reinforces several of the recommendations made in this report and includes additional recommendations on removing barriers for investments in nature that benefit both the environment and communities.	Interagency	https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nature-Based-Solutions-Roadmap.pdf
U.S. Department of Agriculture	National Institute of Food and Agriculture; Forest Service; Rural Development	Strengthening Recreation Economies in Gateway Communities	The Strengthening Recreation Economies in Gateway Communities initiative is an intra-USDA collaboration between the Forest Service, Rural Development, and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. This work supports economic development in rural forest gateway communities by providing technical expertise and funding for the development of recreation infrastructure and capacity. Rural Development and Forest Service field staff engage local businesses that enhance the recreation economy, improve quality of life for locals, and serve visiting recreation enthusiasts to identify new candidates for small business loans and other services.	Technical Assistance	https://www.nifa.usda.gov/about-nifa/press-releases/usda-create-plan-expand-recreation-economies-help-people-thrive-across
Interdepartmental	Environmental Protection Agency, Forest Service	Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Program	Through the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Program, the Forest Service's State, Private, and Tribal Forestry Deputy Area partners with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Northern Border Regional Commission, and the Appalachian Regional Commission to deliver planning assistance to rural communities to leverage outdoor recreation for strategic economic development. In 2020, 10 communities created action plans with this interagency assistance. Communities developed holistic visions for how recreation opportunities could enliven their main streets and expand their local economies. Some used the opportunity to deal with specific challenges like sparse affordable housing and overused recreation sites. A second request for applications in October 2021 resulted in the selection of 25 additional communities for planning assistance. Local planning workshops are ongoing, and action plans for those 25 communities were completed in 2023.	Technical Assistance	https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities

*Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through
Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation: Interdepartmental Report*

Department	Bureau/Office	Program Name	Program Description	Program Type	Links
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Biomass Utilization Program	The Biomass Utilization Program was established to promote the highest and best uses of low value wood and generate economic opportunities to remove hazardous fuels from forested lands. Using this biomass generated from hazardous fuels and restoration treatments as a raw material can generally reduce greenhouse gas emissions when substituted for more fossil fuel-intensive energy sources or products and provides additional benefits when used as an alternative to pile burning. Biomass accounts for approximately 3.9 percent of the annual volume of woody material sold from National Forest System lands over the last 5 years.	Land management	
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Advances in wood science	Research and Development advances wood science to diversify applications for wood products and markets for woody materials. Their engineering and supply chain research focuses on improving the efficiency and sustainability of forest operations and logistics. This helps to retain domestic manufacturing and contributes to a circular economy and rural prosperity, all while enhancing carbon stewardship.	Research/Science	
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Forest Products Laboratory	The Forest Products Laboratory supports wood products research initiatives. Research programs include development of new wood products and wood and fiber composites that support current and future economic development and demonstrate how using wood can reduce dependence on greenhouse gas-intensive materials like steel, cement, plastic, and oil. Forest Products Lab scientists also provide technical support on carbon storage through wood use in buildings. This includes the development of building codes and international standards for mass timber wood structures, a growing sector of the construction industry that is driving job creation across the country.	Research/Science	https://research.fs.usda.gov/fpl
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Forest Products Program	The Forest Products Program supports land management goals and objectives across the National Forest System through timber sale contracts, stewardship contracts and agreements, and Good Neighbor Agreements. Each of these implementation methods produces raw materials for the forest products industry and supports local job opportunities while advancing silvicultural objectives such as reforestation, fuels reduction, insect and disease management, and wildlife habitat restoration. This program also assists low-income, underserved, and minority communities in obtaining inexpensive or free firewood for home heating and cooking.	Land management	

*Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through
Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation: Interdepartmental Report*

Department	Bureau/Office	Program Name	Program Description	Program Type	Links
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Special Forest Products Program	The Special Forest Products Program provides for the sustainable sale and harvest of natural resources other than traditional timber and fiber products from National Forest System lands. Examples include floral greenery, Christmas trees and boughs, mushrooms, transplants (trees, shrubs, or herbaceous plants), seed cones, medicinal plants, cuttings, herbs, nuts, berries, decorative wood, and pitch. The total value of agency forest botanical products sold in FY 2022, based on collections, was \$1.4 million. The sale of these products also provides jobs and revenue sources for local gatherers, helping to sustain livelihoods and local economies.	Land management	https://www.fs.usda.gov/forestmanagement/products/sfp/index.shtml
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service; Research, Education, and Economics; and National Institute of Food and Agriculture	Advancing Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing Innovation for Sustainable, Safe, and Secure American Bioeconomy	The USDA's Forest Service; Research, Education, and Economics; and National Institute of Food Agriculture provide technical assistance to support implementation of the Feedstock Innovation Action Area of the Sustainable Aviation Fuel Grand Challenge Roadmap. This work identifies opportunities to use low value, small diameter, or hazardous wood as a feedstock for emerging sustainable fuels. Promoting wood as a sustainable, preferred, renewable raw material can catalyze the replacement of fossil fuel-based products in some biotechnology, biomanufacturing, and energy applications in the emerging bioeconomy.	Research/Science	https://www.usda.gov/topics/biotechnology/bioeconomy
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Wood Innovations Program	The Wood Innovations Program within the Forest Service's State, Private, and Tribal Forestry organization supports market development and expanded manufacturing for wood products and wood energy. This program has a long track record of success and plays a pivotal role in supporting and revitalizing local economies and connections to sustainable forest management.	Grants/Financial Assistance	https://www.fs.usda.gov/science-technology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovation
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Wood Innovations Grants and Community Wood Grants	Wood Innovations Grants and Community Wood Grants provide financial and technical assistance to State or Tribal governments, industry, and other partners to increase manufacturing capacity for wood products, strengthen markets that support ecological restoration, and enable development of commercial facilities for woody biomass and other wood products.	Grants/Financial Assistance	https://www.fs.usda.gov/science-technology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovation

*Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through
Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation: Interdepartmental Report*

Department	Bureau/Office	Program Name	Program Description	Program Type	Links
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Program	The Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Program uses authorities and appropriations from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to provide financial assistance for facilities that purchase and process byproducts from land management projects on Federal and Tribal forests that are designated as high-priority areas for restoration.	Grants/Financial Assistance	https://www.fs.usda.gov/science-technology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovation
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Innovative Finance for National Forests	This program is managed by the Forest Service and the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. It provides financial and technical assistance to non-Federal organizations to develop and implement partnership models that leverage external capital to enhance resilience on National Forest System lands. The program has supported the incubation of a range of financial innovations tied to wood product markets, as well as recreation access and infrastructure.	Grants/Financial Assistance	https://www.usendowment.org/ifnf/
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Conservation Finance Program	The Conservation Finance Program applies innovative funding and financing approaches (such as debt financing, user fees, voluntary surcharges, and environmental markets) to address challenges and opportunities related to forest restoration, forest product markets, and recreation access and infrastructure. The Conservation Finance Program has invested \$5.6 million in this work as of January 2023, leveraging \$48 million in upfront financing and \$82 million in external funding.	Partnership	https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/partnerships/conservation-finance
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Forest Service	Equity Action Plan	The Forest Service Equity Action Plan includes cross-cutting actions such as: expanding Tribal co-stewardship and strengthening nation-to-nation relationships; expanding partnership opportunities and meaningful engagement of underserved communities; expanding Cooperative Forestry benefits to underserved communities; reducing climate and wildfire-related risks to Tribal, underserved, and socially vulnerable communities; and promoting equitable access to cultural activities, recreation, and outdoor experiences. These actions encourage delivering the mission-centered programs in a purposefully equitable manner to ensure the full suite of benefits, outcomes, and opportunities to participate are available to all, especially in rural and urban places that have been marginalized or overlooked.	Other	https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/equity-action-plan

Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation: Interdepartmental Report

Department	Bureau/Office	Program Name	Program Description	Program Type	Links
Interdepartmental		Justice40 Initiative	The Justice40 Initiative aims to deliver at least 40 percent of the overall benefits of climate, clean energy, affordable and sustainable housing, clean water, training and workforce development, and other investments to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. Intentional modifications of Justice40 covered federal programs will result in more accessible application processes and more equitable project prioritization and funding decisions related to recreation sites, urban and community forestry, and financial assistance for facilities that purchase and process restoration byproducts. These changes will promote economic development, ecological restoration, community capacity and career development, and social support in underserved communities.	Interagency	https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/
Interdepartmental	U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of the Interior, and others	Recreation.gov	The Departments of Agriculture and the Interior coordinate with other Federal partners such as the Department of Transportation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Recreation.gov, a website with tools for trip planning and mapping that allows visitors to make reservations at more than 3,700 Federal sites.	Interagency	
Interdepartmental	U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of the Interior, Economic Development Administration, and others	Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation	To improve public access to nature and expand outdoor recreation opportunities, the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior participate in the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR), reestablished in July 2022 to coordinate actions across Federal land and water management agencies with State, Tribal, territorial, and local governments and agencies, communities, recreation organizations, visitor service providers, and stewardship partners. FICOR's goals include (1) promoting equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities, (2) engaging youth and providing training and career opportunities in resource management, and (3) providing comprehensive visitor information and education. Most relevant for this report, FICOR's 2023–2024 workplan calls for cross-boundary coordination on outdoor recreation management and community-based tourism.	Interagency	

*Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through
Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation: Interdepartmental Report*

Department	Bureau/Office	Program Name	Program Description	Program Type	Links
Interdepartmental	White House	National Climate Resilience Framework	National Climate Resilience Framework identifies the Federal Government's key values, priorities, and objectives to help expand and accelerate nationally comprehensive, locally-tailored, and community-driven resilience strategies. It identifies specific objectives and actions that are critical to strengthening the nation's protections against the impacts of climate change and make communities safe, healthy, equitable, and economically strong.	Interagency	https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/National-Climate-Resilience-Framework-FINAL.pdf
Interdepartmental	U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of the Interior, Economic Development Administration	Natural Capital Accounting Strategy	The Natural Capital Accounting Strategy specifically ties areas that create ecosystem services to the beneficiaries. For example, forests sequester carbon and provide drinking water to downstream communities. As work progresses, natural capital accounting will help demonstrate the return on investment from stewardship activities and account for benefits that underpin the rural-urban relationship, which could facilitate further investment in stewardship.		https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Natural-Capital-Accounting-Strategy-final.pdf
U.S. Department of Commerce	Economic Development Administration	Public Works Program	This program empowers distressed communities to revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, and generate or retain long-term, private-sector jobs and investment.	Grants/Financial Assistance	https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/public-works
Department of Commerce	Economic Development Administration	Economic Adjustment Assistance	Assists State and local entities with a wide range of technical, planning, and public works and infrastructure assistance in regions experiencing adverse economic changes that may occur suddenly over time.	Grants/Financial Assistance	https://www.eda.gov/economic-adjustment-assistance
Department of Commerce	Economic Development Administration	University Centers	This program enables institutions of higher education and consortia of these institutions to leverage university assets to build regional economic ecosystems that support innovation and high-growth entrepreneurship, resiliency, and inclusiveness.	Technical Assistance	https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/university-centers
Department of Commerce	Economic Development Administration	Build to Scale	This program builds regional economies through scalable startups by supporting entrepreneurship and increasing access to risk capital across regional economies.	Grants/Financial Assistance	https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/build-to-scale

*Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through
Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation: Interdepartmental Report*

Department	Bureau/Office	Program Name	Program Description	Program Type	Links
Department of Commerce	Economic Development Administration	Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation	The EDA's Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation program invested \$750 million in American Rescue Plan funding to support communities across the country whose travel, tourism, and recreation sectors were hard hit by damage from the COVID-19 pandemic. With funding going to every State and territory across 185 awards, EDA investments are rebuilding the travel and tourism sector and creating a more equitable, competitive, and resilient industry.		
Department of Commerce	Economic Development Administration	Planning	This program supports local organizations (for example, Economic Development Districts, Indian Tribes, and other eligible areas) with short- and long-term planning efforts.	Technical Assistance	https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/planning
Department of the Interior	Bureau of Land Management	Recreation and Visitor Services Program	BLM-managed lands provide a range of recreation opportunities. In FY 2021, BLM-managed lands received more than 80 million recreation visits, which contributed an estimated \$11.4 billion in economic output and supported 76,000 jobs (BLM 2022). The bureau reported a deferred maintenance backlog of \$4.4 billion in FY 2021 and received 5 percent of the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (\$95 million annually in FYs 2021–2025) through the Great American Outdoors Act. The BLM also benefits from the full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and its project list includes acquisitions intended to support public access to rivers and trails.	Land management	https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation
Department of the Interior	Bureau of Land Management	Timber	Forests on BLM-managed lands support timber and associated industries, including through stewardship contracts for collaborative projects with local communities, to improve, maintain, and restore forest health, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat and to reduce wildfire risk. In 2020, the BLM offered 282 million board feet of timber (under timber sale, Good Neighbor Agreements, and stewardship contracts), which contributed an estimated \$1.0 billion in economic output and supported 5,000 jobs.	Land management	https://www.blm.gov/programs/natural-resources/forests-and-woodlands/timber-sales

*Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through
Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation: Interdepartmental Report*

Department	Bureau/Office	Program Name	Program Description	Program Type	Links
			The BLM works with an independent, nonprofit foundation to encourage partnerships with communities that neighbor BLM-managed lands. The Foundation for America's Public Lands, which was chartered by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017, holds the following purposes: (1) to encourage, accept, and administer private gifts of money and real and personal property for the benefit of, or in connection with the activities and services of, the BLM; (2) to carry out activities that advance the purposes for which public land is administered; (3) to carry out and encourage educational, technical, scientific, and other assistance or activities that support the mission of the BLM; and (4) to assist the BLM with challenges that could be better addressed with the support of a foundation, including reclamation and conservation activities, activities relating to wild free-roaming horses and burros, and the stewardship of cultural and archaeological treasures on public land.		
Department of the Interior	Bureau of Land Management	Foundation for America's Public Lands	The National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service have similar affiliated foundations.	Partnership	https://americaslands.org/
Department of the Interior	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Timber program	The Division of Forestry provides management and protection of trust forest resources for American Indians and Alaska Natives through recognition and support of their resource management goals. This includes forest inventory services, forest planning, and support for timber sales. The division manages reforestation programs, including greenhouses and nurseries and precommercial thinning projects, and can provide funding for investments like pelletizers and equipment for small mills. They also supported the BLM's Tribal Biomass Demonstration Projects.	Technical Assistance	https://www.bia.gov/service/timber-team

*Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through
Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation: Interdepartmental Report*

Department	Bureau/Office	Program Name	Program Description	Program Type	Links
Department of the Interior	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Office of Indian Economic Development	The Office of Indian Economic Development has two divisions. The Division of Capital Investment provides up to 90% loan guarantees and loan insurance for enrolled members of federally recognized Tribes, tribally owned businesses, and tribally run enterprises. The Division of Economic Development provides technical assistance, training, and funding to assist Tribes and Tribal members with starting and sustaining businesses to include those within the tourism industry. The office provides funding in five broad areas: the Living Languages program, community planning, tourism, business development, and infrastructure.	Grants/Financial Assistance	https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/ied
Department of the Interior	Office of Wildland Fire	Office of Wildland Fire	The Office of Wildland Fire released a 5-year wildfire roadmap in April 2022 to coordinate efforts to address wildfire risk. Activities under the plan include forest restoration and monitoring the effectiveness of treatments; coordination of preparedness and response activities with other Federal agencies, States, and Tribes; and planning and workforce investments to expand Interior resources—which will be funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in line with the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.		https://www.doi.gov/wildlandfire
Department of the Interior	Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement		The Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) contributes to the development of coalfield communities and the well-being of the people who live there by working with States and Tribes to ensure coal mines are reclaimed in an environmentally sound manner. As directed in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, OSMRE investigated the feasibility of revegetating reclaimed mine sites on a programmatic scale and determined that an effective nationwide program could be developed and implemented, using a funding distribution mechanism similar to those developed for the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization program and the Watershed Cooperative Agreement Program to distribute funds to States, Tribes, nongovernmental organizations, and other qualifying entities. The office's Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative and Green Forests Work provide additional models for cooperation with entities working to enhance vegetation on reclaimed mine sites and provide employment opportunities for equipment operators (often displaced miners), seed collectors, nursery workers, professional tree planters, and the service sector, as well as ecosystem service benefits to communities.	Grants/Financial Assistance	https://www.osmre.gov/

*Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through
Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation: Interdepartmental Report*

Department	Bureau/Office	Program Name	Program Description	Program Type	Links
Department of the Interior	U.S. Geological Survey		The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) leads research efforts that help understand and quantify the economic impact of restoration activities (for example, business activity and jobs created). USGS and Interior economists developed a cost-collection tool for Interior's restoration projects along with a range of related projects.	Research/Science	https://www.usgs.gov/
U.S. Departments of the Interior and Agriculture	Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service	Reforestation Goals and Assessments and a Climate-Informed Plan to Increase Federal Seed and Nursery Capacity	This report sets agency-specific reforestation targets and defines opportunities to work in collaboration with Tribes, States, and private landowners to accelerate the pace and scale of tree establishment across management jurisdictions. It also provides cross-sector recommendations to provide financial assistance and enable public-private partnerships aimed at ensuring adequate seed and cone supplies and nursery infrastructure to support reforestation efforts across the country. These investments support developing workforce capabilities, jobs, and other economic opportunities related to seed collection, nurseries, and forestry consulting.	Interagency	https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/joint-reforestation-report.pdf

References

- Chaskin, R. 1999. Defining community capacity: a framework and implications from a comprehensive community initiative. The Chaplin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. (accessed March 28, 2023).
- Christoffersen, N.D.; Riley, R. 2021. Fostering rural prosperity through the stewardship economy. In: Investing in rural prosperity. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. (accessed March 28, 2023).
- Executive Order 14091: Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. Federal Register Vol. No. 88, February 22, 2023, pages 10826–10833. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/02/22/2023-03779/further-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal>.
- Headwaters Economics. 2019. Recreation counties attract new residents and higher incomes. <https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/recreation-counties-attract/> (accessed March 28, 2023).
- Merrill, M.D.; Sleeter, B.M.; Freeman, P.A.; Liu, J.; Warwick, P.D.; Reed, B.C. 2018. Federal lands greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration in the United States: estimates for 2005–14. U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2018–5131. 31 p. <https://doi.org/10.3133/sir20185131>.
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. 2022. Outdoor recreation and satellite account, U.S. and states, 2021: new statistics for 2021; 2017–2020 updated. (accessed March 28, 2023).
- U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2019. Rural America at a glance, 2019 edition. (accessed March 28, 2023).
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. 2022. Economic contributions from BLM-managed lands. (accessed February 20, 2023).
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. 2022. Wildland fire: barriers to recruitment and retention of federal wildland firefighters. GAO-23-105517. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105517>

