

COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST AND PUBLIC LANDS RESTORATION ACT

SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WHY SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST AND PUBLIC LANDS RESTORATION ACT?

The problems:

- Our public lands are degraded, negatively impacting the wildlife they support, and the ecosystem services they provide.
- The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management do not have a clear, consistent program of work planned to address the full range of restoration needs, such as hazardous fuels reduction, watershed restoration, and the eradication of invasive species.
- The quick collapse of the timber industry, and other global forces, have left many communities surrounded by public lands in poverty. This poverty continues to increase, and has rippled into all aspects of community life.
- The knowledge, technical expertise, and stewardship ethic of rural community workers and businesses are often underutilized, inadequately recognized, and undervalued.
- The hard infrastructure needed to sustain rural restoration-based enterprises, such as small mills and a value-added manufacturing sector, is rapidly disappearing.
- Local, small, and micro businesses have been structurally shut out of competition for public land restoration projects. Contracts are often too large for them to participate.
- Small, isolated rural communities do not have sufficient access to technical assistance, capital, cutting-edge technology or product development research.
- Monitoring of ecological, social, and economic conditions are not adequately funded, planned, or executed.

THE COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST AND PUBLIC LANDS RESTORATION ACT PROVIDES SOLUTIONS

This Act directs land management agencies in the Departments of Agriculture and Interior to conduct ecosystem restoration and maintenance activities using community-based approaches. It addresses all aspects necessary for forest restoration to succeed, from the Watershed to the Woodshop:

Restoring ecological integrity

- This bill establishes mechanisms to ensure restoration and maintenance of healthy and resilient national forests and watersheds.
- It creates, supports, and provides clear direction and contracting mechanisms for a consistent program of work that addresses the full range of restoration priorities and provides for landscape-level comprehensive restoration to occur.

Promoting Collaboration

- By directing the agencies to conduct multi-party monitoring, which involves a diversity of stakeholders, the bill provides a vehicle for meaningful participation by interested parties.

Monitoring and Accountability

- This bill develops collaborative approaches to monitoring that measure ecological, social and economic impacts.
- The bill directs monitoring information to be collected in a form that is accessible to the general public.
- It helps ensure that corrective action is taken based on the lessons learned from monitoring activities.

Technical Assistance and Enterprise Development

- This bill establishes Forest Restoration and Value Added Centers which would be administered and run by nongovernmental entities, and be dedicated to building community capacity by providing technical assistance to other nonprofits and businesses and allow for diversification of forest-based enterprises. Technical assistance includes support in implementing on-the-ground restoration as well as manufacturing wood removed as a byproduct of restoration activities.
- It increases rural businesses' ability to access public funding and private sector capital for the purposes of business development and infrastructure augmentation.

Workforce Development

- This bill increases the ability of small and micro-businesses, and disenfranchised forest workers, to access restoration and maintenance contracts. It does this by:
 - Identifying criteria for selecting contractors on a 'best value' basis, including past performance, the ability to meet desired ecological conditions, and a commitment to training and hiring qualified workers;
 - Directing the agencies to award a percentage of contracts to targeted entities, including small or micro-businesses, local workers and non-local traditional forest workers. To ensure that larger, regional and national contractors are not excluded from competing for work, this bill prevents more than 50% of work from going to the entities listed in the bill;
 - To ensure effective implementation of this program, the bill directs the Forest Service to hire more contracting personnel.

Promoting Applied Research

- This bill reflects the principles of civic science by conducting research in cooperation with communities, and distributing research findings back to the communities.
- It supports the Forest Service's Forest Products Lab to conduct applied research of benefit to rural communities and businesses.

For more information on the bill contact:

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