



FOREST-CLIMATE
WORKING GROUP

**POLICY
PLATFORM**

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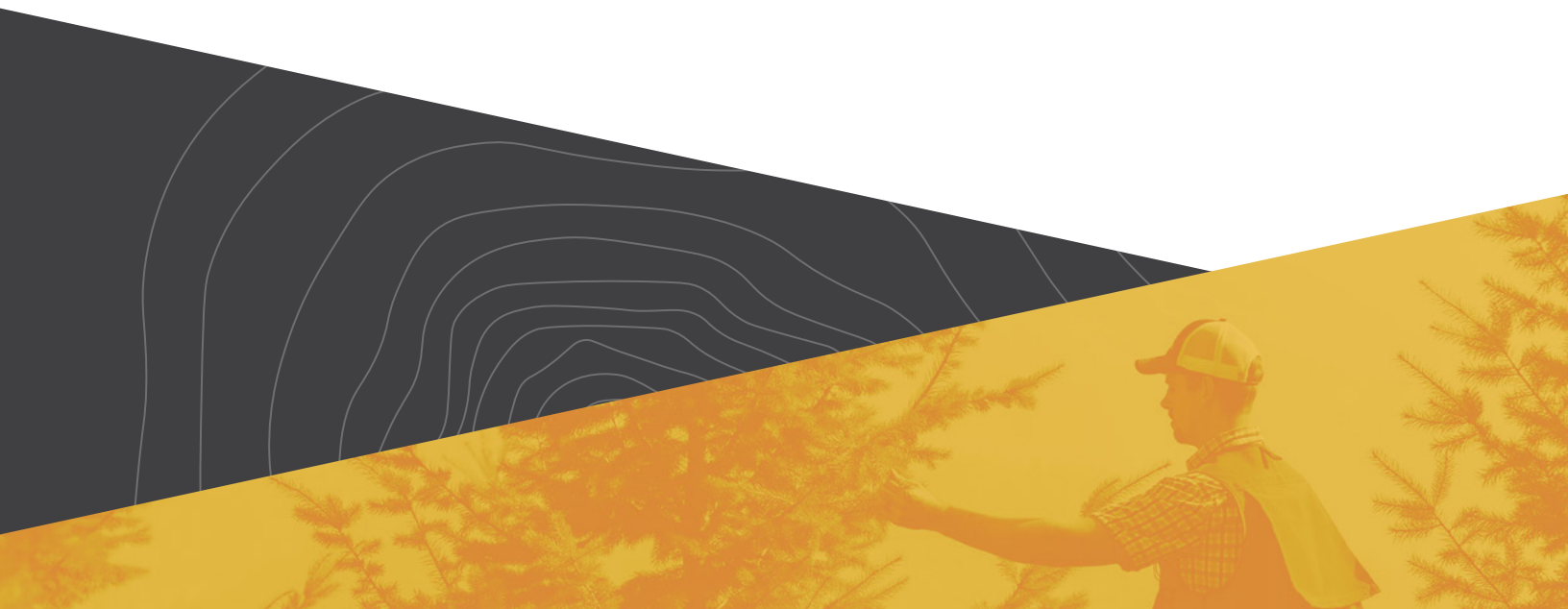
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ABOUT US



This platform outlines how policymakers can help private landowners and public land managers grow powerful climate solutions in America's forests and forest products while delivering other environmental, economic, and social benefits.

WHO WE ARE

The [Forest Climate Working Group \(FCWG\)](#) is a diverse national-scale coalition of forest stakeholder organizations. Our members represent forest landowners, forest products, conservation, wildlife, academic, government, carbon finance, and other forest sector organizations. Together, we advance forest-based climate change solutions through a consensus-driven process, grounded in climate and forest science and data that is based on research and extensive forest experience.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

FCWG members believe that U.S. forests and forest products from sustainably managed forests provide important and cost-effective climate adaptation and mitigation solutions. U.S. forests play a significant role in sequestering and storing carbon, protecting communities from extreme heat and flooding, and providing important natural resources such as water supplies and wildlife habitat.



OUR CORE BELIEFS

DID YOU KNOW:

According¹ to the 2022 EPA GHG Inventory, on an annual basis, U.S. forests and forest products sequester and store carbon equivalent to approximately 12 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

1 KEEPING FORESTS AS FORESTS IS THE FOUNDATION TO ALL FOREST-CLIMATE SOLUTIONS.

According to the USDA Forest Service, over the 50 years from 2020 to 2070, between 7.6 and 15 million acres of private forest are projected to be lost to other land uses, depending on the speed and intensity of the changing climate and the effectiveness of adaptation and mitigation policies. A growing component of public forest is also being impacted by climate change, reducing its capacity to sequester and store carbon due to climate induced drought, insects and diseases and catastrophic storms and wildfire.

2 FORESTS AND FOREST PRODUCTS CAN DO EVEN MORE TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE IF THE RIGHT SCIENCE AND FINANCIAL INCENTIVES ARE PROVIDED.

This includes ensuring that private forest owners and public land managers restore, maintain, and increase forest cover on historically forested lands and recently burned lands or lands lost in recent wildfires, and responsibly and sustainably produce and use forest products as a climate mitigation tool.

3 HELPING FORESTS ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE IS AN IMPORTANT COMPLEMENT TO ACTIONS THAT WILL SEQUESTER AND STORE MORE CARBON IN FORESTS.

Many forest resources and their public benefits could be lost to the stresses of climate change on forests and communities. These stresses include extreme weather, drought, increased spread of pests and diseases, and wildfire. Cutting edge-science is showing that U.S. forests will lose their capacity to store carbon, and will release carbon already stored, if we don't actively help forests adapt².

1. Domke, Grant M.; Walters, Brian F.; Giebink, Courtney L.; Greenfield, Eric J.; Smith, James E., Nichols, Michael C.; Knott, Jon A.; Ogle, Stephen M.; Coulston, John W.; Steller, John. 2023. Greenhouse gas emissions and removals from forest land, woodlands, urban trees, and harvested wood products in the United States, 1990-2021. Resour. Bull. WO-101. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Washington Office. 10 p. <https://doi.org/10.2737/WO-RB-101>.

2. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 2023. Future of America's Forest and Rangelands: Forest Service 2020 Resources Planning Act Assessment. Gen. Tech. Rep. WO-102. Washington, DC. 348 p. <https://doi.org/10.2737/WO-GTR-102>.

GOAL 1 **MAINTAIN AND EXPAND FOREST COVER**

More forests equate to more carbon being sequestered and stored. This is why the foundation for forest carbon mitigation is to maintain the forest cover that we have and reestablish forest cover in the appropriate places where it has been lost, for example to events like wildfire, frequent flooding, and clearing for urban and agriculture uses. To achieve this goal, we identify and advocate diverse recommendations that advance conservation of private forests, including tax policies and markets supportive of private ownership. We also provide recommendations to maintain and expand forest cover on public and private land, including in urban areas, through diverse policy catalysts for reforestation and afforestation.

GOAL 3 **ADVANCE MARKETS FOR FOREST CARBON, FOREST PRODUCTS AND SKILLED LABOR**

Robust and growing markets for high quality forest carbon and forest products produced from sustainably managed forests will provide important revenue to landowners helping to sustain and improve the health and vitality of America's forests and contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation. We support approaches that:

- Encourage private landowners to provide additional climate benefit through durable carbon sequestration and emission reductions appropriate to the site.
- Stimulate procurement and use of products from working forests that provide clear and quantifiable climate benefits.
- Foster strong economic opportunity, job growth, workforce development, and career pathways in the forest and related sectors of the economy.

GOAL 2 **IMPROVE AND INCENTIVIZE FOREST PRACTICES FOR CARBON, ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE**

U.S. forests offer cost-effective opportunities to increase carbon sequestration and storage. We can only realize this potential if we establish policies that recognize the climate benefits of forests and incentivize actions that keep forests healthy and resilient. This means that private landowners and public land managers alike need to identify and implement the right forest practices to support strong carbon sequestration and storage while also addressing forest health issues that are worsening with climate change. To achieve this goal, we identify policy mechanisms to help landowners through financial incentives and other ways to take needed actions.

GOAL 4 **EXPAND CLIMATE DATA AND APPLIED SCIENCE**

Successful forest climate mitigation and adaptation requires current and credible scientific information and tools to be delivered to the right users and decision makers. This includes baseline forest data through the [USDA Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis Program \(FIA\)](#) that characterizes forest carbon stocks and helps illuminate trends in carbon storage and annual carbon stock changes. Providing applied scientific information and tools developed through forest-climate research, such as climate-driven threat mechanisms and resource vulnerability assessments, are also valuable when delivered through effective and efficient structures like the [USDA Climate Hubs](#). To achieve this goal, we describe how policies can advance the data, science syntheses, and tools most relevant to climate efforts across America's forest sector.

OUR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations are organized into five categories to assist policy makers in evaluating the most relevant opportunities for their constituents and the nation. There are separate sections for private and public forests, recognizing that many policy recommendations which support private owners will also support public lands. The other three categories - forest products, data and applied science, and workforce – include recommendations that support private and public lands.

PRIVATE FORESTS

FCWG supports restoring, conserving, and sustainably managing private forests to improve climate resilience and mitigation, to provide a sustainable source of forest products, and contribute to public benefits such as clean air and water, biodiversity, and wildlife habitat. The programs and policy tools recommended are essential to achieve a meaningful contribution to climate mitigation from private forests.

PRIVATE FORESTS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

FOREST CONSERVATION

FCWG recommends helping landowners keep forests as forests by expanding authorities and maintaining adequate funding for forest conservation programs that enhance carbon sequestration and storage by:

- Creating a Forest Conservation Easement Program (FCEP) to keep private forests as forests through conservation easements that prevent conversion risks and enhance carbon sequestration. FCEP should serve as the successor to and expansion of the Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP) and include entity-held forest conservation easements.
- Adequately funding existing forest conservation programs (EQIP, CSP, RCPP, FSP, LSR) that help landowners plant trees and improve practices for forest carbon, adaptation, and resilience; and require federal agencies to align funding priorities to achieve these outcomes.
- Encourage greater landowner participation in Farm Bill conservation programs and the protection of private forests at scale through the continued availability of a waiver for the adjusted gross income (AGI) limits, the provision of waivers or exemptions for payment limitation statutes, or the modification of eligible land definitions.
- Maintaining the Forest Legacy Programs' current authorization, without alteration, and sustain dedicated funding levels within the Land and Water Conservation Fund for states to protect working forests.
- Increasing funding and/or incentives for private tree nurseries to expand seed collection and labelling, and seedling production to enable more tree planting, including on historically forested lands where appropriate, with seedlings matched to future, climate-influenced site conditions.

WILDFIRE

FCWG recommends improving wildfire resilience to help private landowners keep forests as forests by:

- Adequately funding private land/cross-boundary hazardous fuels work to reduce wildfire risk and improve resilience of forest carbon stocks.
- Expanding forest management insurance programs to help private forest landowners acquire and afford insurance for prescribed burning.

VOLUNTARY CARBON MARKETS

FCWG recommends strengthening the integrity of voluntary forest carbon markets to protect participants by:

- USDA and other federal bodies promoting standards for high-quality voluntary offsets from private forestland, instilling market certainty, and legitimizing scientifically rigorous registries and verification bodies serving private markets.

CARBON FINANCING

FCWG recommends increasing the supply of voluntary forest carbon credits by:

- Enabling private capital, public funding, or a combination of both to finance or create tradeable credits for forest practices that measurably increase and stabilize forest carbon sinks through carbon sequestration and storage.
- Unlocking private capital by de-risking investments for private investors through traditional loans, bond and loan guarantees, and other innovative financing instruments.

PRIVATE FORESTS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT FOR UNDERSERVED FOREST LANDOWNERS

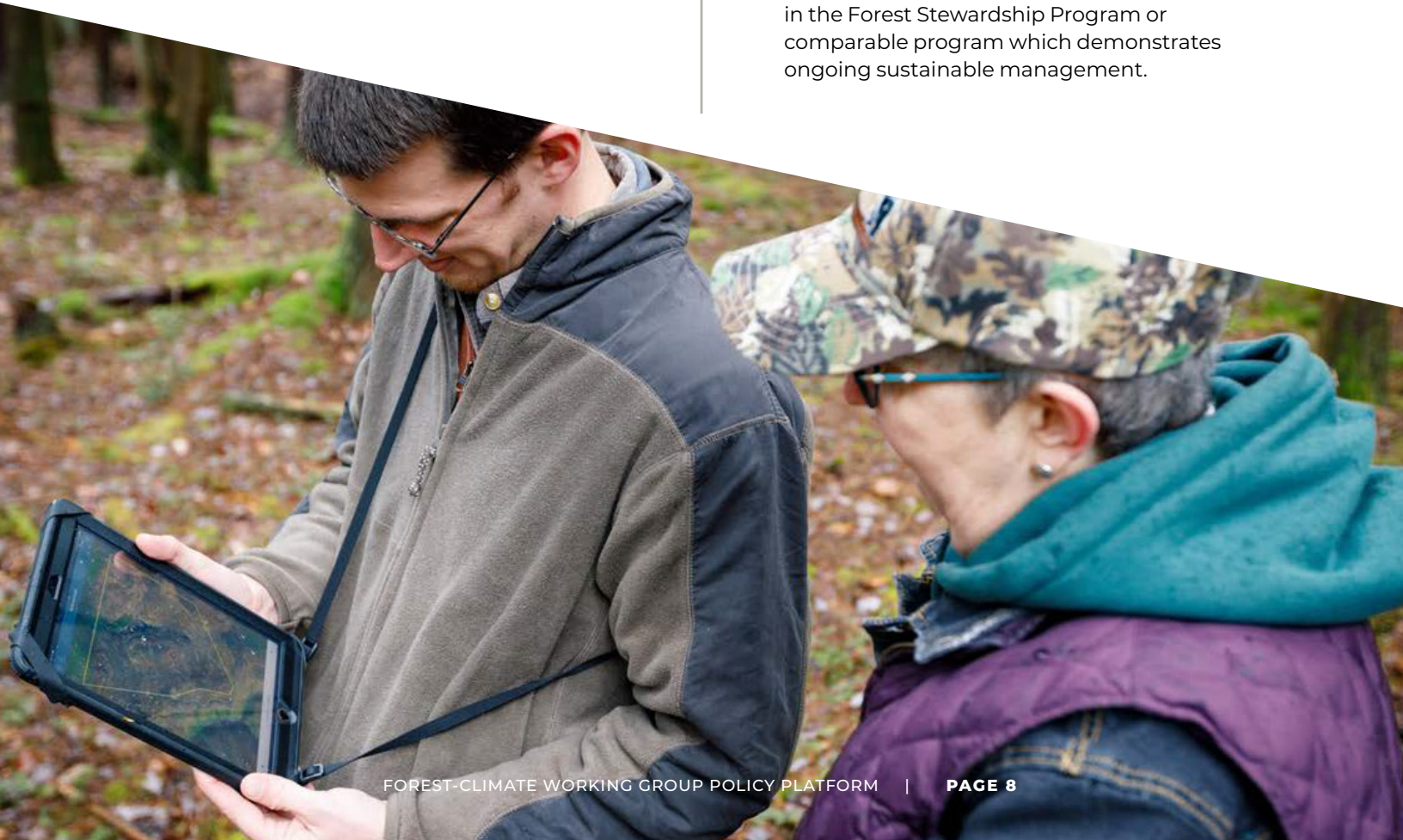
The FCWG recommends expanding technical assistance and support of underserved forest landowners by:

- Increasing technical assistance to private forest landowners on climate-informed forest management practices and informed access to carbon markets.
- Improving access to technical and financial assistance to underserved forest landowners in support of climate informed forest management and access to carbon and emerging markets.

TAX POLICY INCENTIVES

FCWG recommends providing federal tax incentives for private landowners to sequester and store forest carbon by maintaining, restoring, and expanding forest cover through:

- Retaining/enhancing tax policies that encourage forest retention.
- Maintaining the existing forest management federal income tax deduction.
- Maintaining the existing federal tax deduction for replanting after harvest.
- Creating a landowner investment tax credit for private working forests that increase carbon capture and storage.
- Creating a federal tax credit or strengthening nationwide tax incentives for forest landowners that are enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program or comparable program which demonstrates ongoing sustainable management.



OUR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

PUBLIC FORESTS

FCWG supports restoring, protecting, and managing public forests to improve climate resilience and mitigation, and provide public benefits such as clean air and water, biodiversity, recreation, and wildlife habitat. The programs and policy tools recommended are essential to achieve a meaningful contribution to climate mitigation from public forests.



REFORESTATION & RESTORATION

The FCWG supports reforestation and restoring public forests as an important contributor to climate mitigation by:

- Expanding funding opportunities and authority for climate-informed land management and restoration on public, tribal, NGO, and neighboring lands through:
 - ▷ Establishing a forestland restoration grant program.
 - ▷ Granting the USDA Forest Service authority to implement post-fire reforestation treatments for up to three years on lands unlikely to recover naturally.
 - ▷ Permanently authorizing the BLM Forest Ecosystem Health and Recovery Fund
- Expanding climate-informed reforestation supply chain (science, seed collection & storage, nursery infrastructure and operation) for U.S. forests by:
 - ▷ Creating a stand-alone budget line item for the [USDA Forest Service Reforestation, Nurseries and Genetic Resources Program \(RNGR\)](#) and substantially increasing funding from new sources (not redirected from other SPTF funds).
 - ▷ Using the RNGR to support state, tribal, and private tree nurseries and seed orchards through technical assistance and research, providing collaborative agreements and cooperative efforts, and support for seed collection and storage and tree nursery expansion including the purchase of land, building construction and equipment, and workforce development.

FOREST CONNECTIVITY AND MIGRATION CORRIDORS

The FCWG supports restoring forest connectivity and migration corridors by:

- Directing investments to restore forest corridors, link important forest fragments, and restore migration corridors.

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTS

The FCWG supports expanding and maintaining healthy tree canopy and green spaces in cities, towns, and rural communities, including private lands, by:

- Improving equitable access to urban and community forest grant dollars.
- Returning flexibility to the [Landscape Scale Restoration \(LSR\)](#) program to address the highest priority needs across urban and rural landscapes as identified in [state Forest Action Plans](#), and the program should not exclude larger communities or populations that depend on trees for their health and wellbeing, particularly in historically marginalized communities.



OUR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

FOREST PRODUCTS

The FCWG supports government investments in forest products education and technical assistance, grants and demonstration projects, and programs that grow existing markets and support the development of new markets and products from sustainably managed forests to ensure positive outcomes and promote quantifiable benefits for forests and the climate.



FOREST PRODUCTS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

EDUCATION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The FCWG supports expanding education and technical assistance through:

- Investing federal funds in education and technical assistance for architects and engineers to use sustainably sourced long-lived wood products in building construction through programs such as those run by WoodWorks and federal programs that support curriculum and educational development.

GOVERNMENT RESEARCH

The FCWG supports federally funded research to inventory carbon stored in wood products through:

- Supporting research by the Forest Product Laboratory to do a detailed annual inventory of the carbon stored in wood products as a complement to EPA's border wood products assessment in its annual greenhouse gas inventory.

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT & INVESTMENT

The FCWG supports government procurement and investments that support forest products innovation and expansion of markets by:

- The Government Services Administration (GSA) adopting a whole-building Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) requirement for federal procurement.
- Federal agencies encouraging the use of long-lived wood building materials in federal buildings and federal programs that support building construction.
- Directing adequate funding to the USDA Forest Service Wood Innovation Grants program to stimulate new forest product development, product improvement, and forest product uses to support new and expanded forest products markets.
- States and localities expanding the use of wood in procurement and construction projects, particularly in areas that address equity and underserved communities such as affordable housing.

BUILDING TAX POLICIES

The FCWG supports targeted tax incentives and credits that promote the use of building materials with quantifiable climate benefits that could include:

- Creating tax incentives to build with sustainably sourced and long-lived forest products.
- Creating a tax credit for building with lower carbon footprint materials from sustainably managed forests.

OUR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

FOREST AND CLIMATE DATA AND APPLIED SCIENCE

The FCWG supports federal investments in gathering and reporting forest and climate data, and research that provides timely information and tools to assist forest managers develop and maintain climate adapted and resilient forests that contribute to climate mitigation.



FOREST AND CLIMATE DATA AND APPLIED SCIENCE

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

INSECTS AND DISEASE

The FCWG supports programs and investments to detect and mitigate the effects of insects and diseases that reduce the capacity of forests to sequester and store carbon by:

- Improving monitoring efforts to quickly detect and identify both native and exotic insects and diseases and evaluate their risk, including improved biosecurity efforts at ports of entry to prevent the introduction of invasive species that threaten Americas' forests.
- Developing practical tools needed to improve forest management practices so that landowners and managers can respond swiftly to threats from insects and diseases as they occur.

TREE IMPROVEMENT

The FCWG supports investments in tree improvement programs that increase the capacity of forests to sequester and store carbon by:

- Expanding tree improvement efforts that use both traditional tree breeding and modern biotechnology to identify mechanisms of susceptibility/resistance and develop trees that are better adapted to resist insects and diseases and changing climate conditions.

FOREST INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The FCWG supports improved data science, and regular monitoring and reporting on forest carbon stores and sequestration rates across U.S. forests by:

- Expanding statistical research capacity to develop and employ the complex cutting-edge statistical imputation and estimation procedures required to produce the level of accuracy that land managers and other decision makers need.
- Strengthening the USDA Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis Program (FIA) to:
 - ▷ Improve collection and analysis of data on carbon stores and sequestration and links between conservation practices, climate resilience, and profitability.
 - ▷ Reduce the cost of inventorying and monitoring forest carbon and assessing climate resilience at the risks of carbon emissions from climate-driven disturbances such as fire, insect outbreaks, disease, drought, and flooding.
 - ▷ Report more frequently and completely the status of forest carbon stocks and fluxes, including state and ecosystem projections.

FOREST AND CLIMATE DATA AND APPLIED SCIENCE

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RESEARCH

The FCWG supports research that produces information and tools for forest managers that lead to climate adapted and resilient forests with improved sequestration and storage capacity by:

- Increasing the capacity of USDA Climate Hubs and other research units for delivering climate-related science, including effects on sequestration rates and stored carbon in tree biomass and in forest soils due to forest management practices, and ways to improve carbon retention in the life cycle of forest products.
- Directing closer ties among USDA, DOI, other federal research agencies, and land-grant university research programs to develop science-based programs which include private landowners and advisors in developing climate-informed forest management and retention strategies.
- Assessing the effectiveness of ongoing agency delivery and partnership mechanisms to convert science into solutions and use success factors and lessons learned to adapt or build new partnerships to increase effectiveness.
- Expanding the USDA Forest Service Resources Planning Assessment (RPA) to include projecting forest conditions and climate change impacts under different large-scale policies and nature-based strategies, including the impacts of investments in forest carbon, other ecosystem services, and policies to reduce the loss of forest land use.
- Supporting the development of tools and methodologies for life cycle analyses to inform the utilization of wood products from sustainably managed forests to ensure net emissions reduction and avoid unintended consequences.

WORKFORCE

The FCWG supports workforce development, training, and counseling programs to recruit, retain, and provide for career advancement in the forest sector by:

- Improving and investing in workforce development and training programs such as AmeriCorps, establishing regional forest industry workforce training hubs, and pre-employment programs that link underserved urban populations with urban forestry careers.
- Addressing technical issues in Department of Labor regulations and occupational codes that hamper forest sector growth.
- Increasing worker capacity needed to collect seed and grown and package seedlings for restoration and reforestation.
- Increasing capacity of trained burning crews to implement prescribed fire.
- Increasing support for substance abuse education and counseling programs to expand the number of employable people in the forestry sector.





FOREST-CLIMATE WORKING GROUP

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
THE FOREST CLIMATE WORKING GROUP AT:
INFO@FORESTCLIMATEWORKINGGROUP.ORG**

OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

WWW.FORESTCLIMATEWORKINGGROUP.ORG