The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition promotes the following national priorities for the federal land management agencies: 1) investing in the restoration and stewardship of public and private lands, 2) building the capacity of rural communities and businesses to perform land management, and 3) using and creating markets for the products resulting from those actions. Federal investment in an “all lands” approach to restoration and stewardship should create jobs and sustainable communities in rural America. Implementing strategic and integrated investment, improved federal procurement procedures, and better performance measurement can successfully transform our landscapes to healthy, productive conditions that will mitigate for and adapt to climate change, protect water quality and quantity, provide wildlife habitat and other biodiversity values, contribute to clean energy technology, protect communities from the impacts of uncharacteristically severe wildfire and contribute to rural economic sustainability.

**Key elements of the President’s FY2011 budget proposal**

President Obama’s FY2011 budget proposal for the U.S. Forest Service takes several positive steps toward addressing long-term systematic failures in the agency’s budget by focusing on landscape scale restoration and watershed health, integrating tools that can help promote green jobs, along with supporting programs that foster the utilization of forest restoration by-products. These are:

- Creating an integrated resource restoration line item with an emphasis on stewardship contracting;
- Funding wildfire suppression, using tools provided by Congress, in a manner that will reduce negative impacts on other Forest Service programs; and
- Funding several biomass related programs that will improve forest material utilization.

Additionally, within the US Department of Agriculture, the President proposes creating a Regional Innovative Initiative with the intent of coordinating USDA (and other agency) assistance for rural communities.

### Key Recommendations

**Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee**

**Key budgetary recommendations**

1. Create and fully fund the Integrated Resource Restoration Line Item ($693.8 million).
2. Fund the Community Forestry and Open Space Conservation Program at $10 million.
3. Create and fund a Community Capacity and Collaborative Support Grant fund using the authorities that supported the Economic Action Program ($40 million).
4. Fund the Community Wood Energy Program at $5 million.
5. Fund the Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Roads portion of the Budget at $236.5 million.

**Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee**

**Key budgetary recommendations**

1. Fully fund the Department of Agriculture, NRCS Farm Bill Conservation Programs ($4.3 billion).
2. Allocate 10% of funding in FY2011 Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative for grants to partners ($10 million).

**Key Tools for Effective Budget Management and Improved Performance**

1. Require the Forest Service to award all contracts and agreements related to the Integrated Resource Restoration Line Item on a best value basis and include evaluative criteria that will increase the competitiveness of local contractors, creation of local markets for material removed, and protection of workers.
2. Require the land management agencies to report on the number and percent of jobs retained or created, people trained, and local capture of land management contracts and agreements.
**Key Elements Missing from the President’s Budget Proposal**

The FY2011 budget should provide more explicit investment in western rural communities. These communities can provide the stewardship workforce, small business entrepreneurs, and local, indigenous and technical knowledge to support federal land management. Federal investment to build sustainable rural communities is needed in three key areas: 1) support for building capacity and the infrastructure many communities lack (or have lost) in order to capture work on public lands, 2) changes in procurement and contracting systems to facilitate capture of work by small businesses in rural communities, and 3) financial assistance to strengthen fire protection capabilities.

**FY2011 Appropriations and Accountability Priorities**

The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition has five interrelated priorities that frame our recommendations for strategic federal investment. These are:

1. Landscape scale restoration and stewardship of public and private lands;
2. Community capacity building, rural green job creation and economic recovery;
3. Clean energy development through biomass utilization and climate change adaptation;
4. Protection of communities from the negative impacts of wildfire; and
5. Tools and authorities needed for effective budget management and performance.

Several key programs, budget line items, performance and accountability measures, and authorities are integral to the effective management of all lands. This paper addresses priorities for the House Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations subcommittee and House Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies appropriations subcommittee budgets, as well as recommends accountability and rural job creation measures.

**Landscape Scale Restoration and Stewardship of Public and Private Lands**

Our nation’s public and private lands support vital natural systems that provide innumerable benefits including clean air, water, food, and energy. The restoration and stewardship of our nation’s public lands, and support to adjacent private landowners to restore and steward their lands, should be the primary focus of the land management agencies. Following are specific budget recommendations to support landscape scale restoration and stewardship by the land management agencies.

1. **Enact and fund the Forest Service Integrated Resource Restoration Line Item at $693.8 million.**

Consolidating funding for restoration and stewardship into one line item will enable land managers to effectively budget for integrated outcomes related to land management goals. The IRR line item proposal fixes an outdated structure that stovepipes activities that are better integrated to give land managers more effective budget tools to achieve landscape scale restoration and stewardship objectives on the ground. The corresponding effort to revise performance measures to evaluate overall ecosystem improvements and function will improve FS accountability by measuring outcomes (such as watershed condition) rather than outputs (such as miles of stream restored, acres treated, etc.). Socioeconomic measures should be adopted to ensure that the economic and job stabilization goals of this line item are met.

The IRR is divided into three components 1) Restoration and Management of Ecosystems, 2) Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), and 3) Priority Watersheds and Jobs Stabilization. We support all three components of the IRR line item, with the addition of performance measures and other related guidance.

a. **Restoration and Management of Ecosystems:** This budget area creates an integrated source of funding for the treatment of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience. This $604 million dollars will fund, among other things, reforestation projects, watershed improvement activities, and habitat improvement projects. Stewardship contracts and agreements will be emphasized for managing natural resources.

b. **Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program:** This program should be funded at the authorized level of $40 million annually. This competitive program allocates investments for proactive forest restoration using science and collaboration. Program outcomes will include enhanced ecosystem health, reduced fire-fighting costs through land condition improvements, and economic outcomes from the use of wood by-products from restoration treatments. Full funding for this program implements the Forest Landscape Restoration Act (P.L. 111-11).

c. **Priority Watersheds and Job Stabilization:** Fund the PWJS at $50 million. This initiative prioritizes watershed restoration on a collaborative, science based approach including an outcome based performance system. It includes a focus on creating green job opportunities through watershed restoration and utilizing stewardship contracts to implement this work. This initiative offers an unprecedented learning opportunity for the Forest Service to understand how all of these components – ecosystem improvement, collaboration, stewardship contracting and green job promotion can work together to enhance the management efforts of the agency.
2. **Fund the Community Forestry and Open Space Conservation Program at $10 million.**

The nation’s private working landscapes are facing unprecedented and complex challenges, resulting in increasing fragmentation, real estate development, and conversion to other uses. The 2008 Farm Bill created an important new program to address the loss of private forests at the local community level. The Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program supports local governments, tribes and non-profit organizations by providing 50-50 matching grants for the acquisition of threatened forestlands that provide important community benefits.

3. **Fund the Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Roads portion of the Forest Service budget at $236.5 million.**

With an estimated $8 billion dollar backlog in needed existing road maintenance, the Forest Service cannot afford a $72 million decrease in this budget area, as proposed in the President’s FY2011 budget. Funding should be restored to the FY2010 level to ensure that the Forest Service make progress in neglected existing road maintenance. These management actions are essential for restoring and maintaining water quality. Additionally, road maintenance provides needed job opportunities in rural communities.

4. **Fund the FS Land and Water Conservation Fund expenditures under Forest Legacy and Land Acquisition at $91.9 million and $73.7 million, respectively.**

This program assists states in protecting working forests that protect water quality, provide habitat, produce forest products, and create opportunities for recreation and other public benefits.

5. **Fund the Forest Stewardship Program at $29.5 million.**

The Forest Stewardship Program is the only Forest Service program that assists non-industrial private forestland owners to achieve long-term forest management.

6. **Fully fund USDA-NRCS Farm Bill Conservation Programs at the mandated levels for FY 2011 ($4.3 billion).**

The NRCS conservation programs authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill are critical to enhancing ecosystem health on private lands across the nation. The Farm Bill authorized a suite of programs that are used to fulfill distinct needs across the nation depending on private land uses, ecosystem conditions, and historical federal government program implementation.

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**COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING, RURAL GREEN JOB CREATION, AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

Investment in retaining and building the capacity of small, rural businesses to implement restoration and stewardship activities and utilize material that is removed during sustainable land management activities is essential to rural economic recovery. Assistance is needed to ensure that communities have the basic infrastructure, skills, and resources to capitalize on opportunities offered through the IRR line item.

1. **Create and fund a Community Capacity and Collaborative Support Grant Program at $40 million annually using the authorities that supported the Economic Action Program.**

The Community Capacity and Collaborative Support Grant program would provide grants and technical assistance to non-profits and existing and new rural, small, restoration and maintenance-oriented businesses to access capital and other support services such as grant writing, bonding access, and federal bidding procedures and other need technical advice. Funds for nonprofit entities should be available for:

   a. Nonprofit and/or collaborative group staff support, including facilitation of collaborative groups;

   b. Travel related to collaborative group activities;

   c. Local and regional workshops related to scientific, facilitation, and other topics that will assist collaborative groups in advancing their goals;

   d. Dissemination of ecological, social, and economic information;

   e. Training; and

   f. Collaborative group involvement in multi-party monitoring.

2. **Dedicate 10% of Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative funds to partnerships ($10 million).**

Community-based organizations add value to federal conservation priorities and ecosystem service markets by developing local strategies for coordinating and aggregating family forest and ranchland owners to provide access to these markets. Programs like NRCS’s Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) invite community-based organizations to partner with NRCS for the delivery of specific Farm Bill conservation programs to landowners in ways that meet and respond to local needs, opportunities, and customs. While federal programs like CCPI recognize the value that community-

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1 See the RVCC Private Lands issue paper for more information.

RVCC

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Clean Energy Development Through Biomass Utilization and Climate Change Adaptation

Integrated, community-scaled biomass utilization strategies can offset the costs of forest restoration and hazardous fuel reduction activities while contributing to rural economies, energy independence, and carbon emission reductions. The following programs represent a comprehensive approach to encouraging efficient, community scaled biomass utilization strategies across the nation. It is critical that Congress fund all of these programs as each fulfills a different need for support, planning and implementation of a broad biomass utilization strategy.

1. **Fund the Community Wood Energy Program at $5 million.**

   The Community Wood Energy Program (CWEP) was authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill at $5 million. The program will provide up to $50,000 grants to qualifying state or local government entities to prepare “community wood energy plans.” Once a plan has been approved, the qualified applicant may request up to 50 percent in matching grants toward the capital cost of installing biomass energy systems.

2. **Increase funding for the Woody Biomass Utilization Grants program under the Hazardous Fuels line item to $10 million.**

   The Woody Biomass Utilization Grant Program, funded under the FS Wildland Fire, Hazardous Fuels Line Item supports the utilization of forest restoration byproducts from National Forest system lands. The competitive grant program funds projects that demonstrate an increased use of woody biomass from forest restoration and hazardous fuels projects on National Forest System lands where little or no capacity to economically use this low value material exists. This grant program reduces forest management costs by increasing the value of biomass and other forest products generated from forest restoration activities, generates renewable energy from woody biomass, builds industry infrastructure around national forestlands where no or limited industry infrastructure exists, and expands working relationships between local forest products businesses and Forest Service offices.

3. **Invest $15 million in the FS Fuels for Schools and Beyond program.**

   The Fuels for Schools and Beyond Program, administered by the US Forest Service in Region 1, is a significant resource for communities in the region to explore conversion of boilers at elementary and secondary schools to woody biomass from petroleum-based fuels. These projects are extremely successful at reducing heating costs for schools, reducing dependence on less renewable forms of energy, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A significant interest in implementing these projects pervades across the West, however, many communities have struggled to achieve similar results without dedicated technical assistance from the Fuels for Schools program. $15 million dollars could expand the program to meet needs in FS Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9.

4. **Fund the Forest Biomass Energy Program at $15 million.**

   The Forest Biomass Energy Program was authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill at $15 million. The program establishes a new competitive research and development program to encourage use of forest biomass for energy. Priority project areas include: developing technology and techniques to use low-value forest biomass for energy production, developing processes to integrate energy production from forest biomass into biorefineries, developing new transportation fuels from forest biomass, improving growth and yield of trees intended for renewable energy. This research program will contribute significant advances for the improvement of applied forest-based biomass technology.
5. Fully fund the Climate Change Adaptation Initiative in the Department of the Interior. ($17.5 million)

The Department of the Interior’s Climate Change Adaptation Initiative is a proactive approach to adapting to and mitigating for climate change impacts to our nation’s public lands. The approach is collaborative and based on integrating science with the broad experiences of partners across the regional landscapes. This program will be vital to understanding potential climate change impacts on public lands and reaching social agreement for management actions necessary to address impacts and implement mitigation measures.

6. Require the Forest Service and NRCS to join the DOI Climate Change Adaptation Initiative efforts to increase interagency coordination on landscape scale approaches to climate change adaptation.

Congress should require the Forest Service to join the DOI Climate Change Adaptation Initiative to increase interagency collaboration and coordination on climate change strategies.

**Protect Communities from Wildfire**

The important changes enacted to the fire suppression budget to address structural budget problems (referenced above) do not help communities prepare for uncharacteristically severe wildfire, nor do those changes reduce the risk of wildfire to a community. Consequently, funding programs that help communities plan and prepare for wildfire are still a vital component of the wildfire management program. Cuts to these programs, at a time when the actual risk of uncharacteristic wildfire is growing in many areas, is asking many rural western communities to bear an unacceptable level of risk.

1. Fully fund regular fire suppression budget and suppression reserve funds in the Forest Service ($1.168 billion) and DOI ($459 million).

The Administrations’ FY2011 proposed levels for suppression and the reserve funds for emergency expenses are vital to continue implementing solutions to the devastating budget problem caused by uncharacteristically severe wildfire expenditures and the associated budget borrowing experienced for so many years in the FS and DOI.

2. Invest in the FS State Fire Assistance and Community Fire Assistance programs ($126 million [combined regular and wildfire appropriations]).

Forest Service, Community Fire Assistance and State Fire Assistance programs help communities prepare for and reduce risk from wildfires through the collaborative development and implementation of community wildfire protection plans and programs such as Firewise, that educate homeowners about making their property more resistant to fires, as well as provide training and equipment for local firefighters.

**TOOLS AND AUTHORITIES FOR EFFECTIVE BUDGET MANAGEMENT**

1. Use the IRR to implement new accountability systems that focus on outcomes.

Accountability systems should focus on integrated, long term outcomes on the degree to which the agencies 1) improve and maintain healthy functioning watershed conditions; 2) contribute to local economies in a manner that is consistent with their economic planning; 3) work collaboratively with rural communities, interest groups, tribes and state and local government; and 4) monitor the ecological impacts and economic benefits of forest and rangeland restoration and maintenance over time and ensure that monitoring contributes to adaptive management approaches. The proposed IRR line item offers a chance to create meaningful performance measures focused on outcomes – ecological, economic and social. Successful implementation of such an approach in this budget area could then be broadened across the agency to improve overall accountability.

2. Support increased use of Stewardship Contracting through the proposed IRR line item.

The focus on stewardship contracting within the IRR will allow the Forest Service to expand its use of these authorities. Stewardship contracting authorities increase the ability for districts or field offices to carry out more comprehensive, high quality restoration projects by lowering project administration costs. Stewardship contracts bring significant private technical and financial resources to restoration efforts that might not otherwise be available to the Forest Service and the BLM.

3. Congress should provide direction requiring the agencies to report on ecological and socioeconomic outcomes achieved through the use of stewardship contracts.

4. Authorize the National Forest System to administer grants.

The Forest Service, National Forest System (NFS) currently does not have the authority to provide grants. Instead, the FS must redirect their money through State and Private Forestry. Congress should provide NFS direct granting authority to help expedite and efficiently partner with non-profits and other non-federal entities, including tribes, who leverage non-federal money. This would reduce internal transaction costs and ensure that funds are expediently dispersed to communities and enterprises that are positioned to assist the agency in landscape-scale restoration.

5. Increase transparency in Forest Service budgets, particularly related to the planning processes.

Currently, the FS land management planning is disconnected from the budgeting process. Under the current system, management actions called for under a forest plan are not fully funded; monitoring and on the ground projects are often under-funded at the expensive of other activities.
a. **Make planning costs transparent:** The Forest Service should be required to post on their website the actual costs related to planning under their current system, this should include but not be limited to:

- The staff, consultant, and other personnel costs of planning within the agency,
- The line items used to fund planning and percent of each line item dedicated to such purposes,
- The costs of monitoring a land management plan, and
- Other information or costs that provide a full picture of the resources needed to do planning.

b. **Congress should require the production of a budget report detailing costs associated with planning:** Congress should direct the FS to produce a report detailing budget information to inform decisions regarding the planning rule revision. Ideally, under the revised planning rule, systems will be put in place to anticipate budget realities and create forest plans that are financially realistic. It is critical that budget considerations be an integral part of planning assessment.

c. **Direct the Forest Service to establish and provide public access to budget allocation criteria:** Current Forest Service budget allocation decisions are difficult to assess and monitor, because there is a lack of public information about how these decisions are made. Congress should direct the Forest Service to establish consistent allocation criteria at the national and regional levels to guide funding decisions. These criteria should be available for public comment and review. The FS should also be responsible for measuring and reporting outcome oriented measures consistent with their allocation criteria to measure effectiveness.

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**RVCC 2010 Issue Papers**


“Climate Change Adaptation in Rural, Natural Resource-Dependent Communities”

“Rural Natural Resource Green Jobs”

“Stewardship End-Result Contracting”

“Private Working Lands”

“Community-based Organizations: Strategic Assets for Western Conservation”

“Sustainable Ranching to Support Rangeland Conservation”

“FY 2011 Appropriations Priorities: Investing in Western Conservation and Communities”

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**Further Resources Related to the Recommendations in this Paper**

The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition has produced several issue papers in 2010 from which the appropriations and related priorities described in this document are derived. For more in depth understanding of the programs and issues mentioned in this paper, please visit the Sustainable Northwest website where you can find the other issue papers: [www.sustainablenorthwest.org/resources/rvcc-issue-papers](http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/resources/rvcc-issue-papers)
## RVCC Restoration and Stewardship Funding Request Table

**APPENDIX I**

*Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations*

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<th>Budget Area</th>
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<td>$90</td>
<td>$90</td>
<td>$90 (=)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 This column lists the appropriations recommendations of western community forestry practitioners, with changes from the President’s FY08 budget in parentheses.

2 In FY2009 the Wildland Fire Management budget is moved to the Office of the Secretary, Department-wide programs.
## APPENDIX II
### Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Area</th>
<th>Expanded Budget Line Item</th>
<th>Farm Bill Funding Level</th>
<th>FY11 President’s Budget</th>
<th>FY11 CBF REQUEST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mandatory Farm Bill</strong></td>
<td>Environmental Quality Incentives Program</td>
<td>$1,588</td>
<td>$1208.0</td>
<td>$1588 (+380)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wetland Reserve Program</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$502</td>
<td>$502 (=)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program</td>
<td>$85</td>
<td>$73</td>
<td>$85 (+12)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program</td>
<td>$175</td>
<td>$160</td>
<td>$175 (+15)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grassland Reserve Program</td>
<td>$80</td>
<td>$79</td>
<td>$80 (+1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Healthy Forest Reserve Program</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$10 (=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservation Stewardship Program</td>
<td>$1,028</td>
<td>$629</td>
<td>$1028 (+399)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Discretionary</strong></td>
<td>Conservation Technical Assistance</td>
<td>$762</td>
<td>$797</td>
<td>$797 (=)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resource Conservation and Development</td>
<td>$51</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$51 (+51)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural Business Cooperative Service (RBS)</strong></td>
<td>Rural Business Enterprise Grants</td>
<td>$39</td>
<td>$39</td>
<td>$39 (=)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural Business Opportunity Grants</td>
<td>$5</td>
<td>$3</td>
<td>$5 (+2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value Added Producer Grants</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$20 (=)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural Cooperative Development Grants</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$20 (=)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural Energy for America</td>
<td>$40</td>
<td>$39</td>
<td>$40 (=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program</td>
<td>$53</td>
<td>$40</td>
<td>$53 (+13)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediary Relending Program</td>
<td>$8</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>$14 (=)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Coalition Partners**

**Alaska**
Sitka Conservation Society

**Arizona**
Forest Energy Corporation

**California**
Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters
Calaveras Healthy Impact Products Solutions
California Center for Rural Policy
Fourth Sector Strategies
Humboldt Area Foundation
Redwood Coast Rural Action
Trinity County Supervisor, District 3
Watershed Research and Training Center

**Idaho**
Framing Our Community, Inc.
Lemhi County Economic Development Association
Salmon Valley Stewardship
Shoshone County Board of Commissioners
Silver Valley Economic Development Corporation
Woody Biomass Utilization Partnership

**Kentucky**
Center for Rural Strategies

**Maryland**
Communities Committee

**Montana**
Northwest Connections
Restore Montana
Swan Ecosystem Center
Vander Meer’s Wildland Conservation Services

**Nebraska**
Native American Public Telecommunications, Inc.

**New Mexico**
Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations
Forest Guild
Gila Woodnet
Restoration Technologies
Santa Clara Woodworks
SBS Wood Shavings

**Oregon**
Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council
Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council
Ecosystem Workforce Program
Grant County Court
Institute for Culture and Ecology
Integrated Biomass Resources LLC
Lake County Resources Initiative
Oregon Rural Action

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**Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition**

A policy initiative of Sustainable Northwest
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