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BCarbon Receives Innovative Diversity and Carbon Credit Grant from the Bia-Echo Foundation

HOUSTON (August 7, 2023) - BCarbon, in partnership with the Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program (PVAMU Extension), and the U.S. Business Council for Sustainable Development (US BCSD) today announce their receipt of a grant award from the Bia-Echo Foundation. The purpose of the grant is to support the development of a landowner cooperative to expand the economic participation of East Texas African American landowners in the nature-based carbon market.

The 2022 meeting of the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27) convened and acknowledged that sustainable land management practices and the preservation of forests and biodiversity are the cornerstones for climate-resilient and sustainable ecosystems. However, for most small and underrepresented landowners with at least moderate familiarity with the carbon market, pathways to participation often appear cryptic and littered with cost-prohibitive hurdles. BCarbon recognized the prevalence of similar participatory deterrents for East Texas minority landowners. Unfortunately, these deterrents are only exacerbated by the inherent lack of standardization and clarity found in many existing carbon credit protocols. As a result, minority landowners, many of whom own smaller tracts, are typically unable or unwilling to participate in this opportunity.

The funding afforded by the Bia-Echo Foundation's grant will address some of these impediments by helping to educate minority producers on the carbon credit market and to establish a project development and credit marketing business cooperative. In execution, smallholder landowners will be grouped into cooperative clusters to facilitate efficient programmatic onboarding and delivery of carbon project development, financing, and marketing.

BCarbon will work with PVAMU Extension to develop and disseminate educational materials about the carbon credit market and the protocol developed by BCarbon for forest credits. This will be the starting point for credit development under this grant. Additionally, BCarbon will assist with the initial design of the cooperative, in association with PVAMU Extension. BCarbon will also identify and bring forward expert forest testing organizations that will have the capability to deliver the data necessary to support a carbon credit application. PVAMU Extension will leverage its expansive outreach network of historically underserved East Texas landowners and provide educational opportunities to assist landowners in better understanding the nature-based carbon credit market opportunity and help onboard them as members of the business cooperative. To facilitate either ex-ante or ex-post carbon credit sales, the US BCSD

Gulf Coast Carbon Collaborative's Nature-Based working group – composed of a vast array of potential carbon offset purchasers – will help BCarbon and PVAMU Extension to develop a minority landowner program that will produce high-quality credits that will meet offset purchaser metrics around veracity, quality, and socioeconomic impact.

Nicole Shanahan, founder of the Bia-Echo Foundation, stated “this project is directly related to our funding goals and has created enthusiasm throughout our organization. We're proud to be a part of this innovative project in association with BCarbon, PVAMU Extension and the US BCSD. This is an important step from our perspective.”

Dr. Elliott Washington, Forestry Program Specialist with PVAMU Extension added “we have been interested in helping our land-owning partners in East Texas participate in the carbon market for some time now. This is an historic, ground-breaking project that has tremendous potential as a precedent for the small, minority landowners throughout the country.”

“BCarbon was formed by a stakeholder group housed at the Baker Institute at Rice University and has been committed to bringing diversity, equity and inclusion concepts into the nature-based carbon market since our inception,” said Jim Blackburn, CEO of BCarbon. “With the large majority of landowners in the United States being white, we have to work to create opportunities to bring DEI forward, and we are committed to doing so as evidenced by this grant from our partners at the Bia-Echo Foundation who saw the merit in this approach.”

Claude Griffin, Executive Director of the USBCSD, agreed, saying “I am really pleased that we at the US BCSD can work with BCarbon and a historically black university to create a program that can make a difference for African American landowners in East Texas. This is an idea whose time has come.”

Work under this grant will begin immediately and should unfold over the next twelve months at which point a structure and plan for going forward will be completed, and the project will move into an implementation phase.