

NEWS

USDA AND ENDOWMENT EXPAND WORK WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN FOREST OWNERS

Partnership with NRCS and the Forest Service will advance forest management and land retention

U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Greenville, SC

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE (February 9, 2016)

Over the coming three years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Forest Service (USFS), and the U. S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities will invest more than \$4 million to stabilize African American forestland ownership across generations and enhance family wealth by increasing income and land asset value through sustainable forestry.

"The involuntary loss of African American family forest and farm land over the past century has been a tragedy for those families and a loss to the economies of rural communities across the Southeastern United States," said Carlton Owen, the Endowment's President and CEO. "Working together we see significant opportunities to stem further land loss, increase family income, stimulate local forest-based economies and enhance forest health through sustainable forest management on African American-owned forestland."

The partnership's Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Program completed a two-year pilot program in 2015 by supporting sustainable forestry and land tenure programs in three multi-county regions: Coastal South Carolina, Western Alabama, and Northeastern North Carolina. Those projects will continue to build on the success of the pilots after serving more than 200 families with direct forestry and land tenure support. Additionally, a Request for Proposals (RFP) announced today will fund two or three new regional projects. The RFP is available on the Endowment's Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention web page: <http://www.usendowment.org/forestlandretention.html>

Proposals are sought from lead organizations working with networks of public and private organizations that support forest owners in multi-county regions with significant African American populations in rural Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, western Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Landowners will receive support for forestry services and restorative and preventative services to resolve heirs' property issues. Successful lead organizations and their networks will work closely with NRCS state conservationists and state forestry agencies.

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The **U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities** (the Endowment) is a not-for-profit public charity working collaboratively with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative, and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities – www.usendowment.org