

NEWS

SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE RECOGNIZES WORK WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN FORESTLAND OWNERS -- Prestigious Abraham Lincoln Honor Award Granted to Broad Partnership--

U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Greenville, SC
For IMMEDIATE RELEASE (September 15, 2016)

In a ceremony held at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's headquarters in Washington, DC yesterday, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack presented the Department's Abraham Lincoln Award for protecting natural resources to the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities and its USDA partners in the Forest Service (USFS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The award, the Department's highest recognition for service, went to the Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention program that has provided direct support to more than 300 families for forest management and resolving heirs' property problems across three states – Alabama, North Carolina and South Carolina.

In commenting on the award, Endowment President Carlton Owen noted, "We are honored that USDA and the Secretary have singled out this important work as worthy of recognition." Owen went further to acknowledge that the credit for any success achieved in advancing this multi-year effort goes to our partners in the Forest Service and NRCS as well as our partners on the ground in the state forestry agencies, local NRCS offices, and the wonderful non-profit teams leading the work at the Roanoke Center (NC); Center for Heirs Property Preservation (SC); Federation of Southern Cooperatives (AL) and Limited Resource Landowner Education and Assistance Network (AL). "All of this work has been coordinated and capably led by the Endowment's Vice President Alan McGregor" said Owen.

Those representing the broad partnership who were able to attend the ceremony were:

- NRCS: Chief Jason Weller; Associate Chief for Conservation Leonard Jordan and state conservationists Tim Beard (NC), Ann English (SC) and Ben Malone (AL).
- USFS: Chief Tom Tidwell
- Endowment: President & CEO Carlton Owen

The Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention program was launched in 2013 as an effort to aid African American landowners in turning their forested properties into economic assets. While the funders are encouraged by each family that is benefitting from the program the long-term objective is to see more people of color become advocates for the myriad gains from healthy forests. In 2017 the program will be expanded to two additional multi-country areas in Arkansas and Georgia.

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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