

U.S. Endowment for Forests and Communities: Engaging the Water Community in Determining Financial Value and Instruments for Watershed Service Projects

Project Overview

The U.S. Endowment for Forest and Communities will receive \$20,000 over two years to implement a pilot program to conserve watershed forest integrity by determining appropriate financial value of watershed services. The U.S. Forest Service estimates that about two-thirds of our nation's freshwater resources originate in forests. Water utilities are increasingly taking responsibility for the health of local watersheds as the best way to ensure a long-term supply of clean water for the community.

The U.S. endowment will work directly with the water community, individual utilities, and owners of forest land certified to the SFI Standard to engage them in sustainable watershed protection and management. The focus of this grant will be to generate projects on lands certified to the SFI Standard. The Endowment will work with SFI staff to identify managers of forest holdings within watersheds of medium to large urban areas, well-suited for determining value and payment for watershed service type projects. The Endowment will then engage the water utilities in those areas, and the communities themselves, in dialogue about the benefits of protecting and improving management of those watersheds. Ultimately, this project will help these communities to develop a financial instrument that provides revenue to forest landowners for management activities that preserve water quality and decrease water treatment and storage costs.

Supporting the SFI Standard

The project will support a number of requirements in the SFI 2010-2014 Standard related to protection of water resources, including Objective 3: Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources; Objective 10: Adherence to Best Management Practices; and Objective 14: Legal and Regulatory Compliance. The project also will support requirements related to landowners and community outreach, including Objective 8: Landowner Outreach; and Objective 17 Community Involvement in the Practice of Sustainable Forestry.

Project Partners

The US Endowment will partner with SFI program participant land owners, public water utility providers, and potentially power utilities with land holdings. Other partners include The Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation.