

New England Climate Smart Forest Partnership Project: A Win for Forests, Climate, and Communities in New England

Proposal for the USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Funding Opportunity



Big Impact on Climate & the Economy

The USDA recently issued the [Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities](#) Funding Opportunity—a highly innovative program linking verifiable climate-smart production practices on working lands with market development for the resulting commodities. With \$1 billion in funding, this program represents a massive opportunity to pilot scalable, carbon-saving practices that benefit producers of all sizes.

In response to this opportunity, the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF), is anchoring a partnership project, proposing **a groundbreaking and nationally relevant pilot program in New England to build a climate-smart forest-based economy as a powerful tool for climate action**. This builds on a solid foundation constructed over decades by partners in the forestry and forest products sectors, aiming to:

- 1) Implement forest management practices that store more carbon in the forest and in wood products that can be substituted for fossil fuel-based materials,
- 2) Quantify the resulting carbon gains, and
- 3) Build markets for climate-smart forest products.

Benefits for Rural & Urban New Englanders

The proposed project will realize **nationally significant climate benefits** from New England, expand forest products markets, and benefit economically distressed rural communities. A climate-smart supply chain will deliver **economic benefits** at the stump and in commodity wood markets, while simultaneously **improving forest health and resilience to climate change**. Climate-smart forest management practices have been demonstrated to **enhance wildlife habitat, support ecosystem health, and grow more and better-quality wood**, while **maximizing carbon sequestration and storage** in living forests and wood products. Notably, the benefits accrue beyond the forest to constituents in urban and suburban areas as well—with **locally-grown, healthy, low-carbon building materials** that can help meet the growing demand for affordable housing and other commercial and residential construction in a lower-impact manner. Analysis for New England shows that **a holistic approach to forest-based climate mitigation**—protecting forests, practicing climate-smart forestry, and strategically utilizing renewable wood products in place of fossil fuel-intensive materials—can deliver **carbon savings equal to 30% of the emissions reductions needed to reach net zero by 2050**.

Broad & Inclusive Partnership

NEFF is coordinating **a partnership of more than 20 companies, organizations, and institutions that represent forestland owners, foresters, loggers, forest products manufacturers, mass timber developers, climate interests, universities, and financing partners**. Foremost are those who own, manage, and sustainably harvest the forest—the producers who will implement climate-smart practices on the ground—including large commercial landowners, small woodlot owners, First Nations landowners, logging operators, and foresters. To quantify, model, and track the resulting carbon benefits, the partnership includes academic research institutions, nonprofit organizations, and for-profit businesses and consultancies that specialize in the relevant applied technical analyses. Green finance partners will develop innovative financing mechanisms to help scale the practices and products piloted through this program. At the far end of the supply chain, the partnership includes for-profit businesses that represent the end users of climate-smart forest products, including high-value wood for mass timber construction. In addition to committed project partners, we have invited a wider group of individuals and organizations to join an expert advisory panel that will help guide the project and evaluate its success.

Project Proposal

Total Federal Budget Request: \$38 Million

Program Elements

I. Climate-Smart Forestry Incentives for practices that accelerate carbon storage in working forests and products, achieved by a pilot group of forest landowners, on large commercial forests and First Nations woodlands primarily located in Maine, as well as smaller privately-owned woodlands across New England in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. This includes:

- A. **Direct payments to landowners, foresters, and loggers** to implement heretofore uneconomic forest management practices that increase carbon storage in the forest and forest products, relative to Business as Usual (full payment for First Nations and small family forest landowners; cost-share model for large commercial landowners).
- B. **Training for foresters and loggers** on implementing climate-smart practices on the ground.
- C. **Expanded outreach to engage small private landowners** in active forest management—modeled on NEFF’s proven work in this arena—with support from national and local partners.

II. Monitoring, Verification, & Reporting to document the greenhouse gas benefits associated with climate-aligned management and harvesting practices implemented in Program Element I, including:

- A. **Measuring current forest carbon as a baseline for future monitoring**, with a focus on vetted and approved methodologies.
- B. **Modeling carbon benefits from climate-smart forest practices**, building on empirical studies and existing modeling efforts that are complete or currently underway.
- C. **Monitoring, verification, and reporting on practice implementation and carbon outcomes**, including carbon in living forests and wood products.
- D. **Developing and promoting a climate-smart forest management module.**
- E. **Assessing the success and scalability of Program Elements I and II** in terms of practice acceptance and uptake by producers (landowners, foresters, loggers), as well as economic measures of financial performance and cost-benefit.

III. Building the Market for Climate-Smart Forest Products produced from a diversity of species, sizes, and grades of lumber. This project will focus, in particular, on development of markets for high-value commodities that are critical for making the practice of climate-smart forestry economically viable. Through technical analysis, development of innovative financing mechanisms, and pilot building projects, the project aims to advance the market for mass timber within the affordable housing sector—identifying the market potential and developing tools to realize that potential in New England and beyond.

This project is a partnership of companies, organizations, and institutions throughout New England with decades of cumulative experience and expertise, representing forestland owners, foresters, timber harvesters, forest products manufacturers, mass timber developers, climate interests, universities, and financing partners. The coordinating entity, New England Forestry Foundation, is a regional nonprofit organization that specializes in both continuously improving the practice of forest management and protecting the region’s crucial and beautiful working forests. For project information contact:



NEW ENGLAND
FORESTRY
FOUNDATION

PO Box 1346, 32 Foster Street, Littleton, MA 01460
978-952-6856 | newenglandforestry.org