

# Private Working Forests as A Natural Climate Solution

Climate change poses a significant challenge to our environment, our economy and our communities. Carbon sequestration in sustainably managed private forest lands and carbon storage in forest products can provide a natural solution to climate change while also providing a wide variety of additional benefits like clean air and water, wildlife habitat, and good paying jobs.

Forest owners and forest products manufacturers are well positioned to optimize the carbon potential of the private working forest value chain through sustainable forest management and the manufacture of sustainable forest products. Forest owners and managers should be empowered with the tools they need to increase overall forest carbon sequestration using sustainable forest management practices and technologies, and site-appropriate reforestation. Healthy, sustainable forest products markets are essential to optimizing the benefits of forest carbon on private lands and in the materials and products they produce. For example, solid wood construction at scale using new engineered wood technologies, like mass timber produced from sustainably managed forests, presents a significant opportunity to store carbon and reduce energy consumption and related carbon emissions in the built environment.

Private forests are under increasing threat from uncharacteristic wildfire, pests and disease, drought and extreme weather events that can cause significant carbon releases and other environmental damage. In many private forests, addressing these threats requires sustainable management such as thinning, prescribed fire, and other forest management techniques that bolster forest health and resilience.

Public policies should include market and incentive-based approaches that help capture the potential of private forests and forest products to sequester more carbon, while ensuring sustainable forest management to maintain and improve forest health and resilience, boost private sector investment in rural communities, and help keep forests as forests.

Policy is strengthened through advances in science, technologies, techniques, and practices to improve forest carbon inventories and provide better information to landowners, forest managers and the public regarding the contribution and management of forests and forest products for climate mitigation. Such advances also support forest practices that benefit the environment and forest economies.

Maintaining sustainable private working forests at scale to benefit the climate requires investing in the jobs, businesses, and infrastructure necessary to support a strong forest economy. Such investments must help sustain markets that increase the carbon mitigation benefits of forest and wood products, provide additional environmental benefits, and strengthen rural communities.

Leadership and innovation in the private sector play an important role in advancing and informing public policy. Throughout the economy, businesses are seeking natural climate solutions to reduce their carbon footprints. A growing number of partnerships between private companies, the forest sector, and environmental and conservation organizations are driving investment in the significant carbon potential of sustainably managed forests and forest products. The insights and experience gained from such early action provides an important basis for effective policy.

# Policy Principles

As leaders of the environmental, conservation and forest business communities, we recognize that private working forests and forest products can play an important role in mitigating climate change. The following principles outline our shared vision for increasing the contribution of forests and forest products to climate mitigation.

- ▶ Policies should include incentives and market-based mechanisms and should be designed to be accessible and credible to maintain working forests, increase carbon benefits across the working forest value chain, and encourage broad participation from forest owners, forest products manufacturers and potential investors.
- ▶ Public funding should be directed to improve forest carbon science and data collection and incentivize the development of new technologies, techniques, and practices to improve forest carbon inventories and life cycle analyses for forest products.
- ▶ Increased public funding and policies should focus on innovative approaches to increase carbon benefits in and from forests and improve the scalability and outcomes of USDA private forest conservation programs, such as the Forest Legacy Program, State and Private Forest Grant Programs, the Healthy Forests Reserve Program.
- ▶ Policies should encourage, recognize, and reward private sector partnerships that advance the carbon potential of sustainably managed forests and forest products at scale.
- ▶ Policies should help spur investments in the rural jobs, businesses, and infrastructure necessary to support a strong forest economy.
- ▶ Policies to reward the carbon benefits of forest products, such as mass timber and other advanced building materials, must be based on scientifically sound life cycle analysis and include safeguards to promote positive outcomes for forests and the climate.
- ▶ Policies should support updating building and architectural codes to reflect the carbon benefits of advanced wood construction.
- ▶ Public funding should be invested in training programs for architects, builders, and other professionals who make important decisions about building materials and their sourcing.
- ▶ Policies should ensure sustainability through practices such as forest certification, use of best management practices and other approaches that support clean air and water, wildlife habitat, the conservation of ecologically sensitive areas, and other environmental benefits.



BBC Land, LLC



# About the CEO Principles

The CEO Principles are a shared vision for increasing the contribution of forests and forest products to climate mitigation from leaders of the environmental, conservation and forest business communities. The signing CEOs recognize that private working forests and forest products can play an important role in mitigating climate change through thoughtful policy, private sector engagement, and investment in rural communities.

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