

Consortium for Community Forestry

Developing an Inventory of CBF Initiatives in the U.S.

Introduction

A number of organizations and individuals have joined together to form the Consortium for Community Forestry to assist the US Endowment for Forestry and Communities in clarifying its understanding of community-based forestry (CBF) and community-owned forests in the U.S. The Consortium will highlight existing and emerging issues, create a public database of CBF initiatives – including community-owned forests – and identify opportunities for the U.S. Endowment, other funding sources, and organizations to advance community forestry. As part of this process, the Consortium will compile an inventory of CBF initiatives in the U.S. and conduct a survey of key attributes and contextual factors affecting the development and implementation of CBF.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on the parameters of CBF in order to identify CBF initiatives to include in the survey. At this point in time, we are far more concerned with capturing the range of CBF initiatives, than with refining a definition and deciding which examples “fit”. Initiatives will self-select and/or be identified by others as examples of CBF. Representatives from these initiatives will complete a survey and may then be included in a public database of CBF initiatives. We are including place-based initiatives, as well as the organizations that provide support to CBF.

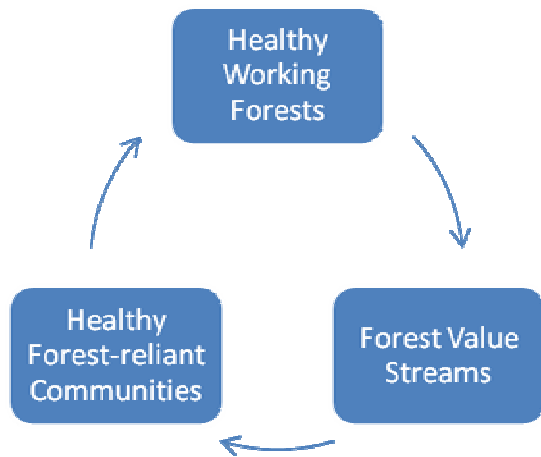
We are asking you, as a knowledgeable and networked resource person in the field of Community-Based Forestry, to help us initiate this process by completing the form on page 4 identifying the CBF initiatives with which you are familiar. You will not be asked to provide additional information, as we will follow-up directly with the contacts you provide. Thank you for your help!

Background

Community based forestry (CBF) has been defined in a variety of ways. In all cases it involves devolution of the locus-of-control from centralized entities (public or private) to various forms of community influence over forest resources and management activity. This shift in the locus-of-control is an invention of necessity and self-preservation. Historically, forest management and forestland decisions, reflecting shifting public environmental values and laws, have been made by large bureaucracies and/or distant organizations with little or no regard to the long-term well being or impact on communities. Whole communities have been created and obliterated on the anvil of economic efficiency and the shifting sands of public opinion. Sustainability of communities and the people who settled forest rich places were not in the equation. Communities are left to cope with degraded resources, obsolete infrastructure, and a lack of reinvestment back into the forest and communities as manufacturing processes have become consolidated, mechanized and globalized. CBF – including community-owned forests – is a movement to reinvigorate, reinvest in, and restructure forest-rich communities in sustainable ways.

The US Endowment envisions a system where healthy working forests provide multiple forest value streams that, when captured, lead to healthy forest-reliant communities. Healthy forest-reliant

communities in turn steward their forests in sustainable ways that maintain healthy working forests. Communities may need assistance in any of these three areas and intervention in any area will lead to a strengthening of the others. This reinforcing system can be depicted as follows:



The forest has a number of potential value streams. Wood and all of the possible derivative products made from wood are the most obvious and remain important to society and forest-reliant communities. In many cases, recreation and non-timber forest products can be a viable forest value streams. Ecosystem services have been the least appreciated and valued elements of a forest, but are coming to be viewed in a new way as the importance of clean water, clean air and climate issues are reaching new levels of public interest. Aesthetics (views of mountains and trees) are generally associated with forest amenity communities and can be very valuable.

What are the many forms of community based forestry and what factors control these forms and whether they are successful? The Consortium proposes to document and map the breadth and diversity of community-based forestry within the United States, catalogue policies and practices, analyze success factors, opportunities, and constraints, and make recommendations for investment.

Definitions for the Purposes of this Study

Community based forestry – is the practice of developing locally appropriate, collaborative initiatives to create and sustain healthy working forests that generate value streams and benefits that support all members of healthy, forest-reliant communities.

Community based forestry initiative – is a local, collaborative effort in which organizations, local government, private forest owners and a representative sample of community members work together to enhance, restore and/or manage the forest resource through sustainable forest stewardship, and to provide diverse benefits to a broad range of community members.

Community – is a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings

Collaboration – is an inclusive, transparent process in which individuals with diverse values, backgrounds, and experiences voluntarily work through their differences and share knowledge and resources to achieve goals they could not achieve alone.

Sustainable forestry – is the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate and scale, which maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, resilience and their potential to fulfill, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic, cultural and social functions, at local, national and global levels.

Forest rich community – communities where the forest resource is currently or has historically been

abundant and a significant part of the local economy and identity and opportunities exist to generate a range of value streams that benefit a broad range of community members.

Healthy working forests – Forests that maintain the function, diversity, and resiliency of all components and can either produce or have the potential to produce a range of timber and non-timber forest products, including lumber, firewood, fiber, recreation, water, wildlife and other ecological services.

Guidance

A CBF initiative may include a variety of projects and activities. We see the following processes as key attributes of CBF, although the form and structure these attributes take may differ between sites. **We believe that all of the following attributes are necessary, albeit at different degrees depending on the context.**

The practice of community-based forestry incorporates processes that address:

- Management of forest ecosystems
 - Promotes forest stewardship that provides a variety of forest products, employment, revenue, and ecosystem services, including: water quality and quantity, recreation, aesthetic value, and carbon sequestration.
- Tenure and access to benefits from the forest resource
 - Secures access and rights to the forest resource at the community level
 - Promotes national, state or local policy initiatives that bring increased community involvement and influence over the forest resources
- Ensures that a broad range of community members receive value and benefits from the land that can support and reinforce community priorities and economic development objectives. For example:
 - Building or rebuilding the infrastructure for forest-based economic activity
 - Business development initiatives that seek to capture one or more value streams from the forest resource
 - Local government entities (including schools and libraries) that derive income from a forest resource
 - Entrepreneurialism and innovation that create new business models
- Building or rebuilding inclusive and equitable civic decision-making capacity and policy frameworks that promote healthy, vibrant and resilient communities
 - Employs collaborative processes that promote community participation in management decisions
 - Promotes policies and programs that enable community-based forestry initiatives to be successful