Preliminary Ideas for an Economic Stimulus Package
Rural Green Economy Initiative:
Green Jobs for Restoration and Stewardship

Summary

Create and fund a $2 billion Rural Green Economy Initiative to train and develop a workforce and rural business assistance program to accelerate restoration and stewardship in America's forests and watersheds. This initiative will include three components: 1) training opportunities to create a restoration-oriented workforce ($250 million), 2) small businesses grants and assistance to create business capacity to capitalize on restoration-oriented opportunities ($250 million), 3) funding to implement restoration and stewardship work in forests and watersheds ($1.5 billion). The USDA Forest Service, under the authority of the Department of Labor, would administer the program to provide career training and education to prepare a workforce to perform a wide range of restoration and stewardship-oriented green jobs on federal lands. This new program should focus on creating long-duration, well paying green job careers in our nation's rural communities through activities that include hazardous fuels reduction, woody biomass utilization, watershed and stream restoration, road and trail maintenance, stand inventories, boundary line location for federal lands, wood bridge repair and construction, stewardship of forests and grasslands including rehabilitation and reforestation, invasive species control and eradication, endangered, threatened and rare species recovery efforts, and the maintenance and greening of recreation sites and facilities. This initiative offers the opportunity to provide approximately 25,000 jobs nationwide.

Rural business assistance grants should be offered on a competitive basis and include start up support for wood to energy programs including appropriately scaled biomass feedstock removals, plant construction, and other utilization of restoration byproducts in value added processing and manufacturing opportunities. This job training and business assistance program must be done in tandem with investments in and competitive grants for landscape scale restoration; without increased investment in restoration and management activities we will not have jobs to offer those who receive training and business development assistance and funding.

The job training, creation and implementation in this initiative are meant to be exclusively natural resource-related jobs that assist the federal land management agencies in carrying out their missions. Successful examples of this type of program can be found in the various federal commercial fishery disaster relief programs – the Northwest Emergency Assistance Plan in particular. This program provided economic aid to salmon fisheries in the states of Washington, Oregon, and California to support both habitat restoration and data collection jobs' programs in all three states (For more information visit www.nfcc-fisheries.org/ir_io_fdra.html). Another program example is the Northwest Economic Adjustment Initiative, which provided similar assistance in the wake of the Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan. These examples are instructive, but the new initiative proposed herein offers an opportunity to provide assistance that provides more complete assistance for long-term sustainable land-based economies.

Outcomes

This $2 billion dollar investment will result in:

- Restored and maintained health, productivity, and long-term sustainability of our nation's forests, grasslands, stream systems, and wetlands.
- Healthy, sustainable economies in our nation's rural communities.
- Increased community and business capacity in rural America.
- Family-wage, stable green jobs careers in rural communities, allowing our rural communities to flourish and our young people to live and work in these areas.
- Reduced catastrophic wildfire and carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to global climate change.
- Reduced wildfire suppression costs.
- Contributions to America's efforts to become energy independent.
- Protection and enhancement of ecosystem services such as clean water, species diversity, and carbon sequestration.
- Increased outdoor recreation and the opportunity for physically challenging occupations that can improve the health of America's youth.

Types of Green Jobs

Hazardous fuels reduction
Reforestation and post-fire rehabilitation to restore areas devastated by fire
Watershed and stream restoration
Restoration and enhancement of wildlife and fish habitat
Noxious weed and invasive species control and eradication
Road and trail maintenance
Stand inventories and other natural resource data collection
Boundary line location for federal lands
Wood bridge repair and construction
Stewardship of forests and grasslands
Maintenance and greening of recreation sites and facilities
Small business development in wood to energy programs including biomass feedstock removals and plant construction
Small business development in utilizing the byproducts of restoration for value added processing opportunities

Needs/Opportunities

Forest Service Restoration and Maintenance Backlog

The US Forest Service is experiencing a crisis of serious proportions in the condition of its lands, facilities and roads. This crisis can be turned into opportunity – the opportunity to put thousands of American's to work through well paying jobs and the development of

small businesses. The following are just some of the facts regarding the Forest Service restoration and maintenance needs.

- 50 million – 90 million acres of national forest land in need of hazardous fuels restoration (the Forest Service treated 3 million acres this year)[1]
- $467 million worth of recreation facilities backlog[1]
- At least $224 million backlog of trails work[1]
- $8 billion[2] road maintenance backlog
- The backlog of unmarked property line is 165,000 miles (or 60% of total property line miles)[1]. This has led to a significant increase in trespasses, encroachments, title claims, expensive and protracted litigation and loss of public lands and public trust.

Opportunity for Forest Assessments/Stand Inventories/Natural Resource Data Collection

- The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act as amended in the 2008 Farm Bill[3] requires all states to complete forest resource assessments in the next two years in order to qualify for funding.
- Forest stand inventories, wildlife population & habitat surveys, rangeland riparian surveys, stream surveys, and other such natural resource data collection are necessary for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and other resource planning processes required prior to project implementation.
- Biomass utilization opportunities require reliable estimates of local forest resource supply – stand inventories are needed to obtain this supply information.

Administration

The Forest Service will administer the green jobs program, in consultation with the DOI (relevant land management agencies – BLM, USFWS) and under the authority of the Department of Labor.

Restoration and Stewardship Job Training ($250 million)

The Forest Service will provide career training and grants to educate and prepare a workforce to perform a wide range of restoration and stewardship oriented green jobs. The availability of a variety of existing delivery mechanisms, differing by geographic location, makes utilization of a range of authorities and programs for delivering this training assistance most effective. Using a variety of mechanisms, the Forest Service can design a national program that provides effective delivery of job training that is customized to the needs and realities of communities, forests, and watersheds at the local

---

[1] Personal communication, Forest Service Budget Director, November 2008

[2] United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 2004. *Fiscal Year 2005 Forest Service Budget Justification*. sec. 10, p.33.

[3] Title VIII, Section 8002 of The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

level. The Forest Service should utilize the following authorities and programs to design the career training and grants program that will build the rural restoration workforce called for under this initiative.

Existing Authorities and Programs

Economic Action Program

The Economic Action Program is a suite of programs for integrating natural resource management and rural community assistance. Economic Action Programs were authorized to help rural communities create and expand natural resource-based businesses, focusing on those which contribute to forest health and resource stewardship, and implement forest products technologies and increase commercial use of small diameter and woody biomass. Authorization was provided through the National Forest-Dependent Rural Communities Economic Diversification Act of 1990, 1990 Farm Bill, Subtitle G, Rural Revitalization through Forestry.

Youth Conservation Corps

The Youth Conservation Corps is a summer employment program for young men and women age 15 through 18, from all segments of society, who work, learn, and earn together by doing projects on public land. Since 1970 the Youth Conservation Corps program has operated as a work-earn-learn program for youth as provided for in Public Law 91-378, 1970, as amended. The program is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Forest Service, U. S. Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service.

Job Corps Centers

The Forest Service operates 18 Job Corps Centers on National Forest Land in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor. Job Corps is authorized by Title I-C of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. It is recommended that if Job Corps Centers are utilized under this Initiative, that direction is provided to those Centers to provide a certain percentage of assistance to individuals from rural communities adjacent to federal lands and to authorize provision of assistance to citizens of all ages rather than just youth.

Partnerships and Agreements

The Forest Service, under various legal authorities, has the ability to enter into partnerships, agreements, contracts and grants with other entities, including tribal governments, and non-profit organizations[4]. For example, the FS recently developed a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Association of State Foresters, National Association of Conservation Districts, and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service to strengthen cooperation among the Parties for coordinated interagency delivery of forestry-related conservation assistance to private landowners. This type of agreement, coupled with grant funding, can be used to engage partners in helping ensure provision of training services in areas where the partner organizations may be the strongest entity to provide such services.

---

[4] For more information on the various legal authorizations for grants, agreements and contracts, visit http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/partnership-guide/.

New Authorities

The National Forest System, as part of the U.S. Forest Service, currently does not have the authority to provide grants, instead they must run their money through State and Private Forestry, which can be a time consuming and cumbersome internal process for the agency and the grantee. To reduce internal transaction costs and ensure that funds are expediently dispersed to communities and enterprises that are positioned to assist the agency in implementation of the Rural Green Economy Initiative we recommend that the NFS be provided direct granting authority to help expedite and efficiently partner with non-profits and other non-federal entities, including tribes who leverage these federal resources.

Rural Natural Resource Enterprise Assistance ($250 million)

The Forest Service, through its Economic Action Program (EAP), will initiate a rural natural resource enterprise program, in collaboration with the USDA Rural Development Program and the US Small Business Administration, to assist restoration and stewardship oriented businesses access capital and other business support services offered by the federal government. EAP will provide grants to finance eligible small businesses and offer services such as, but not limited to; specialized grant writing assistance and instruction, bonding access, federal bidding procedural instruction, and introductions to meeting accountability requirements. Additionally, the Small Business Administration[5] will establish a $50 million fund to provide direct low-interest loans and zero-interest short-term line of credit (to assist with carrying inventory and other short-term credit issues caused by the current economic down turn) to eligible businesses in forest and watershed restoration and stewardship related enterprises. Eligible businesses will be those owned and operated in a rural county and/or can show that a significant portion of their workers are permanent residents of a rural county.

Restoration and Stewardship Implementation ($1.5 billion)

The Forest Service backlog of restoration and maintenance work can be addressed by providing funding directly to implement on-the-ground projects to do this work. Because the funding provided under this Initiative will be a short-term infusion of funding, the Forest Service should be required to expend 65% of the total implementation funds through contracts and grants.

The Forest Service has the ability to contract aspects of planning and design elements of project development, such as NEPA work, stewardship sale preparation and the preparation of other kinds of contracting. Training in these activities and the increased authority to acquire these services from the private sector will enhance the capacity of the FS to deliver more projects and employment opportunities to local community business applicants in a timely manner, while creating a trained workforce that can supplement the Forest Service's own limitations on personnel available for these purposes.

---

[5] Alternatively, this loan and short-term no-interest line of credit could be provided through the Department of Agriculture using authorities provided under the National Forest-Dependent Rural Communities Economic Diversification Act of 1990, 1990 Farm Bill, Subtitle G, Rural Revitalization through Forestry.

Funding for project implementation employing workers in restoration and stewardship should be provided through:

- **Resource Advisory Committees**
  Congress established Resource Advisory Committees (RACs) as a new mechanism for local community collaboration with federal land managers in recommending projects to be conducted on federal lands or that will benefit resources on federal lands. The Committee members review project proposals and make recommendations on spending the county-designated funds to the Secretary of Agriculture and Secretary of the Interior. Committee members represent a variety of interests and are committed to working collaboratively for the long-term benefit of public lands and local communities. RAC's were established under Section 205 of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-393).

- **Establishment of a Restoration and Stewardship Line Item in the FS budget**
  Existing Forest Service budget structures are outdated, left over from the era of large timber sales. These old structures stovepipe activities leading to inefficiencies in administrative procedures and difficulty linking expenditures to outcomes. These outdated structures should be integrated to achieve landscape scale restoration and stewardship objectives. The establishment of a restoration and stewardship line item will facilitate expenditures that directly restore or maintain federal lands, as well as providing an opportunity for increased transparency in agency allocations for this purpose.

The Forest Service has a number of existing authorities to ensure that work is done in a manner that maximizes high-quality, long-term employment. Expedient use of these existing authorities should be pursued in implementing this initiative.

Existing Authorities

Stewardship Contracting
Public Law 108-7 granted the Forest Service ten-year authority to enter into stewardship contracts or agreements to achieve agency land management objectives and meet community needs. This represented an extension of the Forest Service's authority to 2013. Some of the features of the authorizing legislation includes allowing the Forest Service to apply the value of timber or other forest products removed as an offset against the cost of services received, apply excess receipts from a project to other authorized stewardship projects, select contracts and agreements on a "best value" basis, and award a contract or agreement up to ten years which may stimulate long term investment in the local community. Stewardship contracts may be used for treatments to improve, maintain, or restore forest or rangeland health; restore or maintain water quality; improve fish and wildlife habitat; and reduce hazardous fuels that pose risks to communities and ecosystem values. These practices can be bundled into single contracts, which reduce the number of entries into certain areas of the forest and provide for an efficiency of management as opposed to numerous smaller contracts for this work. (For more information visit

www.sustainablenorthwest.org/quick-links/resources/rvcc-issue-papers/2008TalkingPoints-%20stewcontracting.pdf)

Wyden Amendment
The Wyden Amendment (Public Law 109-54, Section 434) authorizes the Forest Service to enter into cooperative agreements to benefit resources within watersheds on National Forest System lands. Agreements may be with willing Federal, Tribal, State, and local governments, private and nonprofit entities, and landowners to conduct activities on public or private lands for the following purposes: Protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and other resources, and/or reduction of risk for natural disaster where public safety is threatened. This authority was initially provided in FY 1998 and has been extended through the end of FY 2011.

Best-Value Contracting
Best value contracting is a mechanism that the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and other federal land management agencies can use to effectively implement projects with multiple objectives. It allows the federal government to acquire goods and services from the businesses that offer the best value to the government, not simply the lowest price. For more information visit www.sustainablenorthwest.org/quick-links/resources/rvcc-issue-papers/Best%20Value%202007.pdf)

Tribal Forest Protection Act
The Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004 (Public Law 108–278) authorizes the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to give special consideration to tribally proposed projects on agency lands bordering or adjacent to Indian trust land. TFPA was passed in July 2004 in response to devastating wildfires that crossed from Federal onto Tribal lands the prior summer. TFPA provides a tool for tribes to propose work and enter into contracts and agreements with the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management to reduce threats from on Federal lands adjacent to Indian trust land and Indian communities. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management coordinated on development of policy to implement the Act. (http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/tribal/index.shtml)

General Contracting Provision

In administering contracts using funds from this Initiative the Forest Service shall offer these projects on a best value basis using current Stewardship Contracting authority and/or on a best value basis using at least the following non-price criteria: Economic benefit to the county closest to the project can be demonstrated through the creation or retention of local jobs, local processing and utilization of the material, and achievement of the ecological objectives of the project, including minimizing soil impacts.

Accountability for Results

The Forest Service should design and implement an aggressive accountability system that monitors results in achieving the goals of the **Rural Green Economy Initiative**. The system should be based on reporting the long-term outcomes of this initiative. The

accountability system should be integrated into the Forest Service normal accountability systems, but ensure that the results of implementing this initiative in specific can be tracked and reported.

Monitoring the ecological and economic impacts of this initiative offers an additional opportunity for job training and creation. Natural resource monitoring is a specialized skill that can be applied in a variety of settings on private and public lands. Local workforce development for monitoring tasks should be pursued at every opportunity and should be done in cooperation with the Forest Service Research Stations with particular emphasis on working with the social scientists with in the agency who are best positioned to be able to report on the economic impacts of these investments and actions; further we recommend that partnerships with community colleges and other academic and research entities willing to be involved in applied research to ensure we are best able to capture and track over the long term the impacts of these efforts.

The Forest Service should be required to monitor and report on integrated, long-term outcomes on the degree to which the agency improves and maintains healthy functioning watershed conditions, contributes to economic systems that support their mission, works collaboratively with rural communities, interest groups, tribes and state and local governments. Congressional guidance and oversight should focus on:

1) Establishing consistent allocation criteria at the national and regional level to guide funding decisions.
2) Requiring the agencies to measure and report outcome-oriented measures consistent with allocation criteria.
3) Ensuring the availability and maintenance of reliable, publicly accessible datasets to support measurements.
4) Requiring the development of performance measures that measure the effectiveness and benefit of restoration work and assistance provided to rural, public lands communities.

Monitoring results could include the following measures:

Economic

- Green jobs created (account separately for federal government jobs and private sector employment)
- Green jobs retained (account separately for federal government jobs and private sector employment)
- Number of small businesses related to restoration and stewardship created
- Number of small businesses related to restoration and stewardship retained

Social

- Restoration and stewardship-based workforce contribution to rural community economic vitality (as percentage of economic activity)

Restoration and Stewardship

- Acres restored to fully functioning condition
- Acres where full restoration is initiated
- Acres maintained in fully functioning condition

For more information contact:

Maia Enzer
Sustainable Northwest
503-221-6911 x 111
menzer@sustainablenorthwest.org

Wendy Gerlitz
Sustainable Northwest
503-449-0009
wgerlitz@gmail.com

E. Lynn Jungwirth
Watershed Research & Training Center
530-628-4206
lynnj@hayfork.net

Johnny Sundstrom
The Siuslaw Institute
541-964-5901
siwash@pioneer.net