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Forest Carbon Coalition Urges The Obama Administration To Modernize Forest Management to Protect The Climate

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Eugene, Oregon and Washington D.C.: The Federal Forest Carbon Coalition (FFCC), today issued a suite of science-based recommendations to the Obama Administration intended to modernize federal forest management to address the climate crisis. The recommendations, *Modernizing Federal Forest Management To Mitigate and Prepare For Climate Disruption*, emphasize conserving carbon already stored in forests while also increasing carbon sequestration, building resilience to climate change-related disturbances, and generating social, economic, and ecological co-benefits consistent with the other goals.

The FFCC is a new first-of-a-kind consortium of over 60 national, regional and local organizations focused on forests, biodiversity, fisheries, rivers, faith and spirituality, Native American treaty rights, youth, rural communities, and climate disruption.
(Website: www.forestcc.org)

The FFCC's 17 recommendations are framed around six new interrelated goals that the FFCC believes are needed to help the U.S. Departments of Interior and Agriculture and other federal land management agencies comply with the requirements of President Obama's Executive Order 13653, of November 1, 2013: *Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change*. The President's Executive Order requires federal agencies to submit plans to CEQ and OMB by July of this year to build resilience for and reduce the sources of climate disruption.

"Although few people realize it, forests play a major role in regulating the Earth's climate, and federal forests must play a significant role in preventing runaway climate disruption," said Bob Doppelt, Executive Director of the Resource Innovation Group, and co-chair of the FFCC. "To address this need, federal forest management agencies must rapidly make a major shift in mindset, science, policies, regulations, and practices. Our recommendations are intended to help the agencies begin the transition."

"The economic values at stake are large," said Ernie Niemi, economist with Natural Resource Economics Inc. and co-chair of the FFCC. "For example, using the Obama Administration's own \$50 per metric tonne mid-level estimate of the social cost of carbon, if even one tenth of the carbon held on federal forests is released into the atmosphere the damage would be in the range of \$200 billion. Our recommendations seek to reorient the management of federal forests to hold onto the stored carbon and prevent this major economic damage."

“Federal agencies have historically neglected forest carbon,” said Jim Furnish, former Deputy Chief of the U.S. Forest Service and Senior Advisor to the FFCC. “We have identified several key policy changes that can really improve carbon storage and lessen climate change impacts.”

The complete set of FFCC recommendations can be obtained here:

<http://www.theresourceinnovationgroup.org/storage/ffcc/FFCCrecommendationsToObamaAdminJune2014.pdf>

Statements From FFCC Steering Committee Members:

“For the sake of all children we believe that agencies who manage federal forests need to re-think and re-prioritize the purposes and practices of forest management in light of the present day climate reality,” said Valerie Serrels, Associate Director of Kids vs Global Warming and the iMatter Campaign, and FFCC steering committee member. “Our recommendations provide a map for not only reframing forest management, but also for transformational shifts in understanding the context of forestry within today’s new climate paradigm.”

“We love our forests for their beauty and for providing an abundance of clean water, wildlife, and recreation,” said Shelley Silbert, Executive Director of Great Old Broads for Wilderness and FFCC Steering committee member. “However, when we think of the economic value of forests, we fail to recognize their critical importance in regulating climate disruption. Reorienting the management of our National Forests is essential to our future.”

“The Tongass is a shining knight in the battle against global warming, and must be managed to protect its world-class ability to store carbon,” said Malena Marvin, Executive Director at Southeast Alaska Conservation Council and FFCC Steering Committee member. “The good news is that protecting Tongass carbon storage is 100% compatible with a Tongass transition that also prioritizes Southeast Alaska’s forest jobs and our \$2 billion per year fishing and tourism industries.”

“From the massive Coast Redwoods of California to the towering spruce trees of the Tongass rainforest in Alaska, older forests help stabilize the climate, clean our air, give us drinking water, and support the region’s outdoor economies,” said Dominick A. DellaSala, Ph.D, President, Chief Scientist at the Geos Institute and an FFCC Steering committee member. “The President can make protecting the nation’s older forests a signature part of his environmental and climate change legacy.”

“If we let them, our public forests can live for centuries, making them great places to store carbon and reduce greenhouse pollution,” said Doug Heiken of Oregon Wild and an FFCC steering committee member. “Conserving high-carbon forests will not only help stabilize the climate, but provide a variety of additional benefits, such as clean water, wildlife habitat, and recreation, all of which enhance our quality of life.”

Summary of FFCC Recommendations To CEO and OMB

The 17 specific recommendations are framed around six interrelated goals:

Goal I: Recognize Carbon As A Significant Public Resource and Establish Carbon and Climate Change-Centered Goals For All Decisions Affecting Federal Forest Management.

Goal II: Maintain the Existing Stocks of Carbon on Federal Forests, Including Carbon in Live and Dead Materials, Above and Below Ground

Specific Recommendations:

- A. Permanently withdraw high-biomass forested areas nationwide from further commercial timber harvest and other development activities.
- B. Authorize commercial timber harvest and other development activities in other mature forests only when analysis shows the carbon benefits exceed the full costs over the mid-term (i.e. 20-40 years).
- C. Establish in planning rules a requirement to designate and conserve forested areas with higher than average carbon biomass.

Goal III: Increase the Amount of Carbon Stored on Federal Forests

Specific Recommendations:

- A. Prevent management activities, including but not limited to timber harvests, that would reduce increases in carbon stocks on a federal forest.
- B. Increase the carbon stored on federal forests by reducing human disturbances.

Goal IV: Enhance, Consistent with Goals I, II, and III, The Resilience Of Federal Forests To Climate Change Related and Other Natural Disturbances

Specific Recommendations:

- A. Use principles of conservation biology as the basis for increasing the resilience of federal forests, including restoration of more natural fire regimes in mesic and xeric forests, away from human habitation and infrastructure.
- B. Where needed, prioritize forest thinning in the immediate vicinity of human habitation and infrastructure and avoid thinning elsewhere unless analysis shows net carbon benefits, over the mid-term (i.e. 20-40 years).
- C. Prohibit the burning and salvage logging of dead wood in high biomass and mature forests.
- D. Place a 5-year moratorium on new leases for fracking for oil and natural gas on federal forests to allow for an assessment of hydrofracking consequences and the values at risk on our national forests.

- E. Deny proposals to extract biomass for energy or to harvest timber for wood products unless analysis shows net carbon benefits over the mid-term (i.e. 20- 40 years).
- F. Significantly reduce carbon emissions generated by the use of fossil fuels in forest-related activities.

Goal V: Generate Social, Economic, and Ecological Co-Benefits Consistent With Goals I, II, III, and IV.

Specific Recommendations:

- A. Increase the supply of ecosystem services compatible with storing carbon on federal forests.
- B. Promote carbon-conservation and restoration jobs consistent with climate and ecological goals.
- C. Realign forest-related payments to local governments to reflect the direct value of storing carbon and the value of the co-benefits of other ecosystem services provided by forests.

Goal VI: Fully Account For The Benefits and Costs of Any Decreases or Increases in Atmospheric Carbon and Other Greenhouse Gasses In All Forest-related Policies, Programs, Regulations, and Practices.

Specific Recommendations:

- A. Publicly and consistently highlight the need to alter federal forest policies and management to reduce the risks of climate change.
- B. Invest in and build the capacity of federal forest management agencies to manage for carbon and climate resilience.
- C. Require scientific, comprehensive, transparent analysis of the ecological, social, and economic costs of changes in carbon due to all management activities before approval.

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