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COUNCIL AWARDS CLOSE TO \$1 MILLION IN FOREST STIMULUS GRANTS TO LOCAL BUSINESSES
Second Phase of Awards to Boost Forest Products Industry

Asheville, NC – Land-of-Sky Regional Council (LOSRC) Chair Letta Jean Taylor today announced grants totaling \$956,164 to 11 local businesses to produce jobs and stimulate the economy of Western North Carolina (WNC). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds are the second round of economic stimulus awards provided by the USDA Forest Service’s Southern Research Station and dispersed from LOSRC to generate jobs by helping forest producers improve their forest products marketing and production methods. Total awards from both rounds come to \$1,209,764.

“This has been a win-win partnership with Land-of-Sky and Western North Carolina communities. Combined with the first three projects unveiled on June 2, Land-of-Sky has now distributed stimulus funds to help 14 businesses across the region, which has created an estimated 141 jobs of under-or unemployed forest producers,” said USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station Director Jim Reaves. “I believe these projects will help jumpstart the forest products industry and the economy of Western North Carolina.”

“We have some of the most productive forests in the country and it is important that we use that asset wisely to support the economies of our rural communities,” said Taylor. “These stimulus projects give us an opportunity to use our renewable forest resources to bring back many of the jobs lost in the economic downturn.”

The businesses selected for funding through the Western North Carolina Forest Products Cooperative Marketing Project include a diverse group of forest enterprises. The companies will use the funds to expand and diversify their businesses. LOSRC awarded more than \$250,000 to Appalachian Designs, Bark House Supply Company, and the Boggs Collective during the first award phase. This second phase provides awards to the following businesses:

- **Clear Creek Wood Products** is receiving \$81,500 to operate a shaving mill from small diameter timber procured from area harvesters.
- **Community Forestry Project** will use \$99,998 to promote sustainable forestry through worker training, product development and cooperative marketing in horse logging, sawmill operation, and production of value-added forest products.
- **Green River Forest Products** is receiving \$88,050 to construct dry kilns to bundle, market, and transport environmentally safe and marketable firewood.
- **Hickory Nut Gap and Big Sandy Mush** is accepting \$99,519 to form a partnership to improve sustainable community forestry through local lumber, small scale sawmills, woodland and medicinal plants, ecotourism, eco-education, land conservation, and the use of local building materials.
- **Blue Ridge Wild Timbers** will use \$66,340 to construct dry kilns and develop marketing and education materials to increase capacity for locally sourced firewood while establishing cooperative relationships with unemployed loggers.
- **Furniture Specialties Inc.** is receiving \$99,880 to gain Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, conduct seminars, assist local vendors become FSC certified, and market the benefits of green furniture constructed with sustainably harvested wood.

- **WNC Mushroom Coop** is accepting \$83,200 to coordinate production of regional growers to collectively market and promote cultivation of gourmet and medicinal mushrooms and sustainably draw from underutilized timber resources to produce mushroom substrate, making this product available to the public.
- **Highland Craftsmen, Inc.** will use \$87,550 to certify locally sourced hardwood trees for structural purposes, certify local professionals to provide grade stamping, and provide this service to other businesses.
- **Recovering Traditional Cherokee Delicacies** is accepting \$62,327 to train and employ unemployed forest producers to harvest, grow, and market forest food products traditionally gathered by Cherokee tribe members, including wild edible greens and mushrooms.
- **Smoky Mountain Native Plants** is receiving \$90,000 to create a network and cooperative of producers to grow, harvest, and market value-added ramp products.
- **Mountain Valleys RC&D** will use \$97,800 to train loggers and forest workers to sustainably open old roads and trails in private forests while implementing forest stewardship plans for innovative approaches to forest uses.

More information about the projects and economic stimulus effort is available at:

http://www.landofsky.org/planning/p_working_lands.html

The Southern Research Station, based in Asheville, is providing more than \$1.9 million in ARRA funds for the economic stimulus effort being administered by LOSRC. The President signed ARRA into law on Feb. 17, 2009. The Southern Research Station awarded the ARRA grant to LOSRC in a competitive selection process.

LOSRC has awarded more than \$1.2 million of \$1.974 million in ARRA funds. Of the remaining funding, LOSRC set aside \$400,000 in funds for cooperating organizations and technical advisors to provide assistance to grantees. LOSRC will be using \$250,000 of the \$1.9 million in ARRA funds for project management and assisting grantees. Approximately \$115,000 is planned for workshops, meetings, and training for grantees and other forest producers in the WNC community.

LOSRC solicited proposals as part of this economic stimulus effort to help improve the forest products industry in WNC. These ARRA funds were awarded through a "Request for Proposals (RFP)" process. Local companies submitted more than 60 highly competitive project proposals requesting over \$4.7 million. The funded businesses met the stringent selection criteria highlighted in the RFPs. Selection criteria included the long-term benefits to WNC forests, primary and secondary community impacts, potential for building local capacity and collaboration, and the sustainability of forest practices.

The marketing project helps businesses to be more profitable as demand for forest products returns and the economy recovers. The stimulus effort provides funding to selected businesses to facilitate collaboration among underemployed or unemployed forest workers. The goal is for forest products companies to expand their businesses, thereby positively affecting the entire production chain, from producers to the consumer.

LOSRC is a non-profit, voluntary association of local governments that manages regional projects and provides services to its members in the areas of planning, economic and community development since 1966.

The Southern Research Station is comprised of more than 120 scientists who conduct natural resource research in 20 locations across 13 southern states (Virginia to Texas). The Station's mission is "...to create the science and technology needed to sustain and enhance southern forest ecosystems and the benefits they provide." Learn more about the Southern Research Station at: <http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/>.

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