

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Project Name: Engaging Family Forest Owners in Carbon Solutions and Markets

Funding Year: 2021

Stakeholders

Forest Service Region: USDA Forest Service - R8

Sponsoring Organization: Georgia Forestry Commission

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Participating Organizations: Georgia Forestry Commission, Louisiana Office of Forestry, South Carolina Forestry Commission

Grantee: Forest Landowners Association

Project Funding

Agreement(s): 21-DG-11083150-026

Project Design

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Project Purpose

Building collaboration of family forest landowners (FFOs), state agencies, & carbon market developers, w/ the goal of creating trust & understanding of carbon programs as part of FFOs management plan/revenue stream. FFOs can contribute to climate solutions & be compensated, which will support keeping their land in forest use. Yet, FFOs find the carbon market confusing, complex, restrictive, & not compatible with owner objectives. Using proven models of collaborative engagement, we will bring stakeholders together to create understanding of FFOs needs to engage in carbon programs w/ the goal of increasing knowledge & participation in this emerging marketplace. Providing resources and interaction not currently available, we will increase participation, enhancing FFOs stewardship and economic viability across the South. If this key region the wood basket of the US is to sustain its forest ecosystems & provide economic & environmental benefits FFOs must engage in carbon markets.

Resource Objective

Primary Objective

- Improve important forest ecosystems

Secondary Objective(s)

- Improve fish and wildlife habitats, including for threatened and endangered species
- Maintain or improve water quality and watershed function
- Measure ecological and economic benefits including air quality and soil quality and productivity

Strategic Issues

Growing climate change commitments from corporate and policymaker interests has led to increased commitments of publicly declared reduction targets, many of which seek forest carbon offsets to achieve their goals. At the same time FFOs are grappling with low stumpage prices and are seeking new forest income streams to keep their land in forest use. Yet, FFOs find the carbon market confusing, complex, restrictive, and not compatible with owner objectives. This project addresses the low access to trustworthy sources of information on voluntary carbon programs by bringing FFOs together with carbon stakeholders and business interests both virtually and in-person as well as developing easy to understand resources to guide FFOs in their exploration of entering the carbon market.

Collaboration & Partners

This project incorporates forest agencies and associations from several states and has the potential for collaboration with all southern states. we engage with forest stakeholders outside of the traditional supply chain, collaboration will be the springboard of this project, bringing together for the first time diverse stakeholders in the carbon arena to inform and engage with FFOs and state forestry commissions. We will draw upon our extensive and trusted relationships within the FFO community as well as with our relationships in the carbon market and sustainable business representatives.

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Integrated Delivery

Use FLFs extensive relationships with FFOs we will collaborate with state forestry associations to survey FFOs on their knowledge, attitudes, interest in carbon markets.

Create a web based interactive tool for FFOs to enter their ownership profile which will guide them on the types of carbon programs or IFM opportunities that meet their ownership profile.

Host and record a series of virtual roundtables and educational webinars that will: provide an overview of the carbon market;

Going from virtual to in-person collaboration, we will bring stakeholders together for Timber Talks (forest field tours) and Forest Forums (stakeholder roundtable dialogues) in partner states.

Influence on Positive Change

As stumpage prices remain depressed and FFOs grapple with economic viability, they must begin to consider innovative income alternatives. The potential of the carbon market offers one of the best new income streams. Yet, forest carbon projects are being developed almost exclusively on properties of 5,000 acres.

FFOs can significantly contribute to natural climate solutions while also receiving income for the contributions, which will assist their ability to keep their land in forest use.

Accomplishments

Deliverables

- Summary and PowerPoint presentation of FLA's survey of family forest owners
- Summary and PowerPoint of presentation of FLA's survey of state forestry representatives
- Forest Landowner Association survey: With more than 340 responses from landowners
- Published study in a special issue of Forests (ISSN 1999-4907) section "Forest Economics, Policy, and Social Science". The study is titled Forest Owner Willingness to Accept Payment for Forest Carbon in the United States

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(https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362911920_Forest_Owner_Willingness_to_Accept_Payment_for_Forest_Carbon_in_the_United_States_A_Meta-Analysis)

- Forest Carbon University: Total of 12 webinars and 3 in-person panels
- Forest Carbon University websites

2021: Hosted informational carbon webinar on NCX/Silvatera program for landowners and forestry stakeholders. <https://www.forestlandowners.com/fla-hosts-carbon-market-webinar-with-silvatera/> The webinar was attended by 230 forest stakeholders

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



2021: Held Carbon/Ecosystem Services panel during FLA Conference: Pathways for Private Forest Landowners to Capture Value from Carbon Storing Properties of Forests with Aaron Bumgarner – Outsyde, Jennifer Jenkins – Enviva, and Zack Parisa – NCX. Attended by 150 forest stakeholders.

2022: Carbon panel at National Conference of Private Forest Landowners in Portland, ME, approximately 200 attendees for this panel.

2022: Forest Carbon University Webinar Series (12 total webinars)
www.forestlandowners.com/fcu-webinars

Landowner series statistics:

Basics: 9/7: 204 registrants, 103 attendees, 375 views of recording

- Anew: 9/14: 95 registrants, 53 attendees, 183 views of recording
- NCX: 10/12: 85 registrants, 29 attendees, 131 views of recording
- Family Forest Carbon: 10/19: 78 registrants, 33 attendees, 83 views of recording
- Finite Carbon: 11/2: 90 registrants, 38 attendees, 91 views of recording
- Forest Carbon Works: 11/9: 126 registrants, 40 attended (rescheduled), 188 views of recording.
- Totals: 678 registrants with duplicates
- o Many participants attended several of the sessions.
- 120 of attendees were not FLA members, added one member from email follow-up.
- 34 states represented:
 - o AL, AR, CA, Washington D.C., FL, GA, IL, IN, LA, MA, MD, ME, MS, NC, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OR, PA, SC, TX, WA, WI, CO, MI, MN, MT, TN, VA, VT, CT, KY

Additionally, a state foresters series was done, while the number of attendees was low, these webinars were designed to share information with those foresters that advise forest landowners on a regular basis, making the reach innumerable. FCU Webinars Foresters - Forest Landowners

- A total of 372 views on the recordings, 189 registrants and 102 attendees were recorded for the state forester webinar series.

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



2023: Carbon Panel at 2023 National Conference of Private Forest Landowners, Nashville, TN. Approximately 175 attendees at this panel.

Accomplishments to Date

We have engaged more than 1,500 landowners, state forestry representatives and carbon market providers via surveys, webinars and in-person meetings. This program has directly impacted landowners in consideration of enrolling in carbon programs.

Launched Forest Carbon University in fall of 2022 - To ensure we were filling the knowledge gaps and delivering the content landowners needed most, we conducted a survey of forest landowners to gauge their understanding and needs for navigating the forest carbon markets. The survey results were used to create a six-part webinar series, for both state foresters and landowners, and a website with resources tailored to landowner's specific needs. (results are listed above)

- Summary of studies estimating willingness-to-accept (WTA) for carbon sequestration in private forests
- Meta-analysis of Forest Owners Willingness to accept payment for forest carbon
- Survey of forest owners conducted by Auburn University.(251 landowners responded)
- Three Carbon provider panels at the National Conference of Private Forest Landowners (2021, 2022, and 2023), attendance by forest stakeholders total 375.
- Survey of family forest owners conducted by the Forest Landowner Foundation (340 landowners responded)
- Survey of state forestry representatives on their knowledge and needs regarding better serving their forest landowner constituents
- Detailed calls and meetings with key carbon market providers
- Meetings during Climate Week with NYSE/ICE regarding Climate Finance and perspective of family forest owners, discussion on the insurance of carbon, and monetizing co-benefits.
- Forest Carbon University websites launched to educate and inform landowners on the carbon market process, carbon market providers, carbon program basics and partner resources. (Forest Carbon University - Forest Landowners)

Quantities to Date

- Landowner Assistance - 1,500 Private forest landowners reached through technical assistance

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Deliverables in Progress

This project is complete, and we are currently assessing next steps to continue this work.

Challenges

While discussion, news, policy and corporate interest in voluntary carbon markets increased in 2021 and 2022, the programs offered for forest landowners were still in their infancy and have yet to become a viable revenue stream for landowners. This is a fast changing market with lots of uncertainty regarding the regulatory and federal policy that may impact the voluntary carbon market. Landowners are interested, but seem to be waiting on engaging. 2023 brought additional changes to the market which resulted in companies changing their strategies and engaging in land buying and afforestation projects.

Due to the evolving market and fluctuations in price of carbon credits based on various factors, the online assessment tool for a landowner to determine best match might be difficult to create to be used in a meaningful way.

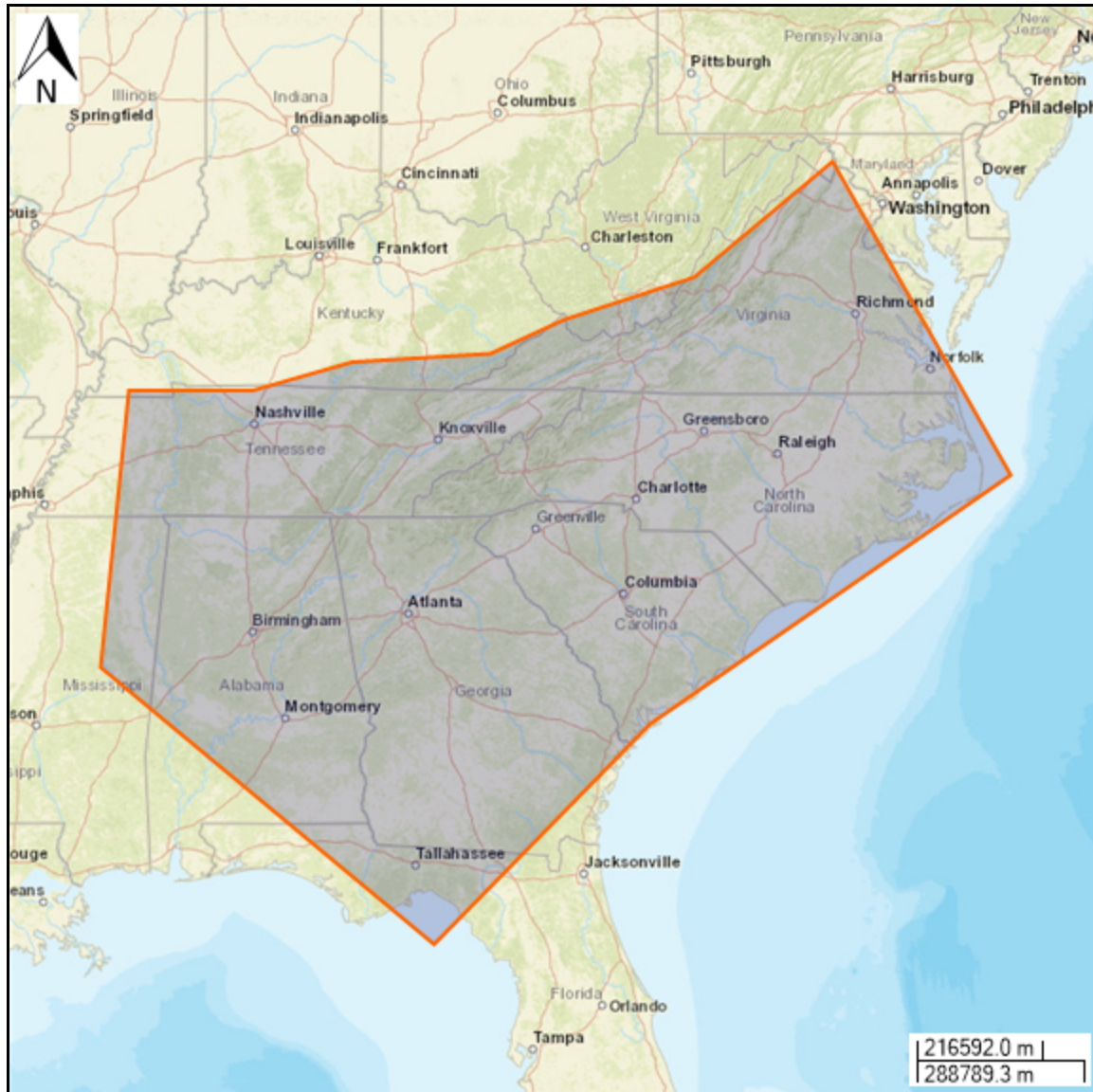
Therefore, we decided to create online educational resources for private forest landowners to allow them to make informed decisions on if these programs are beneficial to their forests and will help them reach their goals.

Additionally, very few landowners have employed carbon projects on their land at this time, and in-person timber talks would not have added value to the conversation about carbon education. All in-person meetings were directed towards informing and educating landowners on the role carbon markets can play in their overall management of their forestland.

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Impact Area



Information Last Updated
10/26/2023