



Fiscal Year 2024 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS & INSTRUCTIONS

Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Program (CFDA 10.708)

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Federal Award Agency Name: U.S. Department of Agriculture – Forest Service

Funding Opportunity Title: 2024 Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Program.

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-COMMUNITY WOOD-2024

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA): 10.708 -- Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Program.

Request for Proposals Summary

The USDA Forest Service is announcing the availability of funding to install a thermally led community wood energy system or build or expand an innovative wood product facility. This grant program supports forest health and stimulates local economies by expanding renewable wood energy use and innovative wood products manufacturing capacity. Up to \$6 million of funding will be available from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Additional funds from annual agency appropriations will be subject to availability.

Eligible applicants are non-profits; local, state, and tribal governments; businesses, companies, corporations (for profit); institutions of higher education; and special purpose districts (public utility districts, fire districts, conservation districts, school districts, and ports.) Applicants must be registered with the System for Award Management (SAM), which is located at <https://sam.gov/content/home>.

Executive Order 13985 : “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government”: We encourage applications that can show a clear benefit to underserved/historically marginalized people and the communities where they reside or the forest areas that they value. When applicable, it should be described in the “FY 24 Application Form - Project Narrative”.

Key Dates - The application deadline is **Friday December 15, 2023**, 5:00 p.m. local time, in the Forest Service Region where you are to submit your application. Additional information is available in Section III, Application Submission Information.

The agency anticipates announcing final selections in May 2024 and to execute awards in August/September 2024.

For More Information

Additional information about application requirements, eligibility, and prerequisites is available at the [Wood Innovations website](#) and by contacting your [Forest Service Regional Coordinator](#).

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I. Program Description

A. Legislative Authority

The grants awarded under this announcement are authorized by the Rural Revitalization Technologies [7 U.S.C. Sec. 8113](#), the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 [Pub. L. 115-334 Sec. 9013](#), and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) [Pub. L. 117-58 Div. J Title VI](#). The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number is 10.708.

B. Overview

The intent of the Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Grant Program (referred to as Community Wood Grant Program) is to support forest health and stimulate local economies by expanding renewable wood energy use and innovative wood products manufacturing capacity.

The Forest Service solicits proposals for projects that will achieve the following:

- Expand thermally led community wood energy or innovative wood product opportunities,
- Improve forest health; and
- Stimulate local economies.

C. Innovative Projects or Activities

This funding opportunity is intended for shovel ready projects that will not require additional funding or time to complete after the award period.

Examples of eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- Install a thermally led community wood energy system for heating, cooling, and/or electricity that replaces fossil fuels such as coal, oil, propane, or natural gas.
- Purchase and install manufacturing equipment at a mass timber production facility.
- Expand a sawmill to add higher value production lines that incorporate innovative technologies and cost cutting measures.
- Purchase and install equipment at a new facility to produce biofuels from forest residues.

D. Funding Priorities and Preferences

Priority will be given to projects that:

- Are located where markets are needed for low-value or low-quality wood.
- Are located where the project will aid forest restoration.
- Use or retrofit an existing sawmill facility where the [average annual unemployment rate](#) exceeded the national average unemployment rate by more than one percent [in calendar year 2022](#).
- Use the most stringent control technology that has been required or achieved in practice for a wood-fired boiler and will operate in a location with limited access to natural gas pipelines.
- Support, benefit, or engage communities that are historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality (pursuant to [Executive Order 13985](#), Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government).

Note:

- Projects that satisfy one or more of the above priorities will be more competitive. However, projects that do not address any of the priorities can still be competitive. For example, a project using wood residues to offset natural gas for heating can still be highly competitive even if it is located where there is an abundance of natural gas.
- Proposals incorporating commercially proven technologies will be most competitive.
- Basic research projects will not be considered.
- Projects must provide a preference for the purchase, acquisition, or use of goods, products, or materials produced in the United States pursuant to [2 CFR § 200.322](#).

II. Award Information

A. Available Funding

All awards are based on funding availability. The Forest Service plans to award up to \$6 million in total awards under this announcement. The maximum for each award is \$1 million to pay for up to 35% of total capital costs. The Forest Service may consider awarding up to \$1.5 million (for up to 50% of total capital costs) for a proposal that warrants special consideration, especially for projects located in areas of high unemployment. **Applicants seeking special consideration must obtain prior approval from a Forest Service Regional Coordinator before submitting a proposal (see contact information below in Section V.F (Agency Contacts)).**

B. Project Length

Awards under this announcement are typically 2 to 3 years in length. Projects of greater complexity may be awarded for a longer period not to exceed 5 years.

The Forest Service will notify a recipient if their proposal is selected for an award and indicate whether additional forms or information are required before the recipient may proceed. The Forest Service will incur no legal obligation until appropriated funds are available and a Forest Service Grant Officer returns a fully executed award letter to a successful applicant. Ten percent of the Forest Service funds may be held by the administrator until final reporting is completed and approved.

Note: An award to a for-profit entity will generate an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 1099 Miscellaneous Income that will be filed with the IRS and provided to the awardee. The Forest Service expresses no opinion on the taxability, if any, of the awarded grant funds.

C. Matching and Leveraged Funds

Matching funds are not required; however, leveraging is required. Applicants must contribute the additional funds (leveraged funds) necessary to complete the project above and beyond the requested Forest Service funding. For example, if an applicant requests Forest Service funding for 35% of the total capital costs of the project, then the applicant must commit to providing 65% of the total capital costs of the project. In this example, the 65% of the total capital costs are considered the required leveraged funds. Even though leveraged funds have a lower reporting burden and fewer legal requirements than matching funds, applicants must adhere to requirements for leveraged funds.

Leveraged funds must be from non-federal sources and be committed within the grant timeframe. Moreover, **if third-party organizations contribute to the leveraged funds requirement, then applicants must submit in the proposal package commitment letters from the third-party organizations confirming the amount of leveraging being committed.**

Applicants must list all other funds (e.g., Federal, State, private) received for this project and closely related projects within the last 5 years (include agency, program name, and dollar amount) in the application appendices.

D. Calculating Total Capital Costs and Maximum Allowable Forest Service Funding

Capital costs represent the total costs needed to bring a project to an operable status. They may include, but are not limited to, construction costs, site work, and equipment used in the production of goods. Although these costs may be included in the calculation, not all these costs are eligible for reimbursement from Forest Service funding. For this grant program, capital costs do not include program income or land.

Total capital costs are the value in **Column C, Line 11 of Budget Table 1** in the Application. The amount of Forest Service funding allowed for the project will not exceed 35% of this value in Column C, line 11 (or, 50% of this value for projects warranting special consideration).

The Forest Service will use the applicant's reported total capital costs to determine the maximum amount of Forest Service funding allowed for the award (e.g., 35% of the project's total capital costs). When filling out the Budget table in the Application, applicants should include ALL costs associated directly with the project other than program income and land. Do not include program income or land anywhere in the budget table or SF-424A.

Applicants may have already completed extensive studies, feasibility assessments, life-cycle analyses, or other tasks associated directly with the project such that these costs can be included in the Budget table. Inclusion of pre-work costs directly related to the project will increase the total capital costs of the project, which thereby increases the amount of Forest Service funding allowed for the project.

Capital costs incurred before October 1, 2023, should not be included in the Budget table. Capital costs incurred on or after October 1, 2023, can be included in the Budget table. Successful applicants should be aware that costs incurred prior to the award date, which is expected to be sometime in August or September 2024, will not be reimbursable with Forest Service funds.

E. Limitations on Use of Forest Service Funds

Real Property Prohibition

Forest Service funds under this grant program cannot be used for capital costs that would create a federal interest in real property. Pursuant to [2 CFR §200.85](#), "real property" means land, including land improvements, structures, and appurtenances thereto, but excludes moveable machinery and equipment. Therefore, applicants cannot use Forest Service funds to pay for any of the following activities: purchasing or improving real property, relocation expenses and payments associated with real property; site work; demolition and removal; construction; or contingencies. However, applicants may use non-federal leveraged funds to contribute toward

these real property related activities and can include them in the budget table. Forest Service funds may be used for architecture and engineering design, inspections, legal work, and permitting costs associated with real property because these activities would not create a federal interest in real property.

Federal Interest in Equipment

Forest Service funds can be used to purchase equipment. Applicants should be aware that purchase of equipment with Forest Service funds creates a federal interest in the equipment. The successful applicant will be required to complete additional paperwork before and after receiving Forest Service funds for the purchase and is subject to the regulations at [2 CFR §200.310](#), [200.313](#), and [200.316](#). These regulations are available at: [2 CFR § 400 subpart E - Cost Principals](#).

Purchase of equipment with non-federal leveraged funds is allowable and does not create a federal interest in the equipment.

Operating Costs Prohibition

Forest Service funds cannot be used for operating costs, which are expenses associated with maintenance and administration of operations on a day-to-day basis.

5-Megawatt Limitation

Forest Service funds cannot be used to acquire a community wood energy system that exceeds nameplate capacity of 5 megawatts of thermal energy or combined thermal and electric energy.

Other Limitations and Prohibitions

Forest Service funds cannot be used for basic research or federal employee involvement in the project. Project or program income will not be considered for these awards and should not be included in the budget or to calculate total capital costs. Expenses for self-marketing or self-promotion are not eligible expenses (e.g., company brochures, company business cards, company display materials, etc.).

III. Application Submission Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are non-profits; local, state, and tribal governments; businesses, companies, corporations (for profit); institutions of higher education; and special purpose districts (public utility districts, fire districts, conservation districts, school districts, and ports.)

B. Required Technical Document

For community wood energy system or innovative wood product facility projects, applicants must provide information to support the following criteria:

- Energy efficiency and cost effectiveness of the system or facility.
- Extent to which the system or facility represents the best available commercial technology.

- Extent to which the applicant has demonstrated a high likelihood of project success by completing detailed engineering and design work in advance of the grant application.

For community wood energy system projects only (in addition to the above criteria):

- Extent to which the system will displace conventional fossil fuels, minimize emission increases to the greatest extent possible, and use the most stringent control technology that has been required or achieved in practice for a wood-fired boiler of similar size and type.
- Extent to which the proposed community wood energy system will increase delivered thermal efficiency of systems being replaced.

C. Content and Form of Application Submission

The proposal package must include all the materials listed below. Each submittal must consist of two separate, searchable PDF (or Word) files, as follows:

Part 1: Cooperator Contact Information, Narrative (including Budget tables), and Appendices

Part 2: Required Financial Forms

Applicants must e-mail all parts of the application at one time, including letters of support and appendices. Separate letters of support, appendices, etc., will not be accepted. No proposals will be accepted by fax machine or hard copy.

Application Form

Part 1. - Project Application: Cooperator Contact Information, Narrative, and Appendices (requirements)

The following sections (1 through 7 below) are required for Part 1 Narrative (see Application Form for more specific instructions):

1. Basic Project Information
2. Project Description
3. Project Impact
4. Technical Criteria
5. Qualifications of Team and Partners
6. Annual Progress Reports and Final Reports
7. Budget Summary and Justification in Support of SF-424A

Appendices are included in Part 1 of the application and do not have a page limitation. Appendices should be well organized with an index so reviewers can readily find information of interest, **especially documentation supporting the required Technical Criteria listed in III.B (Required Technical Document) of these Instructions.** Include only relevant information in the Appendices that will help the review panel understand and evaluate your project. Letters of support should be included as the first Appendix.

Required items that must be included in the Appendices are:

- Letters of support from partners, individuals, or organizations, especially those playing a key role or providing leveraged funds, including Forest Service units if National Forest System lands will directly benefit from the project. Letters of support should display the degree of collaboration occurring between the different entities engaged in the project. **Applicants must submit letters of**

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support from third-party organizations confirming the amount of cash, materials, or in-kind services to be provided in leveraged funds.

- **List of all other funds** (Federal and non-federal sources) received for this project and closely related projects within the last 5 years (include agency, program name, and dollar amount).
- **A screenshot of your System for Award Management (SAM) registration page.** Your organization must have an active registration in SAM to apply and be eligible for an award. Registration may take several months to complete or renew.
- **Short resume for key team members.**
- **Feasibility Assessments.**
- **Woody Biomass Resource Supply Assessment.**
- **Quotes** for professional engineering, architectural, or other technical services.
- **Prior expertise of and rationale** for selection of contractors selected for primary work.
- **Miscellaneous items**, such as schematics, engineering designs, or executive summaries of reports.

Part 2- Project Application: Required Financial Forms

The forms listed below as items **a** through **e** must be completed and submitted with your proposal. Forms listed for items **a** through **c** are located at the Grants.gov website <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html#sortBy=1>. Search the "Form Name" column for the appropriate form. Please provide digital signatures or scanned "wet" signatures on financial forms. Typed signatures will not be accepted.

Required forms FS-1500-35 and FS-1500-22 are Forest Service forms that are available via the respective links at the Forest Service website.

- a) SF-424: Application for Federal Assistance
https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424_4_0-V4.0.pdf
- b) SF-424A: Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs
<https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424A-V1.0.pdf>
- c) SF-424B: Assurances for Non-Construction Programs
- d) <https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms/sample/SF424B-V1.1.pdf>
- e) FS-1500-35: Certificate Regarding Lobbying Activities
- f) <https://www.fs.usda.gov/nac/assets/documents/forms/fs-1500-35-certification-regarding-lobbying.docx>
- g) FS-1500-22: Financial Capability Questionnaire (see Financial Capability section)
- h) https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3834433.docx

Items to note when completing the SF-424 forms:

- Catalog of Domestic Assistance number is 10.708
- CFDA Title is "Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Program"
- Funding Opportunity number is USDA-FS-COMMUNITY WOOD-2024
- Funding Opportunity Title is "2024 Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Program"
- Anticipated announcement of final selections is May 2024 and the project start date is August/September 2024. Leveraged funds should not be included on the SF-424 forms.

Note: Your agency, business or organization must have an active registration (preferred) or have initiated the registration process in the <https://sam.gov/> to apply. You must include a screenshot of the SAM registration page indicating that you have initiated the registration process in the application appendices, or your application will be rejected. **An active System for Award Management (SAM) Registration is required before any type of agreement can be executed.** The business name registered in SAM must match the business name used on the program application. All applicants must have initiated the registration process in SAM to apply for the grant and be announced for an award. There is no charge for registration. Active registration must be maintained throughout the life of the award. **SAM.gov registration process can take time; please ensure your registration is up to date, if awarded.**

D. Submission Date and Time

Applications must be **received** electronically at the individual e-mail address for the respective [Forest Service Regional Coordinator](#) listed in the Agency Contacts section of this announcement **by 5:00 p.m. in the region you submit by Friday December 15, 2023 with NO EXCEPTIONS.** No proposals will be accepted by fax or hard copy.

Incomplete proposals and those received after the official deadline will not be accepted. If any part of the application is missing, the proposal will not be accepted.

E. Confidentiality

Materials submitted to the Forest Service, such as grant applications and progress reports, are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Upon request, the Forest Service may be obligated to disclose such records. However, documents or portions of documents will be protected if they satisfy the requirements of one or more FOIA exemptions.

If the Forest Service receives a FOIA request seeking information provided by your organization, [Executive Order 12600](#) requires the Forest Service to consult with you regarding the potential release of this information. When assembling your proposal package, you may wish to highlight any information that constitutes a trade secret, proprietary information, confidential data, or other information that would cause you competitive harm, impact personal privacy, or have other undesirable consequences if released to the public. For more information about the FOIA and its exemptions, please consult the Department of Justice Guide to the Freedom of Information Act (<https://www.justice.gov/oip/doj-guide-freedom-information-act-0>).

IV. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign points to each proposal based on its ability to meet the following criteria. Each proposal can earn a maximum of 100 total points.

- **Project Description (20 points total)**
 - Project is well defined, budget and timeline are reasonable, and project has high likelihood for success. (15 points)
 - Reporting requirements are addressed. (5 points)
- **Project Impact (40 points total)**

- Project improves forest health and stimulates local economies. Impacts are well defined, realistic, and include assumptions. (15 points)
- Project will create demand for low-value wood, low-quality wood, industrial residues, or timber in areas of the country in need of forest restoration. (15 points)
- Project supports an existing or new sawmill, community wood energy system installation, or forest products business located in a geographic area with an average annual unemployment rate that is more than one percent higher than the national average unemployment rate in calendar year 2022. (10 points)
- **Technical Criteria (25 points total)**
 - Project uses advanced technologies associated with a community wood energy system or innovative wood product facility. (15 points)
 - Proposal presents sufficiently detailed information to address the Technical Criteria listed in Part 1.D of the Application (e.g., energy efficiency, cost effectiveness, best available commercial technology, displacement of fossil fuels, etc.). (10 points)
- **Qualifications of Staff, Organization, and Partners (15 points)**
 - Team member(s) qualifications, experience, and past performance are relevant to the project. (15 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be evaluated against the criteria listed in Section IV.A. All applications will be screened to ensure compliance with the administrative requirements as set forth in this Request for Proposals. **Applications that do not follow the directions for submission or incomplete applications will be disqualified without appeal.**

Forest Service Regional Foresters will rank proposals according to regional priorities. A panel of Federal experts or their designees will perform a thorough technical review of eligible proposals and evaluate the proposals according to the criteria outlined in this announcement. Reviewers independently evaluate proposals for merit and assign a score using the criteria listed in Section IV.A. Both the Regional Foresters rankings and the review panel evaluations will be submitted to the Forest Service national leadership for a final decision. In addition, the Forest Service may consider performance and status of previous or ongoing Forest Service and other Federal grants and awards in making awards under this program and authority.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Date

October 18, 2023	Issuance of Request for Proposals
December 15, 2023	Proposal submission deadline
May 2024	Approximate date for award announcement
August/September 2024	Approximate date of award

V. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

It is expected that applicants will be notified by email about funding decisions around **May 2024**. Successful applicants will receive notification from the appropriate Forest Service Grants and Agreements Office.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements Financial Checklist

This checklist will help recipients in the processing of an award:

- ✓ **Register in the System for Award Management**
 - Your agency, business or organization must have initiated the registration process at <https://sam.gov/content/home> to apply. You must include a screenshot of the SAM registration page indicating that you have initiated the registration process in the application appendices, or your application will be denied. This process can take time; please ensure your registration is up to date.
 - You must have an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) to apply for funding.
- ✓ **Indirect Costs**
 - You should have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) with your cognizant agency if you intend to show indirect costs for reimbursement with Forest Service funds. If not, you can use the de minimis rate of 10% and avoid the negotiation process. For university applications, indirect costs should be at the non-research rate (if one is assigned). **Reminder:** This grant does not support basic research.

C. Reporting

Annual Progress Report

- Annual or quarterly progress reports will be required on a calendar-year basis. Required frequency of progress reporting will be determined during the execution of the grant agreement. A progress report template at the link below is provided as a guide. The reports provide an overview of accomplishments of the goals and objectives listed in the approved project narrative, success stories, and documentation of media activities generated by the award. *Annual Progress Report Template - [Click Here](#)*
- Reports should be submitted via e-mail as Word documents, preferably in a 508-compliant format. 508 compliance is explained at this site: <https://www.section508.gov/>.

Annual Financial Report

- Federal Financial Reports (SF-425) are required. Specific requirements will be provided in the official Award letter if your proposal is selected for funding. *SF-425 Forms - [Click Here](#)*

Final Progress Report

- A detailed Final Progress Report is required and will be posted publicly. The Final Progress Report has two parts:
 - Summary – A brief overview of accomplishments by goals and objectives included in the approved agreement. This document includes outcomes, such as impact to National Forest System and other forest lands, jobs created, impacts to the local and/or national economy and markets, and any other notable successes deemed significant to this project. Final summaries will be added to the [Wood Innovations website](#).
 - Detailed Report – A detailed report that includes a project overview; goals and objectives; methodology; results, discussion, and findings; summary, conclusion, and recommendations; and photographs that can be used for press releases, public websites, or mass communications. This report can include various

assessments, reports, success stories, case studies, and related documents resulting from the project's activities.

Note: If your proposal is funded, 10 percent of the Federal funds may be held by the administrator of the grant or agreement until final reporting is completed and approved.

D. Required Statements on All Documents, Publications, Audiovisual Material, and Electronic Media

The following statements need to be included on all documents, publications, audiovisual material, electronic media, and related informational pieces for public distribution that result from projects funded by this funding opportunity:

"The work upon which this project is based was funded in whole or in part through a grant awarded by USDA Forest Service Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation program.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call toll free voice (866) 632-9992, TDD (800) 877-8339, or voice relay (866) 377-8642.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender."

If the material is too small to permit the full statement to be included, the material must, at minimum, include the following statement, in print size no smaller than the text:

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider."

E. Communication about Publicity

Communication about all press releases, media events, activities, and reports generated by the award should be provided to the [Forest Service Regional Coordinator](#) in advance of the event, media release, or release to the public and be included in the Annual Progress Report. This ongoing communication about media activity will enable the Forest Service to raise the visibility of the work completed from this award.

F. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding this Request for Proposals or administrative regulations, contact your respective Forest Service Regional Coordinator listed below. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with their designated Coordinator to determine whether a project idea will be competitive and to develop a competitive proposal.** Coordinators have additional resources to help with your application development process and are the main point of contact for questions, application submittals, final awards, reporting requirements, and ongoing communication about award progress, including any media events or activities generated by the award.

Note: Your Forest Service Region is generally determined by the State where most of the proposed work will be conducted. Two Forest Service regions may exist in one State. Locate your Forest Service Region using the map below if you are not certain which Region applies.

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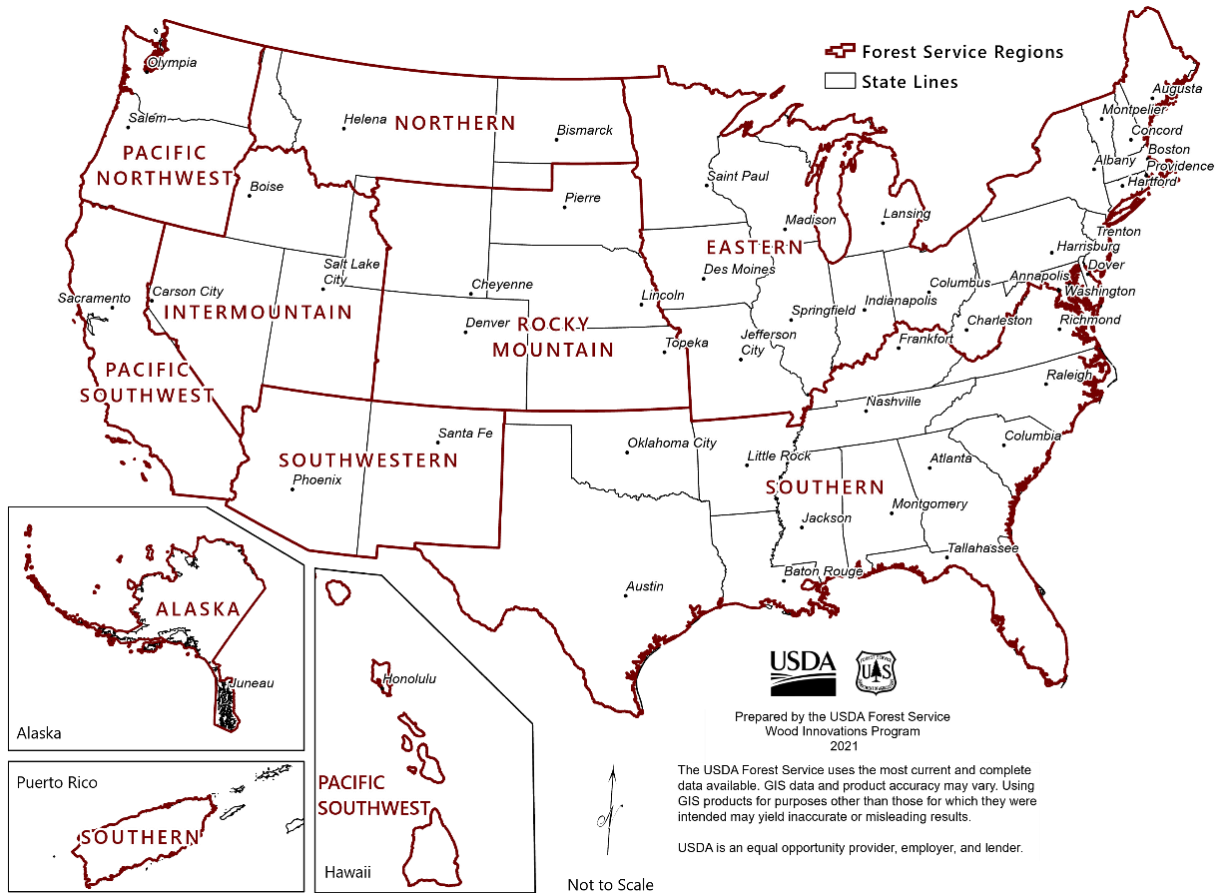


Figure 1. USDA Forest Service Regions

Forest Service Northern Region (Region 1) MT, ND, Northern ID, & Northwestern SD

Julie Kies 406-370-3297 julie.kies@usda.gov

Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region (Region 2) CO, KS, NE, SD, & WY

Todd Gardiner 970-210-9103 todd.gardiner@usda.gov

Forest Service Southwestern Region (Region 3) AZ & NM

Grace Sorenson 928-554-5770 grace.a.sorenson@usda.gov

Forest Service Intermountain Region (Region 4) Southern ID, NV, UT, & Western WY

Chris Clark 208-809-0999 christopher.clark2@usda.gov

Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5) CA, HI, Guam, and Trust Territories of the Pacific

Helena Murray 707-980-2375 helena.murray@usda.gov

Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6) OR & WA

Terrie Jarrell 928-554-5770 terrie.jarrell@usda.gov

Forest Service Southern Region (Region 8) AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, Virgin

Marcus Taylor 540-265-5120 marcus.taylor@usda.gov

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Forest Service Eastern Region (Region 9) CT, DE, DC, IL, IN, IA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NH, NJ, NY,
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