

Woodland

YOUR CONNECTION TO AMERICA'S FORESTS



A Publication of the



American
Forest
Foundation



American
Forest
Foundation

Thank you for your support!

Woodland keeps supporters of the American Forest Foundation (AFF), like you, informed about how your partnership helps unlock the full conservation potential of America's family forests. We also welcome your ideas, feedback, and suggestions. Please reach out if you have any questions about the programs highlighted in this magazine or wish to discuss any of the stories in more detail.

Contact Ema Johnson with any suggestions at ejohnson@forestfoundation.org.

Also, you can access a complimentary, shareable online version of *Woodland* at forestfoundation.org/why-we-do-it/woodland-magazine if you know someone interested in learning about our work.



Contents

Fall 2024

4 Overstory

Rita Hite

6 Program Metrics

7 Policy Update

Sarah Jewell

8 The Right Answer is
Family Forests

Andrea Watts



Seedling Society members Dianne and Salem Saloom welcome the Climate Funding Team to their home and forestland in Alabama.

14 You Can Leave A
Legacy Through AFF's
Seedling Society

Beth Riley

19 A Walk in the Woods

Tom Gresham

Woodland is an official publication of the American Forest Foundation. Opinions expressed by authors do not necessarily represent those of the organization. You are receiving this printed copy of *Woodland Magazine* because you support the American Forest Foundation and the Family Forest Carbon Program. To continue receiving *Woodland* quarterly, please renew your support at a minimum of \$35 annually. For questions, please contact Ema Johnson at ejohnson@forestfoundation.org.

Woodland, a publication of the American Forest Foundation's Climate Funding and Philanthropy Team, is led by Beth Riley, Senior Director of Philanthropy, Bethany Mueller, Senior Manager of Climate Donor Relations, Nate Meehan, Donor Stewardship Manager and Ema Johnson, Senior Manager of Climate Funding. Produced by: Printco Graphics.



BY RITA HITE
 PRESIDENT & CEO
 AMERICAN FOREST FOUNDATION

The Legacy of Our Forests

As we step into a new season, I'm thrilled to connect with you through this issue of Woodland Magazine. It's a time of growth and opportunity for our nation's family forests, and we have exciting updates and stories to share highlighting the invaluable role of family forests and the initiatives supporting their future. Let's dive into the latest developments and how they impact our shared mission to protect and sustain these vital landscapes.

Family forests are the backbone of our national forest landscape- crucial for biodiversity, water quality, and climate stability- and they also represent the deep connection between families and their land. However, the families who manage these forests face a range of challenges, including financial pressures and the need for

on-the-ground management support. In "The Right Answer is Family Forests" (p. 8), we explore how AFF's Family Forest Carbon Program (FFCP) is helping to address these issues by providing technical and financial assistance to family forest owners. Our collective efforts, made possible thanks to your support, help to keep family forests on the landscape, preserve forestlands for future generations, and enhance forests' broader contributions to our environment.

On p. 7, we hear from AFF Policy Manager Sarah Jewell on the status of the Rural Forest Markets Act (RFMA). RFMA is moving forward in Congress, and its implications for our forests are significant. The bipartisan bill aims to offer financial incentives

Continued On Next Page

“I am reminded of the role that each of us plays in contributing to the health and sustainability of our forests. For me, this means reaffirming my own personal commitment to planned giving to AFF.”

to small landowners to implement climate-friendly forest management practices, which boost the value of landowners’ commodities like carbon, water, and timber. For family forest owners, this means new opportunities to benefit financially from their stewardship efforts while advancing the long-term health of their land. Your outreach in support of RFMA plays a critical role in helping to move this bill forward, and in turn helps to unlock the conservation and financial power of family forests.

In this issue’s “A Walk in the Woods” feature (p. 19), we’re excited to highlight the stories of remarkable family forest owners who embody the spirit of stewardship. These dedicated individuals manage their forests with incredible passion and innovation, each contributing uniquely to the preservation and enhancement of their lands. From enhancing biological diversity, to managing sustainably, to tackling climate change, their stories serve as a testament to the profound impact that personal commitment can have on our environment. These profiles not only celebrate their achievements but also offer inspiration and an opportunity to appreciate the many ways family forest owners are making a difference.

As I reflect on the encouraging stories shared in this edition, I am reminded of the role that each of us plays in contributing to the health and sustainability of our forests. I’ve always believed that our work at the American Forest Foundation is a shared endeavor—one that calls on all of us to support to ensure its success. For me, this means reaffirming my own personal commitment to planned giving to AFF. One such opportunity is through our Seedling Society, which was established in 2018 as a way for individuals and families to make planned or deferred philanthropic gifts to AFF. On p. 14, you can read about the inspiring supporters who are choosing to leave a legacy by including AFF in their estate plans, ensuring that our forests, and the communities they sustain, can thrive for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to AFF’s mission. Because of you, we are securing a future where our forests and communities are healthy, sustainable, and resilient. Together, we are making a meaningful impact on our forests, people, and planet. ▲

Program Metrics* All Time

92,845 Acres enrolled



688 Contracts enrolled



\$22.5M Committed to pay landowners over the next 20 years



1.7M Expected Verified Carbon Units (VCUs) generated over the next 20 years by enrolled acreage



Let's put this into context:
this would equate to taking
404,000 gas-powered cars
off the road for one year!



The Rural Forest Markets Act— and Why You Should Care



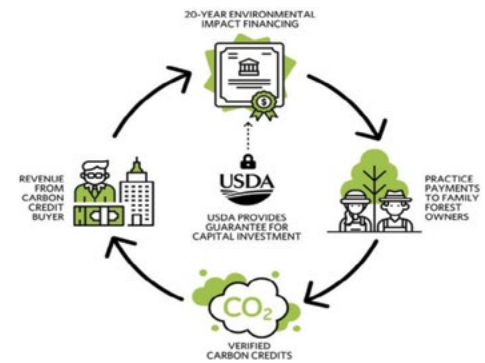
BY SARAH JEWELL
POLICY MANAGER,
AMERICAN FOREST FOUNDATION

After over a year of delays, House and Senate Farm Bill drafts are finally circulating throughout Congress. The Farm Bill is a massive piece of legislation that sets the framework for federal agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and forestry programs. As the bill package moves through both chambers, it is crucial to understand its significant impact on family forest owners. A key bill component is the Rural Forest Markets Act (RFMA), which aims to unlock rural America's conservation and financial potential by increasing landowner access to the voluntary carbon market.

What is RFMA? RFMA is a bipartisan bill designed to bridge the gap between the voluntary carbon market and landowners by bringing private finance to rural America. The bill would create a voluntary incentive for small landowners to adopt climate-friendly forest management practices at no cost to taxpayers. These practices would increase the value of their carbon, water, timber, and other commodities that can be sold in a marketplace. In turn, RFMA unlocks new revenue streams, helping landowners build generational wealth, keep their land in the family, and ensure their forests' long-term health and value.

Why is RFMA So Important? As of 2019, the vast majority of small-forest owners could not participate in a carbon project due to high upfront costs and complexity. One out of three family forest owners have a household income of less than \$50,000 and struggle with the high costs of forest management.

Unlocking access to the voluntary carbon market for these family forest owners can stimulate rural economies, providing the income needed to care for their land. This market alone could generate as much as \$5.6 billion in private investment, supporting rural economies if markets were made accessible to small forest landowners.



Where's RFMA Now? In May, Senate Agricultural Committee leadership, including Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow and Ranking Member John Boozman released their respective Farm Bill summaries, including RFMA. However, the House Agricultural Committee Chair GT Thompson (R-PA) released his Farm Bill draft in May, which he did not include RFMA.

What's Next? Now that each chamber has released its Farm Bill summary or draft, it is time to engage with your Congressional offices to advocate for RFMA. Your representative or Senator wants to hear from their constituents, and your outreach is key to getting RFMA, a conservation and financial win for landowners, inserted into the baseline text of the Farm Bill. If you would like to get involved in outreach efforts or learn more about RFMA, including accessing a recording of AFF's Virtual Policy Briefing: Unlocking the Power of Rural America, where conservation experts from The Nature Conservancy, REI, and the Bipartisan Policy Center discussed the bill's significance for family forests, please contact Sarah Jewell at sjewell@forestfoundation.org. 🌲

FEATURE

The Right Answer is Family Forests

By Andrea Watts

Among the entities that own or manage the largest percentage of forestland in the United States, it's not private industry—such as Weyerhaeuser or Rayonier—nor federal agencies like the U.S. Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management. Instead, it's family forest landowners—an estimated 9.6 million—who collectively control 272 million acres, according to the U.S. Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis program.¹

Family forest landowners who own 10+ acres play an outsized role in providing ecosystem services for both their neighbors and cities downstream. Their forests protect water quality, provide

wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities, sequester atmospheric carbon dioxide, support local economies, and fulfill the societal demand for wood. It's estimated that 160 million cubic meters of timber is harvested from family forests annually, which supports 47.4 thousand jobs.² To put this into perspective, of the timber harvested annually, 41 percent is sourced from family forests³ and 47 percent from corporate forestlands, with other public, private, and Tribal forests supplying the remaining.

However, the delivery of these ecosystem services is in jeopardy.

In 2020, the U.S. Forest Service published *Family Forest Ownership of the United States, 2018: Results from the USDA Forest Service, National Woodland Owner Survey*. This nationwide survey, conducted every five years by Forest Inventory and Analysis seeks to determine “who owns America’s forests, why do they own them, what have they done with them in the past, and what they plan to do with them in the future.”

The survey revealed that respondents who own 75 percent or more of the family forest land rated “High property taxes,” “Keeping land intact for future generations,” and “Trespassing or poaching” as concerns or significant concerns. It also found that an estimated 52 percent of family forest landowners who are the primary decision-makers for their forests are 65 years or older.

The 2022 journal article, *An assessment of the sustainability of family forests in the U.S.A.*, reports that a loss of 2.4 million acres of family forestland occurs yearly. Of this loss 64 percent results in conversion to non-forest uses, such as agricultural, developed uses, or rangeland. For instance, in the South, 442,318 acres were converted to agricultural use, and 326,179 acres were used for development.⁴ Fortunately, the remaining 36 percent of lost family forestland remains forested, but it changes ownership classification, often transitioning to corporate ownership or entities like LLCs and LLPs.

These findings suggest that family forests remaining as family forests is not guaranteed. Because society needs these forests to continue providing ecosystem services, it must support families in maintaining their forestland.

EXPANDING WHAT SUPPORT MEANS

Currently, society supports family forest landowners in several ways. Conservation districts, university extension programs, and non-profits like the American Tree Farm System offer free site visits by professional foresters and provide access to educational resources. State departments of natural resources and the Natural Resources Conservation Service offer project funding for specific forest management activities, such as replanting riparian areas or thinning stands to promote forest health. Additionally, land trusts negotiate conservation easements that provide a one time financial payment in exchange for families relinquishing developmental rights and maintaining their forestland for the long term.

However, families need ongoing financial support. Owning and managing forestland is not inexpensive. Property taxes are paid annually, and there are periodic costs for purchasing new equipment like chainsaws or loppers, fuel for trucks or wood chippers, and hiring contractors for management activities. Unfortunately, there are few federal, state, or private sector programs that cover these ongoing expenses. Most available funding is project-based and does not provide consistent, steady support. Additionally, many families are hesitant to sign conservation easement contracts due to their lengthy contract commitments, which can exceed 30 years.

“Collectively, these findings suggest that family forests remaining as family forests is not guaranteed. Because society needs these forests to continue providing ecosystem services, it must support families in maintaining their forestland.”

For families who do not anticipate harvesting or only plan to harvest once in their lifetime, these management expenses must often be paid out of pocket until tough decisions are inevitable.

“When small forest landowners face an unexpected life event, maybe a medical event or a kid’s college fund, their forest often becomes the asset they quickly liquidate, even though it may not be the best decision for the health of the forest,” explained Lynn Riley, Senior Manager of Climate Science with American Forest Foundation.

1 Family Forest Ownerships of the United States, 2018; Results from the USDA Forest Service National Woodland Owner Survey, pg 2 <https://research.fs.usda.gov/treesearch/62180>

2 An assessment of the sustainability of family forests in the U.S.A. Brett Butler 2022 <https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/treesearch/64837>

3 https://www.fs.usda.gov/nrs/pubs/jrnl/2023/nrs_2023_butler_001.pdf

4 An assessment of the sustainability of family forests in the U.S.A. Brett Butler 2022 pages 7 and 11

“The way to bring value to family-owned lands is to show that we can create something that others are willing to pay us for,”

explained Rita Hite, president and CEO of American Forest Foundation.

LEVERAGING THE VALUE OF SEQUESTERING CARBON

Carbon programs are one way that landowners can generate revenue from their land. However, two other noteworthy findings from the 2018 National Woodland Owner Survey are that less than 0.1 percent of family forest landowners are enrolled in a carbon project, which would compensate them for managing their forest, and the majority of the nearly 270 million acres owned by family forest landowners are not being managed under a formal management plan.⁵

For the American Forest Foundation, these findings were “a realization that it’s quite difficult for family forest owners to enter the voluntary carbon market,” Riley said. “There are many steps involved, and not only is it financially costly, but there’s also a significant amount of knowledge required to navigate this market.”

“The way to drive value to family lands is to demonstrate that we can deliver something that someone is willing to pay us for,” explained Rita Hite, president and CEO of the American Forest Foundation. “We need to show that we can actually produce measurable value in the context of emerging issues like climate and biodiversity.”

Through FFCP, launched in March 2020 as a partnership between the American Forest Foundation, and the Nature Conservancy, family forest landowners with at least 30 acres of forest are provided with forestry assistance and forest management plans. Most crucially, the program offers ongoing financial support to implement sustainable forest management practices that improve the health of their forests and help them achieve their long-term management objectives.

Another benefit of the FFCP is that the contract is only a 20-year commitment unlike a permanent conservation easement. While this length might seem daunting, Hite noted its advantages “What we are finding is that it’s actually enabling families to have conversations with the next generation about what they want to do with the land,” she said.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES AND FORESTS

Since its launch four years ago, over 650 family forest landowners representing over 90,000 acres across 19 states have been enrolled in the program. What’s particularly encouraging is that FFCP connects families to the resources needed to manage their forests; approximately 60 percent of FFCP-enrolled landowners had no formal interaction with any technical assistance provider. With the launch of FFCP’s new project, Field to Forest, new family forests are being established in Georgia. Landowners with at least 40 acres of eligible land can convert underused cropland or pastureland into thriving and valuable forests. This project sequesters carbon through afforestation, transitioning underutilized row crops and pastureland to loblolly pine forest. Loblolly pine was selected because its carbon growth and yields are well documented, and the species has commercial value. “The landowners we are working with are either currently or were recently agricultural producers, so it’s easier for them to transition from growing an agricultural crop to a tree crop,” Riley said.

The creation of the FFCP aligns with a recommendation in Policy Incentives to Scale Carbon Dioxide Removal: Analysis and

5 <https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/treesearch/62180> page 29-32

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/nrs/news/highlights/family-forest-owners-participation-carbon-sequestration-programs>

6 <https://www.rff.org/publications/reports/policy-incentives-to-scale-carbon-dioxide-removal-analysis-and-recommendations/>

Recommendations report produced by Resources for the Future, a nonprofit whose mission is to “improve environmental, energy, and natural resource decisions through impartial economic research and policy engagement.”⁶

In the Policy Recommendations for Initiating the CDR [carbon dioxide removal] transition section, the authors advise:

“To expand conventional land-based CDR, an aggressive ramp-up in ARI [afforestation, reforestation, improved forest management] incentives is needed. In the absence of stronger compliance-based mechanisms for reducing GHG emissions that also reward forest sequestration, and with voluntary credit markets currently providing only limited incentives, the government could increase land-based CDR through public investment in afforestation.”

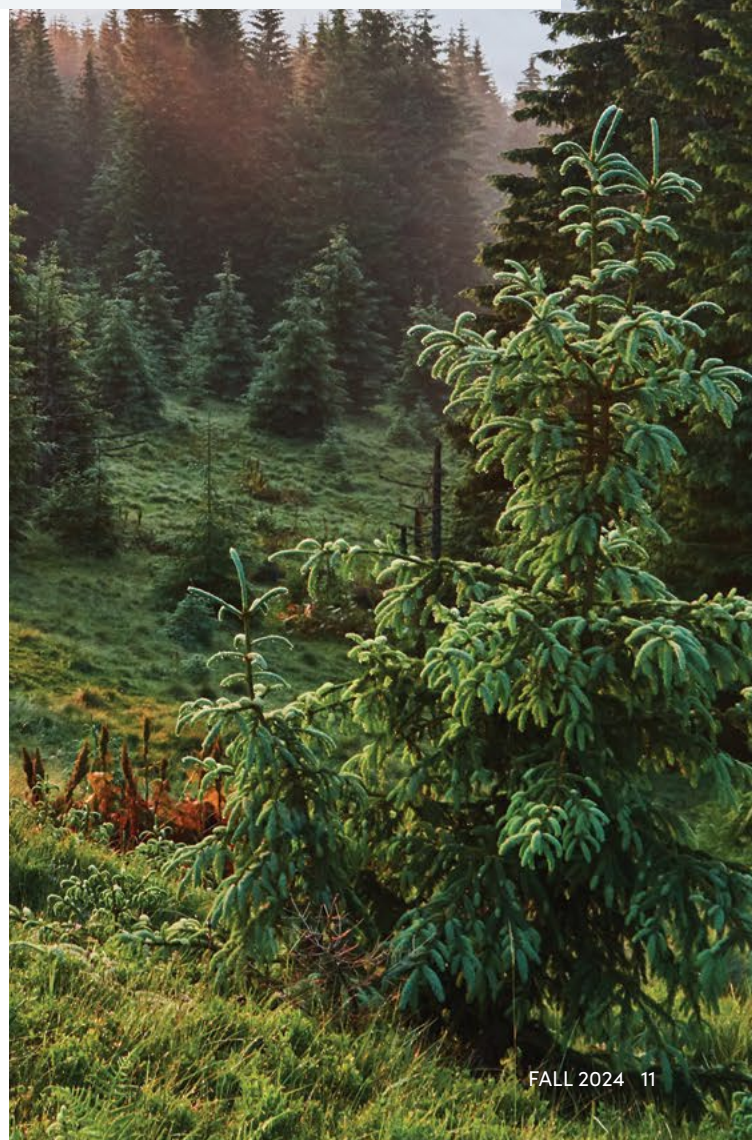
FFCP has implemented this recommendation by building support through a private sector program that also leverages public funding, making it a true public-private partnership.

“We have a grant from the Forest Service’s Forest Landowner Support program, which is funded by the Inflation Reduction Act, to help bring landowners into market-based efforts like FFCP,” explained Hite. “This funding provides technical assistance, outreach, and education so that we can enroll landowners into the program, which then offers them ongoing carbon market support. We’re leveraging public funding to kickstart the process and then the markets take over where the initial government funding left off.”

PRODUCING ADDITIONALITY TO KEEP FAMILY FORESTS ON THE LANDSCAPE

The FFCP is only four years old, and with the broader carbon market industry being accused of greenwashing, it’s understandable to be skeptical about its effectiveness in delivering on the promise of carbon sequestration. What sets FFCP apart from other carbon programs is its focus on demonstrating carbon additionality. When landowners enroll, they implement improved forest management practices that increase carbon sequestration beyond what would have occurred naturally.

“What sets FFCP apart from other carbon programs is its demonstration of carbon additionality.”



“Just as family forest landowners know that growing seedlings into mature trees takes decades, enrollees join FFCP because of the long-term benefits.”

“What we’re ultimately aiming for is for our enrollees’ behavior and carbon outcomes to be roughly 1 ton of carbon per acre per year better than their neighbors who are not enrolled in the program,” explained Riley. “That comparison is the basis for our accreditation.”

But does enrolling in the FFCP make a tangible financial difference? The standard option offers \$200–300 per acre over the 20-year contract period. In September 2021, Calvin Norman and Melissa Kreye, both assistant teaching professors of forestry with Penn State Extension, published a case study of three small forest landowners in Pennsylvania and their experiences considering enrollment in the Natural Carbon Exchange (which is no longer participating in the carbon market) or the pilot Enhancing the Future Forests program through FFCP.

- One couple with 130 acres enrolled in a 20-year contract under the Enhancing the Future Forests program and the Growing Mature Forests program would receive a total of \$31,400.⁷
- A second landowner with 40 acres enrolled under the Future Forests program of the Family Forest Carbon Program would receive \$11,200 over ten years.
- A third landowner received \$200 an acre through the Growing Mature Forests program, which would generate \$7,400 over the 20-year contract.

John Schmidt, who owns 60 acres in West Virginia, enrolled 42 acres into FFCP and uses the annual payments to help maintain the land for the long-term and provide access to forester support. He described his family as ready to continue his management priorities of managing for pollinator habitat and native plants, keeping the land for hunting, and protecting it from development.⁸

In May 2024, landowners who have or are willing to get a Farm & Tract Number (FTN) from their Farm Service Agency office may qualify for the premium option, which offers 20 percent more in payment value than the standard option.⁹

After enrolling in Field to Forest, landowners receive an annual payment of \$30 per acre planted, with additional revenue streams from approved thinning during their enrollment and a timber harvest at the end of their contract.

Hite acknowledged that these payments won’t compete with what developers might offer a family forest owner, but they give landowners a choice. “What this program provides is regular income from their land, often supplementing the more irregular or non-existent timber harvesting income,” she said. “If they’re inclined to keep the forest, it gives them a choice.”

As family forest landowners know that growing seedlings into mature trees takes decades, enrollees join FFCP because of the long-term benefits. Wade Rabun, an enrollee in Field to Forest, retired in 2019 from raising cattle and growing cotton and peanuts. He wanted to continue actively managing the property while setting up his children for success when they eventually own the land.

“A lot of folks were skeptical of this program because when something seems too good to be true, people don’t believe it’s true, but this is true,” he said. “As more people like me enroll and benefit from the program, they will see it’s real.”

Susan Benedict, the owner of Bear Town Tree Farm, enrolled in the program and shared with AFF that with the financial support, “I hope that we can take this from a third-generation Tree Farm to a five-generation Tree Farm. I think it can be done; it’s just a matter of finding ways to keep the land sustainable and profitable.”

Carbon additionality may be why society is paying to support the FFCP, but from the American Forest Foundation’s perspective, Hite said, “it’s an excellent strategy to keep landowners actively managing their land.” 🌲

7 <https://extension.psu.edu/what-is-selling-forest-carbon-like-three-landowners-experiences>

8 <https://www.forestfoundation.org/why-we-do-it/family-forest-blog/john-schmidt-keeper-of-the-woods/>

9 <https://www.forestfoundation.org/why-we-do-it/family-forest-blog/the-latest-news-on-the-family-forest-carbon-program>

You Can Make an Even Greater Impact by Becoming A Monthly Donor Today!

“The American Forest Foundation came up as one of the organizations that is proactive about protecting, maintaining, and improving the quality of American forests,” said Janis Buffham, a founding member of The Giving Tree and a conservation and climate enthusiast who discovered AFF through a Google search.

Years have passed since Janis first discovered AFF. Over time, she has gained a deeper understanding of the significant climate impact her monthly contributions have, particularly supporting AFF’s innovations. Janis expresses confidence in how AFF manages its funds. “AFF is being responsible with their money,” she says. “So I feel good about that... and I’m learning more about their amazing efforts to protect and improve the quality of America’s family forests. **Three years later, I still feel really good about contributing to this organization as a monthly donor.**”

Join **the Giving Tree**, our monthly giving group, today! With your monthly gift, you become a part of a dedicated group working to overcome our most pressing conservation challenges. Members of the Giving Tree are critical in creating a steady, reliable source of funds that enables us to undertake the most crucial parts of our mission.

With your generous recurring donation, you will receive benefits* such as:

- Curated and customized communications.
- Member-only phone line for personal inquiries, concerns, or questions.
- Annual choice of American Forest Foundation gear such as hats, coffee mugs and more

Joining is an easy and convenient way to ensure you are making an even bigger, sustaining impact on our work! Visit <https://www.forestfoundation.org/givemonthly>

We are so grateful to the individuals who are currently making a sustaining monthly gift:

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Clark Beebe | Ruth Hinson | Mike & Christine Mallon | Joshua Traube |
| Robert Bousquet | David Hofer | Will Martin | Nathan Truitt |
| Marcus Bradley | David Hughes | David Mazariegos | Anonymous |
| Janis Buffham | Lacy Hunt | Vincent Nadalie | Anonymous |
| Scott Deitz | Matt Jagnow | Patrick O’Reilly | Anonymous |
| Steve Dosh | Charles Johnson Jr | Jonathan Roberts | |
| Steven Eichten | Gary & Treva Kingston | Casey Rush | |

If you have any questions, please contact Bethany Mueller, Senior Manager, Climate Donor Relations, at (202) 852-7520.

**Must make four consecutive monthly gifts of at least \$35 or at least one \$140 gift in order to qualify.*

You Can Leave a Legacy through AFF's Seedling Society

BY BETH RILEY, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPY
AMERICAN FOREST FOUNDATION

The Seedling Society was piloted in late 2018 as a way for individuals and families to make a planned or deferred philanthropic gift to the American Forest Foundation (AFF) to support its ongoing work into the future. Initially, AFF focused on accepting outright monetary donations, simple bequests, and beneficiary designations. However, that changed in 2020 when AFF's Board adopted a new Gift of Land policy. Today, AFF will gratefully accept gifts of land and does everything possible to ensure the donated forest lands are protected according to the donor's wishes.

"In the past, if people left us land, we were required to sell it and put the money into our endowment for AFF's mission," explained Jameson S. French, president and CEO of Northland Forest Products, Inc., and past chair of AFF's Board of Trustees. "With this new policy, we are responsible for ensuring the land is permanently protected as a working forest."

Since piloting the Seedling Society in 2018 and implementing the Gift of Land policy in 2020, many supporters have made AFF a beneficiary in their estates. They are excited to support the mission of AFF in this way. There have been in-person gatherings in Louisville and Baltimore in early 2019 and 2020 and online gatherings in subsequent years, which have fostered a sense of community.

"The generosity of the members of The Seedling Society is incredibly powerful, especially in these exciting times of change," said Rita Hite, president and CEO. "The Seedling Society is all about having a lasting impact on our ability to help family landowners steward their way into the future in a way that positively impacts our planet."



Dianne & Salem Saloom (center) welcomed Daniel Leathers (left) to their home and forestland in Alabama.

MEET DANIEL LEATHERS

This year, AFF has doubled down on its commitment by hiring dedicated staff to work with current and future members of the Seedling Society. Meet Daniel Leathers, AFF's first Senior Manager for Legacy Giving.

Daniel said, "I was raised with a strong connection to the land and nature. This love for natural surroundings started from an early age and was instilled in me by my grandfather and Scout leaders. As I grew into my teenage years, the family farm and its forests were places to explore and grow. I was fortunate to spend my time camping, canoeing, and exploring, all while learning skills that would later prove beneficial in the US Army and beyond."

In these formative years, he also developed a deep appreciation for conservation and recognized his role in helping to protect our natural resources.

Over the past two decades, Daniel has worked with several non-profits focused on conservation and reconnecting people, especially youth, with nature, emphasizing their role in ensuring effective conservation for future generations. During this time, he discovered other ways to make a lasting impact on our future, one of which is planned giving.

When discussing his excitement about AFF and this position, he said, "There are many ways to make an impact and leave a legacy. Not everyone can go out into the woods and lead hikes and camping trips, but we can all ensure our passion for conservation endures."

This realization led him to include a planned gift in his retirement plan beneficiary designations. Daniel, who grew up in Tennessee but now lives in Kentucky, has a strong desire to improve our future. His extensive experience in giving methods benefits our donors, and their heirs and aligns with their passions.

SEEDLING SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

There are several ways to become a member of the Seedling Society. The most common methods include:

- A documented bequest provision in your will or trust
- A gift of paid-up life insurance
- Purchasing a life insurance policy designating AFF as a full or partial beneficiary
- Designating AFF as a full or partial beneficiary of an IRA, 401(k), 403(b) or other retirement plan
- A deferred gift of real estate, such as a second home, undeveloped land, or other tangible property

Becoming a part of the Seedling Society comes with several benefits. They include:

- Tax saving benefits for you and your heirs
- Estate planning seminars and support
- Peer networking opportunities
- In-person and online special events and gatherings
- Support of dedicated planned giving professional
- Quarterly newsletter

The decision to remember AFF in your estate plans helps to ensure the preservation of our natural resources and is specific to each person, couple, or family. To discuss these and other avenues to leave a legacy, contact Daniel Leathers via email at dleathers@forestfoundation.org or give him a call at 202-765-3710.

Be sure to check out our website for more information on these and other ways to leave an enduring impact on the future. Simply scan the code below with your smart phone and visit our website or go to <https://www.forestfoundation.org/how-we-do-it/philanthropy-and-giving/planned-giving>. 🌲

The American Forest Foundation can help you leave a gift of legacy for a sustainable future.

- Gift of Land
- Bequest in Will or Trust
- Life Insurance Beneficiary
- Retirement Plan Beneficiary

Visit our website for more information.

American Forest Foundation

A Powerful Legacy Across America



Scott & Marge
Hayes



Dianne Komminsk

Growing the Seedling Society since 2018

(OR) SCOTT & MARGE HAYES

Scott and Marge gave their time, talent, and treasures to AFF. They have gained an appreciation for AFF's mission, serving in various roles, including Scott serving on the AFF Board of Directors. When they heard about the Seedling Society, AFF's planned giving society, the couple decided it was an excellent way to provide long-term support. "We know our gift will help AFF fulfill its mission into the future. AFF is a great organization dedicated to helping private forest landowners become better stewards of America's woodlands."

(OH) DIANNE KOMMINSK

A lifelong forest enthusiast, she wanted to make an impact, specifically in her region.

(CA) LOIS KAUFMAN & DAVE MCNAMARA

Foresters by profession, private forest landowners Lois & Dave were the first to jump in and join the Seedling Society in early 2019. Their encouragement to others, "We don't have millions of dollars, but we can combine what we have with a group like AFF. It's a way to give back to something that's given us so much."

(AR) SARAH & ADAM STEEN

Sarah and Adam piloted AFF's Gift of Land program in 2020 by committing to a planned gift of property in the Ozarks of Arkansas. They have served in various volunteer roles for the organization and have been passionate supporters of the FFCP.

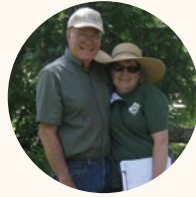
(CO) NATHAN TRUITT

Inspired attendees at the second annual Seedling Society gathering in Baltimore in 2019 by sharing how he made a life insurance gift to AFF from the policy his grandfather gave him.

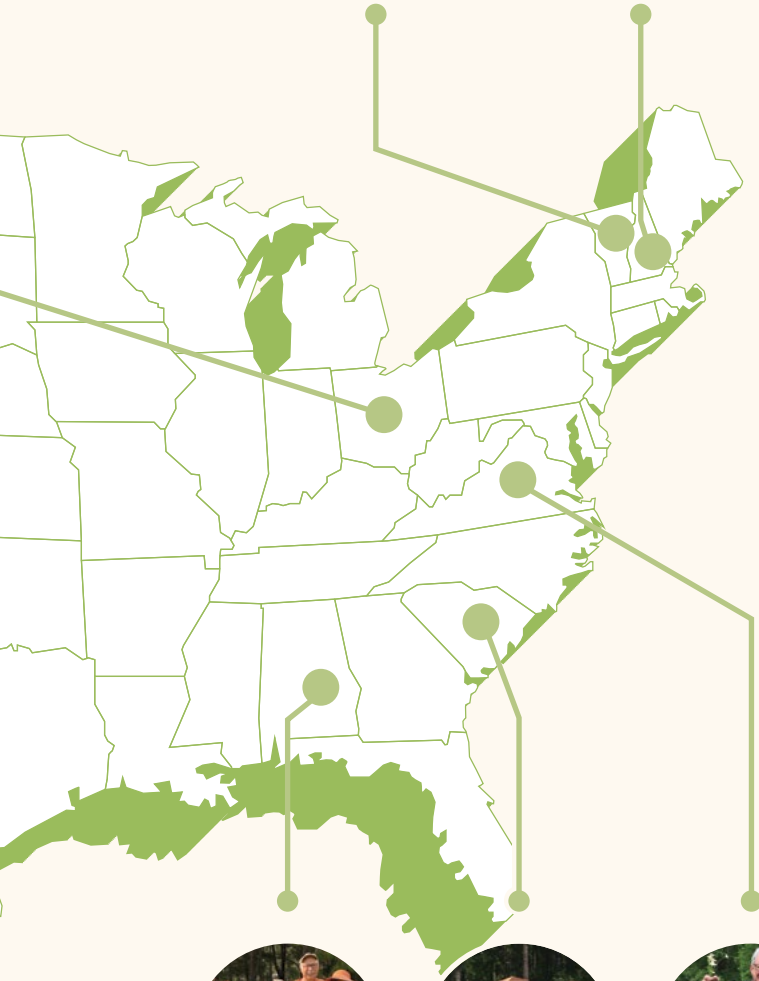




Peter & Julie Parker



Elaine Chipman



Salem & Dianne Saloom



Jim & Pam Porter



John & Kathryn Albright

(AL) SALEM & DIANNE SALOOM

Passionate longleaf advocates, tireless volunteers, and founding members of the Seedling Society, Salem and Dianne Saloom, have established a beneficiary gift for AFF. "We want to make a long term investment in the planet. And we trust the staff at AFF. They are impeccable people. They're honest, innovative, and intellectual."

(VT) PETER & JULIE PARKER

Enrolled in ATFS since the 1950s and the first individual FFCP major donors, the Parkers have Tree Farms in California and Vermont. They have hosted the AFF staff and partners on their land for many tours. In 2023, they notified us that they had updated their estate plans to include AFF and joined our Seedling Society annual gathering.

(NH) ELAINE CHIPMAN

Elaine Chipman became the first family forest owner to complete a land donation to AFF. When her husband of 38 years, Dr. Charles Donaldson Chipman died in 2013, Elaine began thinking about her estate plan. She wanted to ensure that her New Hampshire property would remain a forested tract after her passing. "I'm passionate about the planet and what's happening to it," she said. "Our children and great-grandchildren will not have a great planet unless people do things to help. We all have that responsibility."

(VA) JOHN & KATHRYN ALBRIGHT

John and Kathryn Albright were forest novices when they bought 148 acres of mostly wooded land in Craig County, Virginia, more than 20 years ago. John's work on the land was rewarded in 2013 when the American Tree Farm System certified the property. Then, after his sudden passing in 2019, Kathryn received an outstanding Forest Steward award from the Virginia Forest Stewardship program. Kathryn hopes to pass on her land to AFF in memory of her husband. "John wanted the land to remain as it is, and donating it to AFF will further protect the property."

(SC) JIM & PAM PORTER

The Porters are founding members of the Seedling Society who made an outright leadership gift. Jim is a retired forest products industry professional, and Pam has served in many significant volunteer roles. They love to host their grandchildren and educational programs and tours at their Bailey Mill Tree Farm.

The Family Forest Carbon Program helps landowners **care for their woods while helping the planet.**

Family forests provide many of ecosystem benefits, including wildlife habitat, clean air, and natural water filtration. They also help protect the planet by sequestering and storing carbon. The Family Forest Carbon Program creates a marketplace for landowners to sell carbon credits to environmentally conscious companies working to reduce their carbon footprint. Landowners can earn extra income to help achieve their land goals.

The Family Forest Carbon Program is uniquely designed to help forest owners adopt long-term sustainable management that improves carbon sequestration and storage while balancing other essential forest benefits. The program provides expert guidance from a forest professional, creating a forest management plan, and annual payments to implement practices.

Now available in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Learn more at www.familyforestcarbon.org



American
Forest
Foundation

The Nature
Conservancy 
Protecting nature. Preserving life.

A Walk in the Woods

Family Forest Owner Perspectives

BY TOM GRESHAM

Allison and John Nash

John Nash went looking for land in Florida simply because he wanted a place to hunt turkey. He found an approximately 600-acre parcel that was a perfect Osceola wild turkey habitat, and he bought it in 2002. However, John knew nothing about trees; with the purchase, he'd manage thousands of them. On top of that, about 150 acres of the property recently had been clear cut, leaving behind land that John's wife, Allison, and the couple's daughters likened to the "elephant graveyard" in "The Lion King." It would need to be replanted with pines.

John immediately got serious about learning what he didn't know. He connected with a silviculture contractor, a county forester, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and joined the Florida Tree Farm Program and Florida Forestry Association.

"I leaned on my resources, and the management plan basically gave me a vision of what to do and how to do it," John said.

His plans for it evolved as his interest and understanding of the land grew.

"My goals for my land evolved from hunting turkeys every day to wanting to share the resource with my friends and neighbors, to share this knowledge we have, and to take care of the trees as best as we can," John said.

Allison, founder and president of the Florida Women Landowners Association, said Osceola Pines, as the property has been named, has become a cherished family meeting place and the site of many memorable gatherings over the years. She also found that the family gains a new appreciation for the property the more they learn about the intricate world it contains. For instance, Osceola Pines is home to pinewood dainties, a Florida endangered plant species. For years, Allison said the Nashes didn't know what it was and thought of it as a little weed.



John and Allison Nash on their Florida forestland, Osceola Pines.

"Now we have learned how to cultivate it, how to manage it, and we share that knowledge with everybody who comes out to the property," she said. "We just found out about it a year ago, and now we love to look for it. So the more that we learn, the more it entices us to look for other things we want to learn about. Every time we go out there, there's something new to see and appreciate."

John, who serves as the Florida Tree Farm Program president, said Osceola Pines now boasts a great pine tree stand, providing some income to help support the property. The last time its hardwood hammock was timbered was in 1930, meaning about 300 acres of the property is approximately 100 years old, and "those trees are just getting bigger and bigger."

The property remains an ideal Osceola wild turkey habitat, and the Nashes host many hunters, including some young hunters who have gotten their first turkey or deer at Osceola Pines.

John, a retired banker, estimates he does about 90% of the work on the land himself, and he has found that the time he spends on his property helps him understand how to manage it. "The land talks to you, and tells you what it wants you to do," he said. "All you've got to do is look and listen."

"I can go out on my tractor for two hours and see real progress in helping my land," John said. "I like seeing the forest mature. It's very satisfying."

Janine and Tim Van Norman

When Janine and Tim Van Norman retired as wildlife biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington, D.C., they knew they wanted to buy a wild piece of land they could call their own.

They ultimately settled on 617 serene acres in the Adirondacks in New York, where they have lived since 2018. The property featured five houses, a garage, a barn and some out buildings. The couple fixed up two houses and began renting them to vacationers with plans to develop more.

The couple seeks to promote biological diversity in their forest, address climate change locally with thoughtful land stewardship, and share what they learn to educate others.

"A lot of people are scared of being out in the woods, so having a very comfortable place for them to witness the chaos of nature as it should be is a great way to at least open them up to seeing how important this planet is," Janine said.

All but less than 10 acres of the GreenMan Farm property is forested, and the Van Normans estimate that more than 80% of the timber is hardwood. Their focus for their forest is conservation, so joining the Family Forest Carbon Program was perfect for them. The program, developed by the American Forest Foundation and The Nature Conservancy, enables family forest owners to access climate finance from carbon markets and implement climate-smart forestry practices with the help of expert guidance.

"The program has been great so far, and we've only been in it for less than a year now," Tim said.

The Van Normans cite concerns about the carelessness of previous timber harvesting on their property, including widespread high grading, as a key factor in their decision to limit harvesting.

"There's a need for wood fiber and lumber, but it can be done right," Tim said. "You can do it in a way that's sustainable, takes care of the environment, and maintains wildlife habitat."

As biologists, the Van Normans said they are enthusiastic about the expert support from the Family Forest Carbon Program.

"We're nerds, so we want to know everything," Janine said. "That way, as we continue on this learning journey, we can implement new things or stop doing ineffective things. The forest management plan we receive as part of this program will help us"

The Van Normans said they are interested in sharing their Family Forest Carbon Program experience with their neighbors to see if they would be interested in an alternative to their current approaches, which often involves clearcutting. "It would be great to create some corridors of connected lands that are protected under this program," Janine said.

"All but less than 10 acres of the property, which is named GreenMan Farm, is forested, and the Van Normans estimate that more than 80% of the timber is hardwood."

Janine and Tim Van Norman cultivate biodiversity in the Adirondack Mountains, NY.



In the meantime, the Van Normans will continue to strive to learn more about their land and to look for opportunities to share what they know with others.

“We’re focusing on education,” Janine said. “Right now, it’s for our guests, but ultimately we’d love to expand to the community, schools, and college students to help show people little things that can be done to help the planet.”

Jim Watson and Carol Bibler

Jim Watson says managing large properties is part of his DNA. Raised on a farm in Mississippi, Watson grew up learning “to treat the land kindly so that it will treat you kindly in return.”

With that in mind, Watson and his wife, Carol Bibler, emphasize sustainability above all else in managing Spring Brook Ranch near Kalispell, Montana. Watson is a retired mechanical design engineer who was running a startup manufacturing company when Bibler’s father died and left them the ranch, which is about 1,000 acres. Watson jumped at the opportunity to oversee the land, though he knew he lacked the expertise to do it without a lot of help.

Fortunately, Watson found a wealth of willing experts in Montana ready to answer his questions and point him toward classes and other resources where he could build his own expertise. Over the years, knowledge grew, and Jim and Carol were named Montana Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year in 2022 and the American Forest Foundation’s Western Regional Tree Farmer of the Year in 2023.

Watson said he feels energized by the many challenges that the property provides. For instance, he said, the best decision for the health of your wildlife may not be the best for the health of your trees or the fire risks of your forest.

“There’s a lot of balancing you must do when making forestry decisions,” Watson said. “And that’s a really interesting part about it. You get different advice from different people and must decide how to thread that needle.”

A few years ago, the Watsons added a 640-acre section across the road from their existing land. A portion of the Watsons’ property is open to the public for recreation, and they make the rest available to friends and neighbors by invitation.

Watson said he enjoys introducing people to active forest management.

“I’m an advocate for active forest management because I have seen the results firsthand on my property, and there’s no doubt that’s what we should be doing with our forests,” he said.



Jim takes an active role in the hands-on work of active forest management.

Watson feels grateful for the mentors who have helped him and the support he’s received from the Montana Tree Farm Association and Montana State University Extension service, among others. He believes tree farmers must lean on professionals with more expertise and experience.

“The forestry community in northwest Montana is amazing,” Watson said. “It’s close knit, we all know each other, and we’re supportive and willing to share knowledge. Everyone looks out for each other. It’s a great community.”

Watson noted that Carol is a geologist, and geologists are trained to think long-term—a fitting approach to forestry, too.

“Good forestry means setting up that forest for centuries of use,” Watson said. Every time you walk in the forest and do something, your fingerprint will be there for generations,” Watson said. “And I want someone 100 years from now to look at my forest and say, ‘Wow, somebody did a good job here.’ I would love to be able to get in a time capsule and see my forest 200 or 300 years from now with giant yellow pines. That would make me so happy.”

Sue and Larry Wiley

In 1979, when Larry Wiley bought his first parcel of property near the Cedar River in Iowa, the land was more pasture than woodland. In fact, Larry joked that it resembled a golf course more than a forest.

The following year, Larry planted his first tree, and he's continued to plant trees ever since. He added three more parcels to the property in the 1980s, and today Larry and his wife, Sue, own approximately 275 acres, including approximately 125 acres of timberland along the river. That timberland has flourished in its decades under the Wileys' stewardship, not only through Larry's strategic, steady planting schedule but through natural regeneration that has occurred in tandem with it.

"I have planted many trees over the years," Larry said. "There were also areas of natural regeneration that required removal of honey locust, mulberry and other undesirable species while keeping the oak, walnut and ash."

Unfortunately, Larry has faced some significant challenges recently. In 2020, a derecho swept through his property, bringing with it winds of 140 miles an hour that remained for approximately 20 to 30 minutes, taking down lots of trees. Then, last year, the emerald ash borer arrived, killing off his ash trees.

"For the last four years, I've been cleaning up after the derecho and replanting some trees. Then, last year, the emerald ash borer came through and added insult to injury," Larry said. "I've been trying to harvest what I can. I did a lot of salvage harvesting after the derecho."

For 20 years, Larry has sold campfire wood at a roadside stand near his property, depending on the honor system. He estimates he sells about 15 cords of wood that way each year—though that number jumped to approximately 25 at the outset of the pandemic.

Larry takes pride in being a hands-on landowner, taking on as much of the ongoing management of the timber as he can.

"I enjoy being in the woods," Larry said. "I call it chainsaw therapy. It's good for the muscle, and it's good for the mind."

Larry, a former Iowa Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year, serves on the Iowa Tree Farm Committee and the Iowa Woodland Owners Association. As part of a joint effort between those two organizations, he has been among those who displayed at various events to help promote good forestry management. He also advocates on the topic at the Iowa State Legislature.



Larry Wiley, former Iowa Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year

The issue is important to him.

"We don't have enough trees in Iowa," Larry said. "I'm more than a Tree Farmer—I'm also a conservationist. We need to clean up our water, and we need to clean the air. Many things treat the symptoms, but they won't be treating the problem until they get more trees in the watershed—and more trees in general—to improve the water and air quality. And, of course, trees provide so much more than that for us, too, from wildlife habitat to being good looking. Trees offer so many benefits."

Back on his property, Larry said that every time he starts his chainsaw, he hopes to improve his land and ensure it is better than when he found it.

"It's a great and rewarding thing to be a good steward of the land," Larry said. "Tree farming requires a lot of work. It would be much easier without derechos, invasive species (plants, bugs and disease) along with constantly managing the deer to avoid damage. That's life on a Tree Farm." 🌲



SAVE THE DATE

American Forest Foundation Auction

Tackling our most pressing climate challenges requires a collaborative approach by all participants in the Voluntary Carbon Market—a critical tool in our collective fight against climate change, and in companies' journey to Net Zero.

For the market to succeed, however, we need better solutions for realizing the impact of carbon projects, which includes new mechanisms for how high-quality credits are bought and sold.

Do you work for a company on a Net Zero journey? We have an innovative approach to buy carbon credits.

In the coming months, American Forest Foundation will host its first auction of carbon credits from its Family Forest Carbon Program giving companies a more transparent and streamlined way to purchase carbon credits and advance their climate mitigation journey.

We believe the market requires adaptation, innovation, and improvement now more than ever before. Our auction allows for a more streamlined process and transparency in pricing and volume availability into the future. Buyers will have the opportunity to evaluate all the detailed information about the Family Forest Carbon Program's four active carbon projects, assess the terms of FFCP's offtake contracts, and bid on key terms to secure FFCP credits below future forecasted market prices.

Join American Forest Foundation's Auction

If your company is on a journey to Net Zero, we invite you to experience a new way to buy carbon credits, a new way to assure your critical stakeholders that your business is resilient in the face of climate change, and a new way to finance the actions we all must take to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change.

Join us as we work together to improve the voluntary carbon market to drive measurable positive impact for our planet.

To learn more about how your company can participate, visit www.affauction.org

Seedling Society Spotlight

“We know our gift will help AFF fulfill its mission into the future. AFF is a great organization dedicated to helping private forest landowners become better stewards of America’s woodlands.”



Scott and Marge Hayes

Scott and Marge have given their time, talent, and treasures to the American Forest Foundation (AFF). They have gained an appreciation for AFF’s mission, serving in various roles, including Scott serving on the AFF Board of Directors. When they heard about the Seedling Society, AFF’s planned giving society, the couple decided it was a good way to provide long-term support.

The Seedling Society is a community of individuals like Scott and Marge, who—like you—have a deep-seated commitment to the mission of the American Forest Foundation. By designating AFF in your estate plans, you will ensure a path for its future and enjoy the benefits such as:

- Learning about how your gift empowers family forest owners to take action on their land.
- Discover how your gift honors your stewardship values and supports your legacy planning process.
- Join a community of donors who share goals similar to yours in their estate planning through invitations to exclusive events.

“We know our gift will help AFF fulfill its mission into the future,” said Hayes. “AFF is a great organization dedicated to helping private forest landowners become better stewards of America’s woodlands.”

“Donating to the Seedling Society went smoothly,” said Scott. The Hayes’ gift reflects their commitment to forest management and the mission of the American Forest Foundation.

We’d love to hear from you!

If you want to discuss your giving options, please call or email **Daniel Leathers at (202) 765-3710 or dleathers@forestfoundation.org**. If you have already included the American Forest Foundation in your estate plans, please let us know so we can thank you for your generous commitment to supporting family forest owners. You can enjoy the benefits of recognizing your gift and joining others like you in the Seedling Society.



**American
Forest
Foundation**



The Seedling Society