

# U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities

## *Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention*

Multiple states

### Challenge

African American landowners have faced multiple barriers to land retention including unclear title due to heirs' property, smaller land holdings, and a mistrust of the forest industry and federal programs. Additionally, without realizing the economic value of their land, landowners often perceive their property as a liability to maintain, rather than an asset to keep.

### Innovation

The Sustainable Forestry & African American Land Retention Program (SFLR) is a partnership of the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and USDA Forest Service that promotes intergenerational land retention and family asset creation for African American landowners across the southeast. The program capitalizes on innovative partnerships between local, state, and federal organizations to assist landowners in land retention and asset creation. The program provides a variety of support to these landowners, including access to legal assistance and opportunities for sustainable forestry.

### Overview

The Program arose from recognizing seven historical barriers to African American participation in sustainable forestry practices: 1) weak support systems for landowners; 2) limited access to forestry markets; 3) insecure land tenure due to heirs' property and limited succession planning; 4) limited access to capital; 5) diminished forest health; 6) broken trust among landowners, private foresters, and natural resources programs; and 7) limited return on investment for forest management. SFLR works to overcome these barriers by connecting landowners to comprehensive landowner support networks of forestry and legal services providers. The networks are developed and coordinated by trusted community-based organizations and include organizations with resources and technical capacities, such as state forestry organizations, nonprofits, universities, and the private sector. The networks leverage the stable funding and technical expertise of the government programs; community trust and innovation of community-based nonprofits, conservation groups, and universities; and the market access and technical expertise of private industry.

#### PUBLIC-SECTOR PARTNERS

Natural Resources Conservation Service, State Forestry Commissions, USDA Forest Service

#### OTHER PARTNERS

University of Arkansas Pine Bluff (AR), Winston County Self Help Cooperative (MS), Limited Resources Landowner Education Assistance Network (AL), Federation of Southern Cooperatives (AL), McIntosh SEED (GA), Center for Heirs' Property Preservation (SC), Roanoke Electric Cooperative (NC), and Black Family Land Trust (VA).

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

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