

Working Forest Fund

Critical transitions:



Innovation: Blended finance funds

Geographic focus: North America (USA)

\$: \$500 million



Founded in 1988, the Conservation Fund is a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to preserve critical ecosystems in the US, while pursuing economic development for local communities.

Due to the fragmented nature of land ownership in the US, forests have multiple owners, which prevents the development of holistic management plans and allows for unsustainable management practices to take place. Through the Working Forest Fund, the Conservation Fund protects forests by purchasing and converting them into public goods.¹¹⁷ By working in partnership with land trusts, public agencies and sustainable timberland managers, the WFF secures permanent protection, acquiring the most-high value, at-risk private forestry land with philanthropic, state and federal agencies capital. With the acquired land, WFF develops a sustainable harvest, habitat and wildlife plan. WFF simultaneously acquires a permanent conservation easement, forever preventing the commercial development and fragmentation of the forests. The easement allows for public access and sustainable timber harvesting using best practice. Once the easement is acquired, the WFF sells the land to private and public buyers, reinvesting capital back into further forest acquisitions.

WFF has secured over 683,000 acres of land, deployed \$500 million in acquisition capita and sequestered 159 million tonnes of CO₂. The fund’s portfolio includes North Coast Forests, a 74,000-acre California redwood forest that supports 1,757 jobs, stores over 23 million tonnes of CO₂ and is lightly managed for biomass growth, forest health and economic viability; Logan & Hatfield McCoy, 32,410 acres of forest lands, supporting 47 jobs, storing over 6,8 million tons of CO₂ with the potential for economic diversification through outdoor recreation, wildlife tourism, and wood products in coal-impacted communities; and Clarion Junction, 32,591 acres of forest lands supporting 328 jobs, storing about 7.9 million tons of carbon, with the opportunity to secure the supply chain of a local mill.

The fund plans to rapidly scale its model, seeking to secure 5 million acres of high-value conservation forests over the next 10–15 years.^{118, 119}

Stakeholders:

Conservation Fund

Status:

● Operational