



Establishing an Ecosystem Restoration Workforce

A Transition Proposal for President-Elect Obama

12/18/08

Given the major challenges facing our country related to an economic downturn, energy security, and climate change, American Forests proposes an idea that draws from a similar period in our nation's history, an idea that addresses these major challenges through an integrated approach to economic recovery and environmental improvement.

AMERICAN FORESTS proposes the establishment of an “Ecosystem Restoration Workforce” that would build upon and update the “Civilian Conservation Corps” to focus on training skilled workers and creating quality jobs for the purposes of restoring the health and functions of our nation’s natural ecosystems and stimulating innovative green economic activities based on ecosystem services and products.

In 1933, President Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to combat unemployment during the Great Depression while improving the environment. American Forests worked with President Roosevelt to advocate for the establishment of the CCC in 1933. Today, we believe that President-Elect Obama faces the most critical and opportune time since the Great Depression to revive the central premise of the CCC: Creating jobs for the growing numbers of unemployed workers while also improving the environment. These jobs, however, can and must do more than improve the environment—they can help stimulate and meet the demand for innovative economic activities based on ecosystem services and products. We have moved into a new era of restoration that focuses on actions to improve the capacity of natural ecosystems (i.e., natural capital) to provide ecosystem services and products. While many of these ecosystem services and products, such as clean air, carbon sequestration, clean and ample water, soil regulation, and fish and wildlife habitat, have been treated as public or free goods up to now, efforts are underway to establish economic values and markets which will stimulate new investment and “green” economic activity.

Major policy elements of an Ecosystem Restoration Workforce

1. **A Green Worker Training Program:** Obama-Biden campaign materials propose the creation of a green worker training program. Like similar provisions in the Green Jobs Act of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, these green worker training programs focus on jobs related to renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies and manufacturing. Our proposal is to integrate into these policy proposals training provisions focused on technologies and innovations for the restoration of natural ecosystems and the use of restoration ecosystem services and products for green economic activities. Training

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programs would address diverse target groups in rural and urban communities and address training at a variety of skill levels, from volunteers, to on-the-ground work, to engineering and science, to entrepreneurial skills.

2. Investments in and incentives for innovative restoration activities and businesses:

Obama-Biden campaign materials propose new investments and financial incentives for promoting green economic activities and jobs in the renewable energy and energy efficiency areas. Our proposal is to clarify and expand this policy language so that it includes the activities such as restoring the health of natural ecosystems in rural landscapes and urban areas, increasing the carbon sequestration and storage benefits of terrestrial ecosystems, as well as energy conservation benefits provided by shading in urban areas, and establishing appropriately-scaled enterprises that can develop new technologies and business innovation for ecosystem services, and utilize the by-products of restoration to produce value added and low-carbon energy products. Investments are needed in federal land management programs focused on restoration, in developing strategies and programs for adapting to and mitigating climate change, in grants and tax incentives for innovative businesses focused on ecosystem services and products, including carbon offset projects and wood-to-energy projects, for strategic urban tree planting to provide energy conservation and carbon sequestration benefits, and for community block grant programs to encourage partnerships among diverse public and private entities and investments in innovative projects that deliver community benefits.

3. Capacity building and technical assistance: For emerging energy and climate change policies to be effectively implemented, there will need to be improved understanding of issues and programs, as well as collaborative strategies and partnerships between federal agencies, states and local communities, businesses, non-profit groups, and individuals. Capacity building and technical assistance provisions are intended to build understanding of policy issues, to encourage collaboration among diverse entities, and to share or transfer information about new technologies as well as business strategies.

4. Research and monitoring of green economy: The Green Jobs Act of 2007 and green worker training programs in national climate change legislation include key provisions for new research and monitoring efforts to better understand the green economy and job opportunities, and to specifically to monitor trends in green jobs. Our proposal calls for a research and monitoring program to address data gaps, develop information, and monitor trends in green jobs established through investments in training and green economic activities focused on restoring natural ecosystems.

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