

# CITIZEN-TIMES.com

ASHEVILLE CITIZEN-TIMES • VOICE OF THE MOUNTAINS

## New jobs push could benefit from, preserve natural treasures

July 26, 2010

The ideal employment program for Western North Carolina would create well-paying jobs that are in demand in environmentally friendly industries that take advantage of the region's natural resources.

That the sort of jobs that should result from 11 forest-products grants under the federal stimulus program. If the program works as planned, this will be \$1.2 million well spent.

"We have some of the most productive forests in the country, and it is important that we use that **asset** wisely to support the economies of our rural communities," said Letta Jean Taylor. "These stimulus projects give us an opportunity to use our renewable forest resources to bring back many of the jobs lost in the economic downturn."

Taylor is chair of the Land-of-Sky Regional Council, a four-county planning agency that is administering the program for the U.S. Forest Service's Southern Research Station.

One thing Western North Carolina has a lot of is trees. In the early 20th century, we came perilously close to losing that asset as timber companies clear-cut their way ever higher into the mountains.

Creation of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the national forests helped bring us back from the brink.

There are many ways to make money from forests without cutting down all the trees. One is recreation, an ever-booming source of jobs hereabouts. It would be hard to have zip-line tours, the most recent fad, without trees. Among the goals of a grant to Hickory Nut Gap and Big Sandy Mush is promotion of ecotourism and eco-education.

Preserving forests does not necessarily mean cutting nothing.

Selective logging can produce not only timber and firewood but the raw material for value-added

products. Several grant proposals stress small-scale logging. Furniture Specialties Inc. plans to, among other things, tout the benefits of furniture made from sustainable harvested wood.

Clear Creek Wood Products is to operate a shaving mill from small-diameter timber obtained from area harvesters. Green River Forest Products is to build dry kilns to bundle, market and transport environmentally **safe** and marketable firewood. Highland Craftsmen Inc. is to certify locally sourced hardwood trees

Community Forestry Project plans to promote sustainable forestry by training, production and marketing in horse logging, sawmill operation and value-added products.

Of course, there is more to forests than just trees. WNC Mushroom Co-op will promote mushroom cultivation. Recovering Traditional **Cherokee** Delicacies will use unemployed forest workers to utilize forest foods traditionally gathered by the Cherokee. Smoky Mountain Native Plants will promote value-added ramp products.

The Cherokee proposal is not the only one to stress employment for displaced forest workers. Blue Ridge Wild Timbers is to establish cooperative relationships with unemployed loggers. Mountain Valleys RC&D is to train loggers and forest workers in sustainable techniques to open old roads and trails in private forests.

Advertisement



**Mom Dilemma #36:**  
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

momslike.me.com  
where Local moms meet

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# CITIZEN-TIMES.com

ASHEVILLE CITIZEN-TIMES • VOICE OF THE MOUNTAINS

Julie Mayfield, executive director of WNC Alliance, an advocate for forest conservation, is cautiously optimistic. "If these projects are small scale enough that they won't (threaten the ecosystem), then we support them."

So do we.

Advertisement



**Mom Dilemma #36:**  
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

momslike.me.com  
where Local moms meet

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™