NSRC Funds Northern Forest Projects

Research Will Address Health & Sustainability of Regional Forests

Burlington, VT; Durham, NH; Orono, ME; Syracuse, NY — Northeastern States Research Cooperative (NSRC) Directors are pleased to announce 12 grants totaling nearly $2 million of federal funding and close to $1.1 million of matching funding for research that will focus on areas of concern identified by forest stakeholders in the Northern Forest region: State of the Forest, Measuring & Quantifying Impacts, Developing Tools for Response, and Rural Community & Economic Development. The projects include new investigations with regional scope and importance, transformation of research results into practice, and early-stage partnerships and problem investigation.

"Our forests, including the Northern Forest, are a key part of the struggle to limit the effects of the climate crisis on both ecosystems and rural communities. At the same time, global climate change is already impacting our forests and the economies that often depend on them," observed Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT). "For most of the past 20 years, the universities and scientists that make up the Northeastern States Research Cooperative have helped us understand the Northern Forest ecosystem. I'm pleased by how this round of projects point to work that has evolved in response to the challenges to the ecosystem itself and the communities connected to it."

NSRC received 33 research project proposals requesting $5.2 million in funding. All proposals were assessed by a team of external reviewers (researchers, practitioners, or both), with the top proposals moved forward to the Full Proposal Review Panel (FPRP) for funding prioritization. The final slate of projects selected for funding were based on the proposals themselves, the external expert reviews, the recommendations of the FPRP, and additional considerations as described in the RFP.

"Research partnerships with our state institutions in the northern states have been beneficial to leveraging our collective research capabilities to address increasing risks to our forests with cutting edge science," said Dr. Cynthia West, USFS Northern Research Station Director. "As forests face more extreme disturbances from invasive insects and pathogens, extreme weather events, as well as impacts from human activity, these partnerships are fundamental to help sustain the health and viability of the region's forests."

Research goals for the program, as stipulated in the 2020 NSRC Congressional Authorization, are to sponsor research to sustain the health of northern forest ecosystems and communities, develop new forest products, and to improve forest biodiversity management. NSRC also supports an Indigenous Forest Knowledge Fund (IFKF) to address structural inequities in opportunity for Indigenous youth in

forest research and invest in the cultural and intellectual sovereignty of Tribal forest traditions, alongside other forms of applied forest research. NSRC recently released an RFP for the 2022 IFKF competition.

"I am pleased that the Northeastern States Research Cooperative is continuing their rigorous grant program to support vital forest research. Our forests play an important role in our local economy, in the overall health of our environment, and as a major resource in combating the effects of climate change," noted Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH). "Our policies to address these critical issues depend on sound science, which is built on this type of research. I applaud the NSRC, their member institutions and all the researchers who do the hard work on these critical studies."

NSRC prioritizes problem-driven, engaged research with solid communications to stakeholders. Partnerships between researchers and practitioners are strongly encouraged, as are projects that aim to inform and align with the timeframes of management and policy decisions. The projects funded in this round cover a broad range of concerns related to biodiversity and connectivity, climate change and energy, invasive pests and diseases, and recreation and tourism.

These research projects, led by researchers from all four states, will begin in 2022:

Wildlife in the WUI: Investigating forest characteristics and impacts on mammalian diversity in the wildland-urban interface. Principal Investigator (PI) Daniel Bogan, Siena College

Quantifying changes in forest condition, connectivity and resilience in the northeast using geospatial and remotely sensed data. PI Melissa Clark, The Nature Conservancy

Trail forks and merges: Exploring social impacts from recreational mountain biking in northern forest communities. PI Kimberly Coleman, SUNY Plattsburgh

Implementing forest adaptation options for Northern Forest ecosystems. PI Anthony D'Amato, University of Vermont

Invasive pest effects on tree demographics across the northeastern US. PI Jeff Garnas, University of New Hampshire

Investigating the role of mycorrhizal fungi in New England forest management. PI Caitlin Hicks Pries, Dartmouth College

Jumping worm invasion and impact in the Northern Forest. PI Timothy McCay, Colgate University

Monitoring in a changing world: Developing adaptive protocols for monitoring mammals as they respond to climate and land use change in the northeastern US. PI Alessio Mortelliti, University of Maine

Effects of timber harvesting on the wetland ecology of Northeastern lowland forests. PI Christina Murphy, USGS Maine Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Unit, University of Maine

Eastern White Pine health monitoring through remote sensing assessment of foliar traits. PI Parinaz Rahimzadeh-Bajgiran, University of Maine

Oak at the edge: Investigating the importance of fire as a tool in oak range expansion. PI Matthew Vadeboncoeur, University of New Hampshire

Impacts of extreme climate events on tree regeneration in the Northern Forest. PI Jay Wason, University of Maine

About the Northeastern States Research Cooperative

NSRC (https://nsrcforest.org) is a competitive grant program for Northern Forest research, authorized by Federal legislation (Public Law 105-185), with allocations to the program directed by the USDA Forest Service. Since its inception, the NSRC has funded more than 345 projects, engaging 50 different institutions, agencies, and organizations across the northeast. Federal funding comes from Congressional appropriations through a partnership with the research and development arm of the USDA Forest Service. The private sector, states, and other organizations offered matching funding to support the research on the Northern Forest and its 26 million acres in Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont.

NSRC is jointly directed through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's Northern Research Station and a designated institution in each of the four Northern Forest States (Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Vermont, the University of New Hampshire in cooperation with the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation in New Hampshire, the Center for Research on Sustainable Forests at the University of Maine, and the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry). These institutions are all equal opportunity providers.

Media Contacts

Maine
Meg Fergusson
margaret.fergusson@maine.edu

New Hampshire
Michelle D. Shattuck
michelle.shattuck@unh.edu

New York
Mary Beth Malmsheimer
mmalmshe@esf.edu

Vermont
Julianna White
julianna.m.white@uvm.edu