

Breakout Session of Pipelines for Nature-Based Solutions: Project Opportunities and Engagement Strategies

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Project Opportunities Overview

To begin with, the group members discussed conservational nature-based solution projects.

- Extend rotations: It's crucial to manage the deferral of rotations carefully, particularly in naturally regenerated forests where variations can lead to scrutiny.
- Reforestation and agroforestry: As mentioned in Green Bank, they're trying to add additional trees and other vegetation to reduce energy use.
- Mass timber projects: Products like cross-laminated timber (CLT), represent a significant advancement in using forest materials for building purposes.
- Nitrogen management and drainage water management: Improved water management, specifically through expanded drainage, can play a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Integration of nature in housing projects: Combining environmental elements with residential developments.
- Landscape-scale watershed restoration: Targeted to reduce water treatment emissions.
- Exploration of nature-based solutions for data centers
- Forest service carbon projects: Forthcoming.
- USDA carbon accounting platform: To serve smaller private landowners.

Engagement Hubs Identification

In this part, the group members discussed the organizations that serve as key connectors and have access to a wide range of potential products or projects. They can be landowner organizations, project developers and private companies. More specifically, the key participants can be:

- Ag retailers
- Conservation districts
- Conservation drainage network
- Agricultural finance providers
- TIMOs and NGOs
- Farmer cooperatives

Financial Constraints and Opportunities

Implementing conservation practices often comes at the cost of reduced immediate returns. The group discussed the need for financial solutions that don't compromise returns. Possible solutions include:

- **Debt facilities:** Leveraging existing funds to support conservation efforts without sacrificing returns.
- **Equity Investments:** Considering equity rather than debt to fund conservation activities, which could potentially offer returns through carbon credits.
- **Low-Interest Loans:** Using lower interest rates to make conservation efforts more financially viable.
- **Carbon Credits and Financial Disclosure:** There's an emphasis on the potential for TMOs and REITs to generate carbon credits, which could offset the initial costs of conservation practices. The European Commission (EC) requiring carbon footprint disclosures could enhance the transparency and valuation of such efforts.
- **Long-Term Planning and Institutional Involvement:** The members mentioned the importance of having a long-term strategy, possibly involving the creation of a national green bank, to ensure continuous investment and implementation of conservation practices.

Strategic Engagements:

The last part discussion was around what does this collective community need to engage in these project opportunities.

- **Webinars and information sessions:** Addressing the benefits of project investment and comparative advantages.
- **Role of universities and education:** Emphasizing the importance of training educators who will communicate with landowners. Public universities have got extension outreach faculty doing things like forest carbon and continuing education. Periodically, they organize short pauses and educate landowners about what the opportunities are.
- **Outcomes measurement:** Essential for assessing project impacts and effectiveness. It is necessary to figure out how to price the benefits and the costs.
- **Financing strategies for nature-based solutions:** Maintaining focus on viable financing models and how does greenhouse gas reduction fit in versus how other opportunities fits in as well.