

U.S. Endowment Calls for Balanced Forest Markets to Support Working Forests and Rural Communities

New outlets for low-value fiber can strengthen the forest economy while supporting existing manufacturers

GREENVILLE, SC, UNITED STATES, May 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As forest-sector leaders continue discussions about woody biomass, the [U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities](#) is encouraging a broader conversation about the markets needed to keep working forests healthy and forest-reliant communities strong.



The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities is a not-for-profit public charity collaborating with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative, and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests.

Recent conversations have focused on whether expanded use of woody biomass could increase competition for fiber used by existing pulp and paper mills. That concern is important. Pulp and paper mills anchor local economies, provide markets for forest owners and produce essential products used every day. But the discussion must also account for the communities already living with the consequences of lost markets.



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Pete Madden, president and CEO of the U.S. Endowment

Since 2015, more than 40 U.S. pulp and paper mills have

closed, removing tens of millions of green tons of annual wood demand from forest regions. More than a dozen additional wood-consuming pulp and paper mills may also be at risk of closure in the future. When a mill closes or reduces fiber demand, the effects reach far beyond the facility gates. Family forest owners lose buyers. Loggers and haulers lose work. Sawmills lose outlets for chips, sawdust and other residuals. Rural communities lose jobs, income and local economic activity.

“Working forests depend on working markets,” said Pete Madden, president and CEO of the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. “Existing mills are essential to the forest economy,

and their concerns about fiber affordability and competitiveness deserve careful consideration. At the same time, we have to recognize what happens when markets disappear. Low-value material still exists, but landowners and communities have fewer options. Responsible bioenergy markets can help create value for material that often has limited or no reliable place to go.”

The Endowment’s mission is to strengthen and sustain healthy forest product markets while supporting working forests and the communities that rely on them. A durable forest economy requires strong manufacturing markets as well as multiple responsible outlets for residuals, thinnings, small-diameter timber and other low-value material.

When those outlets are missing, forest management becomes harder to finance. Thinnings may be delayed, forest health treatments may become less practical and landowners may have fewer reasons and fewer resources to keep forests actively managed. Over time, weakened markets can place added pressure on the working forest base that supports rural jobs, wildlife habitat, reliable water supplies and domestic forest products.

The Endowment encourages forest-sector partners to approach this issue with balance and regional nuance. A sawlog should go to a sawmill, and fiber suited for pulp and paper should move to its highest practical use where those markets exist. But not every chip, residual or low-value stem has a reliable home in every region. Transportation distances, mill infrastructure, forest conditions and local market capacity all shape what is practical.

“America’s working forests need strong mills,” Madden said. “They also need diverse, responsible markets for low-value fiber. Most of all, they need a forest economy with enough strength and flexibility to support the people and places behind every acre.”

About the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities:

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities is a not-for-profit public charity collaborating with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative, and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation’s working forests and forest-reliant communities. To learn more about the Endowment, please visit our website at www.usendowment.org.

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