For Immediate Release
February 25, 2015

National Coalition Says Federal Agencies Are Mismanaging Forest Carbon
Federal Forest Carbon Coalition Urges the Obama Administration to Modernize the Management of Federal Forests to Mitigate and Prepare for Climate Change

Contact:
Bob Doppelt, Co-Chair FFCC: bob@trig-cli.org
Ernie Niemi, Co-Chair FFCC: ernie.niemi@nreconomics.com
Jim Furnish, Senior Advisor to the FFCC: jimfurnish@verizon.net

Eugene, Oregon and Washington D.C.: The Federal Forest Carbon Coalition* (FFCC) today issued a Federal Forest Carbon Report Card that says the U.S. Forest Service and other federal forest management agencies are failing to adopt policies, regulations, and practices to explicitly mitigate the loss of carbon and increase carbon stores nationwide. The Report calls on the Obama Administration to rapidly modernize federal forest management to explicitly address carbon management or risk adding thousands of tons of carbon to the atmosphere and aggravating the climate crisis. It also includes a checklist forest managers can use to determine if they are addressing all of the issues required to conserve and increase forest carbon. A summary of the key points is included at the end of this release. The full report and related checklist are available here: http://www.forestcc.org/report-card

"Our research found that the U.S. Forest Service and other federal forest agencies have not yet updated and modernized their policies, planning processes, and practices to explicitly focus on conserving and increasing forest carbon," said FFCC Co-Chair Bob Doppelt, Executive Director of The Resource Innovation Group. "The President’s efforts to mitigate climate change are at great risk unless he and his staff direct federal agencies to make conserving forest carbon a priority."

"I want the Forest Service to address the challenge of climate change head-on," stated Jim Furnish, Retired Deputy Chief of the Forest Service and FFCC Senior Advisor. "Our national forests represent an enormous opportunity to reduce the risks of climate change by protecting carbon-rich forests, and even increasing carbon storage over time. Forest carbon has been historically neglected and it needs to be an urgent priority going forward."
"The carbon stored in the trees and soils of federal forests is far too valuable to be wasted, but our findings show that many forest managers are doing just that," said Ernie Niemi, Co-Chair of the FFCC and President of Natural Resource Economics. "The economic values at stake are huge. Using a mid-level estimate of the monetizable damage from the emission of carbon dioxide ($50 per metric tonne), releasing only one percent of the carbon held on federal forests into the atmosphere would generate in the range of $20 billion of damage."

In addition to recommendations to modernize federal forest management, the FFCC developed the checklist of actions included in the report that forest managers, conservationists and others can use to ensure that they fully account for the impacts of their actions on existing stores of forest carbon and on the forest’s ability to sequester additional carbon.

*About the Federal Forest Carbon Coalition*

- The FFCC is a first-of-a-kind consortium of over 65 national, regional and local organizations focused on forests, biodiversity, fisheries, rivers, faith and spirituality, Native American treaty rights, youth, rural communities, recreation, and climate disruption concerned about the management of carbon on federal forests nationwide.

- The FFCC works closely with forest-carbon scientists and realizes that areas of consensus exist as well as areas that lack consensus on the science of forest carbon management. Where scientific consensus is lacking, the FFCC believes a precautionary approach is required to prevent doing harm. This position that is reflected in the Report Card.

- The FFCC has sponsored a series of webinars by leading scientists that summarize the best science related to forest carbon management. They can be found on the FFCC website: [www.forestcc.org](http://www.forestcc.org).

- The FFCC has compared the state-of-the-art science of forest carbon management against the policies and practices of managers of several national forests and found that in most cases on-the-ground management does not reflect the best science.

- The FFCC intends to continue to work closely with top scientists to clarify the best forest-carbon science, make it available to on-the-ground forest managers, and help FFCC members measure the extent to which forest managers are accounting for the effects of their actions on forest carbon.
Summary
Federal Forest Carbon Report Card
An Urgent Call to the Obama Administration to Modernize Federal Forest Management to Mitigate and Prepare for Climate Disruption

The Federal Forest Carbon Report Card analyzes how federal agencies are currently managing forest carbon. It includes a set of recommendations for modernizing federal forest management to mitigate and prepare for the climate crisis. It also includes a checklist federal agency personnel and others can use to determine if they are addressing all of the issues required for sound forest carbon management.

• Currently U.S. National Forests hold about 150% of the carbon emitted annually by the U.S. Federal forests can and must play an important role in reducing the risks of uncontrollable climate change by adopting policies, regulations and practices to maintain the existing stocks of carbon and increase carbon stores.

• Adopting policies to maintain and increase carbon stores is consistent with President Obama’s Executive Order 13653 Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change and Executive Order 13514 Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy and Economic Performance require.

• However, case studies by the FFCC found a systematic failure among National Forest management agencies to adopt explicit policies and regulations and provide direction to field staff on how they should manage forest carbon. In specific, the FFCC found:
  ⇒ Senior officials and field staff in federal forest agencies have limited awareness of the importance of forest carbon in reducing the likelihood of uncontrollable climate change.
  ⇒ No evidence exists of intentional policies issued by the Chief’s Office or Regional Offices to conserve existing stocks of forest carbon and increase carbon stores.
  ⇒ No procedures exist to assess the effect of plans or projects on forest carbon.
  ⇒ In many cases a mindset and set of assumptions exist that timber harvest and other activities are scientifically sound methods of managing forest carbon, when in reality they are not.
  ⇒ Forest managers do not yet provide a thorough, transparent analysis of the effects on carbon, nor do they utilize decision criteria that recognize the importance of carbon in planning processes, environmental assessments, or project proposals.
  ⇒ No recognition exists of the benefits of managing forest carbon for other strongly correlated values, such as water quality, habitat diversity, and job creation.
  ⇒ No recognition exists of the need to assess the social costs of carbon—the costs of the damage to people, infrastructure, and society as a whole now and in the future— in planning documents, timber harvest, road building, or other development projects.

• In sum, the FFCC found that the Forest Service has failed to understand that carbon is now a civilization changing resource and failed to take explicit steps to manage federal forests in ways that address the urgency of the climate crisis.

• The FFCC believes these failings are systemic and exist in all other federal forest management agencies.
Based on our analysis, the FFCC believes that federal forests should modernize their policies, regulations, planning processes, management programs and practices in accordance with the following six goals:

⇒ Goal II: Maintain the Existing Stocks of Carbon on Federal Forests, Including Carbon in Live and Dead Materials, Above and Below Ground.
⇒ Goal III: Increase the Amount of Carbon Stored in Federal Forests.
⇒ Goal IV: Enhance, Consistent with Goals I, II, and III, the Resilience of Federal Forests to Climate Change-Related and Other Natural Disturbances.
⇒ Goal V: Generate Social, Economic, and Ecological Benefits Consistent with Goals I, II, III, and IV.
⇒ Goal VI: Fully Account for the Benefits and Costs of Any Decreases or Increases in Atmospheric Carbon and Other Greenhouse Gases in All Forest-Related Policies, Programs, Regulations and Development Proposals.

The Report Card includes a checklist of the issues federal forest management agencies should address to manage forest carbon in a scientifically credible manner. Forest managers, conservationists, and others can use it to identify shortcomings in Environmental Assessments, Environmental Impact Statements, Forest Plan Amendments, Scoping Documents, and other policy and management procedures. It can also be used as a tool to educate forest management personnel, forest users, elected officials, and others about the need and means of managing forest carbon in a scientifically credible way.