

# FROM RESTORATION TO RECREATION: INTEGRATING COMMUNITY VOICES TO DEVELOP A LANDSCAPE-SCALE VISION AND ECONOMY FOUNDED ON ECOSYSTEM SERVICES



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**Monongahela National Forest**



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



**MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD**

The people we meet are all neighbors each with unique contributions to make to our community and each worthy of our kindness.

- Charlie Cotherman

[www.pts.edu/blog](http://www.pts.edu/blog)

# BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR!



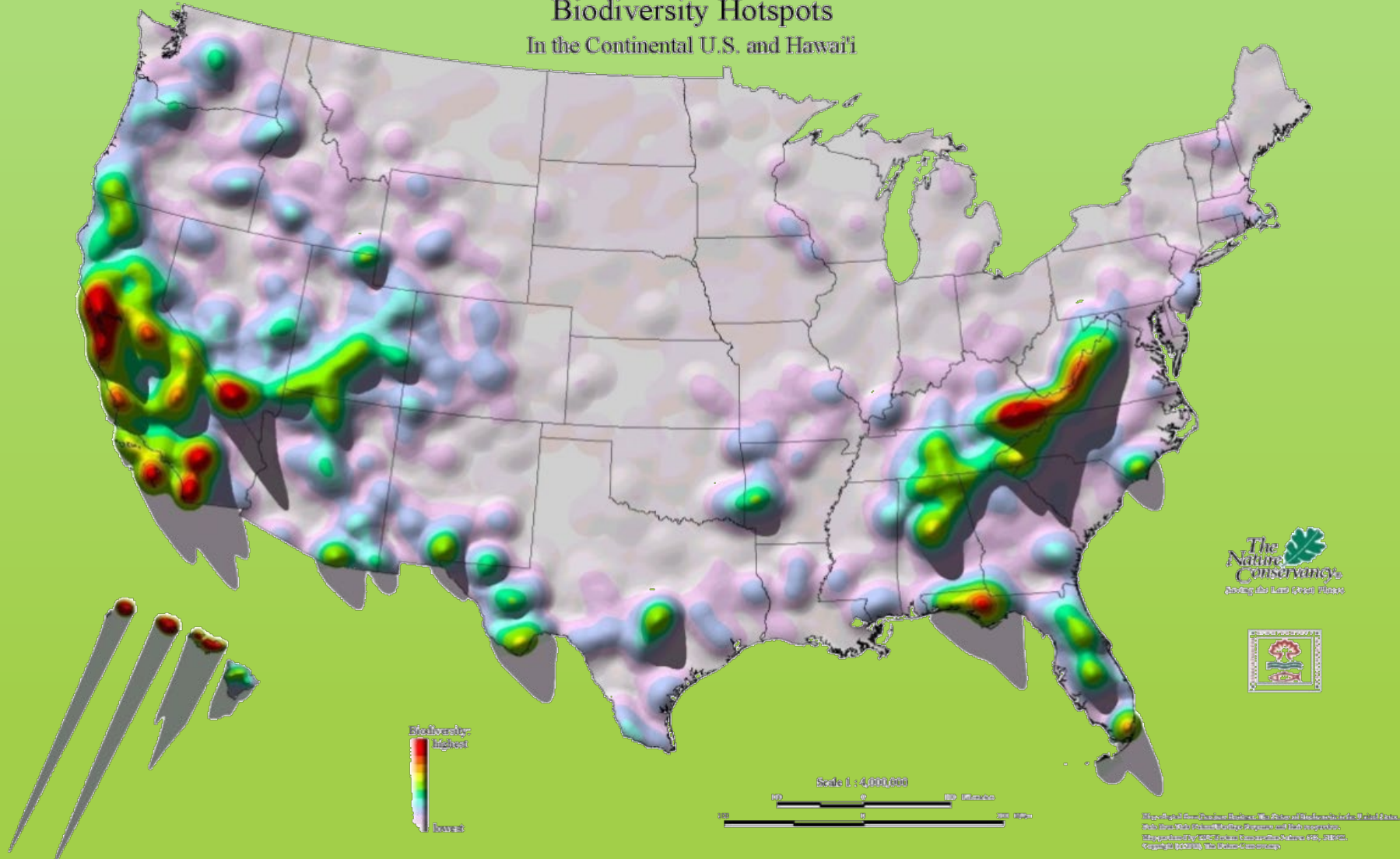
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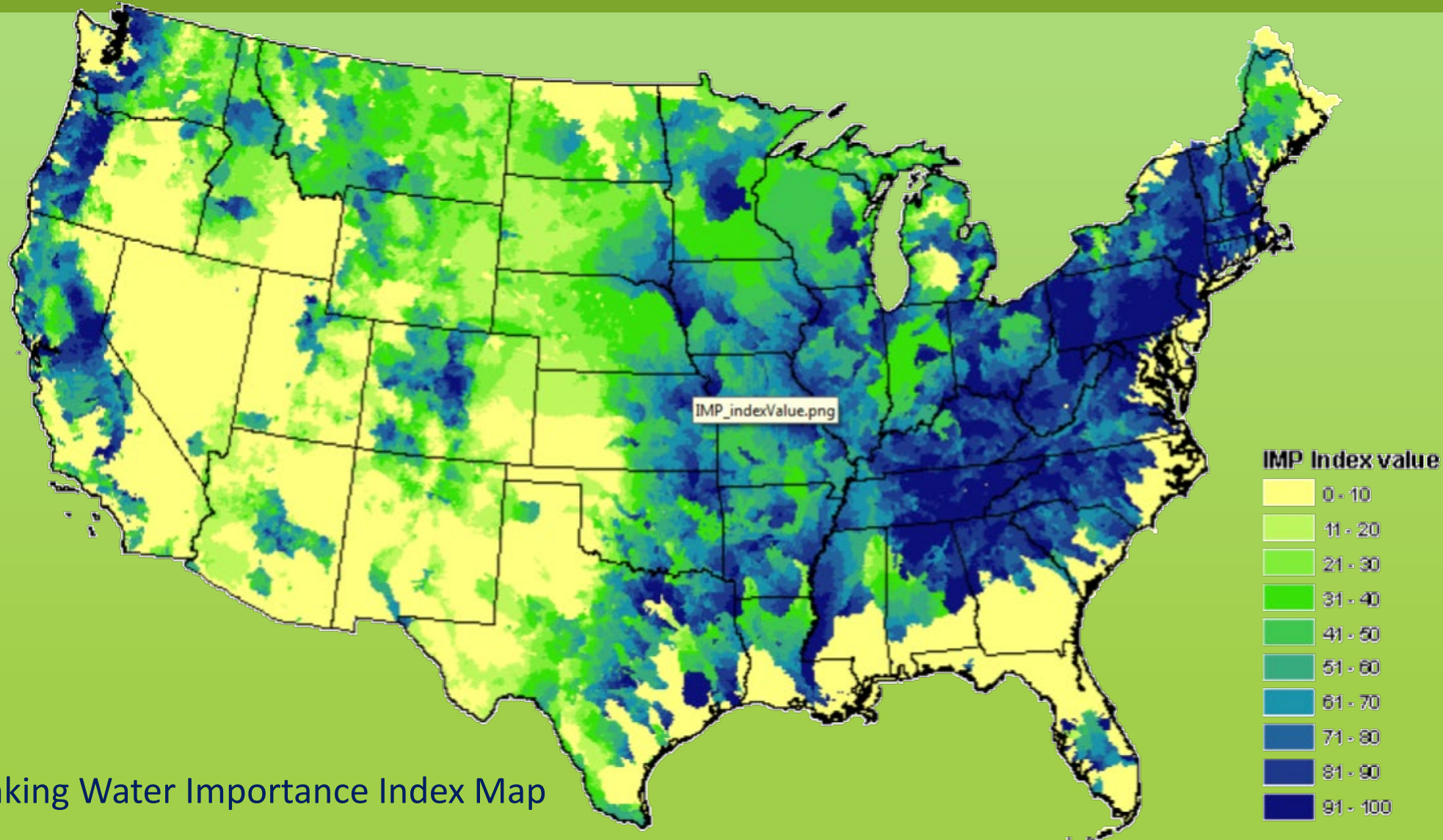
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### Biodiversity Hotspots In the Continental U.S. and Hawai'i



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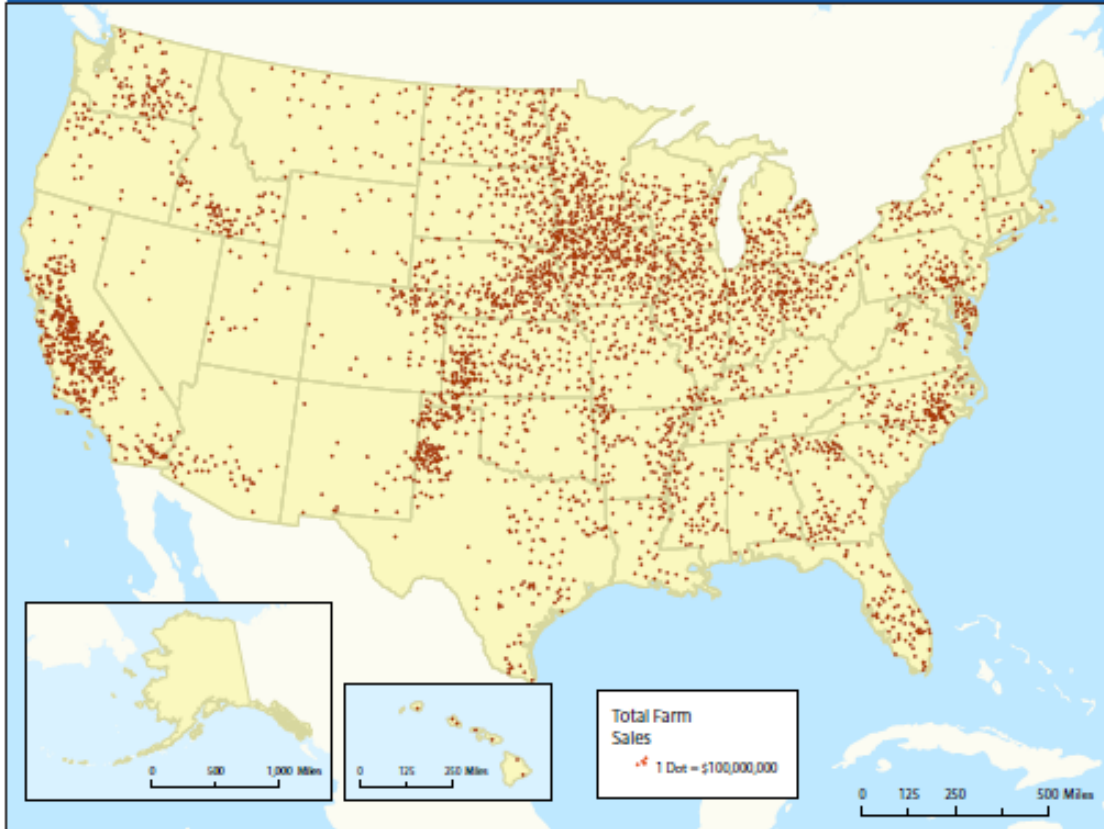
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Surface Drinking Water Importance Index Map

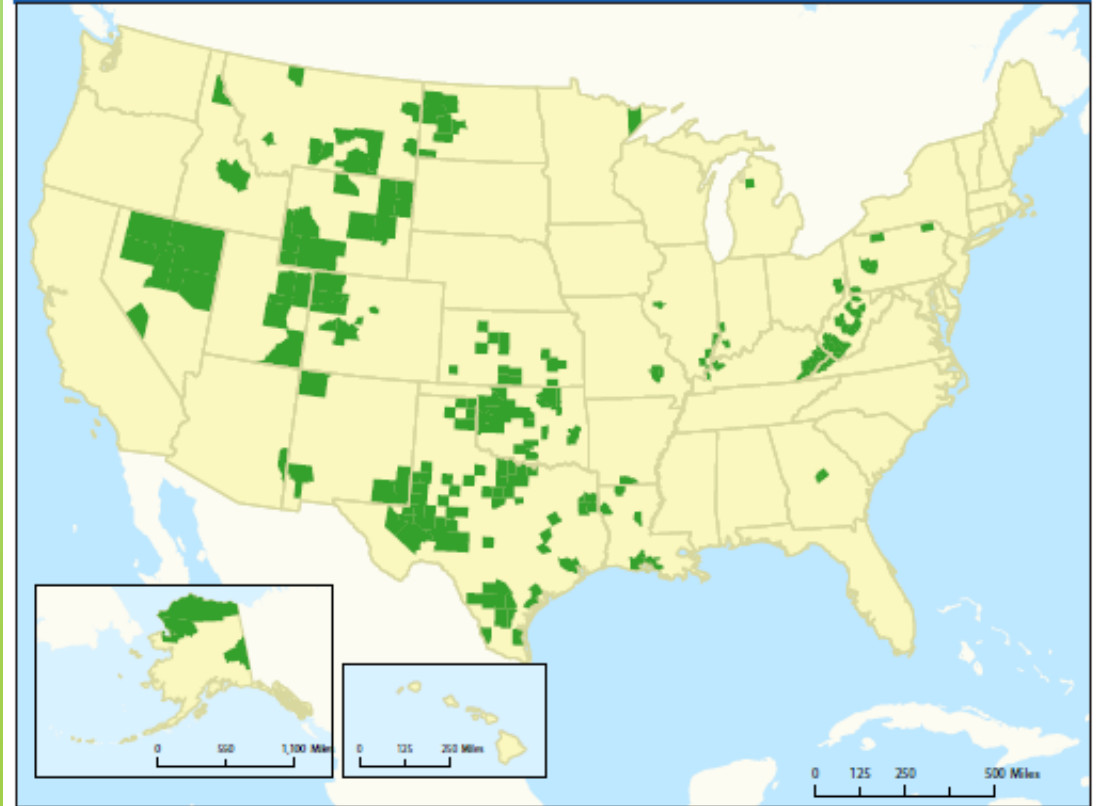


### FARMING AREAS (2012 FARM SALES)



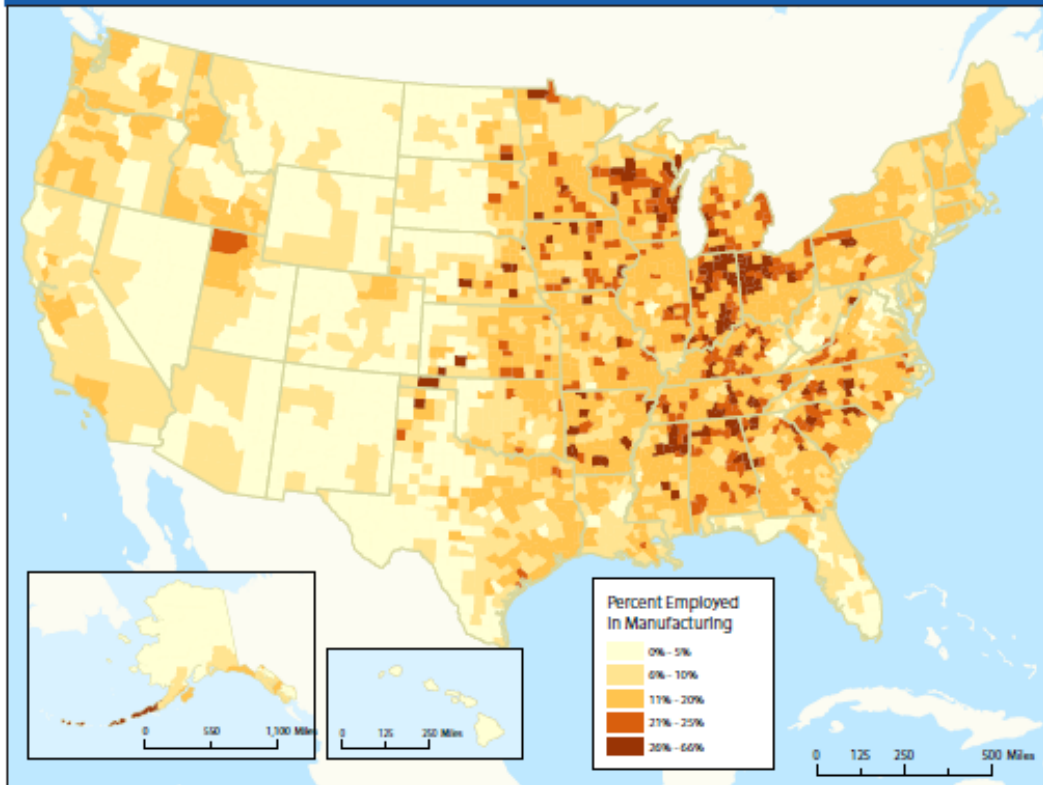
Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture

### MINING DEPENDENT COUNTIES, 2015



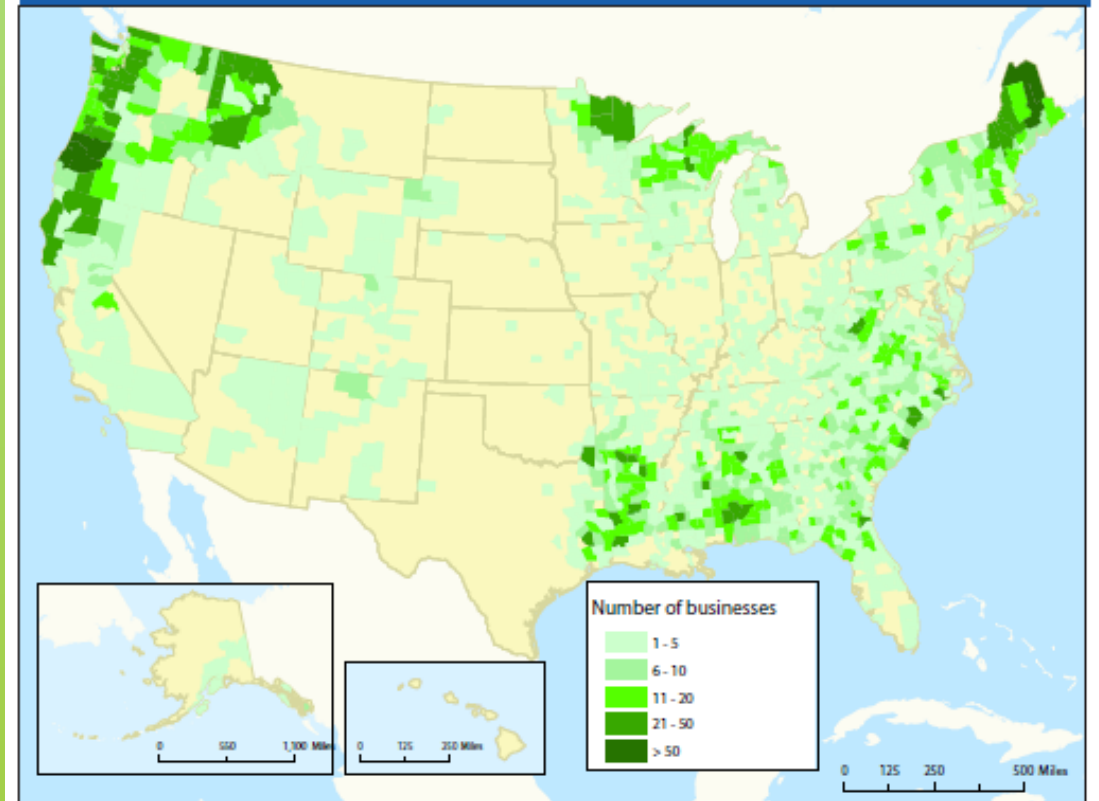
Source: USDA Economic Research Service Typology Codes, using data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2015

### SHARE OF EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING, 2011-15



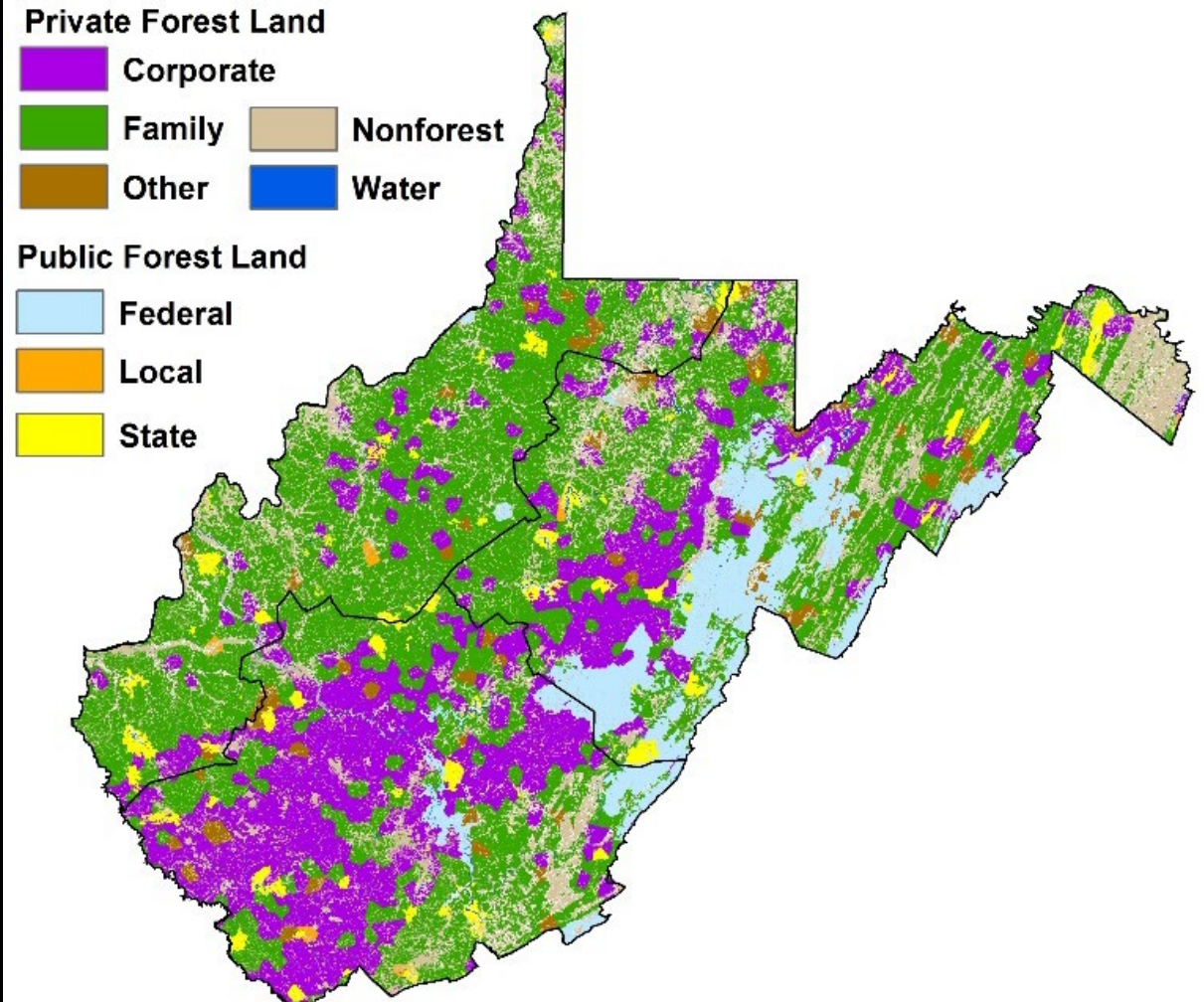
Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-15

### FORESTRY-RELATED BUSINESSES, 2014



Source: Census Bureau, County Business Patterns, 2014

# Forest Land and Ownership







# From Restoration to Recreation – Supporting Communities and Economies

## Monongahela National Forest Key Priority Areas:

- Community Engagement
- Watershed and High Elevation Spruce Restoration
- Healthy and Resilient Forests
- Sustainable Recreation



# **From Restoration to Recreation – Supporting Communities and Economies**

## **Moving from Traditional Methods to 21st Century Solutions.....**

### **Partnerships and Collaboration!**

- Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative (CASRI)
- Potomac Highlands and Rivers and Gorges CWPMA
- Joint Chief's Restoration Initiatives -2015 to Present
- Snowshoe Mountain Resort Partnership
- Snowshoe Highlands IMBA Ride Center
- AmeriCorps
- Student Conservation Experience

## **Inviting Partners, Volunteers, and Communities to Create and Implement Our Vision.....**



# Defining an Economy Founded on Ecosystem Services

**Intent:** Bring diverse stakeholders together to create a shared vision among the ten county region of the Mon Forest

**Method:** Convening business owners, residents, and community leaders to identify needs, priorities, and to formulate plans that will help us move forward together to promote rural prosperity and economic development.

**Outcome:** Partnership that serves as a catalyst and forum to cultivate relationships across local, state, and federal partners and our forest gateway communities (Mon Forest Towns). Together, we work to foster a sense of place and connection to the landscape and as a result, we enhance the economy and quality of life for residents and visitors, while simultaneously sustaining the quality of the environment.

**Foundation: Asking the Community What They Want and Need!**





# Mon Forest Towns:

- Thomas
- Davis
- Parsons
- Petersburg
- Elkins
- Franklin
- Durbin
- Cowen
- Marlinton
- Richwood
- Webster Springs
- White Sulphur Springs

## Mon Forest Towns

*Our **vision** is to help community stakeholders invest in a shared vision to generate positive and tangible outcomes for the social, ecological, and economic health and vitality of this region. We will pursue this vision together with our partners through three key objectives:*

1. Provide a Gateway for Escape, Exploration, and Adventure in Diverse Landscapes.
2. Build Sustainable Recreation Opportunities through Community Engagement.
3. Foster an Economy Founded on Balanced Ecosystem Services with Direct and Indirect Benefits for Local Communities.



# Mon Forest Towns – Community Engagement

- More than 60 facilitated community engagement meetings,
- Inventorying, mapping, and photo-documenting of recreational assets,
- Identification of key needs in each community,
- Completion of community assessments and the development of action plans,
- Establishment of a community fiscal agent, and
- Co-designed community branding to allow residents to become a part of the forest story





# ARC GIS ONLINE ASSET MAPPING

ArcGIS ▾ MNF Area Bike Trails Map (In Progress)

Modify Map & Sign In

Details Edit Basemap

Share Print Measure Find address or place

About Content Legend

### Legend

#### Area Amenities

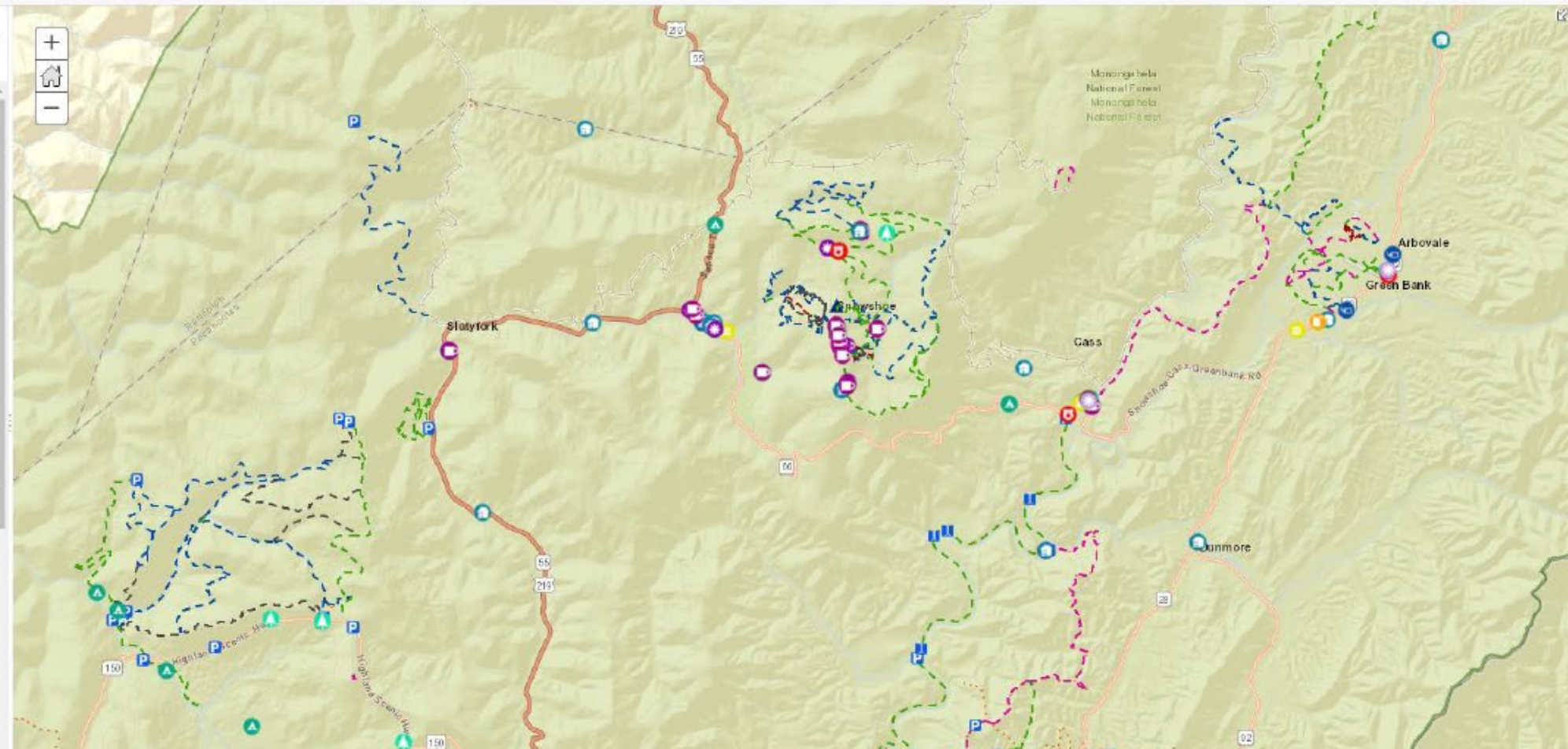
- Attraction
- Camping
- Community Services
- Emergency Services
- Gas/Convenience
- Historical Site
- Lodging
- Recreation Services
- Restaurant
- Retail
- Services
- Specialty Shop

#### Trail Locations

- Bridge
- Overlook
- Parking
- Picnic Facilities
- Restroom
- Stairs
- Tunnel

#### Biking Trails

- Easy
- More difficult
- Very difficult



# Marlinton Community Action Plan

Project Name	Community Prioritization	Community Lead(s)	Partners	Notes from Project leads
Status with IMBA	High	Ken Gaitor, Frank DeBerry, Cindy Sandeno, Matt Edwards	FS, IMBA, Snowshoe, Poca Trails	Inventorying of the trails within a 25 mile radius of Snowshoe to help establish an IMBA ride center that encompasses a variety of experiences. Poca Trails has been inventorying these trails and uploading that information into the WVU map that has the trails and amenities. The application to IMBA for ride center designation is due at the end of July but hopefully it will be submitted in early July. The IMBA application also considers assets in communities and local amenities. Down the road a regional plan can be developed with IMBA.
Fishing Pier/ Stream Stabilization	High	Lauren Bennett, Cindy Sandeno,	Parks and Rec, Dept of Ed, Nursing Home, DNR	Main need is for heavy equipment capable of stabilization work and operator with expertise.
Business Surveys	High	Doug Arbogast, Kristen Beverage, Cara Rose	WVU, FS, CVB	The business survey has been reviewed by all necessary parties and is ready to be distributed to a pre-determined list of indicator businesses throughout the county.
Broadband	High	Janna Lowery, Cassie Hughart, Jamie Baker	USDA Rural Development, Region 4 PDC	A power grant has been awarded for broadband in the 5 county area. Region 4 and Region 1 PDC are working together on broadband. Woody Thrasher is looking at broadband as economic infrastructure.
Wayfinding	High		FS	
Discovery Junction	High	Brynn Kusic, Lauren Bennett, Peter Butler, Cindy Sandeno, Kristen Beverage	Vacant Lot Committee, Marlinton Opera House, FS, WVU Landscape Architecture, USDA Rural Development	Development of the empty lot next to the opera house can provide an access point for the future IMBA ride center, the Greenbrier River Trail, and the general forest. It could be called Discovery Junction – Gateway to the Forest. The WVU Landscape Architecture department has been helping develop a plan for the empty lot next to the Opera House. This space could have a farmers market, a performance stage, interpretive space, and a water feature for kids in the summer. The lot could get a screen and have mini film festivals (mountain biking, fly fishing, or other nature sports).
Empty Industrial Building	High	Sam Felton	Town of Marlinton, Greenbrier Economic District Authority	Greenbrier Economic District Authority holds the building just outside of downtown that could be a good facility to manufacture a bike part or something else related to the recreation economy.
Birding Trail	Medium	Seth Halman, Cindy Sandeno	FS	Birding is the largest growing outdoor recreation sector. The CVB has a brochure on birding. The FS would like to develop a birding trail with certain spots to go to see certain birds during particular seasons. Data already exists on where to find/spot some bird species.
GIS Trail mapping	High	Doug Arbogast	WVU	





### Pocahontas County Business Survey

The recreation economy has been recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture as an emerging or priority area of national need. According to the Outdoor Industry of America, the outdoor recreation economy generates \$887 billion in spending, supports 7.6 million direct American jobs and generates \$125 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue. Outdoor recreation is a growing and diverse economic super sector that is a vital cornerstone of successful communities that cannot be ignored, yet, many rural communities lack the capacity and resources needed to successfully support and capitalize on the recreation economy.

In response to these trends, the Monongahela National Forest in partnership with West Virginia University, USDA Rural Development, and local partners is bringing diverse stakeholders together to create a shared recreation vision for each county and the greater region surrounding the MNF. Creating this dialogue with business owners and community leaders is important in understanding how we can move forward together to make full use of forest and community assets to attract and create a vibrant community experience for local residents and visitors. Producing a local climate where communities can rally around the recreational and cultural assets of the MNF will facilitate rural prosperity and economic development.

*\*If you choose to participate, your answers will be kept confidential. Your individual responses will not be given to any other group, business, or taxing authority. Data will reflect the TOTAL contribution of the tourism INDUSTRY, not individual establishments. The survey itself will have no names or addresses associated with it, and all completed questionnaires will be securely stored.*

Which category best describes your business?

- ~~Agrotourism~~ Food Based
- Campground
- Convenience/Grocery
- Hotel/Motel/B&B
- Non-Profit (please specify sector)
- Outdoor equipment rental/sales
- Outdoor Recreation/Outfitter
- Pharmacy/Drug Store
- Real Estate
- Resort/State park
- Restaurant/Tavern/Café
- Retail/Gift/Specialty
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered non-profit, which category best describes your business?

- Arts
- Culture
- Environment
- History
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

How many years has your business been in operation?

- Less than one year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- More than 10 years

Peak season month(s) (check all that apply)?

- November – March (Winter)
- April- May (Spring)
- June- August (Summer)
- September- October (Fall)

What is your outlook for Pocahontas County's tourism industry?

- Growing
- Declining
- No change
- Not sure

#### Service and Environment

Off-Season month(s) (check all that apply)

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December

Is your business closed for more than 2 weeks in any given month during the year? If yes, please check all that apply

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December

What do you anticipate your business's sales to do in the next year?

- Increase
- Decrease
- No change
- Not sure

Where is your primary market?

- Local (Pocahontas County)
- Statewide
- National
- International

Where is your primary customer base from?

- Local (Pocahontas County)
- Statewide
- Region (neighboring states)
- National
- International

Where is your target customer from?

- Local (Pocahontas County)
- Statewide
- Region (neighboring states)
- National
- International



# Discovery Junction – Connecting the Town to the Forest



# Community Engagement Lab: WVU Landscaping Architecture





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**Small Projects with Huge Outcomes!**

# Branding: Uniting Communities Through A Common Identity



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QUESTIONS?



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