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## Moxie TIMO Conservation for Watershed Health

<b>Applying Organization</b>	The Foundation for Sustainable Forests	<b>Application Date</b>	5/15/2026
<b>Applying Contact</b>	Annie Maloney	<b>Status</b>	Submitted
<b>Record Type</b>	Member Collective	<b>Created By</b>	Annie Maloney, 5/12/2026, 11:28 AM
		<b>Create Account</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Project Overview

<b>Project Name</b>	Moxie TIMO Conservation for Watershed Health	<b>Requested Amount</b>	\$50,000.00
<b>Project/Campaign Name</b>	Moxie TIMO Conservation for Watershed Health		
<b>Type of Project</b>	Acquisition	<b>Project Multiple Locations</b>	
<b>Project Location (State or Territory)</b>	PA	<b>Longitude</b>	-79.998046
<b>Latitude</b>	41.386791		

### Organization Details

<b>Organization Name</b>	The Foundation for Sustainable Forests	<b>Primary address for organization</b>	P.O. Box 146 Spartansburg, Pennsylvania 16434 United States
<b>Contact Name</b>	Annie Maloney	<b>Contact Title</b>	Executive Director
<b>Contact Email Address</b>	amaloney@foundationforsustainableforests.org		
<b>Annual Operating Budget</b>	\$625,000.00	<b>Tax Status/Organization Type</b>	501c3 Organization
<b>Staff Size</b>	2	<b>Main Phone</b>	8146945830
<b>Total Membership</b>	285	<b>Organization Website/Social Media Feed</b>	https://www.foundationforsustainableforests.org/, https://www.facebook.com/sustainableforests/, https://www.instagram.com/for_sustainable_forests
<b>BIPOC-led</b>	No	<b>C-Suite Staff</b>	

### Grant Details

<b>Awarded Amount</b>		<b>Awarded Date</b>	
<b>Funding Program</b>			
<b>Primary Project Type</b>		<b>Secondary Project Type</b>	
<b>Term Start Date</b>		<b>Term End Date</b>	

### Proposal Questions

<b>Mission/History Of Organization</b>	Founded in 2004 by Troy and Lynn Firth, the mission of the Foundation for	<b>Location Details</b>	This project will protect two forests in northwestern Pennsylvania's Venango
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Sustainable Forests is to conserve forested land and support forest livelihoods through practices that maintain the long-term health of the land. Troy is the 2024 recipient of the Pennsylvania Leopold Conservation Award.

Today, FSF has conserved and manages over 4,000 acres across northwestern Pennsylvania and in western New York, with a few stewardship partnerships that assist other nonprofit organizations with the management of their forests. The Foundation also provides outreach through programs such as its annual "Loving the Land Through Working Forests" field conference.

All conserved lands are managed to provide ecosystem services, recreation opportunities, and sustainable forest products that we all rely upon. By functioning within the community, we are well-positioned to demonstrate ecological forestry and provide outreach to the public about conservation and resilience-minded management practices.

County: 346-acres in North Sandy and 82-acres in Sugarcreek Borough. The site is located less than 30 miles from where the first oil well in the world was drilled in 1859. There is a powerful legacy of oil and gas development and timber extraction in the "Valley that Changed the World". These industries are a core part of the region's heritage, and timber production remains an important part of the region's economy today.

Northwestern PA also has unique natural features and rich biological diversity. The French Creek watershed, which includes the Sugarcreek Borough parcel, hosts 27 of PA's approximately 65 species of freshwater mussels, the most diverse population of any stream in the state. This region is also part of the Atlantic Flyway, a crucial and species-rich migratory corridor. Nearby Lake Erie creates a physical barrier to migration where birds are naturally funneled and concentrated through this corner of the state.

The project is within two American Rivers Priority Watersheds, Little Sandy Creek and Mill Creek. According to the National Audubon Society, these sites contain a portion of the Upper Allegheny Forest Block Important Bird Area. The project is within two Trout Unlimited Conservation areas and contains high priority habitat for Wood Thrush, Cerulean Warbler, and Eastern Brook Trout, according to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation's Western PA Restoration Strategies Database. The North Sandy parcel is within a PA Natural Heritage Program Core Area, which supports populations of two undisclosed aquatic species of concern.

To underscore the need to protect these lands, The Nature Conservancy identifies the 346-acre North Sandy parcel as an "Area of Predicted Future Urban Development by 2060". At the same time, the PA Natural Heritage Program has identified it as a "Protection Priority for Climate Change Connectivity."

The North Sandy parcel will grant public access along 0.85 miles of Little Sandy Creek for walk-in fly-fishing in a Class A Trout Stream and High-Quality Coldwater Fishery.

These properties both have a significant common urgency: Forests in high-priority watersheds for conservation that are vulnerable to a change of ownership and/or degrading harvest. FSF has been given a brief window of opportunity to acquire these acres for significant habitat and species conservation outcomes and public recreation impact.

<b>Final Success</b>	The protection and stewardship of over 425 acres of forested land in two biologically diverse and unique watersheds in northwestern Pennsylvania, to be stewarded using ecological forestry to promote forest health and resilience and support a sustainable forest products industry, and accessible to the public for hunting, fly-fishing, hiking, bird-watching, and other recreational uses.	<b>Impact on Climate and Bioversity</b>	According to the PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources' "Examples of Climate Resilient, Green, and Sustainable Best Management Practices", this project will include the following best management practices:
			<b>PROTECT INTERIOR FORESTS AND RIDGETOPS</b>
			This project will protect interior forests and hilltops in two American Rivers Priority Watersheds. This includes 0.85 miles of floodplain along Little Sandy Creek, which contains two PA aquatic Species of Concern. Through management, these forests will remain intact and will be stewarded to promote species, age, and structural diversity for resilience and overall biodiversity.
			<b>FOCUS ACQUISITION EFFORTS TOWARDS LANDSCAPE CONNECTIVITY WITH GREENWAYS, OPEN SPACE, AND CLOSE TO HOME RECREATION</b>
			According to The Trust for Public Land, this project enhances equitable access to recreation at two sites designated as "Medium Need" for public access to outdoor recreation. According to the PA Natural Heritage Program, the project addresses a "Medium Need" Protection Priority for Climate Change Connectivity. These forests are relatively isolated from other conserved lands, thus they are seminal conservation areas from which future connectivity can be established. At Little Sandy Creek, the PA Fish and Boat Commission (PAFBC) is enthusiastic about improving connectivity of public fishing access through this project.
			<b>PROVIDE ACCESS TO WATER RESOURCES</b>
			The protection of a section of Little Sandy Creek for publicly accessible fishing, bird-watching, and nature study supports long-term climate resilience and sustainable public recreation, in partnership with Trout Unlimited, Keystone Flyfishers, and PAFBC.
			<b>ACQUIRE LAND TO PROTECT SENSITIVE WATER RESOURCES, RIVER ACCESS POINTS, AND CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN STREAMS AND SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE</b>
			Extremely sensitive streams and their riparian areas will be protected from degrading forest management, parcelization, and development. Project partners PAFBC and the Watershed Conservation Research Center will provide guidance on maintaining and enhancing stream quality.
			In their book "Tending Your Forest: A Guide to Ecological Forest Stewardship in the Eastern and Central United States", Paul Catanzaro and Tony

D'Amato describe how multi-aged forests provide a sustainable balance between carbon sequestration and storage (Storey Publishing, 2026). As FSF stewards these forests towards a multi-aged ecosystem, FSF will take care to protect sensitive areas that provide habitat for PA endangered species or species of concern.

In 2025, the majority partner of a timber investment partnership, Moxie Timber LP, expressed their desire to sell the partnership's portfolio and dissolve. The portfolio consists of two properties in northwestern Pennsylvania, a 346-acre property in Mill Creek Twp, Mercer County and Frenchcreek Twp, Venango County, and an 82-acre property in Sugarcreek Borough, Venango County.

With encouragement from minority partners (there are five who are either charitable supporters of FSF or volunteer on FSF's Board of Directors), we approached the majority partner about acquiring these properties for conservation and recreation purposes. In March 2026, the two parties signed an Agreement of Sale for the purchase of the properties at an appraised fair market value of \$1,940,000, contingent upon grant funding and expiring in June 2027.

Presently, raising the funds needed in a relatively short period of time is one of the biggest hurdles to success. Although several of the Moxie partners share our conservation and stewardship values, as reflected in their commitments of in-kind donation of land value, the majority partner in the partnership is the appointed Trustee of a family trust and has a fiduciary responsibility to maximize the value of this asset. If FSF does not succeed in acquiring these parcels, then there is a high likelihood that a combination of a large timber harvest and sale of the properties would result in the degradation and subdivision of these intact forests.

Political opposition to conservation in this region also presents a challenge. This project is located in a county governed by elected officials who are not generally supportive of land conservation, citing loss of economic opportunity and private landowner rights. These lands will still be privately owned by FSF, are being sold to FSF by willing landowners, and will support the forest products and outdoor recreation economies. That said, some measure of opposition to the project is likely and could impact our ability to raise funds, particularly from public sources. This is one reason that support from The Conservation Alliance would be very impactful – as a conservation partner representing business and outdoor communities, your support validates the

**Expected Economic & Recreational Impact**

The significance of the state's forested landscape is in the name: King Charles II chose "Pennsylvania" in honor of the colony's founder, a name that literally translates to "Penn's Woods". Today, PA is 60% forested and its forest heritage drives multiple sectors of the state's economy.

PA's forest products are a key component to PA's agricultural economy. By protecting and carefully managing these forests for their ecological health and resilience, his project sustainably supports the forest products industry, which employs 10% of the state's manufacturing workforce and makes PA the largest producer of hardwood lumber in the nation, according to the Pennsylvania Forest Products Association.

Presently, these lands are privately leased for hunting, fishing, and other forms of recreation. If acquired, 428 acres of forest will be open to the public for non-motorized uses including hunting, trapping, fishing, bird-watching, hiking, geocaching, nature study and other activities.

Outdoor recreation is part of the current Governor's broader economic development strategy. According to analysis by the PA DCNR Office of Outdoor Recreation, in the past 3 years PA's outdoor recreation economy has grown by 21%, adding 12,000 jobs across the state.

This project will support key outdoor recreation sectors behind this growth in northwestern PA, including outdoor recreation tourism through outdoor destinations and natural areas, health and wellness-related outdoor businesses, and supporting growth in outdoor recreation retail, particularly for fishing and hunting.

This project is especially important to improving equitable access to outdoor recreation in the region. According to the "Outdoor Recreation Access in Pennsylvania" analysis by PA DCNR, Trust for Public Land, and WeConservePA, the proposed project supports two local communities with a "Medium Need" for access to outdoor recreation.

**Strategy & Timeline For Final Success**



economic potential of this project in the outdoor recreation and tourism sectors, and the need for equitable access to outdoor recreation in local communities.

Author and poet Wendell Berry wrote an essay about FSF in 2012 titled "A Forest Conversation". He states within: "A forest, kindly used, will outlive unimaginably any of its trees." Once acquired, these lands will be protected in perpetuity from development, parcelization, harmful management, and conversion to other uses. While that is a significant step in itself, it is only the beginning of FSF's stewardship journey. As a charitable land conservation organization, FSF is able and committed to making long-term management decisions that align well with forest health and ecological successional timelines, rather than making short-term decisions for short-term gains.

Through ecological forestry, innovative stewardship approaches will be used to enhance ecosystem resilience, tree species diversity, and habitat diversity. We will also begin our formal partnerships with the PA Fish and Boat Commission (PAFBC) and the PA Game Commission to manage public fishing access and aquatic habitat, and manage public hunting access and forest habitat stewardship, respectively.

Near-term activities to care for these sites will include assessments and monitoring of stream and aquatic habitat quality in Little Sandy Creek by the Watershed Conservation Research Center and PAFBC, volunteer stewardship days to clean up trash that was noted in the Little Sandy flood plain, and forest management planning, including "worst first" thinning and invasive plant management at each site.

Near-term activities to enhance public access will include putting up property signs to describe FSF's mission and permitted uses of the property, establishment and maintenance of roadside parking areas, and working with our partners to raise public visibility of the accessibility of these sites for public recreation.

Yes. As the region seeks to balance its oil and gas heritage with a sustainable future for human and ecological communities, there is a great deal of potential and a strong interest in developing the outdoor recreation economy and protect the region's natural resources.

Concerns about conservation of natural lands in the region stem from the perception that the protection of these lands from development will result in

#### Key Decision Makers

Although these properties will remain under private ownership by the Foundation for Sustainable Forests, they will be publicly accessible in perpetuity for recreational use. Furthermore, FSF is seeking public support for the project through the PA DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program, where an application for grant funding is presently in review.

During the public notification process, FSF representatives attended public

#### Working With Business Community

Yes. As the region seeks to balance its oil and gas heritage with a sustainable future for human and ecological communities, there is a great deal of potential and a strong interest in developing the outdoor recreation economy and protect the region's natural resources.

Concerns about conservation of natural lands in the region stem from the perception that the protection of these lands from development will result in

meetings and interacted with key decision-makers at the municipal, county, and state levels. FSF has received letters of support for the project from the leadership councils of each township or borough in which these sites are located. One PA State Senator, and a PA State Representative have also lent their support, recognizing the public and economic benefits it represents. More than a dozen other local organizations in the conservation, forestry, and economic development sectors have provided letters of support as well.

A handful of county and state level decision-makers have historically been opposed to any conservation project of this type in the region, citing the loss of economic development opportunities and private landowner rights. As we engage with them and listen to their concerns, our approach is to show them how this project is sustainable not just for the ecosystem but also for surrounding human communities; rather than taking a pure preservationist approach, these sites will continue to support local jobs through the sustainable forest products industry and growing outdoor recreation economy.

#### Elevate Voices

This project supports PA's Outdoor Recreation Access for All priority by working in sites with a need for 10-minute drive and/or 10-minute walk access to outdoor recreation, a trail, or water access. In April, FSF met Mill Creek Township, Frenchcreek Township, and Sugarcreek Borough leaders to introduce the project, seek feedback, and discuss ways that accessibility and visibility of public access could be enhanced. Each of these municipalities is enthusiastic about the addition of publicly accessible natural areas to their communities. Each has provided a letter expressing their support.

FSF also consulted with the PA Bureau of Forestry to ensure alignment with their 2025 Strategic Plan: "Forests for All: A Plan for Pennsylvania's Forests and People". This project enhances their mission to "conserve, steward, and enhance PA's trees, forests, and native wild plants and connect with all the people and communities we serve." They have provided a letter of strong support for the project's impact towards cultivating forest health and resilience and creating new opportunities to connect people to forests.

These sites are located on the ancestral and treaty lands of the Seneca Nation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Ten miles away from the North Sandy parcel is a 207-acre forest also conserved and managed by FSF along the Allegheny River, which is a historic pathway for

economic decline or loss of opportunity in rural communities. In addition to keeping these forests active as sustainable working forests, recommendations by the PA DCNR Office of Outdoor Recreation suggest that this project is positioned nicely to support broader regional efforts to boost outdoor recreation and tourism economies. Engagement with outdoor recreation and sporting business communities will be a critical component of this.

#### Measurable On-Ground Outcomes

- The protection of 428 acres of forested land that buffer and protect two highly valued watersheds in northwestern Pennsylvania.
- The addition of 428 acres of natural land to enhance equitable public access to non-motorized outdoor recreation, including hunting, hiking, bird-watching, and nature study.
- The protection of and public access to 0.85 miles of Little Sandy Creek, a Class A Trout Stream and High-Quality Coldwater Fishery.
- Beginning a stewardship journey towards long-term enhancement of forest resilience and biodiversity using FSF's ecological forestry approach to diversify forest age, structure, and species diversity.

Indigenous nations and early European traders. Fishermen's Cove, as it is known, is the site of former Indigenous settlements, including artifacts and two long-house sites. In partnership with The Archeological Conservancy, we protect and steward those areas. Though we know little of the significance of this project's sites to either the Seneca or Lenape communities, the Little Sandy Creek corridor would have been an important pathway. We are beginning work with local partners to engage with tribal representatives and historians to learn more and share their voices with local communities.

**TCA Funding Plan**

PA has a complex legacy of working lands, resource economies, and conservation. Forests today face degrading harvests, parcelization, and conversion to uses such as large-scale solar installations and AI Data Centers. This project presents sustainable solutions that thoughtfully address both human and ecological needs. TCA's support gives recognition and validation of its impact, not only to local communities but its regional and national ecological significance.

For example, French Creek contains 27 freshwater mussel species, four of them federally endangered. It is home to the eastern hellbender, North America's largest salamander and a species of special concern in PA. This biodiversity relies upon the integrity of a watershed's forests to buffer the creek from erosion, sedimentation, and major precipitation events.

TCA's support would bolster efforts to provide equitable public access to outdoor recreation in rural communities, and enhance the region's outdoor recreation economy.

**Other Relevant Application Details**

**Confidential Items**

Please keep confidential the individual donors within Moxie Timber who have pledged charitable support for the project via partial in-kind donations of land value (see Project Budget). For transparency, you may disclose Troy Firth's support. Troy Firth is FSF's President and Founder, and is donating the full value of his 6% ownership in Moxie Partners to FSF in support of this project.

Two other Moxie Timber partners, Guy Dunkle and Thomas Hoffman, are volunteer Board members who are donating a portion of their ownership value in support of the project. For transparency, you may disclose their names, but please withhold the amount of their charitable pledges.