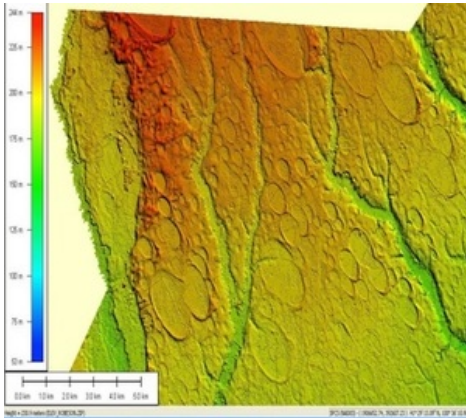


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Enviva launches \$5 million forest conservation fund

By Enviva Holdings LP | December 10, 2015



Enviva Holdings LP, the world's largest producer of wood pellets, recently announced it is establishing the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund, a \$5 million, 10-year program designed to protect tens of thousands of acres of bottomland forests in northeast North Carolina and southeast Virginia.

The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund, administered by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, will award matching-fund grants to nonprofit organizations to permanently protect ecologically sensitive areas and conserve working forests. The \$5 million Enviva Forest Conservation Fund will focus on the Virginia-North Carolina coastal plain, an area that is home to three wood pellet production facilities and a deep-water marine terminal owned by Enviva.

“With the launch of the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund, Enviva will work with leading conservation organizations to identify areas of special concern and provide grants to permanently conserve thousands of acres of this forestland,” said John Keppler, Chairman and CEO of Enviva. “Enviva has always believed there are special places in the forest that should remain so. For instance, we have never harvested nor have we accepted wood from old growth forests.”



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“Although we are small—in 2014 our entire industry accounted for less than one-tenth of 1 percent of America’s forest inventory—as a young company in a new field, we want to be known for always doing the right thing,” Keppler added. “We are deeply committed to keeping America’s working forests healthy and growing, and protecting our forests for our families and future generations. That’s what the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund is all about.”

In addition to the sizable grant program, the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund is underpinned by two bottomland forest stewardship pillars that expand Enviva’s commitment to protecting the region’s forests and environmentally sensitive areas:

First, the Endowment has identified four specific types of sensitive bottomland forest ecosystems through consultation with leading independent academic and environmental organizations. These areas will be priority conservation targets for the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund. Although the vast majority of Enviva’s wood comes from areas other than bottomland forests, Enviva will work with the Endowment to catalog and protect these four sensitive habitats, and to document the company and its suppliers do not cause them harm.

Second, the Endowment will appoint a science-based review team to develop enhanced forestry practices for working bottomland forests, building on the generations-old tradition of sustainable forestry for these lands. This “blue-ribbon committee” will recommend specific additional measures to define and protect sensitive areas, which Enviva will incorporate into its wood supply practices.

“The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund’s grants and Enviva’s enhanced sustainable practices will protect and conserve forests and provide working, bottomland forest owners with markets which will keep these forests as forests,” Keppler said. “The commitments we are making today are unique in our industry and we are proud to lead on these important issues. Our program will deliver tangible environmental and economic benefits to Virginia and North Carolina.”

“Southern forests help clean our water, shield us from storms, and serve as home to many species of wildlife, while at the same time providing jobs and economic opportunity for rural families and private landowners,” said Carlton N. Owen, the Endowment’s president and CEO. “The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund will permanently protect some of the most sensitive bottomland forests in Virginia and North Carolina and will improve the sustainable management of others. We are especially pleased to be working with Enviva to advance these important goals.”

“Enviva’s investment in environmental stewardship will help conserve the sensitive forest areas of North Carolina and Virginia,” said William K. Reilly, former administrator of the U.S. EPA and an independent board member of Enviva Partners LP who chairs the board’s health, safety, sustainability and environment committee. “These steps will help preserve biodiversity in sensitive areas, conserve special forests where Enviva works, and continue to provide economic opportunities for the communities Enviva serves.”

The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund will focus on about 35 North Carolina and Virginia counties that include about 6 million acres of forests of all types. Of this total, about 20 percent are bottomland forests—low-lying, marshy areas near rivers and streams that are home to tree species such as cypress, gum and oak. Many of these bottomlands are in the Albemarle Sound drainage basin along the Roanoke, Chowan, Meherrin, Nottoway and Blackwater rivers.



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Although the vast majority of Enviva’s wood supply does not come from bottomland forests, the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund is targeting these areas because they offer a wide range of environmental and economic benefits. They also face a number of potential threats, including conversion to other uses.

The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund

Permanently protecting sensitive bottomland forests is the cornerstone of the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund. Enviva will contribute \$5 million to the fund in annual installments over 10 years. The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund’s goal is to be a catalyst that will attract other conservation investments to the region, with the goal of conserving 35,000 acres of bottomland forests.

Each year, the Endowment will solicit grant applications, asking qualified organizations to identify specific bottomland tracts that are eligible for protection. Grants will be awarded annually, starting in 2016. The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund will consider a variety of protection strategies, including purchasing land via fee or conservation easement, and grant making priority will be given to organizations that bring matching funds.

“The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund will be particularly appealing to landowners because it provides them a financially attractive alternative to selling their land for development or converting it to other uses,” Owen said. “Many have owned their land for generations and want to keep it in forest cover. The Enviva Forest Conservation

The Enviva Bottomland Stewardship Program

To produce wood pellets, Enviva does not use high-grade wood (also called saw logs) that could be milled into furniture or lumber. Enviva uses only low-grade or leftover materials such as crooked or diseased trees, limbs, tops, chips and sawdust, and where markets allow, pulpwood. Enviva does not accept wood that is harvested from old growth forests or other sensitive areas.

To prioritize grant-making opportunities for the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund, the Endowment identified four distinct ecosystems worthy of conservation: cypress-tupelo swamps, Atlantic white cedar stands, pocosins and Carolina bays. In developing its recommendations, the Endowment consulted with a range of other organizations, including state forestry agencies in Virginia and North Carolina, the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and land trusts in both states.

These four wetland ecosystems and forest types contain some of the most unique plant and wildlife communities found across the Atlantic coastal plain. They provide a range of important environmental benefits, including improving water quality and maintaining wildlife habitats. Additional forest types or landscape features may be added to this list as a result of the science-based management practices review. Enviva’s proprietary “track and trace” system, which utilizes tract-level, GPS coordinates to trace every wood delivery to the company, will be used to verify that the company’s sustainability policies are observed.

The Endowment Review Team

To continue its work identifying sensitive bottomland forest tracts, and to develop enhanced sustainable management practices for bottomland forestry, the Endowment will appoint and administer a science-based review team composed of environmental and forestry experts. The committee will be funded by the Endowment and Enviva.



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This “blue-ribbon committee” will begin work in 2016. The Endowment will seek committee members from state forestry and wildlife agencies, universities and conservation groups to build on Best Management Practices that protect water quality and go further to address a broad range of ecological attributes.

For more information on the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund visit www.envivaforestfund.org.

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