

2022 WOMEN'S FOREST CONGRESS DECLARATION — 19 OCTOBER 2022 We, the Women's Forest Congress, convened on October 17–20, 2022, with nearly 500 participants from 38 U.S. states, three Canadian provinces, and eight additional nations, make the following Declaration in light of the unique moment in which we stand.

We recognize and acknowledge:

Responsible and sustainable forest management plays an intrinsic role in clean air and water, recreation, and biodiversity; and the products and services of the forest affect all people throughout their lives. Moreover, sustaining and promoting the functions and values of forests requires holistic and integrated thinking about the complex relationships on which these systems depend.

Women are essential to the care of forests, provide leadership, and are catalysts. Diverse women's perspectives are even more valuable as new and innovative solutions are sought for our greatest forest challenges.

The impacts of historic and systemic discrimination on traditionally marginalized groups, including people of color and women, trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people, and especially the history of displacement through gentrification and genocide on Indigenous and Tribal nations. This discrimination has limited access and advancement and contributed to marginalization.

LEADERSHIP FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The forest and forest products sector currently lacks gender balance and representation. As of 2019, women represented just 16% of forestry and conservation professionals in the United States as a whole.¹ Women and people of color are significantly underrepresented, underserved, and historically excluded; thus, these perspectives are likely to occupy a minority share of existing answers and be missing in leadership and C-suites.

Gender parity, including intersectional parity, leads to a more sustainable forest and forest products

sector. Issues of equal access, discrimination, sexual harassment, assault, microaggressions, lack of support, and mentorship opportunities must be addressed. We need comfortable, safe, inviting, and welcoming work environments.

Black, Indigenous, and other women of color have needs, requirements, challenges, and experiences that White women do not share.

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

Women are exemplary, focused, resilient, and effective leaders and engaged in promoting healthy living and work environments, thereby strengthening our capacity and capabilities. Addressing the complex and multi-faceted relationships characteristic of forest ecosystems serves as inspiration in supporting each other.

Women are caregivers within communities and families and need to remember to prioritize mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health to strengthen the ability to cope with daily stresses and, at the same time, model healthy behaviors for those around us.

Forest-based solutions must be inclusive of the perspectives of family farmers, small landholders, forest communities, Indigenous people, women, and youth and respectful of their rights.

Indigenous and Tribal nations, impacted by a history of displacement, genocide, and cultural genocide, hold traditional ways of knowing that have historically been devalued and deserve to be elevated and included in decision-making and sustainable forest value chains.

WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES

Equity and inclusion are a path forward as the best way to diversify

the talent and creativity needed to address the most critical issues and amplify the opportunities for positive change in the forest and forest products sector.

The sight of a diverse and representative leadership—including at the executive suite and board levels—is a source of inspiration and motivation for a more diverse talent pool to consider the forest and forest products sector as a career goal or next step.

CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

Research and place-based knowledge provide evidence that inclusive practices and diverse work environments support creativity. Approaching issues through an inclusive lens can lead to longer-term perspectives that support innovation. When all views are taken into account and valued, women can provide a unique perspective to develop forward-thinking recommendations and actions.

The lack of women's perspectives leaves a void in the forest and forest products sector. Limiting professional participation by women and marginalized groups restricts opportunities to think about forests in new ways. Gender parity, including intersectional parity, leads to a more sustainable sector and climate.

GREATEST FOREST CHALLENGES

The challenges facing forests are diverse and include a loss of forest resiliency, disrupted disturbance regimes, wildland-urban interface conflict, transformative market dynamics, political polarization, climate change, and a lack of understanding and trust in forest management.

The world is relying on the forest and forest products sector to provide solutions to global environmental

change. The necessary innovations of today and tomorrow will require interdisciplinary collaboration, creative execution, and the inclusion of a wide range of skills, abilities, perspectives, and talent.

Forests are dynamic and variable across multiple spatial and temporal scales, and taking a longer-term, broader-scale, and inclusive perspective is critical for addressing the greatest forest challenges.

We have the science, experience, and technical expertise, but we need to tap into the hearts and minds of people.

We resolve to:

LEADERSHIP FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Advance our mission and seek to provide all women a space to listen, be seen and heard, and act for the benefit of forests and the forests and forest products sector.

Develop the capacity and the space to pursue our mission with an organizational structure, accountability, and participation that support values of diversity, inclusion, equity, and access.

Educate leaders in the forest and forest products sector on cultural awareness, unconscious bias, and how to be an effective ally and active bystander.

Spotlight and **amplify** Black, Indigenous, and other women of color’s needs, requirements, challenges, experiences, and voices.

Be an open and inclusive group within which trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming participants, including all members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, and all ages, perspectives, backgrounds, geographic locations, professional levels, abilities, experiences, and education are celebrated and able to contribute based on their unique experiences and expertise.

Unleash the power of inclusive leadership in the forest and forest products sector by inviting,

welcoming, and mentoring leaders of all ages, colors, perspectives, and backgrounds.

Collaborate with forest-related initiatives globally to advance the common cause for diversity, equity, and inclusion.²

Document, report, and measure success on goals for representation and leadership for women in the sector with an objective of greater than 33% women throughout the sector and greater than 25% women in C-suite positions by 2050.³

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

Foster and **establish** systems for supporting each other, including training, mentorships, educational services, health and wellness, and human resource advancements.

Gather and **tell** our stories to ensure that learning diverse perspectives continues as a shared value.

Invite colleagues, allies, and contacts to join our efforts to foster vulnerability and connectivity.

Ensure forests and the sector are safe, inviting, and welcoming workspaces for all; support those who report or discuss acts or threats of physical, mental, or emotional violence; and allow workplaces to benefit from greater employee wellness.

WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES

Create a community of outreach and a network of organizations across the forest and forest products sector, including research and educational institutions, corporations, NGOs, and the public sector, to achieve recruitment, retention, placement, and advancement goals.

Empower women in all levels and positions of the forest and forest products sector; share experiences for retaining and advancing welcoming work environments; and generate and enact innovative ideas for increasing recruitment, retention, and advancement.

Promote the variety of working environments in the sector, whether field, classroom, or lab; rural, suburban, or urban; or home, office-based, or hybrid, whether in solo adventures or on big teams.

CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

Intentionally identify and prepare more women for leadership positions.

Reimagine frameworks and processes in order to bring a full diversity of impacted peoples and perspectives, including building the structures for greater participation.

Advocate for workplace systems that enable all people to be healthy, whole, and equitably compensated.

Advance intersectional policies that create pathways for transformative and emboldened women leaders in the sector.

Promote the following Women’s Best Practices for Conferences and Events so that the unique features of our Congress are captured and documented in a way that can be used to inform future events in the sector.

- Leverage the use of personal experiences so that the effectiveness of gaining knowledge through storytelling and vulnerability is understood and expected.
- Build strong mentorship and peer networks to deepen unity, promote development, and support cross-collaboration.
- Create environments that support holistic health, including asking about and addressing special accommodations for attendees.

GREATEST FOREST CHALLENGES

Demonstrate a change in how forest challenges are addressed to include systems thinking, collaborative leadership models, multiple temporal and spatial scales, and holistic solutions.

Foster a climate of innovation to tackle the social, environmental, and economic challenges within the forest

and forest products sector with the goal of not only solving the biggest problems but also first insisting that we identify and intentionally engage the voices missing from the conversation as we design and implement the solutions.

Commit to supporting, adequately resourcing, and sharing information on forest health, carbon storage and sequestration, and other critical data that address the greatest forest challenges of today and tomorrow.

Communicate and value the many interconnected facets of the forest and forest products sector through transparent, authentic, and inspirational messaging that highlights the sector's role in conserving and restoring our planet's most sustainable and renewable resource, benefiting people, nature, and climate.

Encourage the endorsement of international efforts such as the "Principles for Ecosystem Restoration to Guide the United Nations Decade 2021–2030" and commitments adopted at the 2022 World Forestry Congress⁴ (e.g., the Seoul Forest Declaration, the Ministerial Call on Sustainable Wood, Sustain an Abundance of Forest Ecosystems (SAFE), and the Youth Call for Action).

Assert that forests, forestry, and forest stakeholders offer significant nature-based solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, hunger, poverty, and human health. We must act now. There is no time to lose.⁵

The Women's Forest Congress challenges organizations in the forest and forest products sector to⁶:

Foster workforce opportunities for all women through mentorship programs, professional development, scholarships, etc., with a particular focus on reaching out to those who need help or are asking for assistance in any part of their journey;

Broaden recruiting practices to include wider networks, and build a

pipeline of talent by connecting with and showcasing forests and the forest and forest products sector to youth and students, creating job shadowing and internship opportunities, etc.;

Build workplace systems that support mental health coverage, and include training and programs promoting healthy lifestyles, such as family leave, flexible work schedules, generous vacation plans, social opportunities, and holistic wellness programs;

Promote a variety of working environments, encourage flexibility, and ensure all work environments are fully accessible;

Enable employees to prioritize mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health and model healthy behaviors for others;

Create a safe, inviting, and welcoming workspace for all resulting in greater wellness, increased retention, higher productivity, improved creativity, and heart-centered decision-making;

Assess compensation for women and promote paths to pay equity at all levels, including discrepancies in intersectional identities, communities, and demographics;

Intentionally identify and support more women and those from underrepresented groups to achieve leadership positions;

Increase the use of storytelling in conferences, trainings, and workshops; and

Apply models and frameworks to generate and realize solutions to the greatest forest challenges that are built on women's strengths, such as inclusive, collaborative, and multi-scale holistic thinking.

The participants of the 2022 Women's Forest Congress, our supporters, and partners commit ourselves to advance these actions through our organizations, networks, partnerships, and spheres of influence.

NOTES

1. "SAF Celebrates Women's History Month," March 18, 2022, https://www.eforester.org/Main/SAF_News/2022/SAF_Celebrates_Women_s_History_Month; and "Forest and Conservation Workers," [https://datausa.io/profile/soc/forest-conservation-workers#:~:text=Demographic%20information%20on%20Forest%20%26%20conservation,White%20\(Non%2DHispanic\)](https://datausa.io/profile/soc/forest-conservation-workers#:~:text=Demographic%20information%20on%20Forest%20%26%20conservation,White%20(Non%2DHispanic)). For global information, see: https://unece.org/DAM/timber/docs/publications-other/Time%20for%20Action_Gender%20and%20Forestry.pdf.
2. For example, see: "Australian Forest Products Association Diversity and Inclusion Charter" at: <https://ausfpa.com.au/charter/>.
3. For additional context for these goals, see: "25 Women in Leadership Statistics 2023: Facts on the Gender Gap in Corporate and Political Leadership," <https://www.zippia.com/advice/women-in-leadership-statistics/>; "Women Have Only 18.4% Share of Forestry Sector," <https://www.womeninwood.ca/single-post/2017/03/29/Women-have-only-18-4-share-of-forestry-sector>; "Women in the Workplace 2022," <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>; and Subodh Mishra, "Women in the C-Suite: The Next Frontier in Gender Diversity," <https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2018/08/13/women-in-the-c-suite-the-next-frontier-in-gender-diversity>.
4. The "Principles for Ecosystem Restoration" are at: <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/publications/principles-ecosystem-restoration-guide-united-nations-decade-2021-2030>, and detailed action points from the main sessions of the World Forestry Congress can be found at: <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0248en/cc0248en.pdf>.
5. For examples, see: IUCN's Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions at: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-020-En.pdf>; and the new IPCC mitigation report on the role of nature-based solutions to climate change at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3>.
6. The Women's Forest Congress intends to include accessible resources for individuals to be able to utilize to advance these actions.