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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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August 31, 2026

Regional Forestry Workforce Initiative Gains Momentum Across the Northwest

Portland, Oregon -- A new effort from Western Forestry & Conservation Association (WFCA) aims to connect students, schools, and industry while strengthening the future forestry workforce across Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana.

Like with the more traditional trades, the forest sector is being hit particularly hard by the silver tsunami – the phenomenon whereby baby boomer generation workers are retiring faster than incoming rate of labor participation. Skilled-trades advocate Mike Rowe has repeatedly highlighted the national trend of only two tradespeople entering the workforce for every five who retire.

Recognizing the need for a sustainable, resilient forest workforce, WFCA has developed a new collaborative regional forestry workforce initiative around the areas of greatest need. Companies and organizations have already begun signing up to support this initiative.

“We needed a single place in the region where schools, industry, counselors and anyone else working with our youth can point to and learn about forest sector careers,” said Blake Manley, Executive Director of Western Forestry & Conservation Association. “Too many young people fall into a career path rather than choose a career path. It’s simply because no one ever showed them the opportunities that were available. With this initiative, we can help young people find careers they are passionate about while building a workforce that will strengthen our forests, our economies, and our communities for years to come.”

WFCA was previously awarded a Wood Innovations Grant to help develop an Entry-Level Logger Training Program, initially centered in Oregon’s Willamette Valley. That effort provides another piece of the larger workforce strategy by creating opportunities for individuals interested in entering the logging profession to gain foundational training before going to work.

Additional support arrived over the summer when **Hampton Lumber and Mason, Bruce & Girard** committed early funding to help launch this new broader initiative. As of August 21, 2026, approximately \$450,000 has been committed to the initiative.

The funding will be directed toward programs that expose young people to forestry and natural resource careers, strengthen and expand existing educational programs, provide hands-on training opportunities, connect students with employers, and create clearer pathways from the classroom into the workforce.

The long-term goal is larger than filling individual job openings. WFCA and its partners envision a coordinated regional system that gives young people a clear understanding of the opportunities available in natural resources while helping employers develop the skilled workforce necessary to manage forests, produce renewable wood products, protect communities from wildfire, and support the economic health of rural communities across the Northwest.

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About Western Forestry & Conservation Association:

Founded in 1909 to protect Pacific Northwest timberlands from the threat of wildfire, WFCA promotes all aspects of sustainable forest stewardship in western North America through a wide variety of high-quality continuing education workshops, conferences and field courses for natural resource professionals. It also disseminates forestry research and technical information, coordinates professional groups, and provides financial and administrative management for regional research and scientific cooperatives.