

Regenerative Communities in Central Appalachia

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC RENEWAL



Natural Capitalism Solutions proposes to initiate **“Regenerative Communities in Central Appalachia”** – a collaborative project in the Central Appalachian region, in and around Eastern Kentucky, to create economic development and green jobs in locally owned businesses, through application of the principles of Natural Capitalism – efficiency, redesign, and restoration.

Traditional economic development focuses on increasing GDP as the key success indicator. Through decades of working with communities in third world countries and first world cities, the principals of Natural Capitalism Solutions have found that sustainable economic development requires new metrics of success, such as limiting unnecessary outflows of cash and enhancing all forms of capital assets (financial, natural, social, built, intellectual, individual, etc.). Robert F Kennedy summed it up nicely in this short 1968 speech on the U.S. Gross Domestic Product, “It measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”

Natural Capitalism Solutions proposes to work through key stakeholders, on the ground, in the region, beginning with community colleges (RTS), Berea College, Eastern Kentucky University, veterans service centers, Kentucky Correctional Commission, Telus, Winrock, Highlander Research and Education Center, Brushy Fork Institute, MACED-Mountain Association for Community Economic

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Development, Federation of Appalachian Housing Enterprises, Appalachian Sustainable Development, Entrepreneurship for the Public Good, Appalachian Women's Alliance, Appalachian Regional Commission and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Using Natural Capitalism Solutions' stakeholder driven economic development model (LASER) this team will create a replicable process and develop a learning collaborative throughout the Appalachian regions and beyond. Local plans will be validated using the LASER database of juried strategies to identify and apply practical strategies that:

- Build on local assets
- Enhance sustainability and profitability
- Capitalize on global trends
- Identify strategic leverage points
- Provide measurable, replicable economic development
- Create and fill green jobs with trained personnel from under-served communities

Natural Capitalism will work with local stakeholders to track the progress of community development, job creation, and economic vitality metrics; to communicate successes and learning through the collaborative learning process; and to share what works and what doesn't work with other communities, agencies and collaborators.

A core component of ***Regenerative Communities*** will be green jobs development and training. The potential for long term, sustainable job creation in the Appalachian region is strong: restoring natural resources (timber, water, mining), weatherizing and retrofitting buildings, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, watershed management (water source, water purification, wetlands, waste water treatment), transit (car share, car pool, trains, buses) and bio-fuels.

The career creation component of the ***Regenerative Communities*** project will focus on returning veterans, soon to be released prisoners, immigrants, and other under-employed populations, as described on the draft website, www.CleanAndGreenJobs.net. Job placement and business development in locally owned businesses will create economic multipliers and help regenerate disenfranchised communities.

Recent federal goals make the timing of the ***Regenerative Communities*** project excellent, even urgent. Stakeholder driven green jobs, local wealth creation, sustainable economic development, collaborative learning, and measurable progress – the time for Appalachian communities to remake their economies and revitalize their neighborhoods is now.