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Northern Border Regional Commission Announces Latest Regional Forest Economy Partnership Awards

The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) approved nearly \$5 Million in new awards to 5 projects on December 18, 2020, as part of the Regional Forest Economy Partnership (RFEP). The organizations receiving these awards are:

- **Vermont Department of Public Service - \$1,000,000 (VT):** Model funding program for community-driven broadband expansion to expand broadband across the State of VT.
- **Northern Forest Center - \$1,000,000 (ME, NH, NY, VT):** Launch and capitalize Phase One of the four-state Northern Forest Fund to address the availability of quality workforce housing in four communities, one in each state of the NBRC territory.
- **Town of Madison - \$1,000,000 (ME):** Infrastructure improvements at the former UPM Paper Mill to create a state-of-the-art Forest Products Hub.
- **Northern Vermont University - \$986,252 (NH & VT):** Establish the NVU Forestry Accelerator & Workforce Development program to address the economic shift produced by the chronic and consistent decline of the forest products industry across the tri-county region of the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, and Coös County, New Hampshire.
- **Town of Hardwick - \$1,000,000 (VT):** These funds will support the Hardwick Yellow Barn Business Accelerator. The project consists of the adaptive reuse of historic property to create a business accelerator that will lead to significant job growth and market expansion in the farm and food-based sector.

The RFEP program was created to focus on innovative regional approaches to address the decline in forest-based economies. The funds for this program, and all NBRC programs, are available thanks to the support of the Congressional Delegations of all four NBRC states: Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont.

The application process for the RFEP program began in summer, 2020, with a review of Letters of Interest by an external Advisory Board, leading to requests for full applications in fall, 2020. Each NBRC State participated in the scoring of applications, and final decisions were made at the NBRC's December 18th Commission meeting. Applications were scored on a range of variables, including their regional scope, potential for transformative change, and ability to implement.

"The NBRC is excited to work with this year's awardees to move an impressive slate of innovative projects forward," said the NBRC Executive Director, Rich Grogan. He added: "There is not one simple solution to improving our forest-based economies in the region, but we feel that this collection of projects collectively addresses a range of innovative solutions to our region's most critical economic development needs."

Please refer to the NBRC's website, www.nbrc.gov, for announcements about future funding opportunities.

About the Northern Border Regional Commission (www.nbrc.gov)
Created in 2008, the Northern Border Regional Commission is a federal-state partnership whose mission is to help alleviate economic distress and encourage private sector job creation in Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. In its twelve-year history, the Commission has awarded

287 grants amounting to more than \$72 Million across the four states through its primary Economic & Infrastructure Development (EID) grant program and other special initiatives.