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Alliance for Green Heat, USDA Forest Service Support Growing Demand for Firewood in Low-income Communities

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service has awarded more than \$824,000 from President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to the Alliance for Green Heat to expand firewood banks that serve low-income communities who struggle with high heating costs.

Hundreds of firewood banks across the country serve households that may otherwise face bone-chilling temperatures and frozen pipes. Firewood banks are often run by churches, towns, tribes, and groups of volunteers. Most receive donated wood and turn it into split, seasoned firewood and others purchase truckloads of logs.

“Many families, especially in tribal communities, depend on firewood to heat their homes. Firewood banks are helping to ensure that everyone has access to this lifesaving renewable resource,” said Forest Service Chief Randy Moore, “The Forest Service is joining with Alliance for Green Heat to invest in the vital work of firewood banks to serve those in the greatest need.”

Homes with wood stoves have the option of using a local, renewable, and free heating fuel, unlike homes that only have furnaces or boilers. Homes without wood stoves sometimes have to turn to federal and state emergency heat assistance if they run out of money during the winter. With increased storms and power outages, wood stoves also provide back-up heat.

The Forest Service funding will allow the Alliance for Green Heat to provide up to \$20,000 to larger firewood banks and up to \$10,000 to smaller ones. Large firewood banks produce more than 100 cords a year, with some producing over 1,000 cords. New firewood banks who want to begin distributing free wood to needed homes will also be eligible for funding.

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This marks the second year the Alliance for Green Heat has run this program. The first year, the Alliance made grants of up to \$15,000 to 46 firewood banks. Together, those banks delivered nearly 10,000 cords of wood to more than 6,500 homes. Most of the grant funds went to purchase critical equipment like splitters, chain saws, sheds, trailers, conveyor belts, and protective equipment. That equipment will help the firewood banks process and deliver firewood for many years to come.

“During the first year, we were particularly inspired by the efficiency of tribes who provided firewood to thousands and thousands of homes, some of which had no electricity or running water,” said John Ackerly, President of AGH. Four tribal groups representing the Chippewa Cree, the Washoe, Santo Domingo, Hopi, and Navajo, provided nearly more wood than the other 41 firewood banks funded during the first year. However, every bank touches the lives of those they serve through the hard work and generous spirit of their volunteers and staff.

For more information and to submit an application, go to Firewoodbanks.org. Applications may be submitted beginning on September 1.

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The Alliance for Green Heat promotes modern wood and pellet heating systems as a low-carbon, sustainable, and affordable energy solution. The Alliance works to advance cleaner and more efficient residential heating technology, particularly for low and middle-income families. Founded in Maryland in 2009, the Alliance is an independent non-profit organization and is tax-exempt under section 501c3 of the tax code.