

KEEPING  FORESTS

A BRANDED VIDEO SERIES

Forests of the Future

Call for Story & Partnership Concepts
Application Guide and Worksheet

Five

concepts selected

\$10–15K

investment per story

Dec 31

delivery, December 2026

CONCEPTS DUE

Friday, July 17, 2026

Southern forests are usually described as a natural resource or a conservation priority. Forests of the Future begins with a different question: what do Southern forests make possible?

Southern forests produce the materials, services, and conditions behind products, businesses, supply chains, infrastructure, communities, and industries throughout the region and beyond. Yet those connections are often invisible to the customers, investors, business leaders, and other decision-makers who depend on them.

Forests of the Future is a branded video series designed to make those relationships visible through compelling, human-centered stories.

Each installment begins with something tangible: a recognizable product, application, business, market, place, service, or experience. From there, the film reveals the Southern forest system behind it, the materials or conditions being produced, the people managing and transforming them, the supply chains and investments connecting them to market, and

the partnerships needed to sustain or expand that value.

The series should show not only what happens in Southern forests, but what Southern forests make possible.

With support from the Paper and Packaging Board, Keeping Forests is seeking five concepts for the next installments. Each film will be an approximately five-to-eight-minute documentary-style story.

5	\$10–15K	5–8 min	Jul 17
CONCEPTS SELECTED	PER-STORY INVESTMENT	DOCUMENTARY FORMAT	CONCEPTS DUE 2026

About this document. This guide provides complete guidance for the call, followed by a preview of every application question. Review the full document, consult with participating partners, and prepare responses before beginning the online form. You do not need to submit a script, detailed production plan, or formal budget.

Apply Now →

Each film is built to influence a decision.

Forests of the Future is not simply a storytelling or general public-awareness initiative. The purpose is to help a defined audience see a connection to Southern forests it may not currently recognize, and to influence the purchasing, investment, procurement, specification, product-development, market-participation, policy, or other decisions that shape market conditions.

These films are not broad celebrations of forests. A strong concept has a clear communications purpose tied to a particular audience and a meaningful decision or change in understanding.

STRONG CONCEPTS COMBINE

- A memorable, human-centered story
- A recognizable product, application, service, market, customer, or economic result
- A substantive corporate or market-facing partnership
- A clearly defined audience
- A specific change in understanding or decision-making
- A credible path for reaching and influencing that audience

The goal is not only to tell stronger stories about Southern forests. It is to use those stories to create stronger conditions for the products, services, businesses, supply chains, and markets Southern forests make possible.

02 WHO MAY APPLY

The lead applicant may come from any sector.

What matters is the strength of the story, the substance of the partnership, and the ability of the participating organizations to help develop, produce, and place the film in front of the audiences whose decisions matter. Applications are welcome from organizations across sectors:

- ✓ Nonprofit organizations
- ✓ Private companies
- ✓ Public agencies
- ✓ Universities and research institutions
- ✓ Utilities
- ✓ Industry and trade associations
- ✓ Community organizations
- ✓ Economic-development organizations
- ✓ Foundations and financial institutions
- ✓ Others with a relevant story and partnership

One requirement holds across all applicants. Each application must identify a corporate or market-facing partner with a substantive role in the story. The lead applicant may itself be that partner. A nonprofit, public agency, university, or other organization may lead, provided the concept includes a company, buyer, customer, manufacturer, investor, utility, developer, brand, forest-products business, or other market-facing organization directly connected to the result at the center of the story. Confirmed participation is strongly preferred and will strengthen an application. Concepts may also be submitted when a well-aligned partner is in active discussion or has been clearly identified.

03 WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

Compelling, filmable stories that connect a forest to a recognizable result.

The subject may involve an established or emerging forest product, a new use for Southern wood or underutilized material, a manufacturing or commercialization opportunity, a company securing an essential raw material or service, an investment or procurement decision, a supply-chain partnership, or another market relationship made possible by Southern forests.

The subject alone will not make a concept competitive. The strongest concepts will have:

- A tangible or recognizable result
- A substantive corporate or market-facing connection

- A meaningful partnership
- Compelling people and places
- A clearly defined audience
- A specific communications purpose
- A credible opportunity to influence how that audience understands, purchases, invests in, specifies, supports, or decides about something Southern forests produce or enable

DON'T STOP AT THE FOREST

Forest-products innovations are welcome, but the story should not stop at the forest, mill, research laboratory, demonstration project, or new technology. It should show what the resource, material, or innovation **ultimately becomes or enables**, who purchases, uses, depends upon, or benefits from it, what economic, operational, or market need it addresses, and why Southern forests are essential to making it possible.

04 THE PARTNERSHIP WE ARE SEEKING

A corporate or market-facing partner with a substantive role.

THAT PARTNER MAY BE

- A manufacturer
- A buyer or customer
- A consumer brand or retailer
- An investor or financial institution
- A builder, developer, architect, engineer, or material specifier
- A technology or market-development company
- A forest-products company bringing an innovation to market
- A transportation, energy, hospitality, sports, entertainment, or other audience-facing organization

SUPPORTING PARTNERS MAY INCLUDE

- Forest landowners and land managers
- Forestry and landowner organizations
- Researchers and universities
- Public agencies
- Conservation organizations
- Manufacturers and processors
- Community organizations
- Supply-chain participants

We are especially interested in partnerships that connect Southern forests or forest-based innovation to companies, markets, applications, and audiences beyond the traditional forest sector. The corporate partner should produce, purchase, invest in, specify, commercialize, use, enable, or directly benefit from what the forest makes possible.

The relationship among the partners should be central to the narrative. The film should help audiences understand not only what Southern forests make possible, but who must work together to sustain, strengthen, or expand that value.

05 WHAT MAKES A STRONG STORY

The questions the strongest concepts answer clearly.

What does the forest produce or enable?

What does it ultimately become?

Who purchases it, uses it, depends upon it, or benefits from it?

What economic, operational, or market need does it address?

Why are Southern forests particularly important to the story?

What partnership is helping create, sustain, or expand that value?

Whose decisions matter to the future of the product, service, supply chain, or market?

What should that audience understand or do differently after watching?

How will the participating partners help the film reach that audience?

Environmental benefits may be part of the story, but they should support a larger economic or market narrative rather than become the entire narrative. This is not primarily a series about conservation activities,

ecological education, or organizational accomplishments. Above all, we are looking for a memorable narrative rather than a corporate profile, conservation profile, organizational profile, or technical case study.

THE FIRST FORESTS OF THE FUTURE STORY

Bourbon, white oak, and the forest beneath a product people already love.

The first installment, produced with **Buffalo Trace** and the **White Oak Initiative**, connected the future of bourbon to the stewardship and regeneration of the working white oak forests that make it possible.

Bourbon offered a familiar, culturally resonant entry point into a much larger story about forest management, raw-material supply, product quality, long-term business continuity, and partnership. The story did not begin by asking audiences to care about white oak forests in the abstract. It began with something they already recognized and valued, and revealed the forest system beneath it.

The completed Buffalo Trace and White Oak Initiative film is not yet available for public distribution.

06 HOW PRODUCTION WILL WORK

You bring the story and the partnership. We produce the film.

Selected partners work directly with Keeping Forests and its designated production team. Keeping Forests provides a production investment of approximately **\$10,000–\$15,000** for each selected concept, managed by Keeping Forests and applied toward development and production. **It is not automatically provided to the applicant as a direct grant.** This is a call for story and partnership concepts, not a request for filmmakers or production vendors.

DEFINED TOGETHER AFTER SELECTION

- The central narrative
- The intended audience and communications objective
- The role of each participating partner
- Interview subjects and filming locations
- The recognizable result at the center of the story
- Existing footage and available assets
- Production schedule and partner contributions
- Distribution strategy, final scope, and deliverables

KEEPING FORESTS PROVIDES

- Creative and editorial direction
- Production coordination and series branding
- Filming and interview support, as scoped
- Editing and post-production
- Branded titles and graphics
- A package of content for digital distribution
- Launch and distribution support through the Keeping Forests network

THE ANTICIPATED PACKAGE PER STORY

- One primary *Forests of the Future* film of approximately five minutes
- Short-form social-media edits
- Branded titles and graphics
- Selected stills or promotional assets
- Basic materials to support partner distribution

Final length, production approach, and supporting assets are determined during scoping.

07 EXISTING CONTENT & PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS

Stories don't need to begin from scratch.

Because of the accelerated timeline, Keeping Forests welcomes concepts that incorporate or build upon existing video footage, interviews, photography, research, maps or graphics, archival materials, or previously produced content. Be prepared to explain what exists, who owns it, whether permission can be secured, and whether it can be provided in a usable format. Existing content may let us invest more heavily in new interviews, targeted filming, editing, animation, or distribution.

SELECTED PARTNERS WILL BE EXPECTED TO

- Participate actively in story development
- Identify a primary project lead
- Confirm the corporate or market-facing partner
- Coordinate among participating organizations
- Coordinate access to interview subjects and locations
- Secure organizational approvals and permissions
- Provide relevant information, data, and content
- Support production logistics
- Help identify the result that anchors the story
- Review materials promptly for factual accuracy
- Participate in communications and distribution planning
- Help place the finished story and meet the schedule

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS ARE ENCOURAGED (NO 1:1 CASH MATCH REQUIRED)

- Cash co-investment
- Travel, lodging, or other production expenses
- Specialized production or creative support
- Paid promotion, advertising, or media placement
- Access to a significant event, venue, or screening opportunity
- Access to an established customer, employee, investor, industry, or other relevant audience

Additional co-investment may expand the production or distribution package available to a selected story.

08 SCHEDULE & KEY DATES

All films must be completed by December 31, 2026.

Selected partners must be able to support an accelerated schedule. Principal filming should ideally be completed by October 31. Applicants should consider the availability of essential partners, interview subjects, filming locations, facilities, approvals, and any seasonal, manufacturing, operational, or product-launch windows that affect what the team can capture.

June 16 ● CALL FOR CONCEPTS OPENS

July 17 ● CONCEPTS DUE

Friday. Final deadline for submissions.

By July 31 ● **SELECTED PARTNERS NOTIFIED**

August ● **STORY DEVELOPMENT & SCOPING BEGINS**

Aug–Oct ● **PRINCIPAL FILMING**
Ideally complete by October 31.

Nov 15 ● **FINAL FILMING DEADLINE**

Nov–Dec ● **EDITING, REVIEW, GRAPHICS, FINAL PRODUCTION**

Dec 31 ● **FINAL DELIVERY**
No later than this date.

Given the compressed schedule, preference goes to concepts with an identified, engaged corporate or market-facing partner; available staff capacity; identifiable interview subjects; accessible filming locations; a clear approvals process; strong visual opportunities; a realistic filming window; a defined audience and communications purpose; and a credible distribution strategy.

09 SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

What Keeping Forests will weigh most heavily.

The recognizable result

Does the concept lead to a tangible product, application, market, customer, service, or business result that can anchor the film?

The corporate or market-facing connection

Is there an identified partner with a substantive role, and what is the status of their participation?

The economic or market story

Does it show how Southern forests support a product, business, supply chain, investment, job base, customer need, service, or market opportunity?

The strategic communications opportunity

Is there a specific audience whose decisions matter, and a clear account of what they should understand or do differently?

The positioning opportunity

Will the film help audiences beyond the forest sector see Southern forests as productive, innovative, and economically essential?

The quality of the partnership

Are the organizations doing substantive work together, each with a clear role in the story?

Narrative strength & visual potential

Is there a compelling human, product, place, or problem-solving entry point, and strong things to film?

Production readiness

Are partners, subjects, locations, approvals, assets, and the central narrative developed enough to finish by December 31?

Audience & distribution strategy

Do partners have a credible, audience-specific pathway to place the film in front of the people whose decisions matter?

Partner commitment, co-investment & portfolio fit

What resources will partners contribute, and does the concept add a distinct market, geography, application, or audience to the five-story series?

Concepts centered primarily on general conservation awareness, ecological education, or environmental accomplishments will not be competitive unless they also demonstrate a clear economic relationship, a substantive corporate partner, a compelling result, a defined audience, and a credible distribution strategy. Selection is followed by a story-development and scoping process before the final production plan is approved.

10 HOW TO SUBMIT

Complete the online concept form by Friday, July 17, 2026.

The complete application questions are provided in the worksheet that follows. Use it to review every question in advance, coordinate with partners, gather names, dates, locations, and approvals, and draft your responses. Supplementary materials submitted outside the online form will not be considered.

Apply Now →

Questions or requests for a preliminary conversation may be directed to communications@keepingforests.org.

THE WORKSHEET

Forests of the Future: Concept Proposal

This form captures the central idea, partnership, production readiness, and potential audience for your story. You do not need to submit a script, detailed production plan, or formal budget. Questions marked **Required** must be completed in the online form. Concepts are due Friday, July 17, 2026. All films must be delivered by December 31, 2026.

1 LEAD APPLICANT INFORMATION

1 Lead Organization

SHORT ANSWER

REQUIRED

2 Primary Contact Name

SHORT ANSWER

REQUIRED

3 Title or Role

SHORT ANSWER

REQUIRED

4 Email Address

SHORT ANSWER

REQUIRED

5 Organization Website

SHORT ANSWER

REQUIRED

2 THE STORY

6 Working title for the concept

SHORT ANSWER

REQUIRED

A simple descriptive title is fine. It does not need to be the final film title.

7 Tell us the story

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

In approximately 150–250 words, describe the central story the film should tell. Include the product, application, service, market, customer, business result, or economic opportunity that provides the audience's entry point.

8 **What do Southern forests make possible in this story?**

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

Describe the connection between the forest and the recognizable result at the center of the story. What begins with or depends upon the forest? What does it become or enable? Who purchases, uses, or benefits from it?

9 **Why are Southern forests specifically important to this story?**

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

What is distinctive about the Southern forest resource, geography, ownership structure, management system, supply chain, or market context? Why could this story not be told the same way without Southern forests?

10 **What should this audience understand differently after watching?**

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

How could the story help people beyond the forest sector see Southern forests differently, and recognize what they produce, enable, or contribute to the economy?

3 PARTNERS

11 **Who is your corporate or market-facing partner?**

SHORT ANSWER

REQUIRED

Name the company, buyer, customer, manufacturer, investor, utility, developer, brand, or other market-facing organization. If the lead applicant is that partner, enter the lead organization's name.

12 **What role does this partner play?**

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

Explain how the partner connects to the result at the center of the story. The role should be meaningful, beyond sponsorship or general support.

13 **Current status of that partner's participation**

MULTIPLE CHOICE

REQUIRED

- ☐ Confirmed and prepared to participate
- ☐ Verbally committed
- ☐ In active discussion
- ☐ Identified but not yet approached
- ☐ Other

14 **Lead contact for corporate or market-facing partner**

SHORT ANSWER

OPTIONAL

Provide a name and title, if available.

15 **What other organizations or individuals would participate?**

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

List the forest-connected, landowner, research, conservation, public-sector, community, manufacturing, supply-chain, or other partners, and the role each would play.

16 **What makes this partnership important or distinctive?**

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

Describe what the partners are doing together that could carry the narrative and demonstrate a meaningful economic relationship.

4 PEOPLE, PLACES & VISUAL POTENTIAL

17 **Who are the people at the center of the story?**

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

Identify potential interview subjects, participants, customers, landowners, business leaders, researchers, or workers. Names are helpful but not required at this stage.

18 **Where would filming take place?**

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

List likely city, state, landscapes, facilities, manufacturing sites, buildings, businesses, events, or other locations.

19 **What would the audience see?**

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

Describe the strongest visual elements: forests, harvesting or management, manufacturing, laboratories, construction, finished products, customer use, facilities, people at work, landscapes, equipment, or events.

5 PRODUCTION READINESS

A compelling story is our first and primary consideration. If there are potential production issues but the story is good, we will reach out to discuss. Honest responses are appreciated.

20 **When could filming realistically take place?**

MULTIPLE-CHOICE GRID

REQUIRED

For each period, select one: Preferred / Possible / Not available / Not yet known. Periods: August 2026, September 2026, October 2026, November 1–15, 2026.

21 **Is there a season, date, event, or operational window that makes this story stronger on film?**

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

Describe timing considerations: seasonal forest conditions, harvesting or manufacturing activity, construction schedules, a product launch, customer use, a public event, or the availability of a key participant or location. Indicate whether timing is essential, strongly preferred, visually beneficial, or not a significant factor.

6 PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS

22 What staff capacity can the lead organization commit?

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

Identify the primary project lead, if known, and whether additional staff would participate. Include relevant skills: subject-matter expertise, communications, partner coordination, approvals, production logistics, media relations, or distribution.

23 What additional resources or opportunities could partners contribute?

CHECKBOXES

REQUIRED

- ☐ Cash co-investment
- ☐ Travel, lodging, or other production expenses
- ☐ Specialized production or creative support
- ☐ Paid promotion, advertising, or media placement
- ☐ Access to a significant event, venue, or screening opportunity
- ☐ Access to an established customer, employee, investor, industry, or other audience
- ☐ No additional contributions identified at this time
- ☐ Other

24 Briefly describe any additional contribution selected above

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

Include whether the contribution is confirmed, under discussion, or still being explored.

7 AUDIENCE & DISTRIBUTION

Each story should have a clear communications purpose: to influence how a defined audience understands, values, purchases, invests in, specifies, supports, or decides about something Southern forests produce or enable. Identify the audiences whose choices matter and what the film could help them see or do differently.

25 Who is the primary audience this story should influence?

SHORT ANSWER

REQUIRED

Be as specific as possible rather than naming the general public.

26 Who is the secondary audience this story should influence?

SHORT ANSWER

REQUIRED

Again, be as specific as possible.

27 What should the primary audience understand or do differently?

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

Describe the intended change: in understanding, purchasing, investment, procurement, product development, market participation, policy, or another decision.

28 How will partners help the film reach those audiences?

PARAGRAPH

REQUIRED

Identify specific channels, relationships, networks, events, communications platforms, media opportunities, or direct outreach. We are interested in thoughtful, audience-specific approaches rather than general statements like posting to a website or social media.

29 Any specific placement or launch opportunities?

PARAGRAPH

OPTIONAL

An industry conference, customer or investor gathering, product launch, corporate campaign, media partnership, screening, trade publication, employee platform, or other time-sensitive opportunity.

8 FINAL INFORMATION & CONFIRMATIONS

30 Anything else Keeping Forests should know?

PARAGRAPH

OPTIONAL

31 Confirmations

CHECKBOXES

REQUIRED

- ☐ I understand this is a call for story and partnership concepts, not a request for production vendors.
- ☐ I understand my organization is committing staff time to work with Keeping Forests and its designated production team.
- ☐ I understand the \$10,000–\$15,000 production investment is managed by Keeping Forests and not automatically provided as a direct grant.
- ☐ I understand selected stories will be developed within the shared editorial and visual framework of the series.
- ☐ I understand final production scope and deliverables will be determined during story development and scoping.
- ☐ I understand all films must be completed by December 31, 2026.
- ☐ I confirm the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.
- ☐ I am authorized to submit this concept on behalf of the lead organization.

Apply Now →

Submit by Friday, July 17, 2026. Questions: communications@keepingforests.org