

# Chestnut Stakeholder Engagement Webinar

## Remote - February 2025

---

Zoom Meeting: 12 PM – 1 PM CST

### Attendees

- Forest Carbon Works/Chestnut Carbon
  - o Rachel Richmond (Presenter), Jake Blackstock (Presenter)
  - o Briana Capra (Attendee),
  - o Sarah Ford (Attendee),
  - o Alex Butler (Attendee),
  - o Simone Stevens (Attendee),
  - o Brendon Lalman (Attendee)
- Facilitator – CDR Associates
  - o Laura Hickey
- Attended (External)
  - o [REDACTED]
  - o [REDACTED] – Farmer/Neighbor to Chestnut properties
  - o [REDACTED] – Former Landowner/Neighbor to Chestnut properties

The Purpose of the remote stakeholder meeting was to provide updates on feedback from the in-person stakeholder meeting in Morrilton, Arkansas.

### 1. Introduction & Purpose of Meeting - Laura Hickey, CDR Stakeholder Engagement Consultant

- Opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees and outlining the agenda.
- The meeting's primary goal is to provide project updates, address feedback from stakeholders, and discuss next steps in Chestnut's Forest restoration efforts.

### 2. Expansion Updates and Project Overview - Jake Blackstock, Restore Head Forester

- Current Portfolio Updates: Outlined progress on the current phases of Chestnut's project.
  - o The upcoming 2024-2025 phase focuses on further land acquisitions and tree planting. Chestnut aims to expand into new areas while ensuring sustainable, community-focused practices.
- Breakdown of Expansion Plan:
  - o Strategic acquisition of marginal and less-productive land to prevent displacement of prime farmland or productive properties.
  - o Diversified portfolio to avoid centralized footprint in any one county in a given state.
  - o Target properties include floodplains and other low-productivity agricultural lands.
- Sustainable Forest Management:
  - o Tree species are chosen based on soil suitability, which includes factors such as drainage patterns, acidity, topography, and seedling availability.
  - o Both remote sensing and on-the-ground surveys are used to assess site conditions.
- Sustainable Certification:

- The project is FSC-certified to ensure adherence to sustainable forest management practices.
- Chestnut also monitors forest risks such as pests, disease, and wildfires through regular property audits.
- Ongoing input from an Sustainable Plantation Advisory Committee provides guidance on best practices.

### **3. New Initiatives and Practices**

- Lease Program Launch:
  - Chestnut is developing a land lease program for community members. In addition to leasing, Chestnut provides lease opportunities to support hunting, fishing and customary land access for residents.
- Collaboration with Private Consultants:
  - Consultants are hired to oversee key activities such as tree planting and planting plan adjustments, property audits, survival surveys, and risk management, wildlife habitat monitoring and biodiversity assessments
- Stakeholder Involvement:
  - Chestnut continues to work with local stakeholders, including neighboring landowners, farmers, and hunting leaseholders, to ensure sustainable management practices and site-specific solutions.

### **4. Stakeholder Feedback Themes - Rachel Richmond, Project Manager**

- Emphasized Chestnut's commitment to continuous feedback integration and co-benefit creation. Feedback webinars, in-person sessions, and regular updates will remain a cornerstone of Chestnut's engagement strategy.
- Key topics discussed concern regarding:
  - Land prices
  - Displacement
  - Wildfire Risk

### **5. Mitigating Stakeholder Concerns**

- Land Prices and Displacement:
  - Stakeholders raised concerns that Chestnut's land acquisitions might increase land prices and displace farming operations.
  - Mitigation Steps:
    - Acquisitions are conducted at fair market value to avoid driving up local prices.
    - Focus on marginal properties, ensuring sellers can reinvest in better farmland.
    - Avoiding concentrated acquisitions in single communities to limit economic impacts.
- Wildfire Risk:
  - Stakeholder Concerns: Wildfires are a significant risk to restored forest lands, especially during dry seasons.
  - Chestnut's Response:

- Forest Management Plans include elements such as installation of firebreaks to reduce risk, design planting stands to allow fire-fighting access, local experts, hunting leaseholders, and staff play critical roles in wildfire monitoring and reporting.

## 7. Wildlife and Biodiversity Monitoring

- Partnerships:
  - Chestnut is exploring collaborations with local universities, government agencies, and NGOs to enhance wildlife monitoring.
  - Projects aim to improve biodiversity by restoring habitats and tracking the impacts of forest growth on local species.
- FSC Verified Impacts:
  - Chestnut adheres to Verified Impact Standards, which require ecosystem restoration and biodiversity tracking.
  - Wildlife habitat monitoring is an integral part of certification and reporting efforts.

## 8. Community Engagement and Communication

- Chestnut maintains an ongoing dialogue with community members through:
  - Stakeholder surveys and periodic feedback webinars
  - A permanent consultation form on the Chestnut Carbon website
  - Invitations to community events and field visits
  - Updates sent via email and targeted outreach campaigns based on proximity

## 9. Stakeholder Questions and Concerns - Q&A

- **Stakeholder:**
- Question about Chestnut's decision-making process for planting and the criteria used to select land.
  - Raised concerns about areas in Louisiana with water variability and invasive species issues.
    - Specific concerns about tallow tree proliferation in Louisiana were raised.
  - Suggested that Chestnut prioritize access control to prevent trespassing.
    - Doesn't want land to sit there
    - How does product team manage water on land/guns on property
- **Responses:**
- Jake: Look at historical land use as a metric. Planting decisions are based on soil suitability and restoration goals. Soil type has to support succession. Chestnut avoids forcing trees to grow on unsuitable lands. Avoid certain soil types to restore land to what it was once.
- Sarah: Look to avoid parcels where soil type bases aren't suitable for trees. While some areas have not been forested in recent decades, historical data often shows these areas were forested centuries ago. It is not financially feasible to force plant trees either way.
- **Stakeholder:**
- How to work with neighbors and community members specific to Louisiana

- **Responses:**
- Jake: Work with farmers to help with site prep / opening private hunting lease options for access.
- Alex: Hired property manager for local presence to address these concerns elsewhere and as we expand into Louisiana look to do the same there
- **Stakeholder 2:**
- All onboard with what Chestnut is doing. Expressed interest in additional information about hunting leases and preferred to receive updates via email.
  - o Mentioned his neighboring property to Chestnut's, which consists mostly of forestland.
  - o Will email/call for information
- **Stakeholder 3:**
- A farmer that's a neighbor to Chestnut land with trees on it and he leases ground to hunt on.
- Shared a story about successfully extinguishing a wildfire on nearby leased hunting land.
  - o Stressed the importance of maintaining community engagement as it promotes local presence to be involved in overseeing land (ex. manage wildfire risks).
    - Co benefits of having access to land is that neighbors are stewards/caretakers of land.
- **Stakeholder 4:**
- Requested a copy of the meeting slides and updates on previous questions.
- Wants Chestnut to take into account local customs
- Asked if Chestnut could lease WRP (Wetlands Reserve Program) or CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) land.
- **Responses:**
- Rachel: Slides will be sent to stakeholders.
- Jake: WRP land cannot be leased due to existing easements and there isn't any additionality. However, CRP land is eligible though.

## **10. Conclusion - Rachel Richmond**

- Stakeholders will receive periodic updates and invitations to future events.
- Stakeholders are encouraged to continue providing feedback through the Chestnut Carbon website or by contacting the team directly via email/phone number

## **Meeting Adjourned**