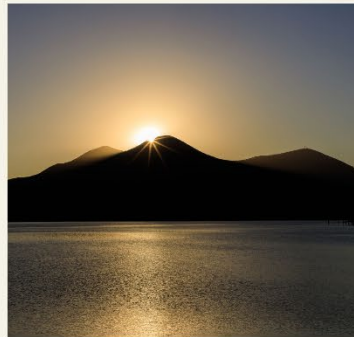




# Redwood Region RISE

## Working Lands and Blue Economy Activation Plan



**California's Redwood Region**  
Tribal Lands, Del Norte, Humboldt,  
Lake, and Mendocino Counties

**A Product of Redwood Region RISE**  
The California Center for Rural Policy  
at Cal Poly Humboldt

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# Executive Summary

## Working Lands and Blue Economy: Regeneration Rooted in Place

The Redwood Region's forests, farms, fisheries, and coastal systems are the foundation of community well-being, cultural identity, and climate resilience. The Working Lands and Blue Economy (WLBE) sector represents a critical opportunity to advance a regenerative economy—one that restores ecosystems, strengthens rural livelihoods, and builds long-term economic resilience.

This Activation Plan outlines a coordinated regional approach across five strategic areas:

- **Market Expansion and Integration:** Strengthen value chains through infrastructure, processing capacity, and regional branding to support locally grown, harvested, and produced goods.
- **Collective Capacity Building:** Formalize sector networks across forestry, food systems, fiber, and fisheries to align partners and scale impact.
- **Workforce and Community Resilience:** Expand career pathways in restoration, processing, marine science, and construction—prioritizing access for Tribal and underserved communities.
- **Rural Innovation:** Support entrepreneurship, cooperative models, and technology adoption to grow climate-aligned rural businesses.
- **Research and Pilots:** Advance applied research, feasibility studies, and pilot projects to test and scale regenerative solutions.

## Anticipated Impact

By August 2026, the region aims to deliver measurable progress across workforce development, infrastructure, and market access. Expected outcomes include:

- Expanded workforce pipelines across forestry, food systems, and blue economy sectors, with increased placement in quality jobs
- Launch and growth of new agricultural, food, and green businesses
- Improved infrastructure across working lands and waterfronts, including food hubs,

- processing facilities, and harbor upgrades
- Increased market access for regional producers through coordinated branding and procurement pathways
- Deployment of pilot projects in areas such as mass timber, wool products, and blue economy innovation

Progress will be tracked through job creation, business growth, infrastructure development, and participation metrics, alongside ecological and equity indicators.

## Regional Partners

This work is led by West Business Development Center and reflects collaboration among Catalyst-funded partners (e.g., Forest WRX Alliance, North Coast Growers Association, Noyo Harbor District), Tribal partners, educational institutions, and regional collaboratives such as the Noyo Ocean Collective.

**As a living document, this plan will evolve as the work advances. Implementation is led by the Working Lands and Blue Economy Sector Investment Coordinator team at West Business Development Center, including Aspen Logan ([aspen@westcenter.org](mailto:aspen@westcenter.org)) and Paloma Patterson ([paloma@westcenter.org](mailto:paloma@westcenter.org)). The West Team will collaborate with the Redwood Region RISE Collaborative, Sector Advisory Council, and community partners to conduct semi-annual comprehensive reviews. These updated versions will be shared publicly to ensure transparency and community engagement. An upcoming update will be provided as a Final Impact Report as California Jobs First's State-funded activities of RRRISE sunset.**

## Redwood Region RISE Shared Values

1. Our work contributes to the good of the community and the good of the environment.
2. Our educational (training) opportunities align with our regional needs.
3. We advocate for equitable access to resources to ensure our region is economically resilient.

## Our Cross-Cutting Principles

These principles guide all WLBE strategies and investments:

- **Economic Resilience:** Strengthen the rural economy through regenerative, place-based industries
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Expand access for Tribal and historically underserved communities
- **Innovation and Adaptation:** Support scalable solutions across forestry, agriculture, and ocean sectors
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Align public, private, Tribal, and nonprofit partners
- **Sustainability:** Advance stewardship of land, water, and natural resources
- **Workforce Development:** Build skills aligned with emerging and legacy industries
- **Infrastructure Investment:** Improve food systems, working waterfronts, and rural connectivity

## Introduction of Working Lands and Blue Economy Sector

This Activation Plan is led by the West Business Development Center SIC team and reflects input from partners across the region.

The **Working Lands sector** includes agriculture, forestry, and rangelands—producing food, fiber, and timber while supporting climate resilience.

The **Blue Economy sector** includes fisheries, aquaculture, marine research, and coastal infrastructure—supporting both economic activity and ecosystem health.

Together, these sectors form an integrated system with strong potential for value-added production, job creation, and innovation—especially in areas such as mass timber, wool products, food systems infrastructure, and marine science.

## Sector Prioritization

The WLBE sector is prioritized due to its central role in economic stability, climate resilience, and regional identity.

The region's working lands generate significant economic output and support a wide range of industries, from timber and agriculture to fisheries and tourism. At the same time, these sectors face ongoing challenges related to infrastructure gaps, market access, and climate impacts.

Updated implementation efforts emphasize:

- **Value chain development** (e.g., meat processing, wool, timber, seafood)
- **Infrastructure investment** (e.g., food hubs, cold storage, harbor facilities)
- **Market expansion** through branding and procurement pathways
- **Integration across sectors** (forestry, agriculture, ocean industries)

This coordinated approach strengthens local economies while supporting long-term environmental stewardship.

## Operating Structure

The **Working Lands and Blue Economy SIC team at West Business Development Center** leads implementation, coordinating across partners and initiatives.

### Sector Investment Coordinators:

- Aspen Logan
- Paloma Patterson

The SIC team works closely with:

- Tribal Nations and Tribal enterprises
- Harbor districts and marine science organizations
- Agricultural, forestry, and food system partners (e.g., NCGA, Forest WRX Alliance)
- Educational institutions and workforce partners
- Local governments and economic development organizations

Sector-specific leadership and advisory networks support implementation across key focus areas (food systems, forestry/fiber, and blue economy).

This structure ensures alignment across diverse projects while enabling coordinated regional action.

# Resourcing Across Strategies

The WLBE sector leverages a mix of Catalyst funding, state and federal programs, and philanthropic investment.

Key investments and implementation activities include:

- Catalyst-funded projects supporting food systems infrastructure, wool industry development, forestry innovation, and workforce pathways
- Harbor and blue economy investments, including Noyo Harbor infrastructure and marine science facilities
- Workforce and resilience investments through the Rural Resilience Partnership and Forest WRX initiatives
- Market development initiatives, including regional branding and institutional procurement pathways for seafood and agricultural products

Key funding needs and gaps:

- Ongoing funding for infrastructure (processing, storage, harbor improvements)
- Capital for scaling value-added production and rural enterprises
- Support for certification, procurement navigation, and market access
- Sustained funding for workforce training and sector coordination

A diversified funding strategy—combining public, private, and philanthropic sources—remains essential to scaling these efforts.

## Goals and Metrics

This plan focuses on expanding workforce opportunities, strengthening markets, and improving infrastructure across the WLBE sector.

Key outcomes include:

- Growth in workforce participation and job placement across forestry, food, and blue economy sectors
- Increased number of new and expanded businesses
- Improved market access and revenue growth for producers

- Expanded infrastructure capacity across food systems and working waterfronts

Short-term progress will be tracked through:

- Training participation and job placement
- Business development and funding secured
- Infrastructure milestones (e.g., facilities, hubs, harbor improvements)
- Market indicators (e.g., procurement volumes, product distribution)

Quarterly reporting will track progress and inform ongoing adjustments.

## Dependencies and Challenges

Successful implementation depends on aligning workforce development, infrastructure investment, and market expansion.

Key challenges include:

- **Fragmentation across sectors:** Limited coordination across forestry, agriculture, and ocean industries can reduce overall impact
- **Workforce gaps:** Need for expanded training aligned with emerging sector demands
- **Market visibility:** Limited external awareness of regional products and opportunities
- **Infrastructure constraints:** Gaps in processing, storage, and transportation systems
- **Funding uncertainty:** Ongoing need for sustained investment across multiple project types

This plan addresses these challenges through coordinated strategies that strengthen value chains, expand partnerships, and align workforce, infrastructure, and market development.

# Strategies

## Strategy 1: Expand and Integrate Markets

### Tactic 1.1: Strengthen the Value Chain

Tactic 1.1: Strengthen the Value Chain				
TASK	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIMELINE	FUNDING SOURCE & GAPS	KEY OUTPUTS & METRICS
Launch the Del Norte (Hmong) Meat Processing Facility to restore regional meat processing infrastructure and reduce transportation costs/emissions	Del Norte Meat Processing Facility/True North/Hmong Association of Crescent City	May 2025 – Sept 2026	RRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$500,000	USDA-certified Del Norte Meat Processing Facility permitted
Develop a Regional Wool Industry Cluster roadmap to bridge gaps from raw fiber to finished product	Kaos Sheep Outfit	May 2025 – Sept 2026	RRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$607,855.70	Wool Industry Cluster Roadmap published with infrastructure and market recommendations
Support Mad River Mass Timber in connecting sustainable forestry to rural housing development through pre-permitted modular housing kits	Forest WRX Alliance/George Schmidbauer	May 2025 – Sept 2026	RRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$500,000	Mass timber pre permitted housing kit designs completed
Activate food hubs, cold storage, and micro processing to improve aggregation and delivery logistics for regional farmers	NCGA	May 2025 – Sept 2026	RRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$1,806,574.10	3+ new or upgraded food system facilities (e.g., cold storage, microprocessors)

**Tactic 1.1: Strengthen the Value Chain**

<p>Pilot and Scale Revenue-Generating Stewardship Models through REM Carbon Markets</p>	<p>Forest WRX Alliance</p>	<p>May 2025 - Sept 2026</p>	<p>RRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$718,988.66</p>	<p>500-acre pilot permitted and enrolled in REM</p> <p>Carbon credit revenue generated or leveraged for reinvestment</p> <p>Number of forestry-related jobs supported through pilot implementation</p>
<p>RFF acquired the Usal Redwood Forest in 2007, spanning over 50,000 acres. Through bioacoustic monitors, camera networks and drone and GIS mapping, they seek to establish community-based forests that provide both critical habitat for increased biodiversity and improved regional economic vitality. RFF is also working to restore the Usal Redwood Forest watershed function at landscape scale through long-term, science-based stewardship.</p>	<p>Redwood Forest Foundation</p>	<p>May 2025 - Sept 2026</p>	<p>Various funding sources</p>	<p>Develop a relationship with the Foundation</p> <p>Monitor progress of their various projects</p>
<p>Monitor regional timber harvest and log flow trends to assess stability of upstream forest supply supporting in-region processing and mass timber initiatives.</p>	<p>Green Diamond</p>	<p>May 2025 - Sept 2026</p>	<p>Data sourced from public harvest reports and industry updates</p>	<p>Annual timber harvest volume trends (Humboldt, Del Norte, Mendocino counties)</p> <p>% of logs processed in-region vs. exported</p> <p>Changes in regional mill capacity or closures</p>

**Tactic 1.1: Strengthen the Value Chain**

<p>Conduct the full gamut of land and watershed management services, lead state biomass and fire resilience partnerships, and partnerships with communities, organizations, public agencies and businesses.</p>	<p>The Watershed Research and Training Center</p>	<p>May 2025 – Sept 2026</p>	<p>Various funding sources</p>	
<p>Infrastructure Improvements including construction of ice house, expanding markets for fishermen and increasing viability of fishing industry in Noyo Harbor</p>	<p>Noyo Harbor District</p>	<p>Mar 2024 – Feb 2026</p>	<p>CA Jobs First Awardee \$3.2M</p>	<p>Completion and successful opening of Ice House.</p> <p>10-12 dockside sales per fishery, per season</p> <p>Creation and implementation of sea to schools program</p> <p>Successful launch of consumer awareness campaign around local species.</p>
<p>Advancing ocean conservation through education, exploration and experience.</p>	<p>Noyo Center for Marine Science</p>	<p>May 2025 – Sept 2026</p>	<p>EDA Grant Funding</p>	<p>Development of an 11.5 acre Ocean Science Center: Project has been designed through EDA funding. Noyo Center continues to pursue construction options with much community support.</p> <p>Completion of the LaBONEatory, a 2,240 sq ft facility to occur in summer 2026. The facility will be a repository for bones used for research purposes.</p>

## Tactic 1.2: Promote Regional Products

<b>Tactic 1.2: Promote Regional Products</b>				
<b>TASK</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE ENTITY</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE &amp; GAPS</b>	<b>KEY OUTPUTS &amp; METRICS</b>
<p>Research existing regional brand identities for the Redwood region. Identify opportunities to consolidate brands or initiate partnerships.</p> <p>In partnership with Arts, Tourism and Culture SIC, Calder Johnson and Cindy Vosburg, ED Del Norte Chamber</p>	Humboldt Made Made in Mendocino North of Ordinary (Redwood Region Collaborative branding)	May 2025 – Sept 2026	Various funding sources	<p>Participation in local markets like Humboldt Friday Night Market etc</p> <p>Growth in membership or partner participation</p> <p>Reach of campaign through social channels, website, press releases</p> <p>Number of local retailers carrying the brands</p>
Develop and launch regional brand promoting North Coast seafood in farmer's markets, seafood counters	West Business Development Center	Sept 2025 – Aug 2026	<p>CA Jobs First grant Sept 2025–Feb 2026</p> <p>Funding gap March–Aug 2026</p>	<p>North Coast Catch–Regional seafood brand, photography, videos to promote North Coast seafood species and sustainability.</p> <p>20–30 participating seafood counters &amp; farmer's markets</p>
Monitor and elevate the market visibility of emerging value-added wool, forest, and ocean-based products produced in the Redwood Region.	Marblis, Hempcrete, Spacecrete, Women with Bows	May 2025 – Sept 2026	Various private and grant funding	<p>Increase in number of Redwood Region–branded value-added wool, forest, and ocean products</p> <p>Can be amplified with regional branding</p>

**Tactic 1.2: Promote Regional Products**

<p>Develop a coordinated institutional procurement pathway for regional food and seafood products</p>	<p>NCGA West Business Development Center</p>	<p>Aug 2025 – Sept 2026</p>	<p>CA Jobs First grant  Catalyst Funding  Rd 2 Implementa tion funding potential  Gap: Certification and procuremen t navigation support</p>	<p>10+ producers supported in meeting procurement requirements (HACCP, MSC, Organic, etc)  Quarterly tracking of pounds of seafood procured  Regional Food Hub onboarding institutional buyers  NCGA facilitating cold chain &amp; delivery logistics</p>
<p>Develop and launch marketing and sales channels for institutional procurement (IE Schools, hospitals, correctional facilities, etc.)</p>	<p>West Business Development Center, Noyo Harbor, NCGA</p>	<p>Aug 2025 – Sept 2026</p>	<p>CA Jobs First grant  Catalyst Funding  Rd 2 implemen ta tion funding potential</p>	<p>3–5 Mendocino and Humboldt school districts purchasing local seafood  Supply 150-200lbs of seafood monthly to Mendocino School Districts</p>

## Strategy 2: Build Collective Capacity

### Tactic 2.1: Establish Sector-Specific Networks

Tactic 2.1: Establish Sector-Specific Networks				
TASK	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIMELINE	FUNDING SOURCE & GAPS	KEY OUTPUTS & METRICS
Establish Advisory Councils for each WLBE sector	West Business Development Center	May 2025- Aug 2026	SIC Awardee	3 formalized sector Advisory councils (Blue Economy, Forestry, Food Systems)
Formalize the Wool Industry Cluster network to coordinate between ranchers, processors, designers, and buyers	UCANR Kaos	May 2025- Sept 2026	RRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$607,855.70	A formalized sector networks
Grow the Forest WRX Alliance to align training, carbon markets, and timber industry interest holders	Forest WRX Alliance	May 2025- Sept 2026	RRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$718,988.66	6+ multi-interest holder convenings or roundtables hosted annually
Expand the Rural Resilience Partnership (RRP) coalition to unify workforce and economic development across fire, fish, forests, and facilities	Trees Foundation	May 2025- Sept 2026	RRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$1,127,936.08	Strengthen partnerships between nonprofits and government agencies through collaborative development of the Rural Resilience Partnership. Coordinate two facilitated Rural Resilience Partnership gatherings. Amplify project initiatives, opportunities and successes.

**Tactic 2.1: Establish Sector-Specific Networks**

Build digital platforms or directories to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing	West Center	May 2025- Sept 2026	SIC Awardee	Monthly email correspondence, listserv for partners to share information
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**Strategy 3: Enhance Workforce and Community Resilience**

Tactic 3.1: Foster Education and Skills Development

**Tactic 3.1: Foster Education and Skills Development**

<b>TASK</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE ENTITY</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE &amp; GAPS</b>	<b>KEY OUTPUTS &amp; METRICS</b>
Launch career pathways under RRP's "4F" initiative for youth and adults in forestry, watershed, and cultural heritage sectors	Trees Foundation	May 2025- Sept 2026	RRRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$1,127,936.08	5+ new or expanded training programs launched in forestry, food, fiber, or construction
Conduct a Regional Forest-to-Market Value Chain Gap Analysis including workforce assessment and curriculum mapping for Climate Tech & Natural Resource Management	Forest WRX Alliance	May 2025- Sept 2026	RRRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$718,988.66	150+ rural residents enrolled in career pathways (through RRP and partner orgs)
Align Workforce and Higher Education Pathways with Market Demand in Mass Timber, Fuels Reduction, and Carbon Markets				

**Tactic 3.1: Foster Education and Skills Development**

Create job training programs for production, processing, and regenerative land management	Forest WRX Alliance	May 2025- Sept 2026	RRRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$718,988.66	3 Regional Resilience Centers planned with programming blueprints
Support Hmong and BIPOC communities with culturally relevant training and business support	Del Norte Meat Processing Facility/True North/Hmong Association of Crescent City	May 2025- Aug 2026	RRRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$500,000	New curriculum modules in climate tech, wood science, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge launched
Develop and implement youth programs in ocean sciences, marine technology, fisheries, and natural resource entrepreneurship to build the regional blue economy workforce pipeline.	Noyo Center for Marine Science, Mendocino College, Cal Poly Humboldt, Noyo Harbor	May 2025- Aug 2026	Various funding sources	75-100 youth engaged annually in ocean science or blue economy programming workshops)  3-5 youth transition into internships, apprenticeships, or marine-related education pathways
Administer training to advance fishing industry careers (i.e., HACCP training, safety training, etc.)	West Business Development Center, Noyo Harbor, CA Sea Grant, NCGA	Sept	CA Jobs First	Deliver 3-5 trainings furthering the Blue Economy knowledge base
Create career pathways for blue economy/fishing job options and forestry	West Center, Noyo Harbor, Capitol Impact	Sept 2025-Aug 2026	CA Jobs First grant, SeaGrant funds	Sector specific career pathways

### Tactic 3.1: Foster Education and Skills Development

Create education programs for blue economy careers (IE marine science careers, marine technical trainings)	Mendocino College, Noyo Harbor, Noyo Science Center, Cal Poly Humboldt	Sept 2025-Aug 2026	Various funding sources	3-5 training programs outlined and instituted
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## Strategy 4: Promote Rural Innovation

### Tactic 4.1: Advance Rural Economic Growth

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TASK	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIMELINE	FUNDING SOURCE & GAPS	KEY OUTPUTS & METRICS
Identify and support scalable rural business models through grants, microloans, and mentorship	West Center, SBDC, City of Fort Bragg, City of Ukiah, North Edge, EDFC	May 2025 - Sept 2026	Various funding sources	10-15 rural businesses receive startup or growth funding via grants or microloans 25+ rural entrepreneurs enrolled in targeted mentorship programs or business accelerators.
Digital literacy training programs for small businesses	West Center	May 2025 - Sept 2026	Various funding sources	25 small businesses participate in training or eCommerce workshops

**Tactic 4.1: Advance Rural Economic Growth**

Build broadband infrastructure for rural communities	City of Fort Bragg	Jan 2025 - Sept 2026	FFA grant from CPUC \$10.4M  Plus other various sources	Broadband expansion project funded or implemented in underserved communities
Support scalable rural business models including cooperative and employee-owned organizations	Cooperative Agriculture Network  Redwood Roots Farm	May 2025 - Sept 2026	Various Funding sources	1 regional cooperative development curriculum created and shared across counties.  Technical assistance provided to at least 8 groups exploring shared ownership models

**Strategy 5: Advance Working Lands and Blue Economy Research**

Tactic 5.1: Develop Research Initiatives

**Tactic 5.1: Develop Research Initiatives**

<b>TASK</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE ENTITY</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE &amp; GAPS</b>	<b>KEY OUTPUTS &amp; METRICS</b>
Conduct feasibility studies for the Meat Processing Facility, Fiber Innovation Hub, and fish processing to guide investment decisions	Noyo Harbor District, NCGA Hmong Humboldt Bay Harbor District	May 2025- Sept 2026	CA Jobs First \$3.2M grant  RRRISE Catalyst Awardees	4+ feasibility studies completed (Meat, Wool, Dockside Market, Timber Housing)

**Tactic 5.1: Develop Research Initiatives**

Build a forestry training dashboard and regional program assessment	Forest WRX Alliance	May 2025–Sept 2026	RRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$718,988.66	Forestry workforce dashboard launched (public access + data updates)
Use videography/storytelling and academic partnerships to document and publish key learnings	Cal Poly Humboldt  Mendocino College  College of the Redwoods	May 2025–Sept 2026	Various funding sources	Academic white papers or case studies published in collaboration with Cal Poly Humboldt and Trees Foundation
Collect baseline economic data and assess gaps in small business services. Publish findings to inform policy, grant applications, and investment priorities	Capitol Impact	May 2025–Sept 2026	Various funding sources	Interest holder-informed reports used for policy, permitting, and investment advocacy

**Tactic 5.2: Pilot Blue and Green Business Solutions**

**Tactic 5.2: Pilot Blue and Green Business Solutions**

<b>TASK</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE ENTITY</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCE &amp; GAPS</b>	<b>KEY OUTPUTS &amp; METRICS</b>
Deploy mass timber housing kits as a pilot for sustainable rural housing	Mad River Timber	May 2025 – Sept 2026	RRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$500,000	3+ pilot programs launched (e.g., timber housing, carbon markets, wool innovation)

**Tactic 5.2: Pilot Blue and Green Business Solutions**

Develop a carbon credit system to fund fire resilience on Tribal and private lands	Forest WRX Alliance	May 2025 - Sept 2026	RRRRISE Catalyst Awardee \$718,988.66	At least 1 new carbon credit funding mechanism implemented for Tribal/private lands
Launch food, fiber, and forest incubators, supporting climate-aligned local enterprises	School of Adaptive Agriculture UCANR	May 2025 - Sept 2026	Various Funding Sources	Business incubation, education and support for 10+ green startups or cooperatives
Launch pilot projects in kelp farming, carbon sequestration	Noyo Center for Marine Science  City of Fort Bragg	May 2025 - Sept 2026	Various Funding Sources	Evaluation framework established to measure climate, economic, and equity outcomes of pilot solutions
Develop a business incubator program focused on small businesses	NorCal SBDC	Jan 2026 - June 2026	Various Funding Sources	10-15 early-stage businesses or social enterprises enrolled in the first cohort

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