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NCIF

BY THE NUMBERS

(2001 TO PRESENT)

→JOBS CREATED OR RETAINED:
1,047

→NUMBER OF BUSINESSES
ASSISTED: 300+

→TOTAL DOLLAR AMOUNT
LOANED: \$10.3M

→TOTAL DOLLAR AMOUNT
LEVERAGED: \$48M

→SERVES WEST VIRGINIA,
NORTH CAROLINA, SOUTH
CAROLINA, SOUTHERN
GEORGIA, AND THE
APPALACHIAN REGIONS OF
VIRGINIA, KENTUCKY,
TENNESSEE, AND OHIO

CDFI
COALITION
WWW.CDFI.ORG

NATURAL CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND

SHEPHERDSTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA

Natural Capital Investment Fund (NCIF) is a nonprofit, business loan fund that provides debt financing to small businesses located in West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, southern Georgia, and the Appalachian regions of Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio. As a subsidiary of The Conservation Fund, NCIF specializes in risk capital for “triple bottom line” enterprises. That is, enterprises that integrate positive economic, environmental, and social performance. Many of NCIF’s business clients are located in economically distressed and/or rural communities.

In addition to lending, technical assistance plays an integral part in NCIF’s approach to helping entrepreneurs achieve business objectives. NCIF has provided more than 7,500 hours of assistance to over 350 companies in areas ranging from accounting to certification to marketing.

Since its certification as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), NCIF has provided \$10.3 million in financing and leveraged \$48 million to support its goal of using the positive power of business and markets to generate economic, social, and environmental returns.



FIRSTHAND FOODS

Ms. Tina Prevatte and Ms. Jennifer Curtis sought to build a sustainable food system that benefited their community and used natural resources responsibly. The result is Firsthand Foods, a company that connects North Carolina’s pasture-based livestock producers with local food lovers, restaurants, and retailers.

Firsthand Foods is committed to sourcing only from farmers who raise their animals humanely, without feeding them antibiotics, animal byproducts, or added hormones. All farms and facilities in Firsthand Food’s network operate on a small scale, which ensures consistent meat quality, minimizes waste concentration, and protects soil and water resources.

Given the company’s unique model, business boomed and quickly outgrew the five freezer chests it used to store its products. With a need for increased cold storage capacity, Firsthand Foods sought financing assistance from NCIF. Through its microloan program, NCIF provided \$40,000 in loan capital for the purchase of a new walk-in freezer. The increased freezing capacity allowed the business to keep a better handle of its inventory and store more of its locally and ethically sourced meat products, which allowed it to increase sales to higher-volume customers.

By collaborating with allied, local businesses in rural, often economically distressed areas and selling their products to local markets, Ms. Prevatte and Ms. Curtis show a dedication to supporting their community’s economy, without sacrificing their values. Their model has given small-scale farmers better value for products, while bringing in enough revenue for Firsthand Foods to hire a new staff member to manage their ever-increasing line of customers.