



FORESTRY TITLE

Background

The 1990 farm bill was the first that included a Forestry Title, which amended the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (CFAA) and authorized a number of programs intended to address private forest issues. Not all private forestry programs are dependent upon the farm bill, and many authorities from previous farm bills are permanent. Public comments addressed general forestry issues as well as specific forestry-related farm bill programs.

Forest Stewardship Program

The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) was established in the 1990 farm bill, and provides technical assistance, through State forestry agency partners, to nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) owners to encourage active forest management. A primary focus is the development of comprehensive, multi-resource management plans that help landowners manage their forests for a variety of products and services. The FSP is active in 50 States and 6 Territories. Since 1990, the program has funded more than 225,000 management plans encompassing approximately 25 million acres of NIPF land. This program is the primary vehicle, within the Forest Service, to provide technical assistance to private forest landowners. Funding is provided through the annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

Forest Land Enhancement Program

The Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) was established in the 2002 farm bill to encourage long-term sustainability of nonindustrial private forests. FLEP replaced the Stewardship Incentives Program and the Forestry Incentives Program, both of which were repealed by the 2002 farm bill. FLEP provides technical, educational, and cost-share assistance to promote sustainability of nonindustrial private forests. FLEP is scheduled to expire in 2007. This program currently is the primary vehicle, within the Forest Service, to provide cost-share assistance to private forest landowners.

Forest Legacy Program and Loss of Forest Land

Ten million acres of private/non-Federal forest land were converted to development from 1982 to 1997. An estimated 44.2 million acres of private forests could become available for development between 2000 and 2030. The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) was established in the 1990 farm bill to help maintain highly important forest areas threatened by development or other non-forest uses. The focus is on working forests—those that provide forest products, water, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities. Lands are protected through conservation easements and fee-simple purchase. The program operates on the principle of “willing buyer, willing seller.” Currently, 46 States and Territories are in the program, with 4 more in the

planning stage. Since fiscal year 1992, FLP has conserved over 1.1 million acres across 33 States and Territories. This program is the primary vehicle, within the Forest Service, for addressing loss of forest land. Funding is provided through the Land and Water Conservation Fund in the annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

Urban and Community Forestry Program (U&CF)

The authority for State Foresters to provide financial and technical assistance in urban and community forestry is granted in the CFAA. The CFAA also authorizes the Forest Service to "conduct, support, and cooperate" in research in rural, suburban, and urban areas through Section 9 of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974. The UCF establishes self-supporting programs in cities, suburbs, and towns that can manage the local urban forest resource through four key program measures: management plans, professional staffing, ordinances and policies, and advisory organizations. Funding is provided through the annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

Economic Development

The Forest Service helps spur economic development through a wide range of activities on National Forest System lands, such as recreation and timber sales, and the agency's utilization of small businesses in local communities. In addition, the Forest Service has utilized the Economic Action Programs as authorized by the 1990 farm bill to help rural communities strengthen and diversify their economies, including over 800 rural communities that have completed community strategic plans aimed at building skills to address social, environmental, and economic challenges.

National Forest System

The national forests are managed for multiple uses as directed by numerous statutes. These uses include timber, outdoor recreation, range, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes.

Markets for Ecosystem Services

Private-sector markets for environmental goods and services, such as water purification, erosion control, carbon sequestration or storage, and wildlife habitat and diversity, are emerging. The Secretary has established a USDA Market-Based Environmental Stewardship Coordination Working Group to explore the role of voluntary, market-based mechanisms in agriculture and forestry, including trading schemes, offset payments, and private investment.

General Opinions

- Many expressed the need to continue a separate farm bill title for forestry-specific programs.
- Many commenters described the ability of family forests to provide social, economic, and ecological benefits, and marketable forest products to our economy and the world. Some suggested that in many places forestry outweighs agriculture in economic value and said that the best thing USDA should do for conservation is to keep forests profitable.
- Some indicated that support for sustainable forestry, through the Forestry Title of the farm bill, is important to our national economy, global competitiveness, and the maintenance of healthy forests and watersheds. Assistance should be provided to family forest owners to encourage active management and keep family forest lands intact.

- A few commenters said that timber should be recognized and treated as an agricultural commodity, and that both research and timber production should be encouraged and that this is not conflicting with conservation.
- Many said that farm bill reauthorization should increase the attention and funding levels for forest land and family forest land owners.
- Some said that forests are an important part of many family farms—and that keeping these forests intact and healthy, with a balance of farm and forest land, should be a priority of the farm bill.
- Many stated that forest land owners have benefited least from distribution of farm program benefits while forest lands provide more environmental benefits enjoyed by the general public than any other land use. Forestry programs should be delivered by the Forest Service, rather than NRCS or other agriculture-focused agencies.
- A few commenters said that monitoring and evaluation should be incorporated into program implementation.
- Some requested that the farm bill prioritize conservation funding to key forested areas and increase funding for programs that benefit biological diversity. Do not use a first-come, first-served approach. A few suggested that prioritization should happen at a State, regional, or local level.
- A few suggested that a landscape approach be used with forest land assistance programs.
- A few desired integration/coordination among existing, overlapping assistance programs.
- Some would like the farm bill to provide support to help farmers and landowners invest in agroforestry (combining agriculture and forestry technologies to create more productive, profitable, healthy, and sustainable land-use systems).
- Some supported development and protection of nontimber forest products such as medicinal herbs, mushrooms, and pine straw.
- A few requested expanding cost-share eligibility for key farm bill programs that are now only available for forest land that is incidental to traditional-agriculture lands.
- Many said that more than 1 percent of the farm bill funding should go to family forest issues, while a few stated that the farm bill must include a Forestry Title that should at least double current program funds and ensure that these programs receive adequate attention.
- Some supported introducing timber and fiber production to young people.
- A few recommended promoting certified wood products and providing cost-share incentives to participate in sustainable forest certification programs.
- Many stated that there is a need for increased incentives and tax credits for management of land to control invasive species and favor native species.
- The cooperation between and contributions from the Forest Service (FS), Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES), and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) were noted several times.

Forest Stewardship Program

- Many stated that the technical assistance provided to family forest owners from FSP is important to the future conservation and management of our Nation's forests.
- Many recommended that FSP should be revitalized and funded at a higher level.

- A few indicated that over 10 million family forest owners require educational, technical, and financial assistance to achieve and maintain healthy functioning forests. The farm bill should continue to fund programs that provide these services to family forest owners.
- Some noted that State forestry agencies are the lead in working with private forest landowners and municipalities to maintain our forest lands—and they require funding through programs like FSP to maintain their presence.

Forest Land Enhancement Program

- Many stated that FLEP is the only cost-share program currently targeted to assist family forest owners. All others were developed to assist farmers and ranchers; Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Water Quality Incentives Program (WQIP) do not work well for forest landowners.
- Many stated that FLEP should be reauthorized in the 2007 farm bill and should be funded through the Forest Service.
- Many suggested that the farm bill needs to include viable cost-share incentives for private forest land management to generate societal benefits through a full suite of ecosystem services.
- Many said that past farm bills have not adequately recognized the importance of family forest owners to national resource management and conservation objectives.
- There is a general indication that many private forest owners cannot afford to manage their land without cost-share assistance.
- A few suggested that FLEP can address wildland fire and insect and disease occurrence in the Nation's forests, and can be tailored to States' needs.
- Some indicated that with adequate funding, FLEP is good for the environment and the economy and allows landowners to improve their timber, but when it is underfunded, the program is a failure and will lead to increased development pressure.
- A few requested that FLEP funds not be diverted to other uses such as fire.

Forest Legacy Program and Loss of Forest Land

- Many stated that private forest land owners face increasing development pressures (some explicitly cited the Forest Service "Forests on the Edge" publication) and a global forest products industry, making the management of forests difficult as a long-term stewardship commitment. The 2007 farm bill should address these problems with programs and tax incentives through the USDA Forest Service.
- Many commented that FLP is an effective tool to help States conserve private forests; it has been instrumental in addressing development pressures on family-owned forests.
- Many requested an increase in program funding to better address the demand for long-term easement programs on working lands such as FLP.
- Some felt that the farm bill should fund conservation programs like FLP and the proposed Suburban and Community Forestry and Open Space Program to help communities and other qualified nongovernmental organizations acquire and manage community and municipal forest lands to meet public needs.
- Some suggested that FLP might be useful in the creation of markets for ecosystem services as it could provide long-term assurance of protection of enrolled lands to those investing.

- A few stated that FLP could be adapted to address a variety of land conservation needs, such as protection of smaller parcels of private forest land around rapidly developing urban centers or protection of larger parcels of private forest in more remote settings.
- A few suggested that FLP be authorized at \$300 million to cover existing demand.

Urban and Community Forestry Program

- General support was expressed for technical assistance for urban forests. The U&CF Program deserves continued/enhanced investment; it is essential to many local programs and funding should be available to smaller communities.
- General support was expressed for community forests as an important component of urban areas. Urban tree cover improves air and water quality, reduces heating and cooling costs, provides better quality of life, and promotes greater public interest and commitment to natural resource stewardship. Urban tree cover needs to be maintained and expanded with sustained Federal funding. A higher quality of life in urban areas will decrease development pressure.
- Some stated that U&CF is one of the Forest Service's best programs because it reaches the grassroots, has a dedicated research component, and leverages substantial non-federal investment through a match.
- Some stated that State forest agencies require continued funding through the U&CF Program.
- Some requested more research on issues pertaining to urban forests, including successfully raising trees in urban areas and economic, environmental, and public health benefits of urban forests.

Economic Development

- Many expressed support for community-based forestry, which includes crops for floral, gourmet, and medical markets.
- General support was given for continuation and expansion of Economic Action Programs as a means of providing assistance to forest-dependent rural communities to help them become self-sufficient.
- Many felt that forestry is a critical component of many rural community economies and the farm bill should support retention and development of local forest-based business, small-scale sawmills in particular, so that forest products can be produced locally and efficiently and the land base can be restored.
- A few suggested considering a forest industry capacity building program within the farm bill, using grants and tax incentives to stimulate mill retrofits and new manufacturing capacity for both sawlogs and small-diameter products.
- Some recommended that the 2007 farm bill should authorize continued support and funding for the USDA Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory and the Technology Marketing Unit.
- A few stated that the farm bill should support forestry cooperatives to assist communities with market development, production, and distribution.

National Forest System

- Some felt that the USDA Forest Service should be making better, more practical use of our national forests.
- A few thought that the Forest Service should recognize that communities around national forest lands depend upon a steady and viable level of timber harvesting.

Markets for Ecosystem Services

- Many commenters noted that important public benefits, or ecosystem services, including wildlife habitat, water quality, recreation, open space, and carbon sequestration, are secured through the management of private forest lands. The farm bill should quantify the value of these environmental services.
- Many stated that landowners are not able to provide ecosystem services (or restore their land) without assistance. They should be compensated for ecosystem services through financial incentives and/or tax incentives that offset the opportunity costs of forgoing development.
- Some recommended that the farm bill shift from commodity-based subsidies to stewardship-based incentives and payments for the provision of environmental services.
- Some supported creation of a market-based approach to conservation of family forests, allowing public and private investment.
- A few said that farm policy should set standards for carbon sequestration.

Detailed Suggestions

- Private forest lands should be monitored to protect our environment and to prevent poor harvesting practices that abound in our rural areas.
- The 2007 farm bill should provide for a more equitable distribution of funds to benefit limited-resource ranchers, farmers, and family forest owners.
- Use upcoming farm bill reauthorization to help conserve threatened forests and farmlands in the New York-New Jersey Highlands and to assist private landowners with stewardship of these lands.
- The Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and State Foresters need to coordinate and work together to address private forest land management needs and issues.
- Research and extension across natural resource disciplines needs increased cooperation and partnership among the USDA research entities, universities and colleges, and other public and private sources.
- Develop tiered incentives for forest landowners, so that the level of assistance increases with an increased level of restoration and sustainable management.
- Support retention and enhancement of the Reforestation Nurseries and Genetic Resources program.
- Support retention and enhancement of the Conservation Education program.
- A program similar to stewardship contracting, but focused on private lands, would be beneficial.
- Country-of-origin labels should be implemented as intended in the 2002 farm bill and should be expanded to include forest products.
- The 2007 farm bill should support the collaborative efforts of Federal, State, and private partners established to protect and enhance the high-quality native rainforest communities in Hawaii.
- The 2007 farm bill should have a forest landowner cost-share program available that is also available for counties and local governments.

- The 2007 farm bill should include funding for management in the longleaf pine habitat area, including prescribed fire.
- The greatest unintended consequence of all forest subsidy policies and programs is sending the wrong message that intentional forest management is not worth investing in unless the Government helps to pay for it.
- The 2007 farm bill should allow forest landowners to participate unilaterally in existing and developing carbon programs and be competitive in the world market. All forest lands should adhere to standards of certification such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 14001, the Forest Stewardship Council, and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.
- Allow the tree farmer to cut his or her wood without restrictions but encourage the replanting and reforestation of the land.
- Fund research for forest products to replace oil and other imports.
- The farm bill should encourage working forests under sustainable management. “Marketing of forestry is not in step with the reality of environmental protection and resource production.”
- The farm bill should address both the cost-share and incentive needs of those already practicing forest management as well as the educational and technical assistance needs of those not currently managing their forest land.
- Forest land is 25 percent of the land use and it should receive 25 percent of the farm bill funding.
- Develop workforce training and certification programs that focus on restoration and meet the needs of private forest lands.
- Require that forest workers be paid prevailing wages by anyone receiving farm bill funds.
- Support retention and enhancement of Cooperative Lands Forest Health Protection.
- Assistance should be given to develop business plans (up to \$5,000) and then to help implement the plans. In turn, landowners should sell the development rights for a 10-year period, or permanently, at the discretion of the landowner.
- Achieve greater conservation on private lands through the Conservation Title, not the Forestry Title.
- Funding for forestry research has historically been left out of past farm bills.

Forest Stewardship Program

- Improve incentives for adaptive management of forest lands to promote natural processes and native ecosystems.
- The FSP should place more emphasis on the private marketplace and investment in fiber crop and value-added product processing.
- Many forest landowners need technical assistance more than they need financial assistance.
- Continue to support the Spatial Analysis Project of FSP.

Forest Land Enhancement Program

- Direct the USDA Forest Service to expand enrollment efforts in FLEP to more accurately reflect need, priority, and geographical distribution.
- Allow FLEP to provide cost-share for the legal, survey, and assessment costs of making donations or bargain sales of land or conservation easements for land protection.

Forest Legacy Program and Loss of Forest Land

- Conservation bonds are a form of low-interest loan that could help to reduce the cost of capital for communities that want to acquire forest lands. Legislation authorizing the use of such bonds has been proposed in Congress as well as at the State level.
- Complete a study to explore conservation and environmental issues related to the sale, fragmentation, and conversion of private forests, particularly industrial forest lands.

Urban and Community Forestry Program

- U&CF should be funded at a total of \$62 million by 2010, with specific breakdowns identified by the commenter for four focus areas: technical and financial assistance to communities; catastrophic events; urban forest health inventory; and Urban Tree Canopy Enhancement focus projects. Funding should be increased for research and development on urban forests to \$24 million per year by 2015.
- Increase funding for U&CF. “In Roanoke, 1 acre of steep land with tree cover removes 41 pounds of ozone from the air per year and it would cost \$781 each year to handle the storm water runoff if that acre of forest was destroyed.”
- The Forest Service, working with the universities, has made significant contributions to urban and community forestry.
- Research urban forestry impacts on air and water quality, and model grants to community forestry programs on the CSREES-Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program to unite multiple resources and include the talent of consulting foresters.

Economic Development

- The USDA Forest Service and the Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center should work together on timber issues; they have had a history of performance in that area.
- Make permanent the Interior appropriations language “Funds appropriated to the Forest Service shall be available for interactions with and providing technical assistance to rural communities for sustainable rural development purposes.”
- The farm bill should support tribes in their efforts to produce timber.
- The Fuels for Schools projects are a good example of a successful program that utilizes renewable resources.
- Support should be provided to nonprofit organizations to work on sustainable forestry and forest-based community economic development.
- Discretionary funds should be provided at the State level for economic and marketing programs, instead of earmarks.
- Farm bill discussions to promote the retention and sustainable management of forests should consider policies that enhance market opportunities, expand access to foreign and domestic markets, and explore innovations for developing marketplace potential for a wide range of multiple-use purposes.

National Forest System

- Government lands should be sold to reduce the national debt.

- The Forest Service should be mandated to reclaim at least 50 percent of every burn over 100 acres.
- “One of the best and most cost-effective tools that the Forest Service has in its arsenal in meeting the vegetation management challenges it faces is the permitted livestock grazing program. The collaborative and cooperative approach is being pioneered in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest through the Martin Basin rangeland project Environmental Impact Statement. Support this positive and collaborative approach to the administration of livestock grazing on National Forest System lands.”
- The EQIP pilot project on the Tonto National Forest should be expanded.
- National forests require active and, in some cases, aggressive management to keep them healthy; adaptive grazing management is one important aspect of this management.

Markets for Ecosystem Services

- The U.S. Government, not the landowner, should get credit for increased carbon sequestration resulting from its programs.
- Entering into the Kyoto Agreement and similar carbon sequestration markets would allow landowners to obtain carbon credits in existing markets by planting and managing trees.
- Amend the Federal tax code to provide an income tax credit to “eligible landowners, certified by the U.S. Forest Service as managing their lands to the highest stewardship sustainable standards.”
- Development of markets for ecosystem services should address landscape-level management across ownership boundaries.