

# The USDA Farm Bill:

WHAT IS IN IT FOR WOODLAND OWNERS?





## Why is the 2008 Farm Bill important to me?

As the owner of forested property or woodlands, you may qualify for landowner assistance under the 2008 Farm Bill program. If the future plans or goals for your property include

- Conserving soil and water resources
- Establishing wildlife habitat
- Sustaining your woodlands
- Implementing your forest management plan
- Restoring wetlands

Then the Farm Bill may support your plans.

This Farm Bill has opportunities for those interested in technical and financial assistance for applying conservation activities in their woodlands.

## What are the benefits for woodland owners like me?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers a variety of financial incentives to woodland owners who are engaged in conservation activities. Some programs offer annual payments for a conservation use, others offer one-time up-front payments for long-term easements conservation, and most include government funds to share the cost of implementing your forest management plan.

Curbing water erosion	Conserving soil and water resources	Establishing wildlife habitat	Managing forest lands	Implementing your forest management plan	Restoring wetlands	Creating a Forest Management Plan
CRP EQIP CSP	CRP EQIP CSP	WHIP CRP WRP EQIP CSP	WHIP CRP EQIP Forest Legacy Program	WHIP EQIP	CRP WRP EQIP	Forest Stewardship Program EQIP

*For specific program information, see pages 4-7.*

## What do I need to do? To qualify for assistance:

### Develop your forest management plan

A forest management plan is a document that you develop and write with a professional forester. The plan outlines the values and goals you have for your property and how you will manage the woodlands for long-term sustainability. Examples include wildlife, recreation, aesthetics, timber, watershed protection, carbon, or any other value you deem important.



### ***Why is a forest management plan important?***

A forest management plan, if developed by a professional forester and put into practice, can ensure the long-term sustainability of the multiple benefits that are important to you. It is also a requirement before accessing financial assistance with some Farm Bill programs.

### ***How do I develop a forest management plan?***

To develop your plan, you will need to work with a professional forester – contact your state forester for planning assistance opportunities. Contact information for your state forester can be found at <[www.stateforesters.org](http://www.stateforesters.org)>.

### ***What are the different types of management plans?***

- **Forest Stewardship Plan** – developed under the Forest Stewardship Program. It may meet planning requirements for Farm Bill programs. For more information on the Forest Stewardship Program, visit <[www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/](http://www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/)>
- **Other forestry plans** – need approval by the state forester and the state conservationist:
  - **An American Tree Farm System® plan.** For more information, visit <[www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org)>
  - **A Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Forest Management Plan.** For more information, visit <[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)>



### ***What should my forest management plan include?***

To be eligible for NRCS cost-share programs, you will need to ensure that your current plan includes specific information on forest management, conservation practices, and an updated map that clearly indicates the locations of proposed cost-share practices. Work with your forester and local NRCS office to ensure your plan has all the necessary information.

## How do I apply?

The application process can be daunting if you are not familiar with the steps. Before you can complete a program application, you will need to sign up with the USDA. Here is an introduction to the basics steps:

1. **Locate your nearest USDA Service Center by visiting <<http://offices.usda.gov>>.** Your local USDA Service Center can answer questions and provide the necessary forms and applications.
2. **Get your information together in advance.** To ensure the application process goes smoothly, gather your information before going to your local service center. Contact your local USDA Service Center if you have any questions. You will need:
  - a. *Deed for your property*
  - b. *Forest management plan*
  - c. *Form CCC-926 Average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Statement.* You will need to complete this form for the previous three years of tax returns.
3. **Register at your USDA Service Center.** Your local service center employee will assist you in registering. You will need:
  - a. *Name, address, and property information*
  - b. *Completed AGI form:* This self-report form is used to determine if you meet the AGI limitation for program participation.
  - c. *Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Determination form*
4. **Complete your program application.** Once you have completed registration, the next step is to complete a program application for the Farm Bill programs that are of interest to you.

- **Landowners who do not reside on their property.** Registration must occur at the local USDA Service Center near your woodlands. Call in advance and make an appointment. Make sure you have all necessary documentation beforehand. You may authorize a power of attorney to a relative, partner, or consulting forester who lives near your property who would register on your behalf.
- **Woodlands owned by a limited liability corporation/LLC, partnership, or other legal entity.** USDA will need information from all partners. A designated lead can sign and register for the entire organization. Please contact your USDA Service Center for details.

## Which programs apply to me?

The programs that apply to you depend on what type of conservation activities you are interested in doing on your property. With all of the different acronyms used, the Farm Bill programs can start to seem like an alphabet soup.

### Farm Bill Programs Chart

	Farm Bill Program	Description	Types of Activities	Agency	States Eligible
Working Lands Conservation	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Financial and technical assistance incentives to promote agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality as compatible goals; optimize environmental benefits; and help farmers and ranchers meet environmental regulations	State Conservationists will rank and select applications (activities) based on national, state, and local criteria.	NRCS	All
	Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)	Assistance to develop and improve wildlife habitat, including threatened and endangered species; can focus program on special areas, habitats, or species	State Conservationist identifies priority resource concerns with advice from the State Technical Committee	NRCS	All
	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Encourages producers to undertake additional conservation activities or improve, maintain, and manage existing conservation activities	State Conservationist identified priority resource concerns with advice of State Technical Committee.	NRCS	All
Wood Energy	Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)	Assistance for establishment, production, harvest, and storage and transport of renewable biomass	Establishment, production, harvest, storage, or transport of renewable biomass	FSA	Requires establishment of BCAP project areas by the Secretary of Agriculture
Emergency Programs	Emergency Forest Restoration Program	Available to NIPF owners to restore landscapes damaged by fire, drought, flood, and other natural disasters; funding subject to appropriation	Payments for emergency measures to NIPF landowners to restore landscapes damaged by fire, drought, flood, and other natural disasters	FSA	All, where there is a natural disaster that has damaged NIPF land, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture

You can work with the USDA or your state forestry agency to find the right program for you. If you have not applied before or have been overwhelmed by the process or the array of programs available, then this information should help.

Forestland Eligible	Length of Agreement	Easements	Payments	Forest Landowner's Obligations
Nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) land	More than 1 year, less than 10 years	N/A	Up to 75% of the cost of the conservation practice or 100% of estimated income forgone by producer to implement particular conservation practices; no more than \$300,000 over 6 years	Develop and implement a forest management plan; assist with cost and establishment of conservation practices
NIPF and tribal land; government land not eligible	More than 1 year, less than 10 years	N/A	Up to 75% of wildlife habitat development practices	Develop and implement a forest management plan that includes the development of wildlife habitat; assist with installation costs
Meet "stewardship threshold" for at least one resource concern and address one additional priority resource concern; up to 10% of enrolled acreage may be in NIPF land	5 years	N/A	May not exceed \$200,000 for all contracts entered into during a 5-year period	Develop and implement a forest management plan that includes installing or maintaining conservation practices
NIPF land eligible with a forest stewardship plan; producer contracts with USDA	15 years	N/A	Up to 75% of the cost of site preparation and tree planting	Compliance with highly erodible land and wetlands requirements; forest stewardship plan; site preparation or tree planting
NIPF land; tree cover must have been on the land immediately before the natural disaster	N/A	N/A	Up to 75% of the cost of the emergency measures	25% cost share; carry out emergency measures

## Farm Bill Programs Chart (cont.)

	Farm Bill Program	Description	Types of Activities	Agency	States Eligible
Conservation Easement/Reserve	Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	Restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems for threatened/endangered species, biodiversity, or carbon sequestration; State Conservationist submits proposals to the Chief of NRCS for funding selection	Conservation easements, protection, enhancement, maintenance, and management of habitat and forest ecosystem functions and values	NRCS	AK, GA, IN, ME, MN, MS, OK, OR
	Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)	Opportunity to receive financial incentives to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture	Restore, improve, and protect wetland functions and values	NRCS	All
	Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)	Helps farmers and ranchers preserve their agricultural land; provide matching funds to state, tribal, and local governments and NGOs to purchase conservation easements	State Conservationist identifies priority resource concerns with advice of State Technical Committee	NRCS	All
	Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	Helps agricultural producers safeguard environmentally sensitive land; CRP is for conversion of marginal cropland to long-term conservation cover, either grass or trees	Includes, but not limited to, tree planting, permanent wildlife habitat establishment, and wetland restoration; management activities can include tree thinning	FSA	All
	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	Special initiative within CRP to address agricultural resource problems; targeting priority environmental needs and providing additional incentives for conservation; voluntary land retirement program that helps agricultural producers protect environmentally sensitive land, decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water	Filter strips and forested buffers; develop and restore wetlands	FSA	All, though since it is a partnership between tribal, federal, state governments, and sometimes private groups and they identify an agriculture-related issue, this can determine the specific geographic areas and practices
	Forest Legacy Program	Grants to states to protect important forest areas	A nationally competitive federal program in partnership with states to protect environmentally sensitive forest lands; entirely volunteer; designed to encourage protection of privately owned forestlands	USFS	All

Forestland Eligible	Length of Agreement	Easements	Payments	Forest Landowner's Obligations
All private forestlands that have an HFRP restoration plan	Permanent or 30-year easements; 30-year contracts (tribal lands only); restoration cost-share agreements	Permanent or 30 years	10-year contracts: 50% of the average costs; 30-year easement/contracts: may receive 75% of market value of enrolled land; permanent easements: may receive up to 100% of market value of enrolled land	For easements, the owner shall cooperate in the restoration, protection, enhancement, maintenance, and management of the land in accordance with the easement or contract
Includes floodplain forest; must have owned land for more than 7 years; government land is not eligible; wetland must be restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits	Permanent or 30-year easements.; 30-year contracts (tribal lands only); restoration cost share agreements	Permanent or 30 years	Permanent: up to 100% of the cost of acquisition and restoration; 30-year easements: up to 75% of the cost of acquisition and restoration; up to 75% of restoration and contract payment equal to 30-year easement acquisition cost; restoration cost-share agreement: up to 75% of restoration cost	Develop and implement a wetland restoration plan that includes the restoration and maintenance of wetlands that will include management of forestland; if necessary, assist with the cost of restoration
NIPF land eligible if it contributes to economic viability of agricultural operation or serves as buffer to protect an agricultural operation from development; forest management plan required if forestland is 10+ acres or 10% of area; easement areas must be less than 2/3 forestland	Permanent	Permanent	NRCS may provide up to 50% of the fair market value of the conservation easement	Develop and implement a forest management plan and comply with terms of the easement
Eligible land is agricultural land meeting cropland definitions, including having been cropped 4 out of the 6 years previous to the passage of the Farm Bill	10-15 years	N/A	50% cost share	Develop and implement a forest management plan for the conversion of cropland to a less-intensive use; also assist with the cost, establishment, and maintenance of conservation practices
Mainly riparian buffers and wetland restoration	10-15 years	N/A	Federal annual rental rate plus cost share of up to 50% of the eligible cost to install the practice	Develop and implement a forest management plan for the conversion of cropland to a less-intensive use; assist with the cost, establishment, and maintenance of conservation practices
Private forestland within a state-defined Forest Legacy Area	Permanent	Yes, fee simple purchases also allowed	Federal government may fund up to 75% of project costs, with at least 25% coming from private, state, or local sources	To qualify, landowners prepare a multiple resource management plan as part of the conservation easement acquisition



## Where can I learn more?

### **Your local USDA Service Center**

**<<http://offices.usda.gov>>**

- Technical assistance
- Program applications, due dates, and eligible practices
- Development, and if approved, implementation of conservation program application

### **The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) <[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)>**

- Technical assistance
- Program applications, due dates, and eligible practices

- Development, and if approved, implementation of conservation program application
- Specific programs: EQIP, CSP, FRPP, HFRP, WHIP, WRP

### **The Farm Service Agency (FSA) <[www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)>**

- Program applications, due dates, eligible practices, and more
- Development, and if approved, implementation of conservation program application
- Specific programs: CRP, BCAP, and Emergency Forest Restoration Program

### **U.S. Forest Service <[www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/](http://www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/)>**

- Technical assistance
- Forest Stewardship Program
- Forest Legacy Program

### **Your state forestry agencies**

- Technical assistance
- Forest management plan development through the Forest Stewardship Program
- Other opportunities for woodland owners cost-share program
- Find your state forester and your state forestry agency, visit <[www.stateforesters.org/about\\_nasf](http://www.stateforesters.org/about_nasf)> or <[www.treefarmsystem.org/stateforesters](http://www.treefarmsystem.org/stateforesters)>

Certified Technical Service Providers: individuals and organizations that USDA certifies as able to provide additional technical service for Farm Bill programs. Contact your local USDA Service Center for more information on the technical assistance available to woodland owners.

## How did these opportunities come about?

More than 30 organizations partnered to create the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition to advocate for private forest landowners. The Forest in the Farm Bill Coalition, along with hundreds of family forest owners like you, worked together to send a clear and concise message to Congress, “Family forest owners are in many ways like your typical family farmer, they too need assistance and incentives to protect the nation’s water and air, conserve our soils, provide wildlife habitat, and produce renewable energy feedstocks.” Congress listened, making many changes to the conservation, forestry, and energy programs to allow family forest owners to participate in these opportunities.



American Forest & Paper Association  
American Forest Foundation  
American Forest Resource Council  
American Forests  
American Tree Farm System  
Association of Consulting Foresters  
Chesapeake Bay Commission  
Eastern Forest Partnership  
Environment and Energy Study Institute  
Environmental Defense  
Hardwood Federation  
Maryland Forests Association  
National Association of State Foresters  
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges  
National Association of University Forest Resources Programs  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
National Wildlife Federation  
National Woodland Owners Association  
Northern Forest Alliance  
Northwest Woodland Owners Council  
Pacific Forest Trust  
Pinchot Institute for Conservation  
Quail Unlimited  
Ruffed Grouse Society  
Siuslaw Institute, Inc.  
Society of American Foresters  
Southeast Quail Study Group  
Southern Environmental Law Center  
Sustainable Northwest  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Wilderness Society  
Trust for Public Land  
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy  
Wildlife Mississippi



American Forest Foundation



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