



Community Forest Program

Summary of Program Specifics

Overview: Through the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (Community Forest Program or CFP), the Forest Service is authorized to provide financial assistance grants to local governments, Indian tribes, and qualified nonprofit organizations (including land trusts) to establish community forests that provide defined benefits.

Authorization: CFP is authorized by Section 8003 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-234); which amends the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978. The law authorized the Forest Service to establish the CFP.

Implementation:

- Implementing regulations were published in the Federal Register on October 20th 2011.
- First Request for Applications issued in February 2012.
- CFP was funded \$500,000 in FY10, \$1 million in FY11, \$2 million in FY12 and \$1.892 in FY 13.
- FY10, 11 and 12 monies were combined to fund ten projects funded in FY 12.
- Five projects funded in FY 13.
- President's request for FY14 is \$4 million.

Eligible Entities:

- Local governments- Any municipal government, county government, or other local government with jurisdiction over local land use decisions.
- Indian Tribes- Federally recognized Indian tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.
- Qualified nonprofit organizations- Consistent with Section 170(h) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code and operates in accordance with one or more of the conservation purposes.

Eligible Land:

- Private forest lands that are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses, are not lands held in trust by the United States, and can provide defined community benefits and allow public access
- Forest lands: Lands that are at least five acres in size, suitable to sustain natural vegetation, and at least 75 percent forested. Forests are determined by both the presence of trees and the absence of nonforest uses.

Program Specifics:

- Requires a 50% non-federal match.
- Requires public access, which may be limited to protect resources or public health and safety.
- Requires involving the community when establishing the community forest, developing the community forest plan, and deciding on long-term management needs.
- Focuses on community benefit, including economic benefits resulting from sustainable forest management, recreational benefits secured with public access, natural resource protection, forest-based experiential learning, and replicable models of effective forest stewardship.
- CFP complements the Forest Service's existing land acquisition program, Forest Legacy Program, with each program engaging unique partners and utilizing different tools for land protection.



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- CFP complements the Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program, which encourages and promotes the creation of healthier, more livable communities.

Project Selection Process

- The Forest Service issues a national request for applications (RFA) for grants.
- Applications for local government and nonprofit entities are required to go to the State Forester, while Tribal applications go to the equivalent Tribal Governments official.
- Applicants will notify the Forest Service when submitting an application to the State Forester or equivalent officials of the Indian tribe.
- State Foresters and equivalent official of the Indian tribe will forward all applications to the Forest Service, and, as time and resources allow will:
 1. Provide a review of each application to help the Forest Service determine that the applicant is an eligible entity, that the land is eligible, and whether the project contributes to a landscape conservation initiative.
 2. Confirm that the proposed project has not been submitted for funding consideration under the Forest Legacy Program
 3. Describe what technical assistance they may render in support of implementing the proposed community forest project and an estimate of needed financial assistance.

Project Evaluation Criteria

1. Type and extent of community benefits provided.
2. Extent and nature of community engagement in the establishment and long-term management.
3. Amount of cost share leveraged.
4. Extent to which the community forest contributes to a landscape conservation initiative.
5. Extent of due diligence completed on the project.
6. Likelihood that, unprotected, the property would be converted to nonforest uses.
7. Costs to the Federal government.

Project Requirements

1. Complete an appraisal following the Federal appraisal standards (aka Yellowbook).
2. Prior to closing, notify the landowner in writing of the appraised value and that the sale is voluntary.
3. Ensure that title is not subject to encumbrances that would be contrary to program purposes.
4. Purchase all surface and subsurface mineral rights, whenever possible or, determine that the likelihood of extraction is so remote as to be negligible.
5. Record a Notice of Grant Requirement.
6. Complete the final community forest plan within 120 days.
7. Provide appropriate public access.
8. Submit every 5 years a self-certifying statement that the property has not been sold or converted.
9. Be subject to a spot check conducted to verify that Community Forest has not been sold or converted.

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<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/cfp.shtml>