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Forest Service Assistance Programs

Updated June 7, 2018

Congressional Research Service
https://crsreports.congress.gov
R45219

CRS REPORT
Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has numerous programs to support the management of state and private forests. These programs are under the jurisdiction of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees and are often examined in the periodic legislation to reauthorize agricultural programs, commonly known as farm bills. For example, the 2014 farm bill repealed, reauthorized, or modified many of these programs. The House version of the 2018 farm bill, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (H.R. 2), contains a forestry title (Title VIII) that would reauthorize, modify, and establish new forestry assistance programs.

Forestry-specific assistance programs (in contrast to agriculture conservation programs that include forestry activities) are primarily administered by the USDA Forest Service (FS), with permanent authorization of funding as needed. Some programs have been combined through the appropriations process or for administration purposes. These programs generally provide technical and educational assistance such as information, advice, and aid on specific projects. Other programs provide financial assistance, usually through grants (with or without matching contributions from recipients) or cost-sharing (typically through state agencies, with varying levels of contributions from recipients). Many programs provide both technical and financial assistance.

Some of the assistance programs provide support for planning and implementing forestry and related land management practices (e.g., Forest Stewardship, Urban and Community Forestry). Other programs provide assistance for forest restoration projects that involve more than one jurisdiction and address regional or national priorities (e.g., Landscape Scale Restoration). Other programs provide support for protecting forestlands from wildfires, insects and diseases, and from converting forestland to nonforest uses (e.g., Community Forest and Open Space Conservation, Forest Legacy). The Forest Health program provides support for protecting both federal and nonfederal forests from continuing threats, although most of the funding goes to federal forests. Programs also exist to enhance state and rural wildfire management capabilities (e.g., State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance) and to promote the use of forest products (e.g., Wood Innovation). International Forestry is often included as a forestry assistance program, because it provides technical forestry help and because it is funded through the FS appropriations account for forestry assistance programs (State and Private Forestry).

Most of the programs provide assistance to state partner agencies. The state agencies can use the aid on state forestlands or to assist local governments or private landowners. How the states use the resources is largely at the discretion of the states, within the authorization of each program and consistent with the national priorities for state assistance established by Congress in the 2008 farm bill.

Overall funding for the Forest Service's forestry assistance programs in FY2018 was $355.1 million, an 8% increase over FY2017 funding of $328.9 million. The Trump Administration requested $197.4 million in funding for FY2019. Overall funding has declined over the past 15 years, however, in both real and constant dollars. Over that time, funding for forestry assistance programs has ranged between 5% and 9% of the total annual Forest Service discretionary appropriation.

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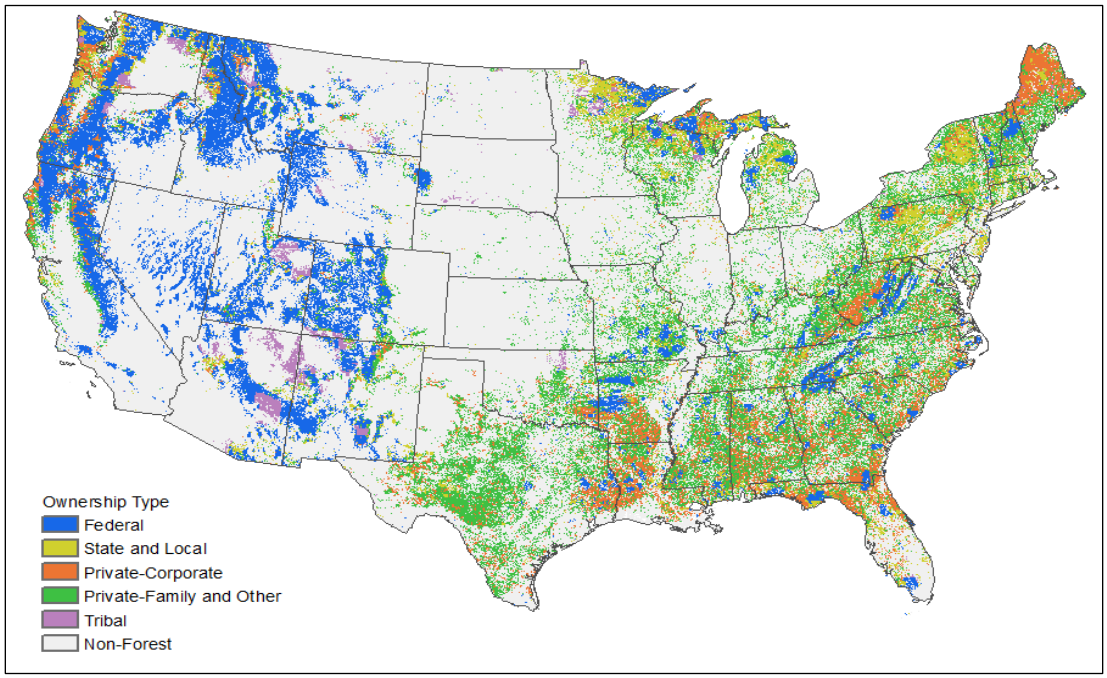
There are approximately 766 million acres of forestlands in the United States, most of which are privately owned (445 million acres, or 58%) by individuals, families, Native American tribes, corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and other groups (see **Figure 1**).[1] The federal government has numerous programs to support forest management on those private forests and also public—state and local—forests. These programs support a variety of forest management and protection goals, including activities related to planning for and responding to wildfires, as well as supporting the development of new uses and markets for wood products. These programs are primarily administered by the Forest Service (FS) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and often with the assistance of state partner agencies.

This report describes current forestry assistance programs mostly funded and administered through the State and Private Forestry (SPF) branch of the FS.[2] Following a brief background and overview, this report presents information on the purposes of the programs, types of activities funded, eligibility requirements, authorized program duration and funding level, and requested and enacted program appropriations.

Figure 1. Forest Landownership in the Conterminous United States



Source: CRS. Data from Jaketon H. Hewes, Brett J. Butler, and Greg C. Liknes, *Forest Ownership in the Conterminous United States circa 2014 - geospatial data set*, Forest Service Research Data Archive, 2017, https://doi.og/10.2737/RDS-2017-0007.

[1] Sonja N. Oswalt, W. Brad Smith, and Patrick D. Miles, et al., *Forest Resources of the United States, 2012*, USDA Forest Service, GTR-WO-91, October 2014.

[2] Assistance for forestry practices or to promote wood and forest products is also available through other federal agencies. For more information, see CRS Report R40763, *Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs*, CRS In Focus IF10288, *Overview of Bioenergy Programs in the 2014 Farm Bill*, and CRS Report R41296, *Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP): Status and Issues*.

Background

Providing federal assistance for nonfederal forest landowners has been a component of USDA's programs for more than a century. Initial forestry assistance efforts began with the creation of the USDA Division of Forestry in 1881 (to complement forestry research, which began in 1876). Forestry assistance and research programs grew slowly, and in 1901 the division was upgraded to the USDA Bureau of Forestry. In 1905, the bureau merged with the Interior Department's Division of Forestry (which administered the forest reserves, later renamed national forests) and became the USDA Forest Service (FS). The FS has three primary mission areas: managing the National Forest System, conducting forestry research, and providing forestry assistance.

The Senate and House Agriculture Committees have jurisdiction over forestry in general, forestry assistance, and forestry research programs. Congress authorized specific forestry assistance programs in the Clarke-McNary Act of 1924.[3] This law guided those programs for more than half a century, until it was revised in the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (CFAA).[4] The House and Senate Agriculture Committees often examine these programs in the periodic omnibus legislation to reauthorize agriculture and food policy programs, commonly known as farm bills.[5]

- The 2008 farm bill established national funding priorities (conserve working forests, protect and restore forests, and enhance public benefits from private forests); enacted a standardized process for states to assess forest resource conditions and strategize about funding needs; and established, modified, and repealed specific assistance programs, among other provisions.[6]
- The 2014 farm bill repealed several programs, mostly programs whose authorizations had expired or programs that had never received appropriations.[7] The 2014 farm bill also reauthorized and modified the requirement for statewide assessments and the Office of International Forestry.[8]

Many of the agricultural programs—including two forestry programs—authorized by the 2014 farm bill are scheduled to expire at the end of FY2018 unless Congress provides for an extension or reauthorizes them.[9]

Overview

Most forestry assistance programs are administered by the FS, but the programs are typically implemented by state partners (e.g., state forestry or natural resource agencies). In these cases, the FS provides technical and financial aid to the states, which then provides information and

[3] P.L. 68-270; 43 Stat. 653.

[4] P.L. 95-313; 16 U.S.C. 2101 et seq.

[5] For more information on the farm bill, generally, see CRS Report R44913, *Farm Bill Primer Series: A Guide to Omnibus Legislation on Agriculture and Food Programs*, and CRS In Focus IF10187, *Farm Bill Primer: What Is the Farm Bill?*

[6] The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, P.L. 110-246.

[7] See CRS Report R43431, *Forestry Provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79)*, for more information.

[8] The Agricultural Act of 2014, P.L. 113-79. For more information on the 2014 farm bill, see CRS Report R43076, *The 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79): Summary and Side-by-Side*. For more information on the forestry provisions in the 2014 farm bill, see CRS Report R43431, *Forestry Provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79)*.

[9] For more information, see CRS Report R44784, *Previewing a 2018 Farm Bill*, and CRS Report R45197, *The House Agriculture Committee's 2018 Farm Bill (H.R. 2): A Side-by-Side Comparison with Current Law*.

assistance to private landowners or specified eligible entities.[10] However, the 2008 farm bill expanded the definition of authorized conservation practices for agricultural conservation programs generally to include forestry practices, and thus direct federal financial assistance to private forest landowners may be feasible through the conservation programs.[11] See **Table 1** for a brief summary of the FS programs addressed in this report; more information on each program is available in the "Forest Service Assistance Programs" section of this report.

To be eligible to receive funds for most of the programs, each state must prepare a State Forest Action Plan, consisting of

- a statewide *assessment* of forest resource conditions, including the conditions and trends of forest resources in the state; threats to forest lands and resources, consistent with national priorities; any areas or regions of the state that are a priority; and any multistate areas that are a regional priority; and
- a long-term statewide forest resource *strategy*, including strategies for addressing the threats to forest resources identified in the assessment; and a description of the resources necessary for the state forester to address the statewide strategy.[12]

The State Forest Action Plans are to be reviewed every 5 years and revised every 10 years.[13] All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 8 territories are covered by a State Forest Action Plan. Each state must also publish an annual funding report and have a State Forest Stewardship Coordination (FSC) Committee.[14] Chaired by the state forester and composed of federal, state, and local representatives (including representatives from conservation, industry, recreation, and other organizations), the FSC Committee makes recommendations on statewide priorities on specific programs as well as on the development and maintenance of the State Forest Action Plan.

National Funding Priorities and Objectives

In 2007, the FS initiated an effort to "redesign" its State and Private Forestry (SPF) programs to improve program delivery and effectiveness. As a result of this process, FS—in conjunction with state partners—identified three nationwide themes and objectives to provide a framework for prioritizing and allocating funds and resources. Congress codified these national priorities in the 2008 farm bill (16 U.S.C. §2101(c)).

Conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses. Objectives include identifying and conserving high-priority forest ecosystems and landscapes and promoting active and sustainable forest management strategies.

Protect forests from threats. Objectives include identifying, managing, and reducing forest and ecosystem threats (e.g., uncharacteristic wildfire, insects and disease, and invasive species) and conducting postdisturbance forest restoration activities.

Enhance public benefits from trees and forests. Objectives include promoting the ecological, economic, and community benefits derived from trees and forests, including protecting water quality and quantity; conserving wildlife and fish habitat; providing open space; and providing outdoor recreation opportunities.

[10] States may request to receive one consolidated payment for all the authorized cooperative forestry assistance programs (16 U.S.C. 2108).

[11] For information on USDA conservation programs, see CRS Report R40763, *Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs*.

[12] These requirements were added by the 2008 farm bill (P.L. 110-246, 16 U.S.C. §2101a). To see each state's Forest Action Plan, see National Association of State Foresters (NASF), https://stateforesters.org/forest-action-plans/about-action-plans. For all of the programs in this report, the term *state forester* may also include any other equivalent state official.

[13] For more information, see NASF, https://stateforesters.org/about-action-plans/revisions.

[14] As authorized in the 1990 farm bill (P.L. 101-624 §1222), 16 U.S.C. §2113(b).

Table 1. Forest Service Assistance Programs

Program	Authorization: *U.S. Code* Citation or Authorizing Statute	Authorization: Duration	Authorization: Funding Level	Type of Aid	Eligible Recipients	Primary Activities
Collaborative Forest Restoration	P.L. 106-393	Permanent	$5 million	Financial	Collaborative groups in New Mexico	Forest restoration projects
Community Forest and Open Space Conservation	16 U.S.C. §2103d	Permanent	As needed	Financial	Local governments, tribes, nonprofit organizations	Purchase forestlands threatened with conversion to other uses
Cooperative Fire Protection • State Fire Assistance • Volunteer Fire Assistance	16 U.S.C. §2106	Permanent	As needed	Technical and financial	States	Systems for fire prevention, control, and use; fire equipment and training; etc.
Forest Health Protection[a] • Federal Lands • Cooperative Lands	16 U.S.C. §2104	Permanent	As needed	Technical and financial	States	Survey, prevent, suppress, or control insects and diseases
Forest Legacy	16 U.S.C. §2103c	Permanent	As needed	Financial	States	Purchase forestlands or easements for forests threatened with conversion to other uses
Forest Stewardship • Assistance to States • Rural Forestry Assistance	16 U.S.C. §2103a 16 U.S.C. §2107 16 U.S.C. §2102	Permanent	As needed	Technical and financial	States	Planning; forest and watershed restoration; reforestation; wildlife habitat improvement; and others
International Forestry	16 U.S.C. §4501 16 U.S.C. §§6704	Permanent FY2018	As needed	Technical and financial	Other countries	Planning and management; fire, insect, and disease prevention and control; rehabilitation
Landscape Scale Restoration	16 U.S.C. §2109a	Permanent	5% SPF appropriation	Financial	States	Forest restoration projects
Urban & Community Forestry	16 U.S.C. §2105	Permanent	As needed	Technical and financial	State, tribal, local governments, private organizations	Planning; education; tree planting and maintenance
Wood Innovation • Rural Revitalization Technologies • Biomass Commercial Utilization Grants • Hardwood technology transfer	 7 U.S.C. §6601 16 U.S.C. §6531 16 U.S.C. §1650	 FY2018 FY2008 Permanent	 $5 million $5 million As needed	Technical and financial	State, tribal, and local governments, other organizations	Education; technology development and transfer; hazardous fuels reduction; market development

Source: CRS.

a. The Forest Health Protection program is also referred to as Forest Health Management.

Types of Assistance

The forestry programs may provide technical assistance, financial assistance, or both. Technical assistance includes providing guidance documents, skills training, data, or otherwise sharing information, expertise, and advice broadly or on specific projects. Technical assistance may also include the development and transfer of technological innovations. Financial assistance is typically delivered through formula or competitive grants (with or without contributions from recipients) or cost-sharing (with varying levels of matching contributions from recipients). As an example, the Forest Health Protection program provides both types of assistance: financial assistance in the form of funding for FS to perform surveys and to control insects or diseases on state or private lands (with the consent and cooperation of the landowner) and technical assistance in the form of data, expertise, and guidance for addressing specific insect and disease infestations.

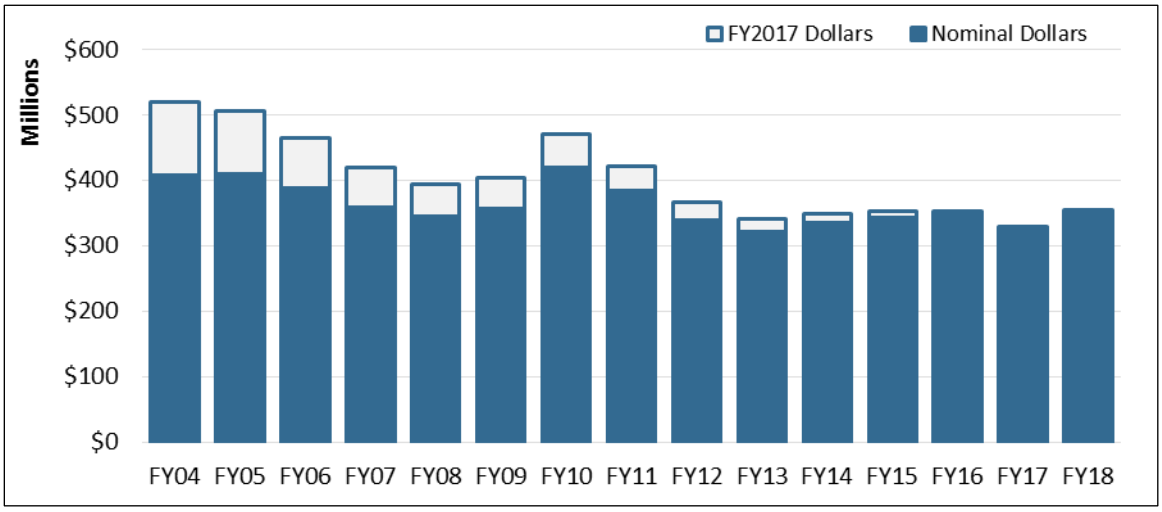
Funding

Most—but not all—FS assistance programs are available nationally and have permanently authorized funding and without specified funding levels. No forestry assistance programs have mandatory spending; all require funding through the annual discretionary appropriations process, and are typically funded in the annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations acts. Most of the assistance programs are funded through the FS's State and Private Forestry (SPF) account, although some programs are funded or allocated from other accounts or programs. Some programs have been combined for funding purposes or for administrative reasons.

Funding for forestry assistance programs has declined over the past 15 years, in both real and constant dollars (see **Figure 2**). The average annual appropriation over that time, from FY2004 through FY2018, was $362.7 million, with a peak of $420.5 million in FY2010 and a low of $328.9 million in FY2017. Funding increased in FY2018 to $355.1 million, but remains below the 15-year average. When adjusting for inflation, however, overall funding in FY2018 was 32% below FY2004 levels and 25% below FY2010 levels. In total, these forestry assistance programs made up 7% of the FS's total annual discretionary appropriation on average across those 15 years.[15] The Administration requested $197.4 million in FY2019 and proposed to eliminate funding for seven of the programs and decreased funding for the others (see **Table 2** for FY2014-FY2018 appropriations and the FY2019 budget request; more information on each program is available in the "Forest Service Assistance Programs" section of this report).

[15] For more information on Forest Service appropriations, see CRS In Focus IF10898, *Forest Service: FY2018 Appropriations and FY2019 Request*, or CRS Report R43417, *Forest Service Appropriations: Five-Year Data and Trends and FY2017 Budget Request*.

Figure 2. Funding for FS Assistance Programs, FY2004-FY2018



Source: CRS. Data compiled from the tables prepared by the House Committee on Appropriations and annual agency budget documents.

Notes: Figures reflect total annual discretionary appropriations for forestry assistance programs, including appropriations provided through the FS's State and Private Forestry, Wildland Fire Management, and National Forest System accounts. Figures adjusted to FY2017 dollars using the annual GDP deflator price index reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Income and Products Accounts Tables, Table 1.1.9.

Table 2. FS Assistance Programs Appropriations, FY2014-FY2018 Enacted and FY2019 Requested

(nominal dollars, in millions)

Program	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019 Request
Collaborative Forest Restoration Program[a]	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	—[b]
Community Forest & Open Space Conservation	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	4.0	0
Cooperative Fire Assistance	91.0	91.0	91.0	93.0	96.0	77.0
State Fire Assistance[c]	*78.0*	*78.0*	*78.0*	*78.0*	*80.0*	*65.9*
Volunteer Fire Assistance[d]	*13.0*	*13.0*	*13.0*	*15.0*	*16.0*	*11.0*
Forest Health Protection[e]	104.6	104.6	99.6	94.5	96.5	85.9
Federal Lands	*58.9*	*58.9*	*58.9*	*55.5*	*55.5*	*51.5*
Cooperative Lands	*45.7*	*45.7*	*40.7*	*39.0*	*41.0*	*34.4*
Forest Legacy	51.0	53.0	62.3	50.3[f]	61.1[g]	0
Forest Stewardship[h]	22.4	23.0	23.0	20.0	20.5	19.5
International Forestry	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	9.0	0
Landscape Scale Restoration	—[i]	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	0
Urban and Community Forestry	28.0	28.0	28.0	28.0	28.5	0
Wood Innovation Program[a]	10.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0

Program	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019 Request
Total	**335.0**	**342.7**	**347.0**	**328.9**	**355.1**	**197.4**
Percentage of Total FS Appropriation	**6%**	**7%**	**5%**	**6%**	**5%**	**4%**

Source: CRS. Data compiled from the tables prepared by the House Committee on Appropriations, communications with the Forest Service Legislative Affairs staff, and the Forest Service FY2019 Budget Justification, available from https://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/usfs-fy19-budget-justification.pdf.

Notes: The programs are funded through the FS's State and Private Forestry account, unless otherwise specified. Funding data for the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP) was not available. Columns may not add due to rounding.

a. This program is funded through allocations from the Hazardous Fuels program in the FS's National Forest System account. Prior to FY2018, the Hazardous Fuels program was funded in the FS's Wildland Fire Management Account. Funding from the Hazardous Fuels program is also allocated to the CFRP.

b. The FY2019 budget request does not include a specific request for funding the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program. The FS requested $390.0 in total for the Hazardous Fuels program in FY2019, below the FY2018 enacted level of $430.0 million.

c. The Administration's FY2019 budget request proposed changing the name of this program to *National Fire Capacity*.

d. The Administration's FY2019 budget request proposed changing the name of this program to *Rural Fire Capacity*.

e. The Forest Health Protection program is also referred to as Forest Health Management.

f. This total reflects a rescission of $12.0 million.

g. This total reflects a rescission of $5.9 million.

h. The Administration's FY2019 budget request proposed changing the name of this program to *Working Forest Lands*.

i. The Landscape Scale Restoration program was first funded in FY2015.

Unfunded and Repealed Programs

Some FS programs have been repealed by previous farm bills, or have gone unfunded by Congress for several years. **Table 3** lists these programs and the most recent congressional action. Some activities authorized by these unfunded or repealed programs may continue to be performed or provided by FS through other authorizations or funding sources.

Table 3. Unfunded and Repealed Forest Service Assistance Programs

Program Name	Action-Year	Description
Community Fire Protection	Unfunded since established in 2002 farm bill[a]	A program to assist communities in reducing threats from wildfire (16 U.S.C. §2106c). Some activities are performed through the Cooperative Fire Protection programs.
Community Wood Energy Program	Unfunded since established in 2008 farm bill	A program to provide financial assistance for state and local governments to acquire wood energy systems for public buildings (7 U.S.C. §8112).[b] Authorization for up to $5 million in annual appropriations expires in FY2018.
Economic Action Programs (EAP)	Unfunded since FY2010	EAP consisted of several programs to provide technical assistance to promote economic development of forest and wood products and in forestry-dependent communities. Some programs have been repealed, others have been unfunded since at least FY2010, and others have continued under different names or as part of a different program.

Program Name	Action-Year	Description
• EAP National Forest Dependent Rural Communities	Unfunded since FY2010	A program to provide financial and technical assistance to rural communities (7 U.S.C. §§6611-6617).
• EAP Cooperative National Forest Products Marketing Program	Repealed in 2014 farm bill	A forest marketing program repealed by the 2014 farm bill. Funding authorization had expired in FY1991. Some activities are performed through the Wood Innovations Program.
• EAP Modern Timber Bridge Initiative	Unfunded since FY2004	An EAP program to promote wood products for use in transportation applications. Also known as the Wood in Transportation program.
Emergency Reforestation Assistance	Unfunded since FY1993	A program to provide seedlings or reimburse the reforestation costs for commercial tree stands damaged from wildfire, damaging weather, or insect or disease infestation (16 U.S.C. §2106a).
Forest Land Enhancement Program	Repealed in 2014 farm bill	A program to provide cost-share assistance to forest landowners for specified forest management activities. Repealed in the 2014 farm bill.
Pest and Disease Revolving Loan Fund	Unfunded since established in 2008 farm bill	A program to provide financial loans to local governments to purchase authorized equipment to perform specified forest management activities (16 U.S.C. §2104a).
Watershed Forestry Assistance	Repealed in 2014 farm bill	A program to promote forestry best management practices and water quality technical assistance for nonindustrial private forest land and tribal forest land.

Source: CRS.

Notes:

a. The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, P.L. 107-171 §8003.

b. For more information on this program specifically and energy assistance programs generally, see CRS Report R43416, *Energy Provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79): Status and Funding*.

Forest Service Assistance Programs

This report focuses on forestry assistance programs administered by FS. Other agencies, inside and outside of USDA, also administer programs that may have forest conservation or protection benefits. For example, the USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA) administers several programs, including the Emergency Forest Restoration program, which provides assistance to nonindustrial forest landowners to recover or restore forests following catastrophic events.[16] The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the Healthy Forest Reserve program, which funds agreements, contracts, or easements to assist landowners with forest restoration or

[16] Funding for this program is often provided as-needed in supplemental or emergency appropriations acts, and it was last funded in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, FY2016 (P.L. 114-113). For more information, see CRS Report R42854, *Emergency Assistance for Agricultural Land Rehabilitation*. For more information on other FSA assistance programs, see CRS In Focus IF10288, *Overview of Bioenergy Programs in the 2014 Farm Bill*, and CRS Report R41296, *Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP): Status and Issues*.

enhancement projects.[17] The Department of the Interior administers a community assistance program to support collaborative community planning and projects to mitigate wildfire risk.[18]

The tabular presentation that follows provides basic information covering each of the FS forestry and fire assistance programs, including

- brief program description;
- program activities;
- eligibility requirements;
- the FS appropriations account budget line item that provides funding for the program;
- authorized funding levels and any funding restrictions;
- FY2018 funding level in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-141);
- FY2019 funding level requested by the Administration;
- statutory authority, recent amendments, and *U.S. Code* reference;
- expiration date of program authority unless permanently authorized; and
- program's website link.

Information for the following tables is drawn largely from agency budget documents and presentations, explanatory notes, and websites. Further information about these programs may be found on the FS SPF website at http://www.fs.fed.us/spf and on the "cooperative forestry" page.

[17] For information on this programs, see CRS Report R40763, *Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs*.

[18] For more information, see the Department of the Interior, Office of Wildland Fire Community Assistance website at https://www.doi.gov/wildlandfire/community-assistance.

Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP)

Program purpose and description	CFRP (also known as the Community Forest Restoration Program) was established to encourage collaborative partnerships among community groups in New Mexico to improve forest ecosystem functioning and watershed conditions and reduce the threats of catastrophic wildfires or insect and disease outbreaks.
Activities	Provides cost-share grants of up to $360,000 for forest restoration projects to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires, reestablish fire regimes, preserve old and large trees, replant deforested areas, and increase small-diameter tree utilization on public and tribal lands in New Mexico.
Eligibility requirements	Collaborative groups consisting of a diverse and balanced group of stakeholders, government, and tribal representatives are eligible to apply for funding. Projects must be on public (federal, state, county, or municipal) or tribal lands in New Mexico.
Appropriations account	Funds are allocated from National Forest System (NFS) Hazardous Fuels account. Prior to FY2018, Hazardous Fuels was funded in the Wildland Fire Management (WFM) account.
Funding authority	Up to $5 million annually.
FY2018 funding	$3.0 million
FY2019 Administration request	The FY2019 budget request does not include a specific request for CFRP
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title VI of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-393).
Authorization expires	Permanent authority.
Program website	https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r3/workingtogether/grants/

Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (CFP)

Program purpose and description	CFP provides financial assistance to establish community forests for community benefits by acquiring and protecting private forest lands.
Activities	Provides up to 50% cost-share grants to purchase the fee simple title of eligible private forest lands. Funding may not be used to purchase conservation easements. The lands to be purchased must be privately owned, at least five acres, 75% forested, and threatened by conversion to nonforest uses, such as residential development, mineral extraction, industrial use, or commercial uses other than timber production. The purchased lands must be managed for public economic, recreational, environmental, or education benefits to communities and provide public access.
Eligibility requirements	Local governments, Indian tribes, or qualified nongovernment organizations are eligible to apply for funding. Proposals are submitted to state foresters (or equivalent tribal officials) and then forwarded to FS. Proposal ranking and project selection criteria are outlined in 36 C.F.R. 230.5.
FS appropriations account	SPF Cooperative Forestry
Funding authority	No specified authorization level, and FS may allocate 10% of the appropriated funds to state foresters for program administration.
FY2018 funding	$4.0 million
FY2019 Administration request	$0; Administration proposes to eliminate program
Statutory authority	Authorized in the 2008 farm bill (§8003), 16 U.S.C. §2103d
Authorization expires	Permanent authority
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program

Cooperative Fire Protection: State Fire Assistance (SFA)

Program purpose and description	The Cooperative Fire Protection (FP; technically, Rural Fire Prevention and Control and also known as Rural Fire Protection) program provides assistance to encourage effective, coordinated, and uniform responses to wildfire, with an emphasis on improving preparedness (such as fire planning and initial attack capabilities) for state and local government fire agencies to respond to wildfires on nonfederal lands, and mitigation (such as hazardous fuels reduction and wildfire prevention activities) for state and local government agencies to reduce the risk of or damage from catastrophic wildfires. SFA is one component of FP and provides assistance for preparedness activities to promote firefighter safety, capability, and capacity, and community mitigation activities to reduce wildfire risk to communities and promote community fire planning.
Activities	Provides financial assistance, technical training, and equipment to state foresters to promote fire protection on nonfederal lands. States may use funds for preparedness activities (e.g., development of fire readiness plans, facility maintenance); firefighting activities, training, and support (e.g., dispatch centers); to purchase, maintain, or rehabilitate equipment; and for program administration. Assistance is also provided for community mitigation programs, including conducting hazardous fuels reduction projects on nonfederal lands and supporting the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans and/or Firewise certification. Manages and provides financial assistance to states to acquire fire-related equipment through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP) and educational programs (e.g., the Smokey Bear public service campaign).
Eligibility requirements	Funding is provided to state foresters or equivalent state officials. A minimum level of funding is allocated annually to each state to ensure a base fire management capacity (at least $100,000), and additional funds are allocated based on acres of nonfederal land, population, and required level of fire protection.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Cooperative Fire Assistance
Funding authority	No specified authorization level for most activities, and up to $35 million annually is reserved for SFA cost-share assistance
FY2018 funding	$80.0 million [$96.0 million total for FP]
FY2019 Administration request	$65.9 million; Administration proposes to change the program's name to National Fire Capacity [$77.0 million total for FP]
Statutory authority	Authorized in CFAA and amended by 1990 farm bill (Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990; P.L. 101-624, §§1215, 1220), 16 U.S.C. §2106
Authorization expires	Permanent authority
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/fire/partners/

Cooperative Fire Protection: Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA)

Program purpose and description	VFA is another component of FP (see above for more information) and was formerly known as the Rural Community Fire Protection program. VFA supports state efforts to provide organization, training, and equipment for rural fire departments to protect and respond to wildfires on nonfederal lands in rural areas.
Activities	Provides up to 50% cost share grants and technical assistance to states to provide education, planning, training, and equipment for rural fire departments to improve fire protection capabilities and effectiveness.
Eligibility requirements	Funding is provided to state foresters or equivalent state officials. States may use the funds to support any organized, not-for-profit, fire protection organization that provides services to a community with a population less than 10,000 or whose firefighting personnel is at least 80% volunteer.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Cooperative Fire Assistance
Funding authority	No specified authorization level for most activities, and up to $35 million annually is reserved for VFA cost-share assistance
FY2018 funding	$16.0 million [$96.0 million total for FP]
FY2019 Administration request	$11.0 million; Administration proposes to change the program's name to Rural Fire Capacity [$77.0 million total for FP]
Statutory authority	Specific authorization for VFA was initially provided as the Rural Community Fire Protection program in the 1973 farm bill (Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973; P.L. 93-86 §27) but was eliminated and replaced by an unrelated program in the 1996 farm bill (Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act; P.L. 104-127 §§741(a)(4) and (5)). Since then, Congress has continued to provide appropriations to the program under the broader FP program, as authorized in CFAA and amended by the 1990 farm bill (§§1215, 1220), 16 U.S.C. §2106.
Authorization expires	Permanent authority
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/fire/partners/vfa/

Forest Health Protection (FHP): Federal Lands and Cooperative Lands

Program purpose and description	FHP (also known as Forest Health Management) was created to protect trees, forests, and wood products from negative impacts due to natural and man-made causes nationwide. The program is implemented through two subprograms: Federal Lands and Cooperative Lands.
Activities	The Federal Lands subprogram surveys and monitors forest health conditions on federal lands, performs pest suppression efforts on federal lands (including lands managed by other federal agencies and tribal governments), and coordinates an integrated pest management program and specific prevention and suppression programs for major insects, diseases, and invasive species across all landownership types. The Cooperative Lands subprogram provides technical and financial assistance to states to conduct forest surveys to detect, monitor, and assess forest conditions across nonfederal lands. Financial assistance may also be provided through 50% cost-share grants for projects or programs to treat specific forest health problems.
Eligibility requirements	FS can act on its own lands and other lands with consent, cooperation, and participation (including financial contributions). Other federal lands submit suppression-related project requests to the FS for approval. Financial assistance is provided to states to support a base level of forest health expertise at the appropriate state partner agencies; these funds are allocated based on nonfederal forest acreage, among other factors.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Forest Health Management. Prior to FY2014, Congress also provided appropriations for both subprograms through the Wildland Fire Management (WFM) account.
Funding authority	No specified authorization level
FY2018 funding	$96.5 million ($55.5 million Federal Lands; $41.0 million Cooperative Lands)
FY2019 Administration request	$85.9 million ($51.5 million Federal Lands; $34.4 million Cooperative Lands)
Statutory authority	Authorized in the CFAA and amended by the 1990 farm bill (§1218), 16 U.S.C. §2104
Authorization expires	Permanent authority
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/

Forest Legacy Program (FLP)

Program purpose and description	FLP provides financial assistance to protect environmentally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses.
Activities	Provides up to 75% cost-share grants to states to acquire eligible private forest lands, either through fee-simple purchases or conservations easements. Landowners with FLP conservation easements on their property must manage the land consistent with the purposes for which the land was enrolled in the program, and may include timber production, hiking, hunting, and fishing. Financial assistance may also be provided to the states to administer the program.
Eligibility requirements	Funding typically goes to state forestry agencies or equivalent to purchase and hold the title or easement. Nonprofit organizations may hold the title or conservation easement for donated tracts. A federal or state-recognized tribe may participate in partnership with the state. States must have and maintain State Forest Action Plans, which must include a Forest Legacy Assessment and recommendations for Forest Legacy Areas. The assessment evaluates current and future forest uses statewide and defines the criteria the state will use to identify, recommend, and prioritize threatened environmentally important forest areas as Forest Legacy Areas. The FS designates Forest Legacy Areas within the state upon approval of the state's Forest Action Plan. The acquired lands must be within a designated Forest Legacy Area, at least 75% forestland, and be acquired from a willing seller. Project selection is a three-step competitive process. First, the State FSC Committee evaluates proposals and makes recommendations to the state; the state then submits recommendations to the FS for final selection.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Cooperative Forestry
Funding authority	No specified authorization level. Since FY2004, funding has been provided through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. For more information, see CRS Report R44121, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Appropriations for "Other Purposes."*
FY2018 funding	$61.1 million ($67.0 million was appropriated and $5.9 million was rescinded)
FY2019 Administration request	$0; Administration proposes to eliminate program.
Statutory authority	Authorized in the 1990 farm bill (§1217), 16 U.S.C. §2103c
Authorization expires	Permanent authority
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/private-land/forest-legacy/program

Forest Stewardship Program (FSP)

Program purpose and description	FSP was established to encourage long-term stewardship on nonindustrial private forest lands (NIPFs). NIPFs are defined as "lands with existing tree cover, or suitable for growing trees, and owned by any private individual, group, association, corporation, tribe, or other private legal entity" (16 U.S.C. §2103a(c)). Forest stewardship is not defined directly or indirectly by reference in the statute. Since FY1993, two other programs have been funded and administered as part of FSP: • Rural Forestry Assistance (RFA), which supports reforestation and genetic resources activities, such as nursery management and seed development and storage; and • Financial, Technical, and Related Assistance to States (Assistance to States), which fosters coordination between federal and state organizations and technological development and implementation for forest data collection and use.
Activities	Provides technical and financial assistance to states, which provides information and assistance to private landowners. Technical assistance includes activities such as landowner outreach and education, development of forest stewardship management plans, and fostering stewardship planning across multiple owners for a landscape-level approach.
Eligibility requirements	State forestry agencies or equivalent. States must have and maintain State Forest Action Plans. States may use funds to provide financial assistance to private landowners.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Cooperative Forestry
Funding authority	No specified authorization level
FY2018 funding	$20.5 million
FY2019 Administration request	$17.9 million; Administration proposes to rename as Working Forest Lands
Statutory authority	FSP was authorized in the CFAA and amended by the 1990 farm bill (§1215), 16 U.S.C. §2103a. • RFA was authorized in the CFAA and amended in the 1990 farm bill (§1213), 16 U.S.C. §2102. • Assistance to States was authorized in the CFAA and amended in the 1990 farm bill (§1215), 16 U.S.C. §2107.
Authorization expires	Permanent authority
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/forest-stewardship/program

International Forestry Programs

Program purpose and description	International forestry programs support forestry and natural resource activities outside of the United States to promote conservation and sustainable forest management and global environmental stability.
Activities	Provides financial and technical assistance to countries to promote development and transfer of technical, research, managerial, education, and administrative skills to forest managers. Includes research and assistance through the Institute of Tropical Forestry and Institute for Pacific Islands Forestry.
Eligibility requirements	Assistance is available only to countries that receive USAID support.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF International Forestry
Funding authority	No specified authorization level
FY2018 funding	$9.0 million
FY2019 Administration request	$0; Administration proposes to eliminate program.
Statutory authority	International forestry activities are authorized in two places: • November 5, 1990: the International Forestry Cooperation Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-513 Title VI), as amended by the Hawaii Tropical Forest Recovery Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-574, passed on October 29, 1992), 16 U.S.C. §4501 et seq. • November 28, 1990: the 1990 farm bill (§2405) authorized the Office of International Forestry and the Institute of Tropical Forestry and specified that the FS should request funding for International forestry through a specific budget line item, 7 U.S.C. §§6701 et seq.
Authorization expires	The authorization for the Office of International Forestry (7 U.S.C. §6704) to receive funding expires at the end of FY2018. Other International Forestry programs are permanently authorized.
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/about-agency/international-programs

Landscape Scale Restoration Program (LSR)

Program purpose and description	LSR was established to support innovative regional or national forest restoration projects that address priority landscapes. Projects should cross boundaries on any combination of landownerships and should be consistent with the national themes of conserving working forests, protecting forests from threats, and enhancing public benefits from trees and forests. Projects may include activities authorized by other programs including FSP, FHP-Cooperative Lands, UCF, and SFA; but not VFA, FLP, or FHP-Federal Lands.
Activities	Provides 50% cost-share grants for cross-boundary projects that address regionally or nationally significant issues or landscapes as identified in State Forest Action Plans. Funding is provided through a two-step competitive process: proposals are first evaluated at a regional level and then at the national level. Each region (Northeast, South, and West) develops regionally specific evaluation criteria that must be consistent with national standards.
Eligibility requirements	State forestry agencies and the District of Columbia are eligible to receive funding, and may pass the funding to partners. Tribes, nonprofit organizations, local governments, and land grant colleges or universities are eligible to sponsor or participate as a partner in a project. A state may submit only five proposals per cycle, and may receive a maximum of 15% of the total funding available in any given cycle.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Landscape Scale Restoration
Funding authority	Authorizes the Secretary to allocate a portion of the forestry assistance funds for LSR
FY2018 funding	$14.0 million
FY2019 Administration request	$0; Administration proposes to eliminate program.
Statutory authority	Authorized in the 2008 farm bill (§8007), 16 U.S.C. §2109a
Authorization expires	Permanent authority.
Program website	https://www.fs.usda.gov/naspf/working-with-us/grants/landscape-scale-restoration-grants

Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program (UCF)

Program purpose and description	UCF was created to establish, manage, and protect trees, forests, green spaces, and related natural resources in and adjacent to cities and towns.
Activities	Provides financial, technical, and related assistance to conduct tree inventories; prepare management plans; plant and care for trees; disaster planning, mitigation, response, and recovery; support workforce development; and host community activities, such as youth summer camps. Also provides 50% cost-share grants to address strategic issues and opportunities as identified by the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC). The NUCFAC consists of 15 members as appointed by the Secretary.
Eligibility Requirements	No eligibility requirements specified in law. Therefore, states and territories, tribes, nongovernmental organizations, private nonprofit organizations, or individuals are eligible to apply for funding.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Cooperative Forestry
Funding authority	No specified authorization level
FY2018 funding	$28.5 million
FY2019 Administration request	$0; Administration proposes to eliminate program
Statutory authority	Authorized in CFAA and amended by 1990 farm bill (§§1215, 1219), 16 U.S.C. §2105
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf

Wood Innovation Program

Program purpose and description	Also known as the Biomass Utilization or Wood Utilization Assistance program, the Wood Innovation program consists of several authorities and programs to promote and market innovative uses of wood products, including stimulating or expanding wood energy technologies, uses, and markets, in an effort to remove hazardous fuels and other wood residues from National Forest System lands, reduce the costs of forest management on public and private forest lands, and to promote economic and environmental health of forest-dependent communities.
Activities	Provides cost-share grants for projects to expand or support markets for wood products and wood energy products and financial assistance for the establishment of statewide or multi-state wood energy teams or wood utilization teams. Also provides technical assistance and technological transfer regarding emerging forest management technologies and forest products production and utilization through the Wood Education and Resource Center (WERC) and Forest Products Laboratory.
Eligibility requirements	State, local, and tribal governments, communities, nongovernmental organizations, institutes of higher education, school districts, communities, and special purpose districts
FS appropriations account/BLI	Funds are allocated from National Forest System (NFS) Hazardous Fuels. Prior to FY2018, Hazardous Fuels was funded in the Wildland Fire Management (WFM) account.
Funding authority	Funding is authorized through different programs, including: • The Rural Revitalization Technologies (RRT) program is authorized to receive up to $5 million annually. • The Biomass Commercial Utilization Grants program was authorized to receive $5 million annually. • WERC has no specified authorization level.
FY2018 funding	$15.0 million
FY2019 Administration request	$15.0 million
Statutory authority	The program relies on different authorities, including: • RRT was established in the 1990 farm bill (§2371), 7 U.S.C. §6601. • The Biomass Commercial Utilization Grants program was established in Title II of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA; P.L. 108-148, §203), 16 U.S.C. §6531. • WERC was established as part of the Hardwood Technology Transfer and Research program in P.L. 105-277 and the FY2000 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 106-113), 16 U.S.C. §1650.
Authorization expires	RRT expires in FY2018; the HFRA authority expired in FY2008; WERC is permanently authorized
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/science-technology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovation

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