
PINCHOT INSTITUTE
FOR CONSERVATION

**FARM BILL 2002 FORUM:
REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF
FORESTRY OPPORTUNITIES**

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The Pinchot Institute also appreciates the contributions of the forum speakers and breakout session experts: **Lloyd Ritter**, Senate Committee on Agriculture; **Mark Rey**, Under Secretary for Natural Resources & Environment, USDA; **Larry Payne**, USDA Forest Service; **Jim Hubbard**, Colorado State Forest Service; **Hal Brockman**, USDA Forest Service; **Larry Biles**, USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; **Steve Yaddof**, USDA Forest Service; **Doug Williams**, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; **Robert Molleur**, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; **Mike Linsenbigler**, USDA Farm Service Agency; **Eric Norland**, USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; and **Anne Heissenbuttel**, National Association of State Foresters.

INTRODUCTION

In May of 2002, Congress passed the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, otherwise known as the 2002 Farm Bill. The legislation contains a number of provisions that create or modify forestry-related programs. These programs will provide needed technical, financial, and education assistance to non-industrial private forest landowners, and will help to ensure the sustainable management of our nations' forests. Various agencies within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in coordination with the states, are responsible for developing rules and implementation strategies for these programs.

The Pinchot Institute for Conservation hosted "Farm Bill 2002 Forum: Review and Discussion of Forestry Opportunities" on August 8, 2002 at the Washington Terrace Hotel in Washington, DC. The objectives of the forum were to highlight the forestry-related provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill and the potential agency strategies for implementing them, as well as to provide opportunities for public input to agencies.

Approximately 80 individuals participated in the forum, representing state and federal agencies, forest landowner associations, community organizations, environmental organizations, universities, and private forest landowners.

The first half of the forum consisted of presentations from federal and state agency representatives and Congress. These presentations highlighted several of the programs that were introduced through the Forestry Title of the Farm Bill, including the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP), the Sustainable Forestry Outreach Initiative (SFOI), and the Community and Private Lands Fire Assistance Program (CPLFA). Conservation Title programs that provide opportunities for the forestry community were also reviewed. Several USDA agencies have responsibility for administering these programs, including the Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Farm Service Agency. Speakers noted that strong cooperation is taking place between agencies as programs are developed. Furthermore, presenters pointed to the collaboration between the federal agencies and non-federal stakeholders, including the State Foresters, state committees, landowners, and others.

Following two lunchtime presentations by private forest landowners, the afternoon was devoted to breakout sessions on the Forestry and Conservation Titles' Farm Bill programs presented during the morning panels. These sessions offered an opportunity for participants to provide comments on the proposed implementation of the programs and to ask questions of federal and state representatives. The federal and state agencies have indicated that they will consider this input as they develop implementation strategies for these programs.

The following report provides a summary of the morning presentations and a compilation of the comments provided by participants in the afternoon breakout sessions. Appendices include the forum agenda, a participant list, and program fact sheets that were developed by the Pinchot Institute and distributed to participants at the forum.

SUMMARY OF SPEAKERS

PANEL 1: OVERVIEW OF NEW AND MODIFIED FORESTRY PROGRAMS IN THE FARM BILL

Lloyd Ritter, Majority Counsel, Senate Committee on Agriculture

Lloyd Ritter opened this panel by stating that forestry has come alive through the farm bill. He reminded the audience that five out of the ten titles incorporated elements of forestry. He also stated that he was pleased to see so many people in attendance, indicating a strong interest in the new farm bill.

Ritter told the audience that significant advances have been made over the 1996 Farm Bill, which did not even have a Forestry Title. He also expressed excitement over the fact that the 2002 Farm Bill contains the first cost-share forestry program ever given mandatory funding in a farm bill, a great section on public involvement, and significant progress related to wildlife and education.

Ritter stated that while some significant programs were cut from the Senate side, he is very pleased with the final results. He mentioned that the Senate Committee on Agriculture wanted to maintain the forest land base while creating new forests and new tree plantations. He thinks the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) is more advanced than its predecessors, the Forestry Incentives Program (FIP) and Stewardship Incentives Program (SIP). Ritter believes that there is a great deal of flexibility built into FLEP, but he wants to make sure its goals are accomplished.

Ritter also stressed the importance of public involvement and added that the USDA and the Department of Energy are working collaboratively to make breakthroughs in sustainable energy. He closed by voicing his desire to continue to work together with agencies and citizens towards the goal of sustainable forestry.

Mark Rey, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, USDA

Mark Rey opened by stating that it is a great time to be a conservationist. He remarked that the 2002 Farm Bill makes a commitment to working lands conservation that will fundamentally alter how working lands are handled, and moves well beyond the path of the 1996 Farm Bill. The mandatory nature of some farm bill funding through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) is an unprecedented event in federal forest policy.

Rey noted that the USDA is implementing farm bill programs in accordance with the legislative language. A strong conservation title was one the top five priorities in the President's Earth Day speech this year. Rey stated that the USDA's implementation efforts so far reflect the administration's awareness of working lands conservation, as well as a national commitment to land conservation. Also, the USDA has recently signed Memoranda of Agreement with both the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Interior

concerning the new farm bill. Rey also stated that ensuring confidentiality and integrating electronic options to make farm bill programs user-friendly are big priorities for the USDA.

In closing, Rey stated his commitment to better involving third parties as partners in implementing various programs in the Conservation Title, and applauded the successful collaboration between USDA agencies.

Larry Payne, Director of Cooperative Forestry, USDA Forest Service

Larry Payne opened by stating that the USDA Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) started preparing for the new farm bill over two years ago, when the agencies realized the need for a better landowner assistance program. The agencies wanted to synthesize the best parts of FIP and SIP into a new program. The National Association of Conservation Districts, National Association of State Foresters, and the National Association of Professional Forestry Schools and Colleges became key partners in this quest. Payne noted that he is extremely proud of the collaboration that took place in the forestry community around this new farm bill. He has seen nothing like it in his 32 years of experience, and applauds the USDA for their efforts in ensuring collaboration. Payne went on to state that the level of collaboration that he has witnessed is especially amazing considering the complexity of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Payne stated that two totally new programs, the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) and the Community and Private Land Fire Assistance Program, are very promising. Many state personnel provided input on FLEP, and NRCS was extremely helpful in sharing their hard work on this program. He added that sticking to an aggressive timeline for implementation of FLEP is the best option to keep people energized and on task. The goal is to get FLEP on the ground and running this fall.

Payne emphasized that extra effort is needed to encourage everyone to work together, but is well worth the end result. He noted that, as part of this collaborative spirit, a public involvement plan and a public consultation plan have been developed. He closed by outlining the many opportunities for input besides this forum, which include a more focused session with agency personnel, consultation workshops across the nation, and the formal Federal Register public comment process.

Jim Hubbard, Director, Colorado State Forest Service

Jim Hubbard opened by affirming his confidence in the ability of the State Foresters to work together on the implementation of farm bill programs. Over the last two years, there was some disagreement and considerable debate within this group, but the end results work to the benefit of all parties.

Hubbard stated that the State Foresters' main objective regarding the 2002 Farm Bill was to establish an incentive program with a cost-share component. States felt strongly that public benefits must be demonstrated. He stressed that FLEP is the next generation of FIP and SIP,

with a strong foundation for collaboration between agencies already in place and stakeholders ready to support it.

Hubbard also spoke about the Community and Private Lands Fire Assistance program (CPLFA), which was an attempt to define the community assistance portion of the National Fire Plan. The plan was developed as part of a 2002 appropriations package, but needed further definition. He believes that the farm bill supplies this definition. He also stated that the long-term success of the program relies on the community ties it supports and sustains.

Using Colorado as an example, Hubbard spoke about the situation wildfires create for communities. Communities are very interested in planning for protection from fire. He focused on the importance of securing enough funding, since CPLFA still needs to go through the appropriations process. Hubbard also stressed the importance of collaboration on a local level when dealing with fire protection planning.

Question and Answer Highlights from Panel 1

Panel members addressed the following points during the question and answer session following the first panel:

- Larry Payne addressed the problem of how to get away from the “first come, first served” approach and to ensure the greatest return on the ground for farm bill programs. He stated that before the interim rule will be developed, a cost-benefit analysis and a civil rights impact analysis must be done on a national scale. Then regional considerations are taken into account, including consulting with State Foresters. Payne said that all State Foresters will create priority plans with input from various stakeholders, and that allocation criteria are being developed by his agency, whereby they will look more closely at the specific elements that determine where the money should go to reap the maximum benefits. Jim Hubbard added that FLEP is a “next generation” program that will look at one landowner at a time, and produce enough public benefits to warrant the expenditure of federal money. Although “first come, first served” will still be an element of many programs, more focused objectives will have to be met.
- In response to a question about how the funding for FLEP will be divided up over time, Larry Payne answered that the Forest Service is considering a plan that would provide \$20 million in the first year, \$25 million in the second year, \$30 million in the third year, \$20 million in the fourth year, and \$5 million in the fifth year.
- Larry Payne addressed a question about how the NRCS planning toolkit will be used by the Forest Service to implement programs. He stated that a joint letter from NRCS and the Forest Service has a paragraph on each farm bill program, and encourages NRCS to consult with Forest Service and state committees, although forestry involvement in state committees varies from state to state. Jim Hubbard added that the experience of NRCS will be extremely helpful since it is more used to implementing the farm bill than the Forest Service, and that Conservation Districts will also be a big help. Hubbard also noted that the forestry community needs to persuade State Technical Committees to pay

more attention to forestry by demonstrating an ability to do the groundwork, a willingness to listen, and an eagerness to be involved in their processes. Mark Rey added that EQIP provides broader support for working forestlands and can be used to assist farmers with a range of regional issues coming down the pipeline, such as water quality, nutrient loads, and combined animal feedlot operations. He also stated that the forestry community needs to act quickly to take advantage of EQIP opportunities.

- Regarding the use of watersheds as a management tool or unit of measurement, Jim Hubbard stated that the risk to communities in the wildland-urban interface needs to be reduced, and that vegetative treatments do not stop at the subdivision boundary. He added that wildfires bring a real appreciation of watersheds, in that treatments need to be on the same kind of large scale. He also stated that fires will teach us lessons about protecting water quality and the need to return to a landscape context in managing for water quantity and quality.
- Lloyd Ritter addressed a question on how to secure FLEP funding in the future. He stated that congressional members want to see what's happening on a state and regional basis; they need data to be effective in reviewing the success of programs. He says that if the program is deemed successful, it can get more mandatory funding. He also added that Congress would be looking for public benefits on a landscape scale. Larry Payne added that an appropriate set of performance measures is needed to pass on to partners and to show Congress the value of the program.
- Mark Rey responded to a question related to the specifics of funding for the 2002 Farm Bill. He stated that it is neither an authorization bill nor an appropriations bill specifically, since some funding is designated as mandatory CCC funding, whereas some funding still needs to be appropriated. He stated that the CCC money is relatively well assured. Also, he clarified that money is prioritized within the bill, but how it is spent on the ground is subject to implementation.
- Mark Rey addressed a concern that funds for Forest Legacy and the Land and Water Conservation Fund have been frozen due to the need to divert funds to firefighting. He stated that levels of firefighting funds appropriated have been inadequate for the past 4 of 6 years. Congress has given the Departments of Agriculture and Interior the authority to use non-obligated funds for firefighting, which has already occurred. Rey went on to state that Congress would replenish funds in the next appropriations bill. The sum effect is that there will be delays in some programs, but he hopes that these delays will be temporary. Lloyd Ritter added that there is some real discussion in the Senate right now on the issue of replenishing the coffers to assure that programs continue. He stated that there could be appropriations bills on the floor in September 2002 to address this issue.

Federal agency representatives highlighted several forestry-related programs in the farm bill; more details were provided in the afternoon breakout sessions (see pages 16-28) and in fact sheets compiled by the Pinchot Institute for Conservation (see Appendix C).

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)

Hal Brockman, Program Manager, USDA Forest Service

Hal Brockman opened by stating that FLEP was created to replace and improve upon FIP and SIP and to provide more flexibility for landowners. He noted that the Forest Service is fortunate, in that the law is written so well that making a rule should be fairly simple.

Brockman continued by emphasizing the importance of state involvement. State Stewardship Committees, along with the State Forester, will determine how the program will run in each state. This includes the distribution of funds and the formation of the State Priority Plan. He stressed that the states have a tremendous responsibility in deciding how to use their FLEP funds.

Brockman also spoke about the composition of the State Stewardship Committees and of State Priority Plans. Some groups are required to be a part of the committee, but there is a whole list of groups that are also welcome. He anticipates that most states will use the plan they already have in hand for SIP to construct a State Priority Plan for FLEP. He closed by stressing the importance of balance between educational and technical assistance at a national and state level.

Sustainable Forestry Outreach Initiative (SFOI)

Larry Biles, National Program Leader – Forestry, USDA Cooperative State, Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES)

Larry Biles opened his presentation with a review of the Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) of 1978, which is an expanded and comprehensive extension program for forest and rangeland renewable resources. The Sustainable Forestry Outreach Initiative (SFOI) was created through the 2002 Farm Bill as an amendment to RREA. In regards to funding eligibility, only Land Grant Institution Extension Services are eligible for funds through RREA. The purpose of SFOI is “for educating landowners about the value and benefits of sustainable forestry, the importance of professional forestry advice in achieving sustainable forestry objectives, and the variety of public and private sector resources available to assist with planning and practicing sustainable forestry.”

Biles went on to state that a formal rule for SFOI would not be published, but that the farm bill language and input from this Forum and a follow-up meeting with the National Council on Private Forests would be summarized and transmitted to State Extension Directors and Administrators in the RREA FY 2003 allocation letters. Private landowners and other stakeholders can also provide input to partner universities via their advisory committee processes

Biles also spoke about the federal role in the administration of SFOI, which includes: solicitation of program guidance from stakeholder groups, allocation of fiscal resources in accordance with legislation, establishment of performance measures, and the synthesis and reporting of state performance information.

Biles closed by stating that the biggest challenge for CSREES and partner universities will be to blend SFOI into the overall rubric of RREA.

Community and Private Lands Fire Assistance Program (CPFLA)

Steve Yaddof, Resource Conservation and Community Development Specialist, USDA Forest Service

Steve Yaddof began by reviewing the origin of the Community and Private Lands Fire Assistance program and its relationship to the National Fire Plan. In the 2002 Farm Bill, CPFLA was established as a new section within the Cooperative Forestry Act. He stated that this program is not slated for direct appropriations until 2004. As such, this program is not facing the time crunch of other farm bill programs. The Forest Service does hope to have this program active even sooner if FY 2003 appropriations allow the use of all State and Private Forestry authority, as in past appropriations.

Yaddof went on to state that healthy forests support healthy communities. He also stressed the importance of collaboration at all levels to implement this program, and asked participants to remember that no action is authorized on non-federal lands without the consent of the landowner.

Yaddof noted that public request for assistance through the National Fire Plan Community Assistance Key Point has focused on the request for assistance with business marketing, community planning, and utilization of hazardous fuels for the creation of local jobs. He closed by assuring participants that public comment will be carefully considered in the development of policies or regulations regarding the expanded role of State Foresters.

Conservation Title Programs

Doug Williams, National Forester, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Doug Williams began by stating that he is very pleased to see something he has worked on for three years come to fruition through the 2002 Farm Bill. He feels that there is a lot in the Conservation Title for forestry, and that agroforestry is a much more recognized component of this farm bill.

Williams outlined the basic components of four individual programs: the Wetlands Reserve Program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Agricultural Management Assistance, and the Conservation Security Program (for more information on these programs, refer to Appendix C).

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Robert Molleur, Natural Resource Manager, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Robert Molleur opened his talk by stating that EQIP has an enormous amount of flexibility built into it, and that adding non-industrial private forestland (NIPF) owners to the eligible land definition has been a great accomplishment. He added that the program purpose has changed to emphasize the compatible goals of agricultural production and environmental protection. The language of the bill states that EQIP is to assist producers in complying with local, state, and national regulatory requirements concerning: soil, water, air quality, and wildlife habitat. Molleur also outlined other significant changes in EQIP: conservation priority areas will no longer be required, payments can now be made in the first year of contract, the contract period has changed, and buy-down rates are no longer used. In addition, he spoke of the funding increase, and the goal of finishing a proposed rule soon after September 2002.

Molleur stressed that NRCS is the lead agency for EQIP but will be working closely with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) since they have a very efficient computer system and a payment process in place already. Since EQIP replaced four other conservation programs, Molleur thinks that streamlining is important to get this process out on the landscape and to take care of the entire customer base. Also important is keeping the customer in mind on State Technical Committees. NRCS and FSA looked at the states that work well for outstanding examples of how to proceed.

Molleur went on to outline the successes of EQIP to date, and the importance of the relationship between State Foresters and the forestry community, and State Technical Committees and State Conservationists. He stated that forestry interests have been underrepresented on some State Technical Committees in the past, and underscored the importance of coalition building in order to remedy this situation. He closed by reaffirming his belief in satisfying customers before technical committees start to debate more specific issues.

Conservation Reserve Program

Mike Linsenbigler, USDA Farm Service Agency

Mike Linsenbigler outlined the history of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP originated in the 1985 Farm Bill; to date, the FSA has planted over 3 million acres of trees as land retirement for cropland. The 1997 Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) was a way for federal agencies to partner with state governments and use CRP to address specific natural resources deficits in each state (e.g., salmon in the Northwest and drinking water in Ohio). Today there are 23 CREP programs across the nation.

Linsenbigler stated that the 2002 Farm Bill authorizes a larger acreage number for CRP. Between now and 2007, about 7.5 million acres will be enrolled in CRP. General enrollment is highly competitive, but continuous enrollment is possible for specific types of areas in specific states through CREP. He stressed that the big question for the FSA is how to allocate the acres in the program. The FSA is currently doing an Environmental Impact

Statement (EIS), and has already had a public comment period and performed site visits. They plan on publishing an interim rule with a draft EIS and having another public comment period sometime soon. Linsenbigler also stressed that the FSA gathered input from a number of different NGOs and federal colleagues.

Linsenbigler closed his presentation by citing some specific examples of successes through CREP, including 132,000 acres of bottomlands along the Illinois River and 100,000 acres of bottomlands in Minnesota being restored to forest cover. He also reminded the audience that CREP is roughly an 80/20% match, and that some states are looking for third parties (NGO's and industry) to help out financially.

Question and Answer Highlights from Panel 2

Panel members addressed the following points during the question and answer session following the second panel:

- Hal Brockman addressed a question about whether efforts will be made to coordinate programs operating in the same watershed. He said he hopes the states are doing this through state committees, and the letter from NRCS and the FS will encourage them to work together towards this end. Doug Williams added that his agency is not concerned about “program double-dipping,” since landowner eligibility has been laid out explicitly and landowners must develop appropriate resource management plans.
- Mike Linsenbigler addressed the issue of indirect funds in the 20% match for the Conservation Reserve Program; his agency will be more flexible on counting indirect services, allowing landowners to combine farm bill programs and address multiple resource issues. Robert Molleur added that landowners need to develop comprehensive landscape plans that they can use for several programs and that they also have the option of expanding upon existing plans.
- Doug Williams responded to a question about the merging of state committees. He stated that there has been some discussion about merging the State Stewardship Committees with State Technical Committees, but there is currently no incentive in place to encourage this.
- One participant asked how federal Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) affect work at the state level. Doug Williams stated that the USDA agencies are not expanding, but they are looking outside for technical assistance, and that MOU expand partnerships. Steve Yaddof added that nothing prevents coordination or collaboration and that agencies are trying to encourage it.
- Robert Molleur addressed the issue of provisions for bringing agriculture and forestry practitioners together. He stated that there are stewardship agreements in place with non-federal partners, which allow for innovative practices and higher cost-share rates.

Rachel Jordan, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association

Rachel Jordan began her talk by reflecting back to the time of her father. She stated that the world has changed a lot since that time, due mostly to technology and the vision of those that have come before us. Legislators, she believes, are convinced of the need to provide assistance to those responsible for working with their land. She voiced her concerns about political correctness getting in the way of forest management, long-term damage to forests, and the waste of forester abilities due to forest “non-management.”

Jordan went on to state that the 2002 Farm Bill provides a framework for active management of private forestlands. She stressed that management must do what is right for the land and the owners of that land. She values stewardship ethics over political correctness. Jordan also noted that private landowner participation in this forum is a significant step in the right direction. She said that landowners offer a pragmatic and efficient perspective to forest policy.

Jordan also spoke about the details of the Forestry and Conservation Titles of the 2002 Farm Bill, and how landowners can become more involved in the State Technical Committees. She believes that the perception of forestry on state committees is going to be critical for the success in promoting forestry, and that forest landowner surveys may also be useful.

Jordan closed by emphasizing the importance of State Foresters and State Conservationists in identifying the management needs of private forestlands, and the importance of education for private forest landowners.

Ron Bell, Ozark Woodland Owners Association, Arkansas

Ron Bell explained that he views the 2002 Farm Bill from three perspectives. As a cattleman, he knows the value of his forests in holding his water table. As a tree farmer, he sees how profitable good forest management can be. As a forest landowner, he feels it is difficult to convince his fellow landowners of the value of good management.

Bell noted that the previous farm bill had too few resources, which were too fragmented and unreliably funded. There was no way to build an economic road map to sustainable forestry. He believes that the new farm bill goes a long way to build that map and piece together that puzzle.

Bell stated his approval of the new, more flexible farm bill. He feels that landowners should be able to pick and choose to add economic and social value to his/her forest by using various 2002 Farm Bill Programs. He thinks the Sustainable Forestry Outreach Program is especially important. He noted that landowner education is very difficult, and listed his main questions about how to successfully provide education to landowners on sustainable forestry management. Bell closed by providing an overview of how the Ozark Woodland Owners Association is providing outreach to landowners in their area.

BREAKOUT SESSION INPUT BY PROGRAM

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)

Federal Agency Representative: Hal Brockman, USDA Forest Service

Clarifications/Explanations

In response to questions from participants, Hal Brockman clarified the following aspects of the FLEP legislation and the roles of the USDA Forest Service and the states:

- The USDA plans to work under the following timetable for developing rules for FLEP¹:

<u>September 19, 2002:</u>	Draft Interim Rule Available for comment
<u>October 15, 2002:</u>	Comments due on Draft Interim Rule
<u>December 15, 2002:</u>	FS will request \$20 million of the mandatory funds from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
<u>January 20, 2003:</u>	Interim Rule will be published in the Federal Register (target date) Begin 60-day comment period
<u>January 30 2004:</u>	Once Interim Rule is in FR, states can start receiving money Final Rule published in FR (expected)

- States are currently working on developing their State Priority Plans.
- Criteria to determine the allocation of funds to the states will be clarified in the Interim Rule.
- If people are interested in commenting on the *Draft* Interim Rule, they should contact their State Forester.
- The Interim Rule will specify that no long-term agreements will be allowed, but that landowners can apply yearly, if the state allows.
- State Priority Plans need to have *concurrence* (this supports language in the legislation) with USDA before a state can receive funds.
- A State Priority Plan will explain what that state intends to do with the FLEP money it receives. The USDA will not dictate what a state can or cannot do, beyond what the legislation and rule specifies.
- The states will determine the breakdown of technical, financial, and education assistance in their state. However, USDA will ensure that there is a balance nationwide, as dictated by legislation.
- States will determine what a management plan needs to include.
- In each state, the State Forester and the State Stewardship Committee must jointly develop the Priority Plan, as dictated by the legislation. Other interested parties can provide input towards the Priority Plan.

¹ Some of the timetable information was updated in September, to reflect developments since the forum.

- State Priority Plans can be revised as often as states and committees determine necessary.
- In terms of eligibility, there are no ownership restrictions now, just limitations on treated acres. Certain considerations that are not addressed in the legislation, such as whether to allow 1,000 acres/year or 1,000 acres for the life of the program, will likely be decided by the states.
- USDA will use web-based reporting and tracking of funds.
- The USDA Forest Service and CSREES will work together to coordinate education through FLEP and SFOI.
- Cost-share funds will be administered through State Forestry offices, some of which have handled this before (if the state already had a cost-share program), but some of which have not. For those that have not, they could perhaps continue to have funds administered through FSA offices.
- Enforcement of activities will be similar to the levels under FIP and SIP.

Considerations for Interim Rule

Participants offered the following recommendations to the USDA for the development of the Interim Rule:

- Clarify in the Interim Rule that comments are welcome before the Final Rule is written.
- Provide assurance to the public that the point of developing an Interim Rule is to allow for money to begin to be transferred, and that the rule will not be final.
- Provide access to the Interim Rule through the internet.
- Keep the comment period open longer than 60 days.
- Get landowners involved early, especially through associations, in developing the rules for FLEP. Spread the word about the comment period through landowner associations.
- Share the Draft Interim Rule with the State Conservationists as well as the State Foresters.
- Let states determine minimum acreage for participation.
- Ensure that the Interim Rule preserves the flexibility built into the legislation.
- Avoid setting minimum dollar amount for participation
- Include criteria that allow for participation by small landowners.

Considerations for State Priority Plans

Participants offered the following recommendations to states for the development of the State Priority Plans:

- Provide more help for landowners who plan on reforesting their land, especially for management of the seedling stage.
- Make sure small landowners are able to address regulations (e.g. water quality standards, endangered species habitat requirements) with FLEP funds.
- State Priority Plans should make multi-resource plans a priority – FLEP is a multi-resource program, not just timber-focused.
- Make sure that a significant percentage of funds goes towards technical assistance.

- Allow for group plans, and use cost-share assistance as an incentive for group plans or cooperation among landowners/communities, especially to encourage public benefits. This would encourage watershed planning. To accomplish this, look to CSP as a model and offer tax incentives to encourage group plans.
- State Priority Plans should include education – surveys show that landowners want education over cost-share assistance.
- Certain considerations that are not addressed in legislation, such as whether to allow 1,000 acres/year or 1,000 acres for the life of the program, should be addressed through State Priority Plans.
- States should keep in mind that the average ownership is already less than 20 acres, so make sure that millions of landowners are not being excluded from FLEP because of a high minimum acreage for eligibility.
- Constancy is key to long-term planning – not simply the amount of money.

Communication and Education

- Use the web for making information available.
- Do a better job of reaching more landowners and provide them with the information to find the resources.
- NIPF landowners need encouragement to participate: in certain geographic areas, there is a degree of apprehension and reluctance to participate in any government programs.
- Tree Farmers in different counties are getting different information – there needs to be consistency.
- Start with education as a basis for determining how to reach landowners.
- There is a big difference between education and information – you cannot simply produce a brochure to reach landowners.
- Outside partners are critical for education.

Miscellaneous Recommendations

- Create a monitoring program and get outside partners (e.g., universities) involved in monitoring. This will have the added benefit in drawing additional support for FLEP.
- Ensure that there is strong coordination between FLEP and other forestry/conservation programs.
- The Forest Service needs to consider the realities of climate change, such as shifting growth patterns, as this will cloud the outcomes of programs such as FLEP. It also increases the challenge of applying a landscape perspective. (Others argued that we need to focus on more immediate threats, like sprawl.)

Sustainable Forestry Outreach Initiative (SFOI)

Federal Agency Representatives: Eric Norland and Larry Biles, USDA CSREES

Clarifications/Explanations

In response to questions from participants, Eric and Larry clarified aspects of the SFOI legislation and answered questions concerning the specifics of SFOI:

- The only direct recipients of SFOI funding are Land Grant Universities.
- Funds are distributed between universities based on a formula that includes acres of non-federal forests, acres of private rangelands, timber growth information, timber harvesting levels, wood industry employment, and two demographic measures: total state population and the urban population within a state.
- Monitoring by CSREES: states send CSREES information such as the number of acres impacted by SFOI funded programs, and the number of landowners contacted. Some states also survey participants of programs.
- CSREES is “pre-rule writing” now, looking for input on how to better partner, and on program development guidance for the states.
- CSREES' RREA allocation instructions will inform recipients that resource gains attributed to the intent of SFOI are to be used for program expansion, not supplementing fiscal shortfalls.
- Funds are currently authorized, but still need to be appropriated.
- Each state receives a base amount of funding through RREA.
- Getting forestry a fair share of funding through extension is a factor of politics and the difficulty varies from state to state.
- Partnering with state forest and wildlife agencies is possible and actually quite common.
- “Marrying the money” from FLEP educational funding and RREA is encouraged; State Foresters should go to stewardship committee meetings with this in mind.
- The process by which extension advisory boards are formed differs from state to state. Virginia Tech, for example, has a 3-year term for members, selected on basis of representation.

Development of Program Guidelines

Participants offered the following recommendations to CSREES in developing program guidelines for partners in SFOI:

- Better reporting of results should be rewarded with more funding.
- Provide incentives for extension services that are willing to monitor their results, possibly using agency collaboration.
- Track results with a coordinated effort between agencies.
- Research better ways to measure behavior and results.
- Allocate funds for program evaluation. (In EQIP, the innovative grants program does this.)

- Partners such as NGOs should be able to collaborate in producing guidelines at a national level.
- Ensure results are considered once they are produced.
- Identify a base program to be enhanced through any additional appropriated funding.
- Provide technical assistance for absentee landowners through a newsletter.
- Consider population profile of forest landowners.
 - Forest landowners are typically not farmers, and not familiar with farm bill programs.
 - Do not forget about small, part-time forest landowners, they may not think of their forest as a resource.
 - Many landowners are hesitant of government programs, but more trusting of extension services; CSREES should consider the unique opportunity this program presents to speak with these individuals who are unreachable through other means
- Include conservation/wildlife staff on state committees.
- Develop national priorities for SFOI spending by states. Targeting money to state extension for specific priorities would be helpful.
- Make programs more customer-driven: e.g., a pilot program in 1-3 states where landowners select a combination of resources, then receive a transfer value coupon for assistance from a state director.
- Encourage states to provide continuing education credits to recruit people to workshops and other educational events; this brings more people and a greater diversity of people.

Opportunities for Collaboration

- Closer partnering between states.
- NGO's and other groups are valuable partners that can be involved in SFOI coordination.
- The National Association of State Foresters already has a close relationship with CSREES, extension services should initiate the same relationship at a state level.
- All forest certification systems should be included – do not endorse a particular system.
- There should be opportunities for groups to participate in advisory groups which define extension activities
 - Larry Biles suggested that there are several entry points for this, and that the county agent is a good place to start.
- Look at non-traditional partnerships, even with individuals in urban areas since some landowners are absentee landowners.

Partnerships Between Universities and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Eric Norland asked participants in the SFOI breakout groups for their feedback on the issue of partnerships between universities and non-governmental organizations, specifically, on whether participants felt there was a conflict of interest between universities and NGOs. Participants offered the following input:

- NGOs are no more agenda driven than anyone else.
- NGOs and universities have partnerships already.

- Be careful, but as long as they are up front, objective, and honest, this type of partnership should be fine.
- Avoid creating borders on who education is provided to – there should be a wide range of partner organizations.
- State Extension Directors should be encouraged to include new groups for membership on state committees.
- Include all parties, including NGO's.
- Be sure that factual information is emphasized; some groups may not want to tell the whole truth.
- Consider that committee appointments can be politically driven, and that universities have their own politics at play.

Community and Private Land Fire Assistance

Federal Agency, State, and Association Representatives:

Anne Heissenbittel, National Association of State Foresters

Jim Hubbard, Colorado State Forest Service

Steve Yaddof, USDA Forest Service

Clarifications/Explanations

In response to questions from session participants, agency and association representatives clarified the following aspects of the Community and Private Lands Fire Assistance program:

- Fire plain easements, similar to floodplain easements, were in the President's budget; however, they were not included in the Interior Appropriations bill.
- CPLFA allows more flexibility at the community level since rules are not required. Much is authorized under this program, but it does not replace state or rural fire assistance. What CPLFA does do is enhance and add new authority for market development, expansion, and utilization.
- CPLFA does allow agencies to work with third party vendors in order to expand the delivery capacity of State Foresters.
- In order to secure funding for CPLFA, participants should encourage their senators to support an amendment that calls for some funding of CPLFA in FY 2003 and full funding in FY 2004. Such an amendment is currently being planned for introduction in the Senate.
- Focusing support for CPLFA should be done during the August 2002 Congressional recess.
- Use trusted sources like state forestry departments to get word out about the National Fire Plan and the 10-Year Implementation Plan.
- CPLFA will be delivered through state agencies, and may be delivered through other parties as directed by the states.
- There is a lack of funding for FY 2003. CPLFA is not on as tight a time schedule as other farm bill program. A CPLFA-like authority was originally funded under the National Fire Plan.
- The agency would like guidelines in place by December 2002; however, they will use existing channels if money or direction comes sooner. Interim rules may refer back to the guidelines developed for FY 2003 and will be looked at to complement the Forest Service Economic Action Programs used by State Foresters and Forest Service as part of the Community Assistance Key Point in the National Fire Plan.

General Knowledge Level Among Effected Communities

Participants offered the following input on their perceived knowledge level of both the National Fire Plan and the 10-Year Implementation Plan:

- Multiple participants felt that there is a good level of understanding of the National Fire Plan in communities that regularly deal with fire, namely western communities; and that understanding of CPLFA is not as great in the East.
- Implementation Plan partners have not all come together to determine responsibility for certain tasks in the plan.
- Communities may not know how they can benefit/participate in plans and/or how to implement them.

Limits to Risk Reduction Activities on Private Lands

Participants offered the following input on limits that exist on risk reduction activities that can be taken on most private lands:

- Fuels reduction and intensive fire planning are needed on NIPF lands.
- Provide forest health education for landowners.
- Use a coordinated approach to reduce risks across all private forestlands.
- Reconciliation between old growth protection and fuel reduction is needed (e.g., look at how much money was spent to put out the fire at Sequoia National Monument).
- The majority of landowners do not have fire insurance, meaning that the public has to pay for suppression. A lot of work is being done in Oregon in response to two eagle nests lost because of fire.
- Focus more attention on protection of timber. Currently, too much attention focuses on houses. Per acre and flat fees to protect timber are being paid by landowners.
- Crop insurance is subsidized – what about subsidized insurance for forests?
- Landowners cannot act fast enough. What can be done if people do not have the equipment to thin?
- Use State Foresters to reach landowners.
- Focus on a larger scale. The political focus so far has been on reducing hazards in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), not across holistic landscapes.
- Protect more than just homes and extend beyond the WUI.
- The number-one priority is always going to be protecting life; however, we need to define other priorities. For example, what should burn – a \$1 million home or \$6 million worth of timber? One example is the Black Butte Ranch on the Deschutes National Forest in Oregon. This ranch is part of an exclusive, gated community. When fire encroached on the property, it was reported that slurry bombers were pulled from other fires in the area, including a fire that jumped a river and burned down a mill.

Role of Government in Helping Communities and Private Landowners

Participants were asked to provide their input on the proper role for federal and state government in helping communities and private landowners reduce the risks posed by wildfires:

- The federal government should work through Conservation Districts to get landowners to reduce fire risk. Conservation Districts have a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the USDA.
- The urban policy committee of the National Association of Conservation Districts should work with individuals in subdivisions. Sometimes the homeowners adjacent to burning lands have been more of an impediment to thinning than the environmentalists.
 - Steve Yaddof noted that the agency is directed to use local people to implement programs whenever possible.
- Utilize state extension services more – they are currently underutilized.
 - Jim Hubbard added that Conservation Districts and Extension Services can help, and that the State Foresters want CPLFA to be locally driven.
- Industry has been a barrier to prescribed burning in eastern Oregon.
- Comprehensive fire management plans should be required.

Conservation Title Programs

Federal Agency Representatives:

Mike Linsenbigler, Farm Service Agency
Robert Molleur, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Doug Williams, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Clarifications/Explanations

In response to questions from session participants, agency and association representatives clarified the following aspects of the Conservation Title Programs:

- Land that is “infeasible to farm,” as defined by the Conservation Reserve Program, differs by region. Part of a field could be enrolled; it is not required that the whole field be enrolled.
- Agencies are looking at FLEP’s applicability to EQIP. The rules that are coming out now will go through a public review period.
- USDA does not want to prescribe how much EQIP money will go to forestry, however, 60% (aggregate breakdown, not state by state) is already targeted to livestock issues.
- For forestry interests wanting to get involved in State Technical Committees, visit your State Conservationist, and work on coalition building. The forestry community needs to get better engaged.
- Money that goes to the third-party system is not redirected from federal employees. Technical assistance is included in funds, but there is a lot that needs to be done that cannot get done using only federal employees.
- Landowners can marry FLEP and EQIP plans into one plan for use in both programs.
- EQIP does not require priority areas anymore, but does give more opportunities for local workgroups to participate.
- Priority areas no longer have to compete for funding.
- NRCS is the backup for when the local third-party assistance supply is exhausted (EQIP).
- State Technical Committees can address drought and other issues that may fall through the cracks between farm bill programs.
- Tracking results: NRCS is not explicitly engaging economists in calculating economic benefits, but the number of acres prescribed for certain practices will be recorded by states. Second year bonuses could be awarded to states with the best results.
- FSA is doing an EIS for CRP (includes cost-benefit analysis, risk analysis). Baseline models are being developed. The agency is working with the US Geological Survey to assess wildlife impacts.
- The agency needs to differentiate among tree types planted through CRP because they have different rotation times. Most trees planted will remain in place after the 10-year CRP contract.
- There will be program review and evaluation by program managers for EQIP.
- CRP lands can include riparian buffers.
- Rules are being developed to address how state officials should work with vendors on EQIP. A draft rule offering guidance to states should be out by mid-August 2002.

- The level of importance given to forestry (in states) needs to be raised, especially in the case of EQIP since it originated as an agricultural production program. States could designate forestry a priority if they so desire.
- State committee meetings are open to the public.

EQIP: Expansion of Forestry Involvement on State Technical Committees

- Conservation Districts should be more involved with State Technical Committees.
- Include landowners, not just landowner group representatives, on committees.
- The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) has been trying to energize state forestry associations. AF&PA has also been working with Sustainable Forestry Initiative state implementation committees, urging them to talk to State Conservationists about the importance of forestry.
- Resources should drive the process.
- Forestry participation on these state committees has declines over the years. Involvement on State Technical Committees is key to bringing forestry to the table.
- Work among landowners to generate enthusiasm and motivation.
- Anyone with an interest in forestry should get themselves on state committees – or write a letter to their State Conservationist.
- In some states, the State Forester and State Conservationist are working together to best deliver assistance to landowners.
- Ensure collaboration through the merging of programs.
- Break barriers at the local level.

EQIP: Minimum Level of Planning Required for Participation

- Include the whole farm in the plan.
- Plans should have modules for different programs.
- Plans should be consistent with soil and water conservation plans.
- Quality control is more important than the minimum level of planning
- Require comprehensive plans. Different programs could address parts of these plans. State committees could make the decision as to whether or not plans should be written for each individual practice (like under FIP).
- Use service providers for writing comprehensive plans.

EQIP: Eliminating Barriers to Effectiveness

- Eliminate buy-down.
- Increase forestry participation in state committees.
- Educate landowners about the benefits of EQIP. In the past, there was cost-share money, but not enough money for education (sometimes money for education was pulled from the technical assistance pool). It is difficult to describe examples of program use to landowners.
- Clarify that NIPFs are eligible to participate in EQIP.
- Invest in the longevity of activities occurring under EQIP.

- Doug Williams added that conservation easements attempt to address this issue.
- Provide adequate technical assistance money.
- Prioritize areas at a local level, even though priority areas are no longer required at a national level.
- Increase coalition building and raise awareness for a better chance at funding.
- Give wildlife a “fair shake” along with water quality.
- Funding level should be even higher.

EQIP: Most Appropriate or Best Sources for Delivering Technical Assistance

- Clarify how the farm bill will be delivered, since some landowners are confused.
- Consider the audience – the most appropriate source for technical assistance depends on the target audience for programs. Not everyone participating is a traditional, full-time farmer.
- Landowners may take some time before they are willing to pay for third party assistance, given the history of not having those services available.
- The only market source is private assistance.
- Providers need a basic level of competence. Technical assistance providers need more training and knowledge of farm bill programs, as well as training on how to work with landowners.
- A good working relationship with the landowner is the most important thing for providers.
- There is not enough government agency staff to deliver the needed amounts of assistance. Third party vendors need to be used.
- District conservationists are the best contact point for landowners, so that a single person can come to the property for assistance with all programs.
- Dealing with fewer folks would be preferable, but more than one may be needed to ensure sufficient expertise. Cross-training between agencies would help to decrease the number of contact folks for landowners. Some people may prefer to deal with three people who REALLY know their programs, rather than with one or two who are simply sufficient in all areas.

CRP: General Recommendations

- Tailor the program for different regions within a state.
- Maintain continuous sign-up.
- Do not prioritize by first come, first served – the program needs to be focused.
- Ensure past participants (in CRP and CREP) are not penalized because of CSP participation.
- Look at non-timber forest products.
- Link to the Grass Bank Program in New Mexico.
- Set acreage limits (so continuous sign-up for CREP is not impeded).
- Consider conservation priorities and World Wildlife Fund’s ecoregions when determining which lands are “highly desirable” for enrollment in CRP.
- Encourage more discussion between the agriculture and forestry communities.

CRP: Reforestation efforts

Some wildlife groups have suggested that fewer trees be planted in reforestation efforts in order to allow more openings for wildlife habitat. Participants offered their opinions on this subject:

- Standards should be allowed for both.
- Use different specifications for habitat and forestry.
- Give the landowner flexibility.
- It depends on the situation – the area priorities must be known.
- Landowners have no control over natural reforestation.
- Points should be given for creation of spacing in pine plantations that allow enough sunlight to create understory browse and cover, and for thinning of those older CRP plantations where canopies have closed.

Miscellaneous Conservation Title Program Recommendations

- More outreach to NIPF landowners is needed – they have a lot of knowledge.
- Third party vendors should include existing partners.
- The development of partnerships relies on trust.
- The forestry community and production agriculture community need to work together; it is only natural for the forestry community to want a big piece of the pie in these programs, but forest landowners need to show the value of their product compared to the agriculture community.

Other Comments

Some participants provided the following written comments on farm bill programs that were not addressed in breakout sessions at the forum:

- The Energy Title is a major step toward national energy security and potentially a major augment to the National Fire Plan by recapturing floor-fuel carbon for biomass fuel.
- Energy Title: The forestry community possesses the optimum carbon to energy ratio over all other renewables and petrocarbons (1:16 for woody biomass compared to 1:1.2 for corn-based ethanol and 1:0.4 for coal)
- There needs to be an honest broker in the USDA and Congress to ensure that a fair portion of the mandatory \$75 million for biomass R & D in the Energy Title finds its way to the forest products industry, and the sustainable forestry communities.

Appendix 1: Agenda

**Farm Bill 2002 Forum:
Review and Discussion of Forestry Opportunities
Pinchot Institute for Conservation
August 8, 2002
Washington Terrace Hotel, Washington, DC**

Objectives:

- ❖ Highlight forestry-related provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill and agency implementation strategies
- ❖ Provide opportunities for input to agencies on new and modified forestry programs

8:00 – 8:30 am	Registration and Coffee
8:30 – 9:00 am	Welcome and Introductions (Terrace Ballroom)
9:00 – 10:00 am	Overview of New and Modified Forestry Programs in the 2002 Farm Bill <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Lloyd Ritter, Majority Counsel, Senate Committee on Agriculture</i>➤ <i>Mark Rey, Under Secretary for Natural Resources & Environment, USDA</i>➤ <i>Larry Payne, Director of Cooperative Forestry, USDA Forest Service</i>➤ <i>Jim Hubbard, Director, Colorado State Forest Service</i>
10:00 – 10:15 am	Questions and Answers
10:15 – 10:30 am	Break
10:30 – 11:45 am	Agency Implementation Strategies for New and Modified Farm Bill Programs Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Hal Brockman, Program Manager, USDA Forest Service</i> Sustainable Forestry Outreach Initiative (SFOI) <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Larry Biles, National Program Leader – Forestry, USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service</i> Community and Private Lands Fire Assistance (CPLFA) <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Steve Yaddof, Resource Conservation and Community Development Specialist, USDA Forest Service</i> Conservation Title programs <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Doug Williams, National Forester, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service</i>➤ <i>Robert Molleur, Natural Resource Manager, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service</i>➤ <i>Mike Linsenbigler, USDA Farm Service Agency</i>
11:45 – Noon	Questions and Answers

Agenda (continued)

Noon – 1:00 pm	Lunch (provided): Landowner Perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Rachel Jordan, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association</i>➤ <i>Ron Bell, Ozark Woodland Owners Association, Arkansas</i>
1:00 – 2:00 pm	Breakout Session I <ul style="list-style-type: none">FLEP (Chairman Room)SFOI (Congressional Room)Conservation Title (Directors Room)
2:15 – 3:15 pm	Breakout Session II <ul style="list-style-type: none">FLEP (Chairman Room)SFOI (Congressional Room)Conservation Title (Directors Room)
3:30 – 4:30 pm	Breakout Session III <ul style="list-style-type: none">FLEP (Chairman Room)Conservation Title (Congressional Room)CPLFA (Directors Room)
4:45 – 5:15 pm	Report Out of Sessions and Next Steps
5:15 pm	Adjourn

The Pinchot Institute gratefully acknowledges the support provided by:
USDA Forest Service
Bradley/Murphy Forestry and Natural Resources Extension Trust
Society of American Foresters

Follow-up information on the forum will be available at:
<http://www.pinchot.org/pic/farmbill/forum.html>

Appendix 2: Participant List

Keith Argow

National Woodland Owners Association

Ron Bell

Ozark Woodland Owners Association, Inc.

Larry Biles

USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)

Joy Black

Ben Black

Nadine Block

Pinchot Institute for Conservation

Kerry Bolognese

National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges

Stephen F. Bohl

Forest Management Bureau
Florida Division Of Forestry

Wilhelmina Bratton

USDA Forest Service

Hal Brockman

USDA Forest Service
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Michael R. Brower

SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry

Marilyn Buford

USDA Forest Service

Stephen Capel

Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries

Kerry Cesareo

World Wildlife Fund

Doug Crandall

National Forest Foundation

Jim Culbert

USDA Forest Service Liason to National Association of Counties

Lester DeCoster

The DeCoster Group

Sarah Dewees

First Nations Development Institute

Mitch Dubensky

American Forest and Paper Association

Loren B. Ford

USDA Forest Service

Tom Franklin

The Wildlife Society

George Freeman

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Dave Gagner

Ducks Unlimited

Mike Gaudern

Oregon Small Woodlands Association

Michael Goergen

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Claire Harper

USDA Forest Service, Cooperative Forestry

Dr. Vernon R. Hayes, Jr.

Forest Landowners Association

Anne Heissenbuttel

Naitonal Association of State Foresters

John Henshaw

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Laura McNichol
National Association of Conservation Districts

Kristina McNitt
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Lloyd Ritter
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Community Based Conservation

Arthur V. Smyth

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Don VanHassent

Maryland DNR Forest Service

David Walker

International Association of Fish and Wildlife
Agencies

Barbara Wells

Northeast-Midwest Institute

Mark Whitney

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Doug Williams

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Daniel E. Wrinn

Northeast-Midwest Institute

Steve Yaddof

USDA Forest Service Cooperative Forestry

FOREST LAND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (FLEP)

A new program established by the 2002 Farm Bill

Program Purpose

FLEP has been established to replace the Forestry Incentives Program (FIP) and the Stewardship Incentives Program (SIP), which were repealed in the 2002 Farm Bill. FLEP is a new incentives program that encourages the long-term sustainability of non-industrial private forestlands by providing financial, technical, and educational assistance by state forestry agencies to assist private landowners in actively managing their land.

Administering Agency

USDA Forest Service, in partnership with State Foresters and State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committees, and in consultation with other Federal, State, and local natural resource management agencies, institutions of higher education, and a broad range of private sector interests.

Funding Level and Program Lifespan

\$100 million (in mandatory funding) from FY 2002 – FY 2007. Annual funding levels will be determined by the agencies involved in implementation. Acceptance of landowner cost-share applications will start 30 days after the interim rule is published and after a state has completed its priority plan.

Forest Landowner Eligibility

To be eligible for cost-share assistance, an owner of non-industrial private forest (NIPF) must develop and implement a management plan (addressing certain criteria) that provides for the treatment of no more than 1,000 acres of non-industrial private forestlands. This acreage limit may be increased to no more than 5,000 acres if it is determined that the treatment of additional acres will result in significant public benefit. The management plan must be for no less than 10 years and must be approved by the State Forester. All NIPF lands are eligible for technical and educational assistance.

Amount of Assistance Offered

Cost-share assistance of up to 75% is offered for the implementation of activities and practices approved in a *State Priority Plan* that designates priorities for action. Priority plans will be developed jointly by the State Forester and the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee.

Opportunities for Input on Program Development

A draft interim rule will be released on or about August 16, 2002 for limited distribution and comment. October 30, 2002 is the target date for publication of the interim rule in the Federal Register, which will be followed by a 60-day comment period. December 1, 2002 is the target date for starting the program.

Additional Information

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SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY OUTREACH INITIATIVE (SFOI)

A new program established by the 2002 Farm Bill

Program Purpose

SFOI is a new program created as an amendment to the Renewable Resources Extension Act of 1978 (RREA). It aims to educate landowners on: the value and benefits of practicing sustainable forestry, the importance of professional forestry advice in achieving their objectives, and the variety of public and private resources available to assist them.

Administering Agency

USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)

Funding Level and Program Lifespan

Annual RREA funding is authorized at \$30 million/year for 5 years (FY 2002 – FY 2007), for a total of \$150 million.

How SFOI Works

The recipients of funding for RREA funds are land grant universities. The land grants will receive program guidance from CSREES relative to including the objectives of SFOI within their state RREA funded programs. Funds are distributed to institutions based on demographics and forest resource characteristics of each state.

Opportunities for Forest Landowners

Forest landowners may serve as stakeholder advisors especially at state and local levels. Some of these positions are elected. Also, in cooperation with resource professionals, landowners may organize and conduct classroom and field instructional events, and serve as volunteer, peer-to-peer ambassadors for forest and natural resources conservation at national, state, and local levels.

Additional Information

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Community and Private Land Fire Assistance

A new program established by the 2002 Farm Bill

Program Purpose

The Community and Private Land Fire Assistance program is aimed at promoting firefighting efficiency at all levels (on Federal and non-Federal lands) and at protecting communities from wildfire threats. Overall, it is intended to improve landscape-level protection from catastrophic wildfires by expanding outreach and education programs directed at homeowners and communities and establishing defensible space on private land in the wildland-urban interface. This program falls under the “Enhanced Community Fire Protection” section, which is a new addition to the 2002 Farm Bill. This section complements the existing “Rural Fire Prevention and Control” authority in the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act.

Administering Agency

The *USDA Forest Service* administers this program, in partnership with State Foresters and other State officials.

Funding Level and Program Lifespan

Annual funding of \$35 million has been appropriated for FY 2002 – FY 2007, and the program may be granted such sums as are necessary for Fiscal Years thereafter.

Considerations for Program Guidelines/Rules

The USDA Forest Service will be developing guidelines for this program and examining the use of interim rules.

Opportunities for Input on Program Development

There are several ways in which the public can provide input on this program:

- (1) Through the Federal Register and public comment period;
- (2) Through State Foresters/Fire Managers working on the program;
- (3) Through Forest Service representatives for the program;
- (4) Through public forums.

For More Information

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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

A modified program in the 2002 Farm Bill

Program Purpose

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program aimed at promoting agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals, and optimizing environmental benefits. This existing program provides cost-share payments and other incentive payments to producers to treat identified soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on eligible land.

Administering Agency

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers this program. State Technical Committees, Tribal representatives, and local working groups convened by conservation districts advise and assist NRCS on program implementation.

Funding Level and Program Lifespan

\$ 6.1 billion in mandatory funding from FY 2002 – FY 2007. Annual funding starts at \$400 million in FY 2002 and increases up to \$1.3 billion in FY 2007. 60% of EQIP funds are targeted to livestock production practices.

Notable Programmatic Changes

- Minimum length of an EQIP contract has been reduced to 1 year after the implementation of all practices. Maximum length remains at 10 years.
- Annual payment limitation has been eliminated; however, the sum of all EQIP payments to an individual or entity cannot exceed \$450,000 for all contracts signed during FY 2002 – FY 2007.
- Applications will be evaluated for funding based on a state and locally-developed procedure to optimize: environmental benefits, the use of cost-effective conservation practices, and the use of practices that address national priorities.
- Conservation Priority Areas are no longer used.
- Conservation Innovation Grants – (pending new EQIP rule)

Forest Landowner Eligibility

Eligible land includes non-industrial *forestland*. An EQIP plan of operations is required. These plans are site-specific and may be developed by producers with the help of NRCS or other certified providers. The State Conservationist, with advice of the State Technical Committee, will identify conservation practices eligible for financial assistance. Local work groups will assist in identifying practices to treat locally identified resource concerns.

Amount of Assistance Offered

EQIP continues 75% cost sharing on certain conservation practices, but allows a 90% cost-share rate if the producer is a *limited-resource or beginning farmer* (pending new EQIP rule). Incentive payments may be made to encourage a producer to adopt land management practices such as nutrient management, integrated pest management, or wildlife habitat management. Actual cost-share rates and incentive payments will be determined at the state and local level. For FY 2002 only, any practice that exceeds \$100,000 cannot exceed a 50% cost-share rate.

Additional Information

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http://www.usda.gov/farmbill/conservation_fb.html
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002>
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>

CONSERVATION TITLE PROGRAMS*

New and modified programs in the 2002 Farm Bill

*EQIP is addressed in a separate fact sheet.

Conservation Security Program (CSP)

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will administer this new program. It was created to provide financial and technical assistance for the conservation, protection, and improvement of soil, water, and related resources on Tribal and private lands. Eligible lands include cropland, pasture and rangeland. Only *forested land that is an incidental part of an agricultural operation* shall be eligible for enrollment in the CSP. The Congressional Budget Office estimates a budget of \$369 million for FY 2003 – FY 2007.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The CRP is a continuing program that offers annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to farmers to establish long-term conservation covers (e.g., grass and *trees*) on eligible land. Eligible land includes marginal pastureland that is to be converted to a less intensive use, such as *tree cover*. A total of up to 39.2 million acres can be enrolled in the CRP. The program is reauthorized through FY 2007 and is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). It receives mandatory funding from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) at a level of \$1.8 billion to \$2 billion annually.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

WHIP is a modified program in the 2002 Farm Bill, administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Cost share payments and technical assistance are provided to producers to develop high quality wildlife habitats on their land. Funding of \$360 million is mandated through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) for FY 2002 – FY 2007, ranging from \$15 million in FY 2002 to \$85 million in FY 2007. Although not mentioned specifically, *forest landowners* may be eligible for enrollment in WHIP.

Conservation of Private Grazing Lands

This continuing program is administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and provides technical and educational assistance for conservation and enhancement of private grazing lands. These lands may include *grazed forestland*. The 2002 Farm Bill has authorized appropriations of \$60 million a year for FY 2002 – FY 2007.

Farmland Protection Program

This program was reauthorized through FY 2007 through mandatory Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funding totaling \$597 million. CCC funds are used to match state, tribal, or local government funds for establishing conservation easements and protecting topsoil by limiting nonagricultural uses of the land. *Forestland* that is an incidental part of an agricultural operation is eligible. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers this program.

Agricultural Management Assistance

Created by the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000, the Agricultural Management Assistance Program provides assistance to states where participation in the federal crop insurance program is historically low. The 2002 Farm Bill provides an additional \$10 million per year in mandatory Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funding for FY 2002 – FY 2007 for a total of \$20 million per year. Producers in 15 designated states are eligible for financial assistance for a range of conservation and risk reduction purposes, including the *planting of trees* to improve water quality or form windbreaks. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is responsible for administering the conservation cost-sharing assistance portion of the program.

Conservation Corridor Demonstration Program

This new program requires establishment of a conservation corridor demonstration program on the east side of the Chesapeake Bay in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. The purpose of the project is to demonstrate local conservation and economic cooperation using existing USDA conservation programs. State and local partners must provide 50% of funding. Each state may submit a conservation corridor plan to integrate agriculture and *forestry* programs of the USDA with state and local efforts to address farm conservation needs.

Additional Information on Conservation Title Programs

http://www.usda.gov/farmbill/conservation_fb.html

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Features/FarmBill/Analysis/conservationoverview.htm>

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/products.html>

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/default.htm>