USDA Forest Service
State & Private Forestry
Cooperative Forestry

Forest Land Enhancement Program

Briefing Paper

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FLEP Overview

The 2002 Farm Bill authorized the Forest Service to launch a sustainable forestry program to assist nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) landowners in what is known as the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) and made $100 million available. The program allocated $20 million in its inaugural year, fiscal year (FY) 2003 through State forestry agencies.

Due to the extreme fire season of 2003, $40 million of the FLEP funds were transferred to Wildland fire suppression and were not repaid. $5 million were released for FLEP in (FY) 2004. In the (FY) 2005 budget, $20 million was cancelled. $10 million was released in mid (FY) 2005. The remaining $5 million is currently available for the program. Any FLEP funds remaining in the States may be spent in accordance with Federal and State program direction. Below is a basic description of this program.

Through FLEP, State forestry agencies and their partners can provide a wide array of educational, technical and financial services with the remaining funds that are intended to ensure that the nation's NIPF and related resources continue to provide sustainable forest products and safeguard the health of our water, air, and wildlife.

FLEP is a voluntary program in each State and participation by landowners is voluntary. In each State participating in the program, the State Forester and State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee have jointly developed a State Priority Plan that is intended to promote forest management objectives and describe FLEP. The State Priority Plan will determine the mix of educational, technical and financial assistance with States choosing one or more of these elements. As applicable, it will identify educational activities and their outcome, describe the technical assistance to be provided and its outcomes, and describe the cost-share components that will be available to NIPF landowners and the public values of these practices.

FLEP allows treatment of up to 1,000 acres per year and variances of up to 5,000 acres if significant public benefits will accrue. The maximum FLEP cost-share payment for any practice may be up to 75 percent. The aggregate payment to any one landowner through 2007 may not exceed $100,000, except in Alaska. The variances for Alaska are described in their State Priority Plan.

States will be responsible for reporting program accomplishments for all the program components - educational, technical, financial, – that is being implementing. States will also account for administrative dollars used to implement FLEP.

Program implementation began after the interim rule was published in the Federal Register on June 9, 2003.