




CARING FOR YOUR FOREST



*With a Forest
Stewardship Plan*



If you own or manage forest land, you are probably concerned about keeping it productive and healthy now and in the years to come. Like many forest landowners, you may want to sustain or increase the economic value of your forest while protecting environmental assets such as wildlife and clean water.

Historically, only a few landowners have received any professional assistance in managing their forest land. The Forest Service is concerned with helping private landowners

protect, improve, restore, and sustain their forests. The Forest Stewardship Program brings professional natural resource management expertise to private landowners to help develop plans for the sustainable management of their forests. This greatly increases the likelihood that private forests will remain productive and healthy, and that the social, economic, and environmental benefits of these lands will be realized.

Close to 10 million families and other private owners manage 350 million acres of forest land in the United States. This land represents one-half of the forested lands across the country. Healthy forests provide clean air and water, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, wood, other forest products, and more for all Americans.





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PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Most owners of nonindustrial private forests are eligible for the Forest Stewardship Program. Nonindustrial private forests include rural lands with existing tree cover or land suited for growing trees. Landowners may be any private individual, group, association, corporation, Native American tribe, or other private legal entity. There is no restriction on the maximum number of acres owned, although some States may have a minimum acreage requirement to be eligible for the program.

*Nonindustrial private forest landowners are found in all 50 States and U.S. territories. About 30 percent are white-collar workers, 15 percent blue-collar workers, and 30 percent retired. The rest are farmers, homemakers, or service workers, or else gave no answer when surveyed. About half are more than 55 years of age.**

"Private Forest-land Owners of the United States," by Thomas W. Birch, 1996 (Radnor, PA: USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Forest Experiment Station), 183 pp.





DEVELOPING YOUR FOREST STEWARDSHIP PLAN

If you would like to participate in the Forest Stewardship Program, contact your nearest State forestry office. This agency will provide for a natural resource professional (forester, biologist, or private consultant) to visit your land and discuss your management objectives. Many landowners have several objectives, such as enhancing wildlife or riparian habitat or producing timber. After your objectives are discussed and understood, the resource professional will prepare your Forest Stewardship Plan. A few States are experimenting with a “coached planning” approach. Using this approach, the resource professional guides you in preparing your own plan, instead of preparing it for you. As the landowner, you must understand and approve the plan, which is also sent to the State forestry agency for approval.

Landowners use Forest Stewardship Plans to manage their forest for many purposes while protecting the natural and cultural resources of their property. Of the landowners that have Forest Stewardship Plans now—

- *79 percent are growing or caring for trees*
- *71 percent are improving or preserving forest land as wildlife habitat*
- *49 percent are harvesting or marketing trees*
- *33 percent are preserving or improving the quality of water resources*

** “Evaluating the Forest Stewardship Program Through a National Survey of Participating Forest Land Owners,” by J. Dixon Esseks and Robert J. Moulton, February 2000. Chapter Three.*

Forest Stewardship Plans provide guidance that you can carry out by yourself, or with the assistance of professional resource managers and consultants. Your participation in the Forest Stewardship Program is strictly voluntary. As the landowner, you are asked to make a good faith commitment to implement strategies suggested in your plan. Most plans cover one piece of property. However, in some States, landowners are working together on plans that cover several properties.



IMPLEMENTING YOUR PLAN

Several cost-share programs are available to help you implement your plan:

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)—Provides technical, educational, and financial assistance to help private landowners defray the costs of making long-term investments in tree planting, forest stand improvement, and site preparation for natural regeneration. Contact a State forester, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service, or a USDA Forest Service office for more information.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)— Provides financial incentives to landowners to convert highly erodible or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetation, including forestry applications such as wildlife plantings or riparian buffers. Landowners receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract. Contact the USDA Farm Service Agency for more information.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)— Provides technical, educational, and financial assistance to landowners to address natural

resource concerns in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. Payments can be received to implement practices including pest management, tree planting, and forest stand improvement. Contact the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)—Offers financial support to landowners' wetlands restoration and protection projects. This program obtains voluntary conservation easements from landowners and provides cost-share payments for wetlands rehabilitation practices. Among other practices, WRP allows and encourages tree plantings focused upon wetland rehabilitation. Contact the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Other cost-share programs— Many States have State-funded cost-share programs. Private organizations (such as Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, etc.) may provide funding to implement certain practices.

Funding and acreage requirements differ among the programs. See page 10 for contact information.



SUCCESS STORIES

ALASKA — *Managing for many resources*

Ted and Jean Berry, owners of Birch Grove Farm, purchased their land to create an aesthetically pleasing landscape that was agriculturally productive, offered recreational opportunities, and provided habitat for wildlife. With the help of a Forest Stewardship Plan, the Berrys have enhanced views of their lake and Mt. McKinley; improved opportunities for songbirds, fox, rabbits, sandhill crane, geese, and moose; and created more than 3 miles of recreational trails. According to Ted, “I could not do what I have done with my land without the financial support and assistance I received.” Ted hopes to leave his land in better condition than he found it, and to be a good steward of the land.



The results of a voluntary survey conducted in 1999 describe how the Forest Stewardship Program is meeting the needs of landowners:

- *The program is reaching a large number of people who had never before received professional advice for managing their land.*
- *Many people who had been managing their forest land on their own are now participating in the program.*
- *Over 80 percent of participants who had written a plan have started to implement it on the ground.*
- *Most participants are now using a multiresource approach to management (for example, the same owner pursuing both timber stand improvement and wildlife protection).*
- *Over half of the participants have tried new management practices on their land.*
- *Roughly 94 percent of the participants said that they would recommend the program to others.*

* “Evaluating the Forest Stewardship Program Through a National Survey of Participating Forest Land Owners,” by J. Dixon Esseks and Robert J. Moulton, February 2000.

SUCCESS STORIES...



ARIZONA — *Controlling invasive species*

Preparing a Forest Stewardship Plan helped to coordinate the efforts of local, State, and Federal staff working on weed control in the Picture Canyon area, just east of Flagstaff. Named for its abundant petroglyphs, this 55-acre area located along a river had been seriously degraded by yellow star thistle, scotch thistle, and bull thistle. The plan helped those involved to learn about the history of land use and the long-term potential use of the land. As a result, they are using a much wider array of management activities including prescribed fire, herbicide application, and mechanical treatment to control the thistles. The Arizona State Land Department plans to use the site to demonstrate various invasive species control techniques and the benefits of planning to other landowners in Arizona.

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CALIFORNIA — *Decreasing risks of wildfires*

Forest Stewardship Plans were written for 22 landowners in the Tassajara and Toro Creek watersheds as a response to wildfires that burned 50,000 acres in 1994 and 1995. While many of the landowners had lost their homes in the fires and saw reduction of fire hazard as a priority, they also wanted to enhance wildlife habitat and stream quality on the land. A cooperative plan was written for all of the landowners, as well as specific plans for each individual. The plans helped to improve riparian habitats and dramatically

increase steelhead trout populations.

Landowners were encouraged to replant with fire-resistant plants that were also good browse for wildlife. The quality of the watershed is now greatly improved. Landowners better understand their relationship with their surrounding environment and how to decrease the risk of such disasters in the future.



GEORGIA —
*Increasing timber
values and songbird
populations*

Landowner Charles E. Garrett, Sr., was recognized with the 1999 Certified Forest Steward Award for his outstanding management of Garrett Timbers, a 1,000-acre property in Berrien County, Georgia. The property has been in the Garrett family since 1857; Charles has managed it for 14 years. He has used a Forest Stewardship Plan for the last 5 or 6 years. Charles has increased the value of the timber on his land through much-needed thinning and burning and has provided habitat for declining species such as quail and fox squirrels. Songbird populations have increased by as much as 33 percent since his plan was prepared. In addition, Charles has taken measures to protect the wetlands that comprise 25 percent of his land. Charles says he likes having a Forest Stewardship Plan because “it is always better to see your land through someone else’s eyes.” Charles maintains an excellent working relationship with his State forester and is continuing to follow his plan.



KANSAS — *Integrating trees and forests
into prairie ecosystems*

The Bundleflower Plant and Wildlife Preserve, owned and managed by the Ruder family, demonstrates many ways of integrating trees and forests into prairie ecosystems. Work on Jim Ruder’s 160-acre preserve began in 1972 when he planted 3 acres of black walnut. Now it is a productive wildlife habitat that also hosts contemporary farming practices of the Great Plains. The preserve’s Forest Stewardship Plan and Conservation Plan were useful tools in designing the many improvements to the property. When asked whether he still uses these plans, Jim Ruder said, “I use them so much I have them memorized.” Jim found the expert advice he received during the preparation of these plans invaluable. The soils information was particularly useful in selecting the best tree species to plant on each site. He lamented the experience of a neighbor who did not have a plan and planted trees that were not suitable for the site chosen. “My neighbor would have saved valuable time, effort, and expense if he had had the benefit of expert advice that he would have received with a plan.”



SUCCESS STORIES...

PENNSYLVANIA — *Demonstrating good forestry*
George and Joan Freeman of Knox, Pennsylvania, own the 645-acre Freeman Tree Farm, which is an educational showplace of good forestry practices. Farm visitors can see how the owners met their objectives for growing timber and enhancing wildlife habitat at the crop tree demonstration areas. In conjunction with Clarion University and AmeriCorps' "Smiles" program, the Freemans provide urban and minority children with hands-on experience in the great outdoors. George Freeman says of the Forest Stewardship Program, "It helped me realize how important it is to look at all aspects of the farm, and to realize the great progress that can be made with minimal effort."

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

The USDA Forest Service administers the Forest Stewardship Program in partnership with State forestry agencies. Contact a State forestry agency for more information on the Forest Stewardship Program. A list of State contacts can be found on the National Association of State Foresters website.

National Association of State Foresters
444 N. Capitol St., NW - Suite 540
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: 202-624-5415
Fax: 202-614-5407
www.stateforesters.org

USDA Forest Service, Cooperative Forestry Staff
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090-6090
Phone: 202-205-1389
Fax: 202-205-1271
www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/

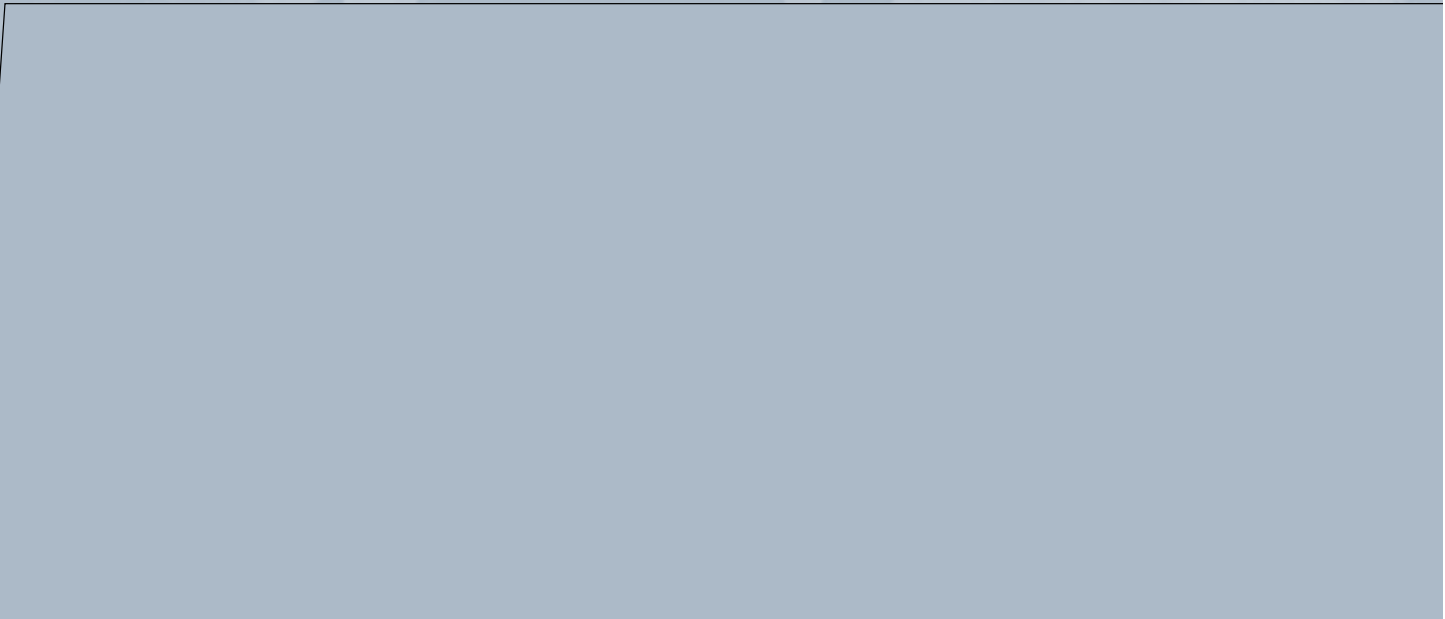
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For more information on cost-share programs, contact the following:

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, DC 20013
Phone: 202-720-3210
www.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA Farm Service Agency
Phone: 202-720-5237
www.fsa.usda.gov







United States
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Forest Service



Forest
Stewardship
Program

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