

At a Glance:
**Healthy Forests Reserve
Program**

May 2008

Overview

The Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP) is a voluntary program established for the purpose of restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems to: 1) promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, 2) improve biodiversity; and, 3) enhance carbon sequestration. Program implementation has been delegated by the Secretary of Agriculture to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The HFRP is authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, with a maximum enrollment of 2 million acres from 2004 through 2008. The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) reauthorizes the program for fiscal years 2009 through 2012.

“Safe Harbor” provisions of the Endangered Species Act will be made available to landowners enrolled in the HFRP who agree, for a specified period, to restore or improve their land for threatened or endangered species habitat. In exchange, they avoid future regulatory restrictions on the use of that land.

To be eligible, the land must be privately-owned and:

- restore, enhance, or measurably increase the likelihood of recovery of a threatened or endangered species;
- improve biological diversity; or
- increase carbon sequestration.

The HFRP provides financial assistance in the form of easement payments and cost-share for specific conservation actions completed by the landowner.

Land is enrolled through easements and cost-share agreements, and must have a restoration plan.

The cost effectiveness of each agreement or easement and associated restoration plans must maximize the environmental benefits per dollar expended.

Legislative Changes

The 2008 Farm Bill expands enrollment methods to include permanent easements and allows for 30-year contracts rather than easements for Tribes. Not more than 40 percent of program funding shall be used for cost-share agreements, and not more than 60 percent may be used for easements. The Bill provides \$9.75 million for each of fiscal years 2009 through 2012; funds made available for the program shall remain available until expended.

More Information

For more information and updates about the HFRP and other Farm Bill topics, please refer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Web site <http://www.usda.gov/farmbill> or the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web site <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/HFRP>.

