Farm Bill Requirement & Redesign Components:
STATE ASSESSMENTS & RESOURCE STRATEGIES
Final Guidance

State assessments and resource strategies are integral to the State and Private Forestry (S&PF) Redesign and required as an amendment to the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA), as enacted in the 2008 Farm Bill. This document provides national guidance to States to develop their state assessments and resource strategies.

There are three components to the assessment and planning required by the State and Private Forestry (S&PF) Redesign approach to identify priority forest landscape areas and highlight work needed to address national, regional, and state forest management priorities:

- **State-wide Assessment of Forest Resources**[1]—provides an analysis of forest conditions and trends in the state and delineates priority rural and urban forest landscape areas.
- **State-wide Forest Resource Strategy**[2]—provides long-term strategies for investing state, federal, and other resources to manage priority landscapes identified in the assessment, focusing where federal investment can most effectively stimulate or leverage desired action and engage multiple partners.
- **Annual Report on Use of Funds**[3]—describes how S&PF funds were used to address the assessment and strategy, including the leveraging of funding and resources through partnerships, for any given fiscal year.

Each State is required to complete a State Assessment and Resource Strategy within two years after enactment of the 2008 Farm Bill (June 18, 2008) to receive funds under CFAA.

State-wide Assessment of Forest Resources

To ensure that federal and state resources are being focused on important landscape areas with the greatest opportunity to address shared management priorities and achieve measurable outcomes, each state and territory will work collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders to develop a statewide forest

---

[1] Previously titled "State Forest Resource Assessment". The title was changed to reflect Farm Bill terminology

[2] Previously titled "State Response Plan". The title was changed to reflect Farm Bill terminology

[3] Previously titled "Annual Action Strategy". The title was changed to reflect Farm Bill terminology

resource assessment. The state forest resource assessment should provide a comprehensive analysis of the forest-related conditions, trends, threats, and opportunities within the state.

At a minimum, state forest resource assessments will:

- Provide an analysis of present and future forest conditions, trends, and threats on all ownerships in the state using publicly available information.
- Identify forest related threats, benefits, and services consistent with the S&PF Redesign national themes.
- Delineate priority rural and urban forest landscape areas to be addressed by the state resource strategy. States can also identify linkages between terrestrial and aquatic habitat, as appropriate.
- Work with neighboring States and governments to identify any multi-state areas that are a regional priority.

- Incorporate existing statewide plans including Wildlife Action Plans, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and address existing S&PF program planning requirements. States can also utilize relevant national and regional assessments as appropriate.

A combination of qualitative, quantitative, and geospatial data can be used in the statewide assessment to provide information relevant to key state issues and national themes. In addition, non-geospatial information can be used in combination with geospatial data to identify priorities. States may identify separate priority areas for different programs and issues.

Appendix B contains suggested guidance for identifying state and regional priority forest landscape areas.

State-wide Forest Resource Strategy

A state's forest resource strategy will provide a long-term, comprehensive, coordinated strategy for investing state, federal, and leveraged partner resources to address the management and landscape priorities identified in its assessment. The resource strategy should incorporate existing statewide forest and resource management plans and provide the basis for future program, agency, and partner coordination.

At a minimum, state resource strategies should:

- Outline long-term strategies for addressing priority landscapes identified in the state forest resource assessment and the following national themes and associated management objectives (the intent and policy implications of each of these national objectives are described in Appendix A):
    - o **Conserve Working Forest Lands:** conserving and managing working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses.

- Identify and conserve high priority forest ecosystems and landscapes.
- Actively and sustainably manage forests.
  - o *Protect Forests From Harm:* protect forests from threats, including catastrophic storms, flooding, insect or disease outbreak, and invasive species.
    - Restore fire-adapted lands and reduce risk of wildfire impacts.
    - Identify, manage and reduce threats to forest and ecosystem health.
  - o *Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests:* including air and water quality, soil conservation, biological diversity, carbon storage, and forest products, forestry-related jobs, production of renewable energy, and wildlife.
    - Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.
    - Improve air quality and conserve energy.
    - Assist communities in planning for and reducing wildfire risks.
    - Maintain and enhance the economic benefits and values of trees and forests.
    - Protect, conserve, and enhance wildlife and fish habitat.
    - Connect people to trees and forests, and engage them in environmental stewardship activities.
    - Manage and restore trees and forests to mitigate and adapt to global climate change.

- Describe how the state proposes to invest federal funding, along with other resources, to address state, regional, and national forest management priorities.

- Include a long-term timeline for project and program implementation.

- Identify partner and stakeholder involvement.

- Identify strategies for monitoring outcomes within priority forest landscape areas and how action will be revised when needed.

- Describe how the state's proposed activities will accomplish national State and Private Forestry program objectives and respond to specified performance measures and indicators.

- Describe how State and Private Forestry programs will be used to address priority landscape and management objectives.

- Incorporate existing statewide plans including Wildlife Action Plans, community wildfire protection plans, and address existing S&PF program planning requirements.

Annual Report on Use of Funds

The annual report should describe how the State used all S&PF program funding, for any given fiscal year. The annual report should describe specific actions taken within the fiscal year, under each program, to address the state assessment and resource strategy. The annual report should include a comprehensive budget with known contributions from all federal, state, and nongovernmental partners.

Additional Guidance

Coordination and Stakeholder/Public Involvement—State forestry agencies shall coordinate with the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee, State Technical Committee, the State wildlife agency, applicable Federal land management agencies such as the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, and State Urban Forestry Council to ensure that assessments and resource strategies address the rural-to-urban landscape continuum and identify opportunities for program coordination and integration. State forestry agencies should also involve other key partners, including Tribes and natural resource and related entities in their state to ensure that the state's assessment and strategy integrate, build upon, and complement other natural resource plans (e.g., State Wildlife Plans). This input is not necessary for the annual report.

In states where the lead agency for the Forest Legacy Program (FLP), or other CFAA program, is not the state forestry agency, state assessments should be developed in partnership with the state lead agency. In addition, the FLP section or other relevant sections, of the resource strategy should be developed by the state lead agency, even if it is not the state forestry agency and include all program-specific requirements.

Timeline and Updates—State forest resource assessments and resource strategies are to be completed no later than two years after enactment of the 2008 Farm Bill (June 18, 2008). Assessments and strategies shall be reviewed and updated at least every five years, or as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. Annual reports for a given fiscal year must be developed and submitted by the end of the first quarter of the next federal fiscal year.

Approval Process—State resource assessments and resource strategies will be approved by the State Forester, with final approval by the Secretary of Agriculture. Once approved by the Secretary, the State-wide assessment and State-wide resource strategy shall satisfy all relevant S&PF planning and assessment requirements. The annual report should be submitted through the Forest Region or Area, to the S&PF Deputy Chief.

In states where the lead agency for the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is not the state forestry agency, the state lead agency shall concur on all aspects of

assessments and resource strategies that pertain to the Forest Legacy Program, including the identification of Forest Legacy Areas. If the state assessment incorporates a state's Forest Legacy Assessment of Need, the approval process is that which is required for the Forest Legacy Program.

Grant Narrative—States are encouraged to use a single annual grant narrative, which outlines actions to address the state assessment and resource strategy, for all S&PF programs that are authorized to receive funding under a consolidated grant option.

Forest Service Support—Each geographic region and the islands shall have an S&PF point of contact to assist states with development of assessments and resource strategies and to coordinate with Forest Service program staff.

This document describes the national strategic objectives that tier to the three Redesign themes. The descriptions include suggestions on how states may address the objectives in their assessments and resource strategies. There is also a list of potential data layers that could be used in the assessments for addressing each objective. States will likely have unique state or regional issues that may also be addressed in their assessments and strategies.

National Theme: Conserve Working Forest Lands

Identify and conserve high priority forest ecosystems and landscapes.

In many parts of the United States, forests and other open space are being fragmented and converted to development. Forestry agencies can work with partners, stakeholders and communities to identify and protect priority forest landscapes through land acquisition, conservation easements, and land use policies. Forestry agencies can also provide technical assistance to communities to help them strategically plan for and conserve forests and other open space.

Factors contributing to loss include residential, commercial and industrial development; expansion of utility infrastructure and transportation networks; and planning, zoning, and policies that favor conversion. Consequences include the outright loss of public benefits associated with forests or the marginalization of those values provided by contiguous forested landscapes. Fragmentation also includes "parcelization," or the fracturing of large singular ownerships into numerous smaller ones.

Assessments and strategies should attempt to identify, protect and connect ecologically important forest landscapes, and open space, thus maintaining a green infrastructure, particularly around and within areas of, population growth and development.

Potential data layers: Green infrastructure composite, protected areas, including Forest Legacy Areas, open space conservation plans, community forests, development risk, forest fragmentation, roads and other infrastructure.

Actively and sustainably manage forests.

Forestry agencies and partners can provide landowner assistance and incentives to help keep working forests working. Providing forestry assistance to landowners can improve the economics of, and encourage sustainable forest management. In urban and suburban areas, forest agencies can assist communities to develop sustainable forest management and green infrastructure programs.

Assessments and strategies can identify viable and high potential working forest landscape where landowner assistance programs, such as Forest Stewardship can be targeted to yield the most benefit in terms of economic opportunities and ecosystem services. Assessment and strategies can also identify opportunities for multi-landowner, landscape scale planning and landowner aggregation for access to emerging ecosystem service markets.

Potential data layers: Spatial Analysis Project (high potential for Forest Stewardship), forest cover

---

Restore fire-adapted lands and reduce risk of wildfire impacts.

The strategic management of wildfires is crucial to the health of our nation's forests, the safety of our citizens and the contributions of forests to our economy. Assessments should identify areas where management can significantly reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire while enhancing multiple associated forest values and services.

Many forest ecosystems are dependent on fire for their health and sustainability. Decades of fire suppression and a changing climate have disrupted natural fire regimes, resulting in fuel buildup, loss of biological diversity, changed species composition, and loss of some fire-dependent species. Assessments should identify areas where these effects of fire exclusion can feasibly be mitigated or countered through sound management, particularly where there are opportunities for federal, state and community partnerships. Resource strategies should identify appropriate treatment strategies for priority landscapes, including the use of fire as a management tool.

Potential data layers: Wildfire risk

Identify, manage and reduce threats to forest and ecosystem health.

A healthy forest landscape has the capacity for renewal and for recovery from a wide range of disturbances, while continuing to provide public benefits and ecosystem services. Threats to forest health include insects, disease, invasive plant and animal species, air pollution, and climate change.

Assessments should identify high value forest landscape areas that are especially vulnerable to existing or potential, forest health risk factors, where forest management practices are most likely to prevent and mitigate impacts. Assessments should also identify areas where management could successfully restore impacted forests.

Resource strategies should include feasible long term strategies for addressing forest health risks and opportunities within important forest landscape areas.

Potential data layers: Forest health risk

National Theme: Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

---

Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.

Forests and forestry practices can help protect, restore, and sustain water quality, water flows, and watershed health. Healthy urban and rural forested watersheds absorb rainfall and snow melt, slow storm runoff, recharge aquifers, sustain stream flows, and filter pollutants.

Assessments should identify watersheds where continued forest conservation and management is important to the future supply of clean municipal drinking water, or where restoration or protection activities will improve or restore a critical water source. Resource strategies should include actions for managing and conserving these priority watersheds for water quality and supply, and other ecosystem services.

Potential data layers: Priority watersheds, water quantity and quality by source, drinking water

---

Improve air quality and conserve energy.
Urban and exurban forest cover, including agroforests can improve air quality, reduce energy consumption and produce biomass for energy production. Assessments should identify areas where management or restoration of the urban or exurban forest canopy will have significantly positive and measurable impact on air quality and produce substantial energy savings. **Potential data layers:** Impervious surfaces, heat islands, population density, non-attainment areas, canopy cover, ozone concentration

Assist communities in planning for and reducing wildfire risks.
Communities play an essential role in reducing the risks of catastrophic wildfire. State & Private Forestry programs assist communities in identifying wildfire risks, developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs), and promoting FIREWISE and other risk reducing policies and actions. . Some communities are especially prone to loss of life and property from wildfire. Local or state laws, regulations and ordinances, landowner attitudes and priorities, and public policies all play important roles in managing fire risk near communities. Assessments should identify communities where State and Private programs can substantially mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfire occurrence and associated risks to human safety and property. Assessments should incorporate existing CWPPs and identify communities in especially vulnerable areas that need a CWPP. Resource strategies should include a plan for effectively addressing those communities that are most at risk. **Potential data layers:** Wildland-urban interface, Existing CWPPs, fire potential

Maintain and enhance the economic benefits and values of trees and forests.
Assessments should identify forest landscape areas where there is a real, near term potential to access and supply traditional, non-timber, and/or emerging markets such as those for biomass or ecosystem services. These might be areas where necessary infrastructure currently exists, is planned or developing, where group certification of landowners has created market supply aggregation potential, or where retention and management of forest cover presents a money saving alternative to an engineered fix – such as a water filtration facility. Strengthening and developing new market opportunities for forest products and benefits provide incentives for forest stewardship and conservation. **Potential data layers:** Biomass potential, site productivity, existing or planned mills and other forestry infrastructure, Biomass energy facilities, CROP areas, municipal water supply intakes

Protect, conserve, and enhance wildlife and fish habitat.
Protection, conservation, and restoration of forested wildlife habitat are critical to maintaining and enhancing the rich biodiversity of our nation. Major threats to fish and wildlife habitat include the patchwork of public-private ownership, threats associated with urbanization, and uncharacteristic wildfire. Assessments and resource strategies should identify forest landscapes that represent or contribute to viable wildlife habitats (contiguous or connected), contain high species richness, endemism, and/or that represent core habitat for focal conservation species (i.e. species of concern, threatened and endangered species or keystone species that are representative of a healthy ecosystem). Assessments and resource strategies should incorporate State Wildlife Action Plans. Resource strategies should include actions for conserving and enhancing habitat attributes in priority landscape areas. **Potential data layers:** Threatened and endangered species habitat, State Wildlife Action Plan data

Connect people to trees and forests, and engage them in environmental stewardship activities.
Our nation's federal, state, urban and private forests are the natural backyards for many communities and serve as society's connection to nature. Assessments and resource strategies can attempt to conserve and enhance a green infrastructure that effectively connects people with their natural environment. Resource strategies can include programs that provide opportunities for children, teens and adults to recreate while gaining an appreciation for the importance of forests and open space with respect to the health, security and well-being of society. **Potential data layers:** Census data, recreation and trail networks, hunting and fishing areas, cultural and heritage sites

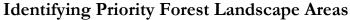| **Manage and restore trees and forests to mitigate and adapt to global climate change.** |
|---|
| America's forests offset a significant portion of the nation's annual carbon emissions. Additional climate change mitigation benefits could be achieved through partnerships and management measures. These measures include supporting the development of markets for carbon offsets, utilizing woody biomass for energy, wood product substitution, and promoting tree growth in urban areas. Assessments should identify opportunities for promoting carbon emissions offsets through forestry.

The important benefits that forests provide, such as biodiversity, wildlife habitat, and water storage and flows are affected by climate change. Forest range, type and composition are projected to change significantly– with corresponding changes in wildlife habitat, biodiversity, water flows, and fire regimes.

Assessments should consider how climate change will affect important public benefits from forests. Resource strategies should attempt to maintain and enhance resilient and connected forest ecosystems that will continue to provide public benefits in a changing climate.

Potential data layers: Climate change modeling such as the Climate Change Atlas, Northern and Southern Forest Futures forecast data |

Suggested Guidance for State Assessments

State forest resource assessments will identify, describe, and spatially define forest landscape areas where forestry program outreach and activity will be emphasized and coordinated. Establishment of these priority areas is intended to (1) enable the efficient, strategic, and focused use of limited program resources; (2) address current state and national resource management priorities; and (3) produce the most benefit in terms of critical forest resource values and public benefits. This component of a state's assessment should be geospatially based.

The geospatial analysis to delineate priority forest landscape areas may include at least one data layer that addresses each of the national objectives:

o **Conserve Working Forest Lands:** conserving and managing working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses.
- Identify and conserve high priority forest ecosystems and landscapes.
- Actively and sustainably manage forests.

o **Protect Forests From Harm:** protect forests from threats, including catastrophic storms, flooding, insect or disease outbreak, and invasive species.
- Restore fire-adapted lands and reduce risk of wildfire impacts.
- Identify, manage and reduce threats to forest and ecosystem health.

o **Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests:** including air and water quality, soil conservation, biological diversity, carbon storage, and forest products, forestry-related jobs, production of renewable energy, and wildlife.
- Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.
- Improve air quality and conserve energy.
- Assist communities in planning for and reducing wildfire risks.
- Maintain and enhance the economic benefits and values of trees and forests.
- Protect, conserve, and enhance wildlife and fish habitat.
- Connect people to trees and forests, and engage them in environmental stewardship activities.
- Manage and restore trees and forests to mitigate and adapt to global climate change.

Regional and multi-state analyses that delineate multi-state priority landscape areas, where states can share resources to address regional threats and opportunities, are strongly encouraged. In addition, priority landscape areas may include urban areas and non-forested lands, such as grasslands, agricultural lands and riparian areas, where agroforestry, afforestation, or reforestation will produce environmental benefits.

States are encouraged to draw from existing data sources and layers, including those provided by the National Assessment or developed for the Forest Stewardship Spatial Analysis Project, regional forest resource assessments, Forest Legacy Assessments of Need, and State Wildlife Action Plans as technically valid and appropriate. A state's geospatial assessment can include one or more weighted overlay analyses that delineate priority landscape areas. A state may choose to conduct separate analyses to address specific resource management or unique program-related questions, or use analyses already completed for individual programs, such as those completed for the Forest Stewardship Spatial Analysis Project or the Southern Forest Resource Assessment.

In order to facilitate inter-state and multi-state analyses and data summaries, data used in state assessments should be at a scale of 1:100,000 or better and overlay analyses should be conducted at the 30-meter cell size or finer. For example, states may wish to consider using one-meter or parcel-based analysis units in urban areas. A state's forest resource assessment should include a description of all spatial analysis methods and logic and one or more maps that identify priority forest landscape areas. States should identify information gaps as part of their assessment process. These geospatial information gaps will help focus future data development work at regional and national levels.

It is expected that states have important information critical to assessing forest resource conditions, trends, and benefits that is not available geospatially. In addition to the core issues or themes listed above, states should consider other environmental and social factors as appropriate—such as cultural resources, demographic opportunities, poverty, public health, crime, recreation, and air quality.