

Using Forest Legacy to Protect Native Hardwood Forests in Iowa

Protecting Working Forests and Partnerships in the Heartland

The Challenge

Iowa is a rural State of over 36 million acres, with a land base that is dominated by private production agriculture. Approximately 2.7 million acres of upland and bottomland hardwood forests is on sites often too steep or too wet to farm. Recently, there has been a dramatic shift in Iowa from disregarding these forests toward a demand for forested housing tracts and recreational lands. This demand is causing land values to rise, and prices now exceed those paid for high quality cropland. Forested tract development is accelerating forest fragmentation, threatening watershed protection, and degrading wildlife habitat.

The Solution

Beginning in 2001, the Iowa Forest Legacy program started identifying large forested tracts that border the State's limited Federal, State, and local public lands for protection. Iowa's active Forest Stewardship Committee members, along with Iowa Department of Natural Resources field foresters, seek landowner applications annually. The Forest Legacy Program has established conservation easements as a viable tool in Iowa, which has enhanced landowner commitment to forest stewardship.

Resulting Benefits

- Each of Iowa's four major State forests has developed an acquisition plan that identifies prioritized neighboring private forests that could be protected through fee title or conservation easement acquisitions.
- Bargain sales that are now being pursued offer opportunities to stretch limited Federal, State, and local funds to protect critical private forests bordering public lands.



(Left to right) Bob Walton of the Dubuque County Conservation Board, landowner Cliff Waller, and Denny Michel of the Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau are just a small part of the partnership necessary to accomplish land protection in Iowa. (Photo credit: Iowa Department of Natural Resources)

Highlights of Iowa's Forest Legacy Program

- Five properties totaling 867 acres and valued at \$1,109,000 have been protected with conservation easements, using \$765,671 in Forest Legacy funds.
- A key property within the boundaries of Loess Hills State Forest in western Iowa has been acquired using \$131,510 in Forest Legacy funds. The 255-acre tract is valued at \$608,000.
- One of the tracts in northeastern Iowa protected with a conservation easement connects Yellow River State Forest and Effigy Mounds National Monument, while two other tracts protect unique ice caves and bluff lands along the upper Mississippi River.
- The Whitewater tract conservation easement protects 417 acres of the White Water Canyon, the canyon features 200-foot walls of Hopkinton Dolomite.
- An additional seven tracts totaling nearly 3,500 acres of working forests have been proposed for funding.

Sharing Success

The Forest Legacy conservation easement acquisition on the Whitewater tract from the Waller Family trust has led to additional conservation efforts in the county. The Dubuque County Conservation Board and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation have raised \$1 million for fee title acquisitions on other properties to open White Water Canyon for public access.

The Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program helps landowners enhance their efforts to promote forest stewardship through partnerships with landowners and forestry experts.



USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry

For more information, contact:
Kathryn P. Maloney, Area Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Phone: 610-557-4103
Email: kmaloney@fs.fed.us

Deirdre Raimo, Forest Legacy
271 Mast Road
Durham, NH 03824
Phone: 603-868-7695
Email: draimo@fs.fed.us