

Healthy Forests Reserve Program Longleaf Pine Habitat

Overview

The Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP) is a voluntary program that encourages landowners in South Carolina to restore, enhance, and protect forestland resources on private land through easements (permanent or 30 year) and 10-year cost share agreements. The objectives of the HFRP are to:

- Promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA);
- Improve plant and animal biodiversity;
- Enhance carbon sequestration.

Expected Benefits

In South Carolina, the HFRP is expected to promote a suite of species, including the following threatened and endangered species:

- Red-cockaded Woodpecker
- Flatwoods salamander
- Smooth Coneflower
- Pondberry
- Canby's Dropwort
- American Chaffseed
- Pine or Gopher Snake
- Painted Bunting
- Florida Pine Snake
- Eastern Fox Squirrel
- Brown-headed Nuthatch
- Mimic glass lizard
- American Kestrel

- Gopher Tortoise
- Southern Hog-nose Snake
- Pine-barrens Tree Frog
- Timber Rattlesnake
- Eastern Diamond Back Rattlesnake
- Northern Bobwhite

These species are expected to benefit as a result of improved pine forest habitat conditions, implementation of forestry best management practices, and improved water quality through better management of riparian areas.



How HFRP Works

Persons interested in entering into an easement or cost share agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) must apply at their local NRCS office.

If an application is approved for funding, the NRCS will pay the participant 100% of the fair market value minus fair market value encumbered by the easement of their land for a permanent easement and 75%

for a 30-year easement. Those accepted for 10-year cost share agreements are only eligible for cost share payments.

The NRCS will work with participants to develop a plan to restore, enhance, maintain and manage the land for the benefit of federally listed species, federal candidate species and State species of concern. This plan becomes the basis of the easement or agreement and cost share payments are made based on the completion of the practices in the plan.

The NRCS will pay 100% cost share on all practices for permanent easements, 75% cost share on 30-year easements and 50% cost share for 10-year cost share agreements.

Landowner Eligibility

To be eligible to enroll an easement or contract in the HFRP, a landowner must:

- Be the owner of eligible land for which enrolment is sought;
- Agree to provide all information to the NRCS to determine eligibility;

Eligible Lands

The following criteria are specific to the 2011 HFRP Program in South Carolina. Eligible lands must be part of the historic longleaf ecosystem located in all or portions of the following counties:

- Aiken, Lexington, Richland, Kershaw, Chesterfield, Marlboro, Darlington, Lee, Sumter, Calhoun, Orangeburg, Bamberg, Barnwell, Allendale, Hampton, Jasper, Beaufort, Colleton, Dorchester, Charleston, Berkeley, Clarendon, Florence, Dillon, Marion, Horry, Georgetown, Williamsburg, Edgefield and Saluda.
- For the 2011 sign up South Carolina NRCS has identified the Salkahatchie Watershed, the Ace Basin, and the area immediately surrounding the Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife refuge as a priority area.
- Be capable of supporting habitat for selected species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) or candidate species under consideration for listing under ESA.
- Can include some adjacent lands (buffer areas) that surround suitable habitat for listed species.

Ineligible Lands

The following lands are not eligible for the HFRP:

- Lands owned by a government entity;
- Land subject to an easement that protects wildlife habitat (such as WRP and CRP.);
- Lands where it would be unlikely that restoration would be successful (hazardous material sites, etc.)

For More Information

If you need more information about HFRP, please contact your local USDA Service Center or your local Soil and Water Conservation District. Information is also available on the internet at: <http://www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>. <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>

Note: This is not intended to be a definitive interpretation of legislation. Rather, it is preliminary and may change as USDA develops implementation policies and procedures.

