

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **CONTACT:**

Shaun Worley, Programs Specialist

PHONE: (803) 253-3512 EMAIL: [shaun.worley@sc.usda.gov](mailto:shaun.worley@sc.usda.gov)

## **Healthy Forests Reserve Program Sign Up Announced in South Carolina**

*Eligible Landowners Encouraged to Apply April 1-May 1, 2011*

**Columbia, SC, March 24, 2011--** The Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP) is a voluntary program that encourages landowners 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.

This is the first time this program has been offered in the Palmetto State, and SC NRCS has identified the Salkehatchie Watershed, ACE (Ashepoo-Combahee-Edisto) Basin, and the area immediately surrounding the Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge as priority areas. 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.

If an application is accepted for funding, NRCS conservationists will work with participants to develop a plan to restore, enhance, maintain, and manage the land, and this plan will become the basis of the easement or agreement and cost share payments will be made based on the completion of the practices in the plan. 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 agreements.

To be eligible, landowners must be the owner of the land for which enrollment is sought, and they must agree to provide all information to their local NRCS conservationist to determine eligibility.

Interested landowners should contact their local NRCS soon in order to meet the May 1<sup>st</sup> application deadline. Additional information on the HFRP, including a list of the species of concern and a map of the priority area, is located at [www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov) or contact your local USDA NRCS office. USDA-NRCS is an equal opportunity employer and provider.