

Forest Stewardship Program National Standards and Guidelines



Revised
October 2015



USDA Forest Service
State & Private Forestry
Cooperative Forestry

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Forest Stewardship Program

National Standards and Guidelines

Program Purpose

The purpose of the Forest Stewardship Program is to encourage the long-term stewardship of important State and private forest landscapes, by assisting landowners to more actively manage their forest and related resources.

The Program provides assistance to owners of forest land and other lands where good stewardship, including agroforestry applications, will enhance and sustain the long term productivity of multiple forest resources and produce healthy, resilient forest landscapes. Special attention is given to landowners in landscape areas identified by State Forest Action Plans and those new to, or in the early stages of managing their land in a way that embodies multi-resource stewardship principles. The program provides landowners with professional planning and technical assistance they need to keep their land in a productive and healthy condition. Assistance offered through the Forest Stewardship Program also provides landowners with enhanced access to other USDA conservation programs, forest certification programs, and forest product and ecosystem service markets.

A successful Forest Stewardship Program will create a flow of public benefits such as air and water quality protection, the provision of wildlife habitat, and address key issues in State Forest Action Plans. Often efforts will focus in priority areas of the State guided by a landscape-scale stewardship plan that encompasses multiple ownerships under the same plan to address resource needs over a defined time period. These plans are tailored to target specific demographics of the region and utilize messages and approaches to increase the likelihood of successfully engaging landowners who have not previously participated in assistance programs. These partnerships also place an emphasis on measuring results and adapting the overall plan as necessary.

The Forest Stewardship Program is authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 2103A. These standards and guidelines are intended to assist State and Territorial partners with the implementation of this authority and to provide supplemental guidance, as appropriate, to achieve intended program outcomes.

The Forest Stewardship Program and associated outreach efforts must adhere to the USDA non-discrimination policy: *USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.*

Eligible Program Activities, Participants and Related Requirements

Forest Stewardship Program:

The Forest Stewardship Program is funded through an annual appropriation to an Expanded Budget Line Item (EBLI) that includes Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act Section 5: **Forest Stewardship Program** and Section 3: **Rural Forestry Assistance**.

Activities authorized for the Forest Stewardship Program (Section 5) are related to the delivery of information through landowner education and professional technical assistance (including the development of multi-resource Forest Stewardship and other management plans), through State Foresters, to eligible nonindustrial private forest landowners. Guidance for the delivery of education, technical and planning assistance is provided above and by the US Forest Service Manual, Chapters 3210 and 3250.

For purposes of this program, nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) land includes rural lands, including wildland urban interface, with existing tree cover, or suitable for growing trees, that is owned or leased long-term by any private individual, group, association, corporation, Indian tribe or other private legal entity, such as Alaska Native corporations.

Private nonindustrial forest lands managed under existing Federal, State, or private sector financial and technical assistance programs are eligible for assistance under the Forest Stewardship Program. Forest resource management activities on such forest lands must meet, or be expanded or enhanced to meet the requirements of the Forest Stewardship Program.

Participation in the Forest Stewardship Program is voluntary. Landowners can participate in the program in a variety of ways:

- Technical assistance
- Educational programs
- Agree to manage their property according to an approved Forest Stewardship Management Plan. Landowners also understand that they may be asked to participate in future management plan monitoring activities.

Rural Forestry Assistance Program:

Rural Forestry Assistance (Section 3) includes State Forestry Assistance, which also authorizes the US Forest Service to provide financial assistance to State Foresters (or equivalent State officials) for the following:

1. Develop genetically improved tree seeds;
2. Develop and contract for the development of field arboretums, greenhouses, and tree nurseries, in cooperation with a State, to facilitate production and distribution of tree seeds and seedlings in States where the Secretary of Agriculture determines that there is an inadequate capacity to carry out present and future reforestation needs;
3. Procure, produce, and distribute tree seeds and trees for the purpose of establishing forests, windbreaks, shelterbelts, woodlots, and other plantings;

4. Plant tree seeds and seedlings on non-Federal forest lands suitable for the production of timber, recreation, and for other benefits associated with the growing of trees;
5. Plan, organize, and implement measures on non-Federal forest lands, including thinning, prescribed burning, and other silvicultural activities designed to increase the quantity and improve the quality of trees and other vegetation, fish and wildlife habitat, and water yielded therefrom; and
6. Protect or improve soil fertility on non-Federal forest lands and the quality, quantity, and timing of water yields therefrom.

For the purposes of the Rural Forestry Assistance authorities, eligible non-Federal forest land includes State, municipal, or private lands in a forested condition and/or capable of producing timber, recreation, and other benefits associated with the growing of trees.

As with other aspects of the Forest Stewardship Program, grants are normally awarded to State Foresters or equivalent State officials. State Foresters may use funds for sub-grants to partners or contractors to carry out practices. The US Forest Service may direct grants to partners on a State's behalf. Funds cannot be used to directly "cost-share" individual forest management practices with individual landowners. Funds cannot be used for real-estate transaction work associated with the acquisition of conservation easements as this would be an augmentation of Forest Legacy Program and other easement acquisition programs.

Reforestation, Nurseries, and Genetic Resources Activities

Reforestation, Nurseries, and Genetic Resources (RNGR) provides technical assistance and technology transfer through State Foresters (or equivalent State officials) to growers and users of native plants for conservation, reforestation, and restoration purposes. RNGR activities focus on:

1. Facilitating the production and distribution of genetically appropriate native grass, forb, and tree seed and seedlings;
2. Ensuring that seeds and seedlings deployed in reforestation and restoration efforts improve ecosystem health and enhance and sustain the long-term productivity of timber and non-timber forest resources to help meet future public demand and provide the environmental benefits that result;
3. Ensuring that forest regeneration or reforestation assistance is available when needed to promote sustainable long-term resource productivity; and
4. Enhancing public benefits from private forests, including air and water quality, soil conservation, biological diversity, carbon storage, renewable energy production, forest products, forestry-related jobs, wildlife habitat, and recreation opportunities by providing seed or seedlings needed to carry out these activities.

These activities are coordinated and delivered through *Reforestation, Nurseries and Genetic Resources* (RNGR) Team and the National Seed Lab according to guidance provided in the US Forest Service Manual: Chapters 3220 and 3230.

State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committees

Each State Forester or equivalent State official must establish a State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee, administered by the State Forester or designee thereof (162113(b)) Section 19 of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA). The Committee shall include, to the extent practicable, but not limited to, individuals representing the following:

- US Forest Service (National Forest System, State & Private Forestry or other branches)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- Cooperative Extension Service
- NRCS State Technical Committee
- Local Government
- Soil and Water Conservation District
- Consulting Forester
- Forest Products Industry
- Forest Landowner
- Land-Trust Organizations
- Conservation Organization
- State Fish and Wildlife Agency
- Tribes

Existing State committees may serve as the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee if their membership includes the interests specified above.

The Committee must be active and ongoing to address statewide Forest Stewardship Program implementation issues, opportunities, and concerns and to support overall program coordination. The Committee should meet at least once per year to be considered active and ongoing. The Committee's primary functions are:

- To provide advice and recommendations to the State Forester concerning implementation of the Forest Stewardship Program, and other associated landowner assistance and cost-share programs;
- To provide assistance and recommendations concerning the development, implementation and updating of the State Forest Action Plan;
- To provide assistance and recommendations concerning priority issues and geographies for focused program delivery and to encourage Landscape Stewardship; and
- To provide advice and recommendations concerning the Forest Legacy Program.

State Foresters are encouraged to actively pursue partnerships with Committee and non-committee agencies, organizations and institutions interested in forest resource management and conservation.

State Forest Action Plans

State Forest Action Plans (Section 2A), as authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA), replaces Forest Stewardship Spatial Analysis Project (SAP) that was previously required by the CFAA. There are three required components for the State Forest Action Plans in order to receive Federal funding:

- State-wide assessment of forest resources: provides an analysis of forest conditions and trends in the State, threats to forest lands and resources, delineates areas or regions of the State that are a priority, and any multi-State priorities;
- State-wide forest resource strategy: provides long-term strategies for investing State, Federal, and other resources to address threats to forest resources and manage priority landscapes identified in the assessment, focusing where Federal investment can most effectively stimulate or leverage desired action and engage multiple partners; and
- Annual report on use of funds: 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 completed a State-wide assessment and resource strategy, collectively referred to as *State Forest Action Plans*, in 2010. The State Forest Action Plan must be reviewed at the five-year point and updated at least every 10 years (but can be modified or updated by the State forester sooner). Refer to the national guidance for State Forest Action Plans for more specific requirements.

A major component of the State Forest Action Plan is a spatial analysis of forest resource management threats and opportunities, to delineate priority areas (Forest Stewardship Program important forest resource areas) for delivering State & Private Forestry programs. The Forest Stewardship important forest resource areas map should be included in the State Forest Action Plan (and when updates are made to this map/geospatial data, the State Forest Action Plan should also be modified accordingly).

State Forest Action Plans must be guided by the following national priorities and objectives and delineate important forest resource areas where program activity will be emphasized.

State & Private Forestry National Priorities and Objectives

The State Forest Action Plans should address the national priorities (codified in the CFAA) and associated management objectives:

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.

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.

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.

- 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.

Beginning in 2014, each revised State Forest Action Plan must include a chapter titled “Relationship to National Priorities.” The chapter should illustrate how States are specifically addressing the above priorities. A common set of performance measures is being developed in 2015/2016 so quantitative information in the chapter can be summarized at the national level, but until those measures are formally adopted States should complete the chapter in narrative fashion only.

State and Territory Forest Stewardship program administrators and Individual Forest Stewardship Plan and Landscape Stewardship Plan preparers should consider priority issues and relevant strategies identified in the State’s Forest Action Plan to the extent possible when developing outreach and education programs, providing routine technical assistance, and preparing plans.

Technical and Planning Assistance

Landscape Stewardship

Not all forest conservation issues and priorities can be effectively addressed by working with individual landowners at the single parcel level. To achieve greater public benefit and to address widespread or common issues across multiple land ownerships on larger geographic areas, the Forest Stewardship Program should work with multiple stakeholders at the community or landscape level.

Landscape Stewardship is an all lands approach to forest conservation that works across multiple ownerships to address issues and opportunities identified in each State’s Forest Action Plan. Landscape Stewardship also encompasses an important strategic goal for the US Forest Service related to open space conservation. The Agency is striving to discernibly increase the connectivity of key landscapes and to retain working forests. Landscape stewardship projects are collaborative efforts to achieve desired social, economic, and environmental objectives shared by the stakeholders through community and landowner engagement. Landscape Stewardship projects, associated approaches and planning, can involve collaboration with community, municipal, county, State, and Federal agency officials; corporate landowners; non-governmental entities; and nonindustrial private forest landowners. Through landscape stewardship approaches that work with multiple partners on all lands, the technical assistance provided can lead to greater conservation outcomes and public benefit.

Resources available in technical and planning assistance can come in a variety of forms that are best described in ascending order of their level of engagement with individual landowners. All forms of technical assistance can be delivered under the umbrella of a landscape stewardship approach that identifies an all lands strategy and priority areas for program delivery. At the most basic level, landowners may be reached as part of a larger community that receives the benefits of targeted outreach and education. A second level of landowner engagement occurs through a routine technical assist; consultations with individual landowners that do not immediately result in the creation of a plan. Increasing levels of consultation and planning with individual landowners result in practice plans, forest management plans, and Forest Stewardship Management Plans. As encouraged under the landscape stewardship approach, Forest Stewardship Management Plans can be written to cover multiple ownerships while still covering common elements. These forms of assistance are fully explained in the following sections:

Landowner Outreach and Education

States and Territories are encouraged to focus outreach efforts in important forest resource areas and priorities defined in the State's Forest Action Plan. Within these areas the Forest Stewardship Program should be accessible to all landowners and community stakeholders as appropriate. In addition, outreach efforts should:

- Identify and address underserved communities and groups;
- Balance the needs of current participants and potential future participants;
- Coordinate with other landowner assistance programs to avoid duplication and support ongoing efforts as appropriate;
- Identify opportunities for landscape-scale and/or multiple landowner planning and technical assistance delivery, especially where ownerships are relatively small;
- Promote and foster the development of peer-to-peer landowner networks;
- Consider collaboration with other non-Federal lands within the important forest resource areas; and
- Develop appropriate landowner outreach and social marketing strategies for different/diverse landowner groups and local resource management concerns, including: the use of demographic data to segment landowners according to interest and responsiveness, tailoring messages and the right service deliverer to these different segments, identifying and focusing on priority landscapes over multiple years and employing multiple interactions with landowners; and continuous evaluation of effectiveness in order to improve success over time.

Routine Technical Assists

The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act authorizes the provision of technical assistance to private landowners. Specifically the CFAA authorizes:

- Assisting landowners to implement forest management activities, including the use of existing technical and financial assistance programs where appropriate.
- Educating landowners about forest management practices and issues.

States are encouraged to deliver routine technical assistance/advice regarding, among other things, the evaluation of timber sales, site preparation, tree planting, invasive species, wildlife habitat, and forest health issues.

Documentation Requirements

Routine Technical Assistance provided by professional forest resource managers, and State and local resource entities (either public or private) should be documented to ensure consistent accomplishment reporting. State records consisting of landowner case files or databases of all those receiving routine technical assistance should be established to include:

- Landowner contact information
- Date
- Recommendations made and/or resulting accomplishments
- Utilization of other programs

Landscape Stewardship Plans

A *Landscape Forest Stewardship Management Plan* is a multi-landowner Forest Stewardship Plan written to address landscape-level issues across all ownerships. As with individual Forest Stewardship Management Plans, the Landscape Forest Stewardship Plan preparer(s) should consider, describe, and evaluate resource elements present and consider their importance to the landscape conservation priorities and issues. A listing of Plan Elements to consider appears on page 14 of this guidance document. Landscape Forest Stewardship Management Plans should also address:

- Priority conservation issues relevant to the landscape as discussed in the State's Forest Action Plan.
- Opportunities for collaboration across all land ownerships, including National Forest System lands, other Federal land agencies, State, municipal, or non-government organizations.
- Opportunities for connecting existing and future individual Forest Stewardship Management Plans within the landscape to the issues, recommendations, and approaches described in the Landscape Forest Stewardship Management Plan.
- Desired outcomes for the conservation issues of concern in the landscape.
- Opportunities to leverage other Federal, State, local and private conservation programs.

Though there are common elements to consider in plans it is important to note that projects can take on many different approaches, scales, and issues. For example, the Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine cuts across a large number of States but deals with a single species and very specific habitat. The Blue Mountains project in Oregon deals with one confined area of the State on Federal and private land aimed primarily at fuels reduction. Other projects may focus on a watershed with multiple owners in two States and address multiple resource issues. It is important to encourage flexibility as a way to reinforce that on-the-ground results are the top priority. To better understand how to create a Landscape Stewardship Plan, download the [Landscape Stewardship Guide](#).

Management Plans

Practice Plans

Practice plans are management plans for a single stand or area of a tract, particular management concern, or landowner area of interest. These plans are valuable in addressing more immediate landowner needs and can lead to more comprehensive planning in the future. The plan can include small incidental areas (example: Special Management Zones) associated with the stand or area of interest. A practice plan is not generally developed for an entire tract unless the tract is small and/or supports one timber type that will be managed as a single parcel. Practice plans are often used to document existing conditions and make management recommendations as required by Federal or State financial assistance programs.

Plan Criteria

Each practice plan should be prepared by a professional forest resource manager and include the:

- Landowner's and plan writer's contact information;
- Property identification and location information;
- Landowner's objectives;
- Description of existing site conditions;
- Listing of any recent management activities;
- Detailed management recommendations; and
- Detailed map of the property.

Forest Management Plans

Forest management plans create opportunities for landowners to meet their forestry objectives. These plans generally cover an entire ownership, but are less comprehensive than Forest Stewardship Management Plans. The primary focus of the plan is to provide forest management information and recommendations.

Plan Criteria

A management plan will include several key elements to help landowners make good decisions about forest management. Management plans should be prepared by a professional forest resource manager and should include:

- The landowner's and plan writer's contact information;
- The property identification and location information;
- A listing of the landowner's stated goals and objectives;
- Detailed forest stand conditions;
- Detailed recommended practices; and
- A detailed map of the property.

Forest Stewardship Management Plans

A Forest Stewardship Management Plan serves as the foundation for engaging forest landowners in a plan that addresses individual landowner objectives while adhering to National and State Forest Stewardship Management Plan guidelines. State guidelines must consider the [NASF](#)

[*Principles and Guides for a Well-Managed Forest*](#). A general outline for plans, actions and progress, as relating to these principles, can be found in [*NASF's A Stewardship Handbook*](#).

Plan Criteria

All Forest Stewardship Management Plans must:

- Be prepared or verified as meeting the minimum standards of a Forest Stewardship Management Plan by a professional resource manager, and be approved by the State Forester or a representative of the State Forester.
- Document authorship.
- Include landowner information.
- Include location and plan maps.
- Clearly State landowner objectives.
- Describe current forest condition.
- Describe desired forest condition.
- Include practices and activities aimed at reaching the desired forest condition or condition class.
- Document a feasible strategy and timeline for practice and activity implementation.
- Describe any suggested monitoring activities to be done by the forester or landowner.
- Be developed for a specified management period that adequately allows for progress with the landowner's long term stewardship objectives.
- Be reviewed and renewed, revised or rewritten at the end of the specified management period or sooner, as needed, to be considered current.

Landowners must be involved in plan development by setting clear objectives, timetables and targets, and clearly understanding the plan's details and desired outcomes.

Plan Elements

The plan preparer will consider, describe and evaluate resource elements present and their importance to the ownership. The extent to which management plans addresses these elements will depend upon their prevalence on the property and their importance with respect to the landowner's primary objectives. The intent of this guidance is that all approved Forest Stewardship plans be multi-resource in scope and adequately comprehensive with respect to forest ecosystem management.

The plan preparer will consider, describe, and evaluate plan elements and their importance to the ownership when they are present. Plan elements to be considered include:

- Soil and water
- Biological diversity
- Range
- Agroforestry
- Aesthetic quality and desired Timber species
- Recreation
- Wood and fiber production
- Fish and wildlife
- Threatened and endangered species

- Forest health and invasive species
- Conservation-based estate planning / legacy planning information
- Archeological, cultural, and historic sites
- Wetlands
- Fire
- Carbon Sequestration & Climate Resilience
- Forests of Recognized Importance (FORI)*

Management recommendations and alternative strategies, consistent with landowner objectives, will be provided to protect or enhance all plan elements present. Prescriptions or treatments must be stand or site specific. An ownership map drawn to scale, or photo, which accurately depicts vegetation cover types, hydrology, and other significant forest related resources with a legend, is required.

The professional resource manager will discuss the Forest Stewardship Management Plan with the landowner, following completion, and periodically, to assure understanding and encourage plan implementation. *When Forest Stewardship Management Plans are desired to align with American Tree Farm Standards, FORI must be considered.

Additional Information

The landowner's understanding may be improved by including additional information appendices. Appendices might include:

- Descriptions of assistance available and financial incentive programs
- Educational materials
- A glossary of terms
- An explanation of applicable Federal, State, and/or county regulatory programs, especially as they apply to:
 - o Archeological, cultural, and historical sites
 - o Wetlands
 - o Threatened and Endangered Species

Forest Stewardship Plans and USDA Conservation Programs

The 2008 Farm Bill explicitly expands eligibility for many USDA conservation programs to include nonindustrial private forest landowners. The Farm Bill also recognizes Forest Stewardship Management Plans (FSMP) and other forest management plans may address conservation program planning requirements for certain programs, where forest land is concerned, thus eliminating the need for a separate conservation plan. The FSMP is considered equivalent to the NRCS Forest Management Plan (CAP-106), and minimum requirements for both the FSMP and CAP-106 have been defined in the [Common Forest Management Plan Template](#).

The US Forest Service will work with State Foresters and USDA agencies to facilitate participation in USDA conservation programs by providing relevant training and information to foresters and landowners. All who are providing technical and planning assistance should make landowners aware of programs for which they may be eligible. Plan preparers can also help

advise landowners on participation in these programs during and after the planning process. Use of terms such as “practice plan” and “forest management plan” may be common between State and Federal agencies such as NRCS, however technical requirements may vary in many cases. State Foresters are encouraged to consult with their State Conservationist to mutually agree to any additional information or requirements needed by NRCS for landowners to participate in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and other USDA conservation programs. Through these programs, eligible landowners may be able to receive assistance to implement their FSMP. Please see the **Appendix** for more information.

Monitoring Forest Stewardship Management Plan Implementation

Successful implementation of landowner Forest Stewardship Management Plans, and thus sustainable forestry in practice, provides the best indication the program is achieving its primary purpose of encouraging the long-term stewardship of nonindustrial private forest lands.

Monitoring is an important component of successful Forest Stewardship Management Plan implementation; therefore, the State forestry agency must annually monitor a portion of all Management Plans. States use the Stewardship Mapping and Reporting Tool (SMART) to generate a plan monitoring sample each year and record monitoring results.

Selected properties will be visited and assessed by State, US Forest Service, or other qualified resource management professionals to verify that current forest conditions are consistent with landowner stewardship objectives and the result of sustainable management, as defined in the landowner’s approved Forest Stewardship Management Plan. Visits to selected properties will yield a percentage of total acres visited, that are being managed sustainably as defined by approved Forest Stewardship Management Plans. This percentage will be used as an indication of overall accomplishment in terms of acres managed. It is recommended to include standard language in the Forest Stewardship Plan informing the landowner of the possibility of monitoring visits to the property during the life of the plan.

Visits to selected properties may be conducted by the plan preparer or another natural resource professional. Forest Stewardship Management Plan implementation monitoring programs may be conducted in partnership with other landowner assistance and/or land management agencies and organizations. A number of States have other programs, such as tax programs, which require plan implementation and include periodic site inspections. When a sampled property is inspected through such a program, the results from the site inspection can be used to fulfill Forest Stewardship Management Plan monitoring requirements, without another visit to the site.

Additional, more detailed guidance for plan monitoring is provided in other program related documents.

Forest Stewardship Recognition

To ensure the program's success is properly recognized, States and other partners are encouraged to:

1. Identify the US Forest Service when promoting the Forest Stewardship Program;
2. Submit success stories annually;
3. Acknowledge stewardship participants with a Forest Stewardship certificate and sign;
4. Recognize exemplary landowner forest stewards; and
5. Recognize field foresters who excel in promoting the Forest Stewardship Program.

Details:

1. State Forestry Agencies/ partners shall formally recognize the US Forest Service in any promotion of the Forest Stewardship Program and publications (including signs, posters, brochures, etc.) and use Forest Stewardship Program theme art (on websites and plans). Please see information located in the grant award letter signed by each grantee.
2. States are encouraged to submit yearly success story/stories to Regional Office, with supporting photos (if possible). Success stories are used to increase outreach and communications and are shared by the US Forest Service to promote the success of the Forest Stewardship Program.
3. States are encouraged, but not required, to present participating landowners with a Forest Stewardship certificate and Forest Stewardship sign. States are required to use the new Forest Stewardship Program theme art (adopted in 2012) when purchasing Forest Stewardship certificates and signs from this point forward. There is no requirement to replace existing Forest Stewardship signs. States are able to utilize their existing supply of signs with the goal that signs with the new theme art will be phased in by January 1, 2016.
4. State Foresters, in consultation with their State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committees, may choose to develop additional recognition activities for exemplary landowner forest stewards. Recognition activities could include the following approaches, but are not limited to:
 - Forest Stewardship award or recognition program/celebration for individual forest landowners, groups, organizations, etc.
 - Selection and recognition of a "Stewardship Forest" of the year, or Forest Stewardship Landowner/Manager of the year.
 - Regional landowner recognition by the US Forest Service and Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters, Southern Group of State Foresters, and/or Council of Western State Foresters.
 - Selection and recognition of a national Forest Stewardship Landowner by US Forest Service, National Association of State Foresters (NASF) or other national group or organization.
 - Coordinate recognition activities with partner groups, such as American Tree Farm System, NASF, etc.
 - Visit and host ceremony on recognized land to honor landowner.

5. In order to recognize the outstanding work being done by field foresters related to the Forest Stewardship Program, a national award will be established. States will select their exemplary field forester and submit their nomination to their respected US Forest Service designated area (northeast, south, and west). From here, three foresters will be selected for awards by the US Forest Service and Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters, Southern Group of State Foresters, and/or Council of Western State Foresters. Every two years in conjunction with the National Forest Stewardship Meeting, a national “Stewardship Field Forester of the Year” will be selected from the winners the two previous years.

Accomplishment Reporting

Each State or Territory must maintain and annually report the following accomplishment data:

1. Number of Landowners Assisted
2. Number of Landowners Educated
3. Acres covered by active Forest Stewardship Management Plans (**annual increment**)
4. Acres from measure #3 that are within Important Forest Resource Areas
5. Number of active Forest Stewardship Plans (**annual increment**)
6. Total Acres of important Forest Resource Areas
7. Acres covered by active Forest Stewardship Plans (**cumulative**)
8. Acres from measure #7 that are within Important Forest Resource Areas
9. Acres from measure #8 that are confirmed as managed using accepted plan monitoring practices
10. Number of new or revised EQIP Management Plans
11. Total acres of new or revised EQIP Management Plans.
12. Acres covered by Practice or other Forest Management Plans
13. Acres from measure #12 that are within Important Forest Resource Areas
14. Acres covered by Landscape Stewardship Plans
15. Acres of Landscape Stewardship Plans that are within Important Forest Resource Areas
16. Number of seedlings produced and or distributed
17. Pounds of improved seed collected and or produced

In addition, States are encouraged, as feasible, to develop and maintain central databases that locate Forest Stewardship Plans and accomplishments on the landscape as facilitated through the use of available spatial analysis and plan writing/tracking tools. States are required to use SMART to report accomplishments. States have the option to use SMART to develop individual plans or upload plan boundaries in bulk using the Stewardship Accomplishment Data Loader (SADL) tool.

Funding Guidelines and Management

The Forest Stewardship program should strive to fund the delivery of a maximum amount of “on the ground” information and technical assistance to forest landowners. Program administrative costs should be kept to a minimum. Administrative costs are defined as indirect costs per the US Forest Service Grants Management Handbook (FSH 1509.11).

Funding for the Forest Stewardship Program follows the National Allocation Methodology (please see **Appendix** for more information) and is allocated based on three criteria; base program funding, statewide comprehensive program potential, and program performance. Changes to the funding methodology require input from the NASF Forest Resource Management Committee.

The determination of statewide comprehensive program potential is based on the number of ownerships and acres of nonindustrial private forests and woodlands as defined by Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) and the National Woodland Owner Survey. Ownerships equal to or greater than ten acres of forest and woodland are used to calculate potential. The latest iteration of the Renewable Resource Planning Act Assessment (RPA) separates forest land from woodland however FIA combines the two and designates them forest. The Forest Stewardship Program will continue to utilize the FIA definition recognizing the program’s intent to encourage private forest landowners to better manage their land for multiple benefits including productivity.

Program performance is based on three criteria; the total acres covered by active Forest Stewardship Management Plans, acres within Important Forest Resource Areas covered by active Forest Stewardship Management Plans, and acres within Important Forest Resource Areas that are confirmed as managed according to an active plan using accepted plan monitoring practices. A constraint multiplier is applied to the last two criteria. SMART is the primary data source for program performance.

*A Note on Program Performance within Important Forest Resource Areas: A priority area constraint multiplier will be applied to these factors in order to address inconsistencies in how States are delineating priority areas. For each State, this multiplier will be calculated by subtracting from one, the proportion of the State’s potential stewardship program acres that are within Important Forest Resource Areas. Multiplier = [1 - (Important Forest Resource Area Acres/Potential Stewardship Acres)]

Appendix:

Appendix materials can be found in a separate document composed of other relevant program guidance.