

Forest Legacy Program

Budget Line Item	Forest Legacy Program				
	(dollars in thousands)				
	FY 2014 Enacted	FY 2015 Enacted	FY 2016 Pres. Budget	Program Changes	Percent of Program Changes
Forest Legacy Program					
Annual Appropriations	\$50,965	\$53,000	\$61,000	\$8,000	15%
Forest Legacy Program Total	50,965	53,000	61,000	8,000	15%
Annual Appropriations FTEs	24	24	24	0	0%
Total Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)	24	24	24	0	0%

Performance Measure

Accomplishment and Targets (1)

	FY 2012 Actual	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Target	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Target	FY 2016 Target
Forest Legacy Program						
Acres of environmentally important forests protected from conversion (Annual accomplishment for Discretionary funds)	52,999	87,927	85,000	34,715	90,000	95,000
Acres of environmentally important forests protected from conversion (Annual accomplishment for Mandatory funds)	0	0	0	0	0	60,000
Acres of environmentally important forests protected from conversion (Cumulative)	2,275,320	2,362,577	2,447,577	2,410,512	2,617,577	2,565,512
Parcelization of forests avoided (number of parcels prevented) (Discretionary funds)	2,361	2,854	2,872	4,123	2,846	5,295
Parcelization of forests avoided (number of parcels prevented) (Mandatory funds)	0	0	0	0	0	3,385

(1) The Past Performance narrative below provides detailed information on aspects of program management, strategies, and/or improvements in relation to the accomplishments associated with the performance measures.

FY 2016 Program Changes

The FY 2016 President’s Budget proposes \$61,000,000 in discretionary funds, \$8,000,000 above the FY 2015 Enacted Budget. In addition, the request includes \$39,000,000 in mandatory funds for the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) as a transfer from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in the Department of the Interior, for a total of \$100,000,000.

The President’s budget proposes to permanently authorize annual mandatory funding, without further appropriation or fiscal year limitation for the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) programs beginning in FY 2017. During the transition to full permanent funding in FY 2016, the budget proposes \$550 million in mandatory and \$350 million discretionary funds total of \$900 million in LWCF. Starting in 2017, the total of \$900 million would be available annually in mandatory funds. The amounts requested include the authorized levels for the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture.

In planning for FY 2016, 30 States submitted 52 proposed projects, totaling more than \$147,730,425 million. Funding is provided to highest priority activities that can demonstrate

performance in a transparent manner. FLP projects are located in Priority Areas or Forest Legacy Areas identified in Forest Action Plans. In FY 2016, 41 projects are proposed for funding. Refer to the *FY 2016 Forest Legacy Program Proposed Projects* at the end of this section. The FY 2016 program targets include new measures for the acres of environmentally important forests protected from conversion using mandatory funds and parcelization of forests avoided using mandatory funds.

Past Performance

Since FLP was authorized in 1990, a total of 2.398 million acres have been protected across the country. These acres include approximately 169,186 acres of water bodies and 2,733 miles of streams. In FY 2014, FLP completed nine conservation easements and nine fee simple tract purchases, leveraging \$17,886,000 of Federal funds with \$9,958,000 of partner funds to protect a total of 34,715 acres. One acquisition highlight in FY 2014 was closing on the Androskoggin Headwaters project in New Hampshire. This acquisition completes a contiguous 63,000 acre protected forested landscape that includes the new Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge and two previously funded FLP projects. Forest Service analysis shows this landscape as one of the few areas in New Hampshire that will likely maintain deep snow packs that is more resilient to the effects of a changing climate—supporting sustained and manageable water flows and important refuge for wildlife and plants.

In FY 2014, we also expanded our accomplishment queries to include an analysis of anticipated project closures and fund expenditures over time to better project accomplishments and understand trends in project timelines. The results of this analysis reiterates the difficulties in accurately forecasting the amount of time it takes to close complicated real estate transactions, particularly when faced with staffing constraints at multiple levels in a program executed by both Federal and non-Federal staff. In light of these observations, we are currently evaluating changes to predicted accomplishment calculations. In addition, we launched an effort to update FLP program implementation guidelines in FY 2014, with a final product anticipated in FY 2015.

In FY 2014, we identified an emerging challenge in the FLP program related to the lack of qualified appraisers in some parts of the country. The Forest Service currently supports one Senior Review Appraiser to help address program needs. The program is also able to meet some of this need using field unit appraisal staff, but there are limits to what they can provide given their workloads and being responsible for other programs. The Forest Service is currently evaluating options to these challenges, which may include hiring an additional Review Appraiser who could provide assistance to partners and who could also conduct Quality Assurance Inspections.

Program Description

Program Overview

Forest Legacy funds are used for the protection of important forests that are under significant development pressure and that protect air and water quality, provide access, and protect important habitat for threatened or endangered wildlife or fish species. The Forest Legacy Program is funded through the LWCF. By permanently protecting important working forest lands, the FLP helps to create and maintain rural jobs and ensure a robust forest infrastructure.

The Forest Legacy program is a key component of the President's America's Great Outdoors Initiative to conserve important landscapes and reconnect Americans to the outdoors. The funding helps the Forest Service continue to work across boundaries to support projects that protect forests in key landscapes as identified in States' Forest Action Plans to address the national priorities for private forests. These projects are coordinated with other partners to create viable and cohesive zones where the economic, social, and environmental values of forests are conserved.

The Forest Service is able to protect critical forest landscapes that are threatened by land conversion through FLP. These lands are protected through conservation easements and fee-simple purchases with partners such as State agencies, private landowners, and other conservation partners (e.g., The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, The Conservation Fund and other local/ regional conservation organizations). Projects are evaluated by a panel to fund the highest priority land conservation areas. Funds for the FLP are provided through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

More than 50 percent (over 420 million acres) of our Nation's forests are privately owned. Family forest owners and timber companies (including Timber Investment Management Organizations (TIMOs) and Real Estate Investment Trust (REITs)) are facing increasing pressure to sell, subdivide, and develop their land. Protection of private forests through the FLP helps provide private landowners with a conservation option. Intact private forest lands provide a multitude of benefits for the American public, including places to recreate and enjoy nature; working forestlands that provide jobs and forest products like wood and paper; and habitat for fish and wildlife. The FLP helps mitigate development in the Wildland Urban Interface, which reduces community exposure to wildfire danger, and maintains open space, thus increasing the

Upper Rio Chama River Watershed Forest



Photo: Trust for Public Land

The Upper Rio Chama River Watershed Forest Legacy Project permanently protects 11,665 acres of forest land in northern New Mexico, including valuable watershed resources for communities and wildlife. A conservation effort that began in 2009, the largest and final phase of the project was completed in November 2014. Located within the Jarosa Creek-Rio Vallecitos watershed, the property contains high elevation mixed conifer, aspen and spruce-fir forests interspersed with mountain meadows and 18 miles of cold, clear tributary creeks. With seeps, springs, and 18 miles of tributary creeks, the property provides abundant water to the Rio Chama, which flows into the Rio Grande, and contributes to the local water supply for communities which continue irrigation, ranching and cultural traditions dating back to the 18th Century. The property is also visible from the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, which winds for 18 miles along the property's eastern border, and encompasses a mosaic of habitats that support a high diversity of plants and animals including habitat for two federal Candidate species (Rio Grande cutthroat trout and Canada lynx), and the threatened Mexican spotted owl. The Upper Rio Chama River property, which adjoins the Carson National Forest on three sides, will stay in private ownership but will be permanently protected from development through a conservation easement.

likelihood of firefighter success in defending property. Conservation across a landscape rather than focusing solely within ownership boundaries is essential to address large-scale conservation issues such as protection and restoration of watersheds, reduction of wildfire risk, and protection of at-risk species. The program operates on a willing buyer-willing seller basis and is a non-regulatory, incentive-based land conservation program.

Protection of private forests through FLP maintains a multitude of public benefits and ecosystem services. Eighty-nine percent of all FLP acres are adjacent to other protected lands. Research also shows that approximately 17 percent of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions worldwide are the result of deforestation or conversion of forest land to other uses (Congressional Research Service, *International Forestry Issues in Climate Change Bills*; 2009). Protecting forests from conversion is critical to ensuring resiliency to impacts of a changing climate on resource conditions.

Allocation and Integration

The FLP projects are nominated through a two-stage competitive process that includes State-level identification and approval of projects as well as a national review and ranking of these State-nominated projects. This two-tiered review results in high-quality projects that are supported both locally and nationally. Each project is ranked using standardized criteria: (1) importance—public benefits gained from the protection and management of the property, (2) threat—likelihood of conversion to non-forest uses resulting in a loss of forest values and public benefits, and (3) strategic relevance—project fits with a larger conservation plan, strategy, and initiative, and enhances previous conservation investments. Project management funds are allocated to Forest Service regions based on management needs for the projects.

Partnerships

As of the close of FY 2014, more than 2.3 million acres of environmentally important private lands have been protected through FLP. States and landowners are the primary partners, but land trusts and other conservation organizations play a critical role in identifying and completing projects. While the program requires a 25 percent non-Federal match, the program averages a 50 percent non-Federal match.

FY 2016 Forest Legacy Program Proposed Projects

Priority Rank	State	Project Name	Request
Administrative Funds			\$6,400,000
1	MT	Trumbull Creek Watershed	6,500,000
2	GA	Lentile Longleaf Pine Tract	3,500,000
3	ID	Hall Mountain-Kootenai Valley	3,300,000
4	FL	Silver Springs Watershed	3,700,000
5	NY	Rensselaer Plateau Working Forest	5,455,000
6	ME	Big Six Forest	3,800,000
7	WA	Mt. St. Helens Forest Phase 2	3,800,000
8	UT	Zion-Orderville Gulch	2,630,000
9	TN	Sherwood Forest	3,345,000
10	OR	East Moraine Wallowa Lake	3,000,000
11	NC	East Fork of French Broad Headwaters Phase III	2,800,000
12	CT	Whip-Poor-Will Woods (WPWW)	1,430,000
13	AR	Pine-Flatwoods Recovery Initiative	1,150,000
14	HI	Helemano Wilderness Area	3,000,000
15	PA	The Northeast Connection	2,985,000
16	TX	Longleaf Ridge	2,000,000
17	SC	Chestnut Ridge Extension	1,005,000
18	CA	Rainbow Ridge Wherit Conservation Easement	650,000
19	MI	Pilgrim River Forest	550,000
Subtotal, Discretionary			\$61,000,000
20	VT	Worcester Woods	4,000,000
21	WA	South Puget Sound Coastal Forest	3,500,000
22	UT	Tavaputs Plateau	1,425,000
23	OR	West Klamath Lake Forest	2,000,000
24	HI	Jimmy and the Giant Palms	2,060,000
25	NY	Fort Ann Working Forest	710,000
26	TN	Grassy Cove Project	1,540,000
27	FL	Wolfe Creek Forest	2,000,000
28	VT	Groton Forest Legacy Initiative	1,335,000
29	MO	Eleven Point Forest	3,000,000
30	MI	Gitcha-ninj Nebish Forest	680,000
31	CA	Pacific Union College Forest	3,000,000
32	NH	Oliverian Valley	510,000
33	AR	Wye Mountain Headwaters	2,000,000
34	AL	Coastal Headwaters Forest	2,500,000
35	MS	Pascagoula River Conservation Lands	1,600,000

FY 2016 Forest Legacy Program Proposed Projects

Priority Rank	State	Project Name	Request
36	VA	New River Headwaters	1,665,000
37	FSM	Yela Forest Watershed	560,000
38	DE	Sussex Timberlands	1,860,000
39	KY	Knobs State Forest and Wildlife Management Area	1,200,000
40	VA	The Cove	1,035,000
41	RI	Arcadia Woodlands	820,000
Subtotal, Mandatory			\$39,000,000
Total Funding			\$100,000,000