

USDA Forest Service

Field Guide to the USDA Forest Service



Field Guide to the Forest Service

Chapter 2 DRAFT

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2. Field Guide to the Forest Service

What is the USDA Forest Service?

For more than 100 years, the USDA Forest Service has been a large part of America's great outdoors. The Forest Service was created in 1905 to care for the land and serve the people, and today more than 30,000 dedicated Forest Service employees continue this tradition. These professionals work day in and day out to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands.

Forest Service-managed lands—commonly referred to as the National Forest System (NFS) — encompass about 193 million acres on 154 national forests and 20 grasslands. These lands comprise about eight percent of the United States' total land area and are located in 44 states as well as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. These natural resources are some of America's greatest assets and have major economic, environmental, and social significance. Forests, grasslands, and ranges provide wildlife habitat; help cleanse air and water; supply timber and fuel products; and serve as wonderful places to enjoy outdoor recreation such as hiking, camping, and fishing. The Forest Service manages the largest single water source in the United States—watersheds on national forests—and over 66 million people rely on a national forest for their water supply.

The agency also supports and cooperates with state and private landowners in the management of non-NFS forested lands and watersheds. Through its State and Private Forestry (S&PF) Deputy Area, the USDA Forest Service provides direct technical and financial assistance to States, Tribes, communities and non-industrial private landowners towards improved stewardship and sustainable management, focusing on forest health, fire protection, active management strategies and conservation efforts.

With programs in all 50 states, U.S. territories, and commonwealths, the Research and Development (R&D) Deputy Area of the Forest Service works at the forefront of science to improve the health and use of our Nation's forests and grasslands. Hundreds of Forest Service researchers work in a range of biological, physical, and social science fields to promote sustainable management of the Nation's diverse forests and rangelands.

2.1 Partnerships and the Forest Service Mission

The Forest Service has a tremendous responsibility, and the agency can only effectively manage its resources through a collaborative approach that embraces partnerships. These partnerships are often agency-wide and typically span all aspects of the organization's mission. Both domestically and abroad, on Federal and non-Federal land, partnerships are developed in areas such as aquatic and wildlife habitat, clean and adequate water supplies, climate change mitigation and adaptation, forest and grassland conservation, and sustainable outdoor recreation.

Strategic investments in partner-focused efforts represent a growing percentage of the Forest Service budget and, with community support, allow the Forest Service to accomplish more across vast landscapes and through broader constituencies. On an annual basis, the Forest Service enters into thousands of grants and agreements with partners, leveraging Federal dollars to encourage hundreds of millions in non-Federal contributions. This combined investment in partnered work routinely stretches beyond \$1 billion annually.



← 2.2 National Partnership Office

The [National Partnership Office](#) (NPO) of the Forest Service works to augment the agency's relationships with citizens, communities, non-governmental organizations, and others. Although partnership capacity on regions and forests is increasing and there is growing network of dedicated

partnership professionals throughout the agency, the NPO works to enhance regional and local Forest Service staffs' partnering capabilities. While the NPO is formally part of the NFS, it works across all Forest Service Deputy Areas and coordinates national partnerships. Core work includes a focus on coordinating high-performance public-private partnerships, developing policy and guidance, managing strategic alliances, developing partnership tools and resources, and building collaborative partnership capacity across the agency.

The NPO provides partnership and collaboration tools and information to practitioners through the Partnership Resource Center, which is an online clearinghouse of partnership information sponsored by Forest Service and the National Forest Foundation. The [Partnership Resource Center website](#) offers visitors opportunities to connect with communities of practice; find tools, techniques, and training programs concerning collaboration and building strong partnerships; and learn about emerging issues, public land law, and the legislation that defines partnering with the Forest Service.

- [Developing Strong Partnerships](#)
- [Finding Funding](#)
- [Partnership Guide](#)
- [Peer Learning Sessions](#)
- [Public Land Law](#)

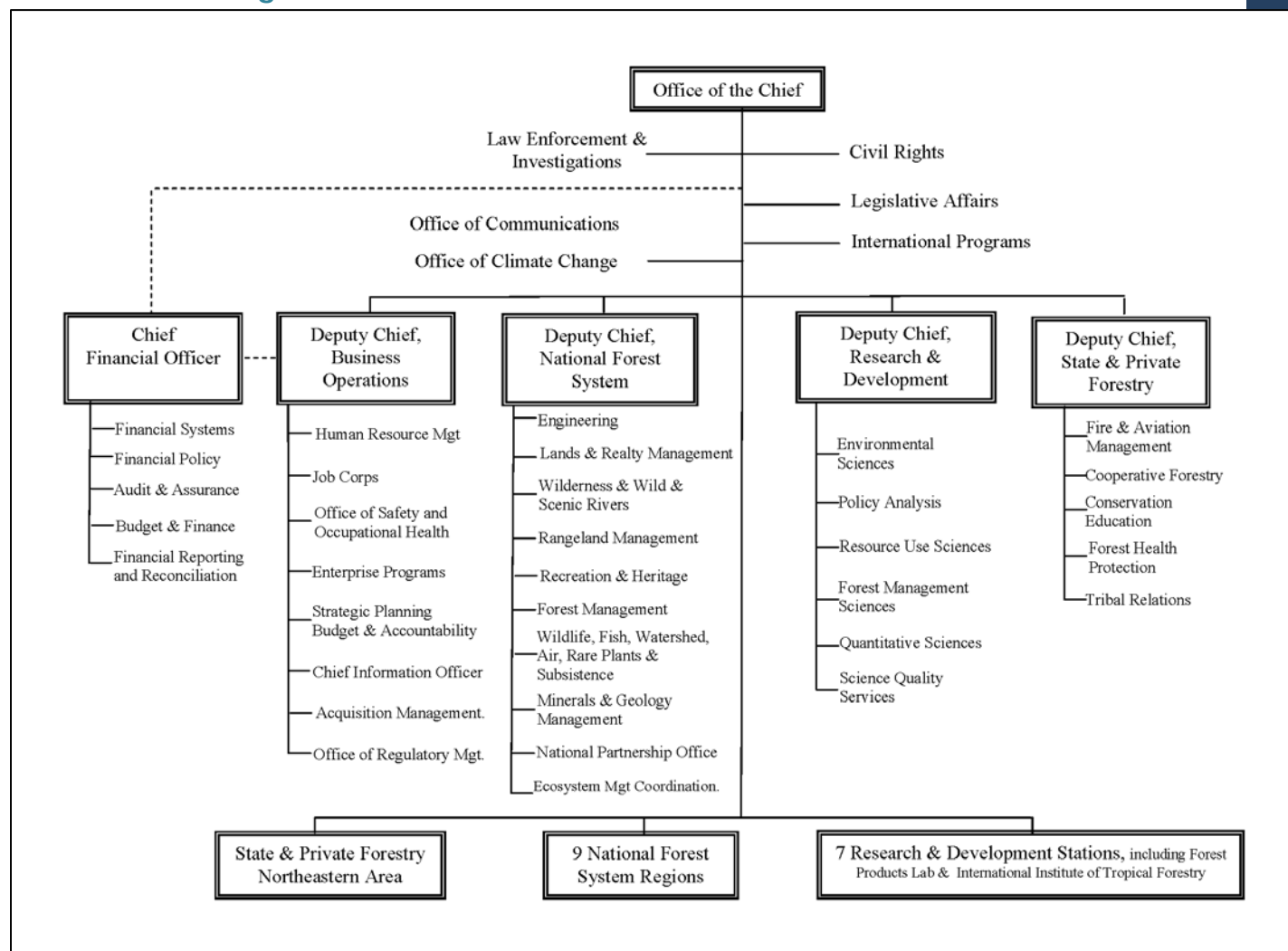


2.3 Forest Service Organization

The Forest Service is the largest agency within the Department of Agriculture, and it employs more than 30,000 permanent employees and thousands more across the nation through seasonal employment. Relative to other Federal agencies, the Forest Service is heavily decentralized and only maintains a small footprint in its Washington, DC headquarters. Decision making is distributed across this organizational structure.

While the public is often most familiar with individual national forests or grasslands within the NFS Deputy Area, those who work closely with the Forest Service can benefit from learning more about all of the agency's Deputy Areas—Business Operations (BizOps), Research and Development (R&D), and State and Private Forestry (S&PF).

Forest Service Organization Chart



2.3.1 Washington Office

Partnerships and collaboration develop in all levels of the Forest Service, with direction and policies originating from the national headquarters in Washington, DC. This Washington headquarters office is often referred to as the Washington Office or WO. The four Deputy Areas of the Forest Service—BizOps, NFS, R&D, and S&PF—each have a Deputy Chief and national staff that shepherd that Deputy Area's work, policy and direction.

2.3.1.1 Office of the Chief

The Chief oversees all aspects of the Forest Service and reports to the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment in the Department of Agriculture. Staff areas within the Office of the Chief enhance the Forest Service's capacity to deliver its mission through strong, collaborative relationships with Congress, the national media, national and international interest groups and partners, employees, and the American people. Each of the following program areas are within the Office of the Chief, provide distinct expertise, and have the shared role of advancing the agency's goals and activities both within and outside the Forest Service.

- [Climate Change](#) - The Climate Change Advisor's Office is the primary spokesperson for the Forest Service on climate change and leads the implementation of the nationwide strategy, weaving climate change response into policies, processes, and partnerships.
- [Law Enforcement and Investigations](#) - The basic mission of Law Enforcement and Investigations (LE&I) is public and employee safety, resource protection, enforcement of US Criminal Law, and to provide enforcement expertise to other agency managers. LE&I also performs drug enforcement duties on NFS lands or in areas with a nexus to NFS lands.
- [Legislative Affairs](#) – This staff works closely with the Chief's Office to prepare the Forest Service for Congressional hearings, create position statements, and draft strategic communications. In addition, Legislative Affairs, often in collaboration with the Forest Service's other Deputy Areas, serves as a liaison linking the agency with other Executive

Branch agencies, the Department of Agriculture, members of Congress, and other stakeholders.

- [Office of Communication](#) - This office is responsible for communicating news and information about the Forest Service to its diverse external constituencies, in addition to its internal audience of more than 30,000 employees.
- [International Programs](#) – Partnering with nearly 60 countries on a wide range of natural resource management, policy, and research issues, International Programs promotes sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation internationally. Much of their work is done in collaboration with others, including United States Agency for International Development and Foreign Agricultural Service; the World Bank and United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization; non-government organizations, such as Ducks Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy; and universities. International Programs also provides worldwide disaster response leadership and expertise through an extensive Disaster Assistance Support Program.



2.3.2 Business Operations

The BizOps Deputy Area of the Forest Service has oversight concerning Human Resources, Budget and Finance, the Chief Information Office, Job Corps, Acquisition Management, Civil Rights, the Enterprise Program, and other functions that affect every Forest Service employee. Those who do business with the Forest Service are likely to engage often with employees who work within this Deputy Area, especially those involved in Acquisition Management. More Business Operations information is available on the [Forest Service Web site](#).

- [Acquisition Management](#) - This staff provides policy, oversight and operational support in the areas of Acquisition, Property Management, and Grants and Agreements. They provide centralized acquisition support for the Forest Service information technology program and for incident (fire) resources.

- [Civil Rights](#) – Civil Rights delivers a comprehensive and result oriented program that ensures equality, justice, and full participation in agency activities and programs.
- [Enterprise Program](#) - These teams of Forest Service employees operate as independent, financially self-sustaining units funded directed by the clients who request their services and expertise. There are currently 14 Enterprise Units offering a wide range of products and services, from historic preservation to business plan development.
- [Human Resources Management](#) – This group works to provide value to the Forest Service by delivering efficient and effective human resources programs and services.
- [Job Corps](#) – In cooperation with the Department of Labor, the Forest Service manages 28 residential Civilian Conservation Centers (better known as Job Corps program centers) to provide young adults with occupational and life skills. When it is logistically feasible, program centers work closely with all Deputy Areas of the Forest Service to support administrative and field-going activities that also offer student training opportunities.
- [Office of Safety and Occupational Health](#) - The Chief stresses the importance of taking a proactive approach to safety, and this staff and program support the Chief in achieving that goal by providing services that prevent injuries and illnesses to personnel and damage to property.
- [Strategic Planning, Budget, and Accountability](#) - This staff is responsible for preparing both the Forest Service Strategic Plan and the Resource Assessment under the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (co-lead with Resources Valuation and Use Research Staff), coordinating the annual Performance and Accountability Report, and facilitating program evaluations.
- [Sustainable Operations](#) – Sustainable Operations, more commonly referred to as SusOps, works to reduce the agency's environmental footprint by focusing on sustainability in six areas: energy, water, green purchasing, fleet and transportation, waste prevention and recycling, and sustainability leadership.



← 2.3.3 National Forest System

In addition to its presence in the national headquarters, NFS has [nine regions](#) to manage the 154 national forests and 20 national grasslands within the Forest Service. Approximately 85 percent of all Forest Service employees work within NFS. Programs are managed through the following WO staff areas:

- [Ecosystem Management Coordination](#) - This staff group supports and manages planning and decision making processes used by the Forest Service to manage the lands and resources of the NFS and in the delivery of services to the agency's stakeholders.

- [Engineering](#) - Engineering provides technical assistance for the management of national forests and grasslands while working closely with other Federal agencies, state and local governments, tribal governments, and many private cooperators.
- [Forest Management](#) - Forest management provides guidance, administration, and support of the agency's forest products management and sales programs.
- [Lands](#) - This staff and program secures and protects the American public's rights, title, value, and interests in its national forests and grasslands and authorizes a variety of uses on those lands.
- [Minerals and Geology Management](#) - This group manages energy and mineral resources for development, production, and reclamation needs according to specific authorities, legislation, rules, and regulations.
- [National Partnership Office](#) - See [section 2.2](#).
- [Rangeland Management](#) - Rangeland Management manages vegetation resources across the range landscape to serve a multitude of resource needs, ensuring things like habitat for a variety of plant and animal species, clean water, and sustainable grazing and browsing.
- [Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources](#) - This program manages recreation and cultural resources across the agency's 193 million acres, connecting the American people with nature in an unmatched variety of settings and activities. This staff facilitates hiking, horseback riding, off-highway vehicle driving, picnicking, camping, hunting, fishing, boating, wildlife viewing, exploring historic places, skiing, and so much more.
- [Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air and Rare Plants](#) - This staff area protect, sustain, and improve ecosystems and water and watershed resources while also enhancing ecosystem productivity, managing public access, and increasing environmental education.
- [Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers](#) - This staff and program work to manage some of the most varied, ecologically significant, and valued Federal lands and free flowing waters in the nation. Collectively, Wildernesses, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Scenic and Historic Trails and other Congressionally Designated Areas comprise almost a quarter of all lands managed by the Forest Service.

This organizational structure and staff units can often be found within regions, forests, and grasslands in addition to at the WO, but may also be aligned differently, depending on the needs, context, and staffing parameters of a particular unit.



2.3.3.1 Regions

The NFS has nine regions, which are broad geographic areas encompassing many national forests and grasslands. Each region has a headquarters, often referred to as the RO (regional office), that provides oversight to national forests and grasslands within its region. The highest authority in each RO is the Regional Forester, who reports to the Chief. Among other duties, each RO coordinates activities within the region and allocates budgets to the forests and grasslands.

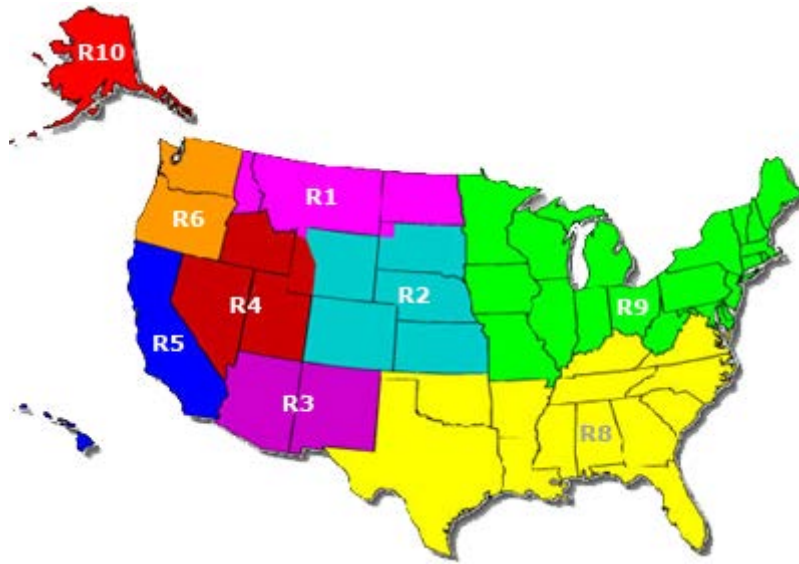
- [Region 1, Northern Region](#)
- [Region 2, Rocky Mountain](#)
- [Region 3, Southwestern Region](#)
- [Region 4, Intermountain Region](#)
- [Region 5, Pacific Southwest Region](#)
- [Region 6, Pacific Northwest Region](#)
- [Region 8, Southern Region](#)
- [Region 9, Eastern Region](#)
- [Region 10, Alaska Region](#)

A number of years ago, the Forest Service consolidated the Region 7 forests and grasslands into Regions 8 and 9, thus eliminating Region 7.

Many of the regions have a partnership coordinator who works with national forest and grassland employees and partners. The partnership coordinator works closely with both internal and external

stakeholders to provide help in overcoming partnership barriers and promoting partnership activities. Guidance on contracting and grants and agreements is typically provided by RO staff.

United States Map displaying the nine NFS regions.



2.3.3.2 National Forests and Grasslands

National forests and grasslands have a Forest Supervisor and supervisor's office (SO) that is responsible for overseeing their respective national forest and grassland. While many national forests and grasslands have their own SO, some SOs are consolidated and oversee multiple national forests. From the SO level, national forests and grasslands are further divided into ranger districts. There are 521 ranger districts across the nation, and District Rangers manage each ranger district. The District Rangers report to the Forest Supervisor, who reports to the Regional Forester, who reports to the Chief of the Forest Service.

The SO coordinates activities and priorities between its ranger districts, allocates the forest-level budget, and provides technical help to each district. Most contracting officers, who are Forest Service employees with the skills and authority to bind the Forest Service to legal contracts, are located in the SO.

The ranger districts direct many on-the-ground activities, including campground operations, road and trail maintenance, vegetation and wildlife habitat management, and watershed restoration. Ranger districts have the closest connection to local communities.

A forest leadership team, which often includes public affairs, fire management, administration, and representatives from other staff areas in addition to the Forest Supervisor and District Rangers, sets national forest or grassland project priorities. Only some employees have the legal authority to make project decisions. These employees – the Forest Supervisors and District rangers – are referred to as line officers.

2.3.4 Research and Development

Research has been part of the Forest Service mission since the agency's inception in 1905. Today, the Forest Service has the largest forestry research program in the world. Under the [Research and Development Deputy Area](#), often referred to as R&D, scientists carry out basic and applied research to study biological, physical, and social sciences to promote sustainable management of forests and rangelands.

Researchers work independently and also with a full range of partners. R&D partners closely with universities and other research institutions, as well as with nonprofits, other agencies, industry, and the international research community. R&D connects with land managers and practitioners to provide scientific information that is relevant and accessible for on-the-ground action. With programs in all 50 states, R&D's work informs policy and land management decisions in the broad spectrum of land management issues, including invasive insects, degraded river ecosystems, or

sustainable ways to harvest forest products. The information and technology produced is available to the public for its benefit and use.

Forest Service R&D focuses the bulk of its research capacity on the following [areas of national importance](#):

- **Inventory, Monitoring & Analysis** – Forest Service R&D provides the resource data, analysis, and tools needed to effectively identify current status and trends, management options and impacts, threats, and other natural processes across a range of natural resources.
- **Water, Air, and Soil** – This program area provides the scientific basis and specialized tools needed by natural resource managers and landowners to understand the likely effects of their decisions on the Nation's water, air, and soil resources.
- **Resource Management and Use** – This program area provides science and technology that helps sustain forests and ranges in the United States and keeps them economically and environmentally productive.
- **Urban Natural Resources Stewardship** - Leaders across the country are embracing nature as a critical component of the urban environment and the health and well-being of its residents, and Forest Service scientists are at the forefront of urban forestry and watershed research. The agency's scientists are providing information that helps communities improve their natural resources and transition to a more sustainable future.
- **Outdoor Recreation** - Forest Service scientists provide science and technology that recreation and wilderness managers can use to balance the demand for recreation with the need to sustain healthy ecosystems.
- **Wildland Fire and Fuels** - Forest Service scientists conduct cutting-edge work in wildland fire research and develop tools, methods, and applications to improve our understanding and management of fire, fuel, and smoke.
- **Forest Products** - Led by the Forest Products Laboratory (FPL), the Forest Service identifies ways to innovatively use wood and fiber, contributing to the conservation and

productivity of forest resources and leading to sustainability for forests, the economy, and quality of life.

- **Invasive Species and Pathogens** - Invasive species have significantly impacted U.S. ecosystems and cost millions of dollars to prevent, detect, and control. Forest Service R&D provides the scientific information, tools, and methods needed by regulators, managers, and the public to address invasive species.
- **Wildlife and Fish** - Forest Service research provides managers and decision-makers with the tools and knowledge necessary to help protect, enhance, and restore fish and wildlife habitats and minimize the effects of disturbances such as fire, urbanization, disease, and climate change.



2.3.4.1 Research Stations, Research Sites, and Experimental Forests

Cost-effective technology discovery, development, and transfer are carried out through seven Forest Service research stations in the following locations along with satellite offices throughout the nation:

- [Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin](#)
- [International Institute of Tropical Forestry in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico](#)
- [Northern Research Station in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania](#)
- [Pacific Northwest Research Station in Portland, Oregon](#)
- [Pacific Southwest Research Station in Albany, California](#)
- [Rocky Mountain Research Station in Fort Collins, Colorado](#)
- [Southern Research Station in Asheville, North Carolina](#)

A [network of 83 experimental forests and mountain ranges](#) are the backbone of long-term scientific studies. These programs provide the hindsight of 100 years of data to guide future research and management. In addition, 348 natural research areas, representing a diversity of significant

natural ecosystems, are preserved on NFS lands to provide baseline data and serve as controls for ongoing studies.



← 2.3.5 State and Private Forestry

The [Forest Service State and Private Forestry Deputy Area](#), often referred to as S&PF, shares responsibility—working in partnership with State and local agents—for the stewardship of about 500 million acres of non-Federal rural and urban forests. Over 50 percent of the nation's forests

are privately owned, and these non-Federal forest lands comprise two-thirds of all the nation's forest lands and about 20 percent of its landmass. Among Federal agencies, the Forest Service is a leader in non-Federal forest land stewardship, and S&PF is involved in many important partnership and capacity-building projects across extensive ownership boundaries.

S&PF programs employ collaborative relationships, expert advice, innovative technology, and financial assistance to State forestry agencies, local governments, nonprofit organizations, landowners, and Tribes, helping partners across the country manage and protect their trees and forested landscapes and to benefit from the services forests provide. S&PF works directly with state forestry agencies to ensure that forest landowners have the best technical, educational, and financial assistance available to help them achieve their objectives in an environmentally beneficial way. S&PF works with Tribes, communities and non-industrial private landowners to produce ecological, social and economic benefits for the American people.

Opportunities to obtain S&PF partnership project funds are numerous. Since State Foresters are the legislated partner for many programs, S&PF often grants program funds to State forestry offices to deliver forestry assistance to the public, with oversight from Forest Service regional program coordinators.

- [Conservation Education](#) – Conservation Education (CE) programs help people of all ages understand and appreciate our country's natural resources and how to conserve those resources for future generations. Through structured educational experiences and activities targeted to varying age groups and populations, CE enables people to realize how natural resources and ecosystems affect each other and how resources can be used wisely. The role of CE to educate people about the conservation of our nation's forests and grasslands is critical to the accomplishment of the Forest Service's mission.
- [Cooperative Forestry](#) – In collaboration with state forestry agencies, private landowners and other partners, Cooperative Forestry (CF) programs promote healthy forests and livable communities throughout the United States by connecting people to resources, ideas and one another. CF is a partnership driven organization – delivering programs helps private

landowners and both urban and rural communities care for their forests, strengthen local economies, and maintain a high quality of life.

- [Fire and Aviation Management](#) – Effective wildland fire management requires partnerships between agencies and communities. Fire and Aviation works with state forestry agencies to provide safe, efficient and economical fire management services while sustaining, protecting and restoring ecosystems.
- [Forest Health Protection](#) - Forest Health Protection (FHP) protects and improves the health of America's rural, wildland, and urban forests through partnerships across lands of all ownerships. FHP has primary responsibility for monitoring forest pests and providing financial and technical assistance for lessening pest-caused damages. Hundreds of specialists in forest entomology, forest pathology, invasive plants, pesticide use, survey and monitoring, suppression and control, technology development, and other forest health-related services work to improve the health of America's rural, wildland, and urban forests.
- [Office of Tribal Relations](#) – The Tribal Relations Program facilitates consistency and effectiveness in Forest Service program delivery to Tribes, provides long-term consultative services, and encourages collaborative relationships with tribal governments through new policy and direction. Tribal Relations operates at three tiers within the Forest Service organizational structure—field, regional, and national—to promote a culture where consultation and dialogue with tribes stimulate meaningful investment in inter-governmental relationships.



2.3.5.1 Office Locations and the Northeastern Area

While most S&PF staff are located in the same regional offices as NFS, there is a separate S&PF office in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, the [Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry](#). This Area works to provide targeted resources to the Northeast and Midwest, very populated areas of the country that are heavily forested and have the most privately-owned forests of anywhere in the United States. Included in the Northeastern Area are Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin and the

District of Columbia. The Northeastern Area Director is a line officer and reports to the Chief, similar to a Regional Forester. The Northeastern Area also has three field offices, in Durham, New Hampshire; St. Paul, Minnesota; and Morgantown, West Virginia.

2.4 Resources

- [Forest Service Directives](#)
- [Meet the Forest Service](#)
- [National Partnership Office Contact List](#)
- [Regional Partnership Coordinators Contact List](#)
- [The U.S. Forest Service: An Overview](#)
- [Forest Service Employee search](#)