



United States Department of Agriculture



2008 Farm Bill

(Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008)

New Opportunities for Forestry-related Conservation Assistance to Private Landowners

Regional Webinars for State Forestry Agencies &
Cooperators

February 9 - 12, 2008



United States Department of Agriculture



New Opportunities for Forestry-related Conservation Assistance to Private Landowners

Presenters:

**James Melonas, Cooperative Forestry,
USFS**

Andy Mason, National Forester, NRCS



Regional Webinar Objectives

- **Share highlights of forestry-related programs/provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill**
- **Inform State forestry agencies and partners:**
 1. Immediate opportunities for forest landowners to apply for USDA assistance (e.g., EQIP)
 2. Importance of participating on your State Technical Committee and contacting NRCS & FSA officials in your State for more specific information
 3. Opportunity to comment on interim final rules



Steps to USDA Conservation Assistance

1.

Create your Plan

2.

Sign-up with USDA

3.

Find a Program for you

4.

Other Farm Bill Programs



Steps to USDA Conservation Assistance

1.

Create your
Plan



1. Create Your Plan – Work with a Professional Forester

OPTIONS:

- Forest Stewardship Plan



- Tree Farm Plan



- Other forestry plans

(e.g., practice plan approved by State Forester, new NRCS Forest Management Plan)



1. Create Your Plan – Additional Info Needed by NRCS

- Description for each conservation practice and an alternative (can be no-action)
- Updated map with proposed practices
- Environmental Effects
 - Provide assessment and impacts to help NRCS meet requirements
 - Ultimately NRCS responsibility



Steps to USDA Conservation Assistance

2.

Sign-up with
USDA



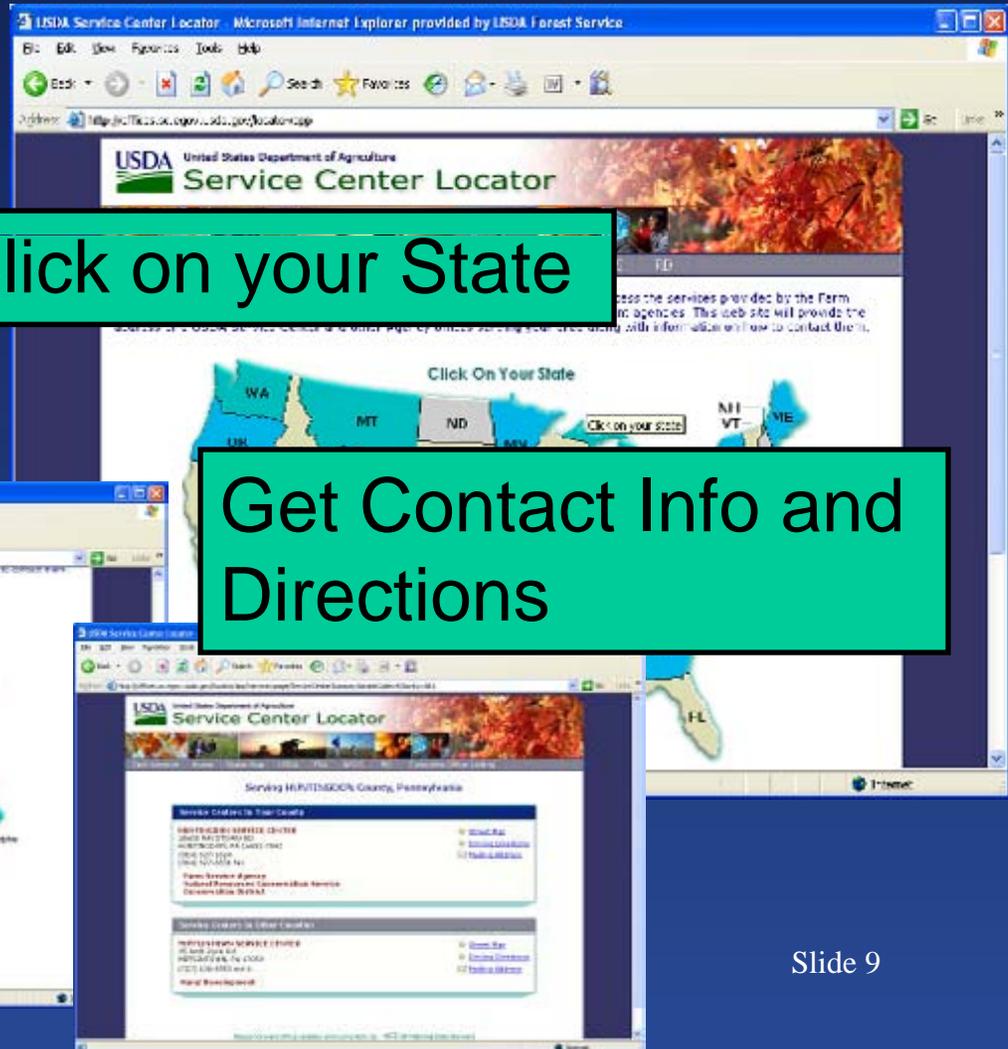
2. Sign-Up with USDA – Find a Service Center

Go to:
offices.usda.gov

Click on your State

Click on your County

Get Contact Info and Directions





2. Sign-Up with USDA - Eligibility

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Limitation

- Limits conservation benefits to persons or legal entities with avg. non-farm AGI less than \$1 million
- Exceptions: *unless 2/3 of average total AGI is from farming, ranching, or forestry*
- Limitation may be waived: *if environmentally sensitive land of special significance protected*
- Due date on comments on Interim Final Rule extended to 4/6/09



2. Sign-up with USDA – Application Process

- Landowner forms at USDA Service Center:
 - *Adjusted Gross Income Statement*
 - *Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Determination*
- Landowner information: into *Service Center Information Management System (SCIMS ID)*
 - Name, address, etc.
 - Farm and Tract Number (need deed)
- Complete program application and submit to NRCS/FSA



Steps to USDA Conservation Assistance

3.

Find a Program
for you



3.

Find a Program for you - types

Working
Lands
Conservation



Wood
Energy

Conservation
Easement/
Reserve





3. Find a Program for You – Working Lands Conservation

NRCS

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)



3. Find a Program for You – Working Lands Conservation

EQIP (NRCS)

- Nonindustrial private forest land (NIPF) is eligible
- Addresses natural resource concerns
- State Conservationist identifies priority resource concerns with advice of State Technical Committee.
- Forest management plan required if plan of operation addresses NIPF



3. Find a Program for You – Working Lands Conservation

EQIP (NRCS)

- Assistance for a wide range of forestry-related conservation practices, and to develop a forest management plan
- Applications accepted throughout the year
- Participants enter into a contract to implement one or more practices



3. Find a Program for You – Working Lands Conservation

EQIP (NRCS)

- \$7.3 billion authorized for five years - \$1.3 billion in FY 2009
- 60% of funds to conservation practices related to livestock production
- Priorities/practices/processes vary by State – **see NRCS, participate on State Technical Committee**
- Comments on Interim Final Rule due by 3/16/09



3. Find a Program for You – Working Lands Conservation

WHIP (NRCS)

- Assistance to develop wildlife habitat, including T&E species.
- Eligibility Changes: private agric. land, **NIPF**, Tribal land, (govt. land NOT eligible)
- National and State level - can focus program on special areas, habitats, species (e.g., State-wide strategies for forest resources)



3. Find a Program for You – Working Lands Conservation

WHIP (NRCS)

- Funding authorized at \$85 million annually through 2012
- Priorities and processes vary by State – participate on State Technical Committee and contact NRCS for more information
- Comments on Interim Final Rule due by 3/17/09



3. Find a Program for You – Working Lands Conservation

CStP (NRCS)

- Focus is on additional conservation activities and to maintain, improve, manage existing activities
- Emphasis on NIPF (up to 10% of the acres enrolled nationally ~ 1.3 million acres)
- Applicants must:
 1. Meet the “stewardship threshold” for at least one resource concern and;
 2. Address one additional priority res. concern



3. Find a Program for You – Working Lands Conservation

CStP (NRCS)

- EQIP may be better option for some NIPF owners (significant resource concerns)
- 5-year contract and receive stewardship payments for “enhancements”
- Eligibility and conservation measurement tools still under development
- Interim Final Rule expected later in 2009



3. Find a Program for You – Conservation Easement/Reserve

- NRCS
 - Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)
 - Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
 - Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)
- Farm Service Agency (FSA)
 - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
 - Cons. Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- Forest Service
 - Community Forest and Open Space Program
 - Forest Legacy Program



3. Find a Program for You – Conservation Easement/Reserve

HFRP (NRCS)

- Restore and enhance forest ecosystems through easements, 30-year contracts, and 10-year cost share agreements:
 1. Promote recovery of T&E species
 2. Improve plant and animal diversity
 3. Enhance carbon sequestration
- All private forest lands potentially eligible
- \$1 million AGI limit does not apply to HFRP



3. Find a Program for You – Conservation Easement/Reserve

HFRRP (NRCS)

- Original “pilot states”: *Arkansas, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi*
- New States added in December 2008: *Georgia, Indiana, Oklahoma, Oregon*
- Chief may implement in any state/territory
- \$9.7 million authorized annually through 2012
- Comments on Interim Final Rule due by 2/13/09



3. Find a Program for You – Conservation Easement/Reserve

WRP (NRCS)

- Assistance to restore and protect wetlands through permanent or 30-year easements, 30-year contracts (Tribal lands only), restoration cost-share agreements
- Eligible lands **include floodplain forests**
- Governments not eligible
- Ownership change within 7 years – not eligible



3. Find a Program for You – Conservation Easement/Reserve

WRP (NRCS)

- 2 million acres enrolled through 2008
(~ 500,000 acres planted with trees/shrubs)
- National enrollment – all states/territories
- 3 million acre cap through 2012
(~ 766,000 new acres)
- FY 2009 – up to 250,000 acres
- Comments on Interim Final Rule due by 3/16/09



3. Find a Program for You – Conservation Easement/Reserve

FRPP (NRCS)

- Help farmers and ranchers preserve their agricultural land
- Matching funds to “eligible entities” to purchase conservation easements
- ***Forest land is eligible for inclusion if it:***
 1. Contributes to the economic viability of an agricultural operation; **OR**
 2. Serves as a buffer to protect an agricultural operation



3. Find a Program for You – Conservation Easement/Reserve

FRPP (NRCS)

- Forest management plan required if forest land is 10+ acres or 10 percent of area
- Easement areas must be less than 2/3 forest land
- Comments on Interim Final Rule by 3/17/09



3. Find a Program for You – Conservation Easement/Reserve

CRP (FSA)

- Acreage cap reduced: 39 to 32 Million acres
- 50% cost-share payments for tree planting, thinning for windbreaks, shelterbelts, and wildlife corridors for general sign-ups.
- Add'l incentives available for continuous sign-up
- \$100 million authorized for cost-share to conduct “thinning activities”



3. Find a Program for You – Conservation Easement/Reserve

CREP (FSA)

- Special initiative w/in CRP to address Ag resource problems
- Agreements between USDA and States or Tribes
- Targeting priority environmental needs and providing add'l incentives for conservation
- Mainly riparian buffers and wetlands restoration



3. Find a Program for You – Conservation Easement/Reserve

Community Forest & Open Space Conservation (USFS)

- Grants for purchase of community forests
- Program open to Tribes, local government, environmental orgs. – proposals submitted through States or Tribal governments
- Encourages working land, education, requires public access
- Subject to appropriations



3. Find a Program for You – Conservation Easement/Reserve

Forest Legacy (USFS)

- Grants to States to protect important forest areas
- Conservation easements and fee-simple purchases
- National competitive selection process
- More than 1.5 million acres protected to date



3. Find a Program for You – Wood Energy Programs

- FSA
 - Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)
- Forest Service
 - Community Wood Energy
 - Forest Wood to Energy



3. Find a Program for You – Wood Energy

BCAP (FSA)

- Assistance for establishment, production, harvest, storage and transport of renewable biomass
- Requires:
 - Establishment of BCAP project areas
 - Producer contracts with USDA: NIPF is eligible
- Payments:
 - Contract payments to producers in BACP
 - Delivery payments to collect or harvest eligible materials delivered to conversion facility in BCAP project area.



3. Find a Program for You – Wood Energy

Forest Biomass for Energy (USFS)

- competitive R&D program to encourage use of forest biomass for energy.
- Up to \$15 million per year, subject to appropriations

Community Wood Energy (USFS)

- Grant program for communities to plan, develop, and acquire community wood energy systems.
- Up to \$5 million per year, subject to appropriations



4. Other Farm Bill Programs

Landscape/Watershed
& Innovation Opps.



Emergency
Programs





4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Landscape/Watershed & Innovation Opportunities

- NRCS
 - Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
 - Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
 - Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative
- Forest Service
 - Cooperative Forest Innovation Partnership Projects
- USDA
 - Environmental Services Markets



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Landscape/Watershed & Innovation Opportunities

CCPI (NRCS)

- Address conservation priorities in targeted geographic areas on a local, state, multi-state, regional level.
- **NIPF is eligible** – address priority areas in State-wide forest resource assessments and strategies?
- Priority is given to applications that
 - involve a high percentage of producer/NIPF owners
 - leverage non-Federal resources and coordinate with local, State, or Federal efforts



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Landscape/Watershed & Innovation Opportunities

CCPI (NRCS)

- Directs 6 percent of funds or acres in EQIP, WHIP, CStP for conservation activities
- Funds and acres directed at State level (90 percent) and nationally (10 percent)
- Projects selected competitively
- National Request for Proposals out soon



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Landscape/Watershed & Innovation Opportunities

CIG (NRCS)

- Stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies
- FY 2009 – up to \$20 million available for national competition.
- Four CIG categories in FY 2009:
 - Natural Resource Concerns (includes Forest Health)
 - Technology
 - Chesapeake Bay Watershed
 - Grant Leveraging
- Applications due March 2, 2009



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Landscape/Watershed & Innovation Opportunities

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (NRCS)

- Improve water, soil, & air quality in Chesapeake Bay watershed through conservation practices
- 2008 Farm Bill authorized \$188 million thru 2012
- Includes forestry-related natural resource concerns
- Eligible States: DE, MD, NY, PA, VA, WV

4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Landscape/Watershed & Innovation Opportunities

Forest Innovation Partnership Projects (USFS)

- May competitively allocate up to 5% of Coop. Forestry Asst. Act funds for innovative projects
- Funds available to States, Tribes, local government, land-grant, or private entities
- 50% cost-share (includes in-kind)



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Landscape/Watershed & Innovation Opportunities

Environmental Services Markets (USDA)

- New USDA Office Created
- Aid development of private-sector market-based approaches for environmental goods and services.
- Carbon markets to be initial emphasis.
- Board Created and Committee Developing



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Emergency Programs

- FSA
 - Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)
- Forest Service
 - Pest & Disease Revolving Loan Fund



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Emergency Programs

EFRP (FSA)

- Available to NIPF owners to restore landscapes damaged by fire, drought, flood, & other natural disasters.
- Funding subject to appropriation.
- Funds available until expended. Up to 75% cost-share.
- Regulations to be issued within 1 year of enactment



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Emergency Programs

Pest & Disease Revolving Loan Fund (USFS)

- Low interest loans to local governments for equipment to deal with infested trees
- May fund monitoring, removal, and disposal of infested trees.
- Subject to appropriations



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Opportunities for Foresters/Forestry

NRCS

- State Technical Committees
- Technical Service Providers (TSPs)
- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Opportunities for Foresters/Forestry

State Technical Committees (NRCS)

- 2008 Farm Bill expanded agricultural and forestry involvement on committees
- NIPF owners are now explicitly members of State Technical Committees and Local Working Groups
- State Cons. may designate specialized subcommittees to focus on a particular technical or programmatic topic
- Interim Final Rule published November 25, 2008 (comments were due January 26, 2009)
- Is there forestry involvement in your Committee?



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Opportunities for Foresters/Forestry

TSPs (NRCS)

- TSPs are certified professionals, qualified to provide program participants with the technical services necessary to implement their conservation projects
- NRCS has TSP agreements with many State forestry agencies to provide technical forestry asst. to landowners
- Landowners may receive technical services by three methods: 1) directly from NRCS; 2) through an agreement between NRCS and third party provider; or 3) through a payment and approval to hire a third-party provider

4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Opportunities for Foresters/Forestry

TSPs (NRCS)

- 2008 Farm Bill changes:
 - Third party TSPs may develop a conservation activity plan (including a forest management plan) for a program participant
 - State Conservationists will establish fair and reasonable payment rates for third party TSPs
 - NRCS will provide national criteria for the certification of third party TSPs
- Comments on Interim Final Rule due 3/17/09



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Opportunities for Foresters/Forestry

AMA (NRCS)

- Assists agricultural producers to address issues such as water management/quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation practices into farming operations.
- **Includes tree planting for windbreaks or to improve water quality**
- Eligible land: cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland, NIPF, and other land that produces crops or livestock where risk may be mitigated....



4. Other Farm Bill Programs - Opportunities for Foresters/Forestry

AMA (NRCS)

- Available in 16 states: CT, DE, MA, NV, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, UT, VT, WV, WY, and HI (HI added in 2008)
- \$15 million authorized annually through 2012.
- Interim Final Rule published 11/20/08
(comments were due by 1/20/09)



Regional Webinars for State Forestry Agencies & Cooperators

KEY POINTS

- There are immediate opportunities for forest landowners to apply for USDA assistance during 2009 (e.g., EQIP).
- To learn more about programs and priorities: Participate on your State Technical Committee and contact NRSC & FSA officials in your State.
- You still have an opportunity to comment on many of the Interim Final Rules.



United States Department of Agriculture



Questions?