



Forest Legacy in Alaska

Issue

Alaska's Forest Legacy Program was approved by the Secretary of Agriculture on November 1, 2002 and initially funded for the acquisition of three parcels in FY 2003. For this program, the Alaska Region and the state are operating under the State Grant Option selected by the state in its Assessment of Need, which sets the goals and objectives for the State's Forest Legacy Program. Grants for administration and purchase of interest in property are issued to the State's lead agency, the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. Federal oversight is provided by the regional State & Private Forestry staff. The three western Regions, (R5, R6, & R10), share a specialist in managing the Forest Legacy Program.

Background

The Forest Legacy Program was established in the 1990 Farm Bill to protect environmentally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses and to promote forestland protection through the use of conservation easements and fee-simple purchase. The program is run as a partnership between the Forest Service, state lead agencies, local governments, land trusts, conservation organizations, local groups and interested landowners. Each project must have at least a 25% non-federal match in funding. The program is required to operate on the principle of "willing buyer, willing seller." Participation is limited to private forest landowners.

Since its first appropriations in FY 1992, the FLP has conserved over 1,959,000 acres in 42 states and territories. In Alaska, 4,920 acres have been protected to date. South Denali, a 160-acre project, was funded for 2010.

Accomplishments

Due to the excellent efforts of the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, the state's lead agency for the program, and the Conservation Fund of Alaska, the Alaska program has closed on the following properties:

2004 - Chena River SRA Inholding, Fairbanks, Alaska

Forest Legacy Funding \$ 174,000

Total Project Costs \$ 241,000

Total Project Acres 239

General Description: 239-acre inholding in the Chena River State Recreation Area, approximately 36 miles from Fairbanks.

2005 and 2006 - Sorenson/Gorman Inholdings, Wood-Tikchik State Park, Dillingham (Bristol Bay Borough), Alaska

Forest Legacy Funding \$ 313,575

Total Project Costs \$ 511,005

Total Project Acres 203

General Description: 123- and 80-acre inholdings in Wood-Tikchik State Park, one at the head of the Agulowak River, a premier trout fishing stream that drains Lake Nerka, the other at the mouth of Elva Creek, also on Lake Nerka. Wood-Tikchik State Park is near Dillingham in SW Alaska.

2007 - Diamond Creek, Homer (Kenai Peninsula Borough), Alaska

Forest Legacy Funding \$ 450,000

Total Project Costs \$ 1,140,000

Total Project Acres 415

General Description: This project contains two parcels (140-acre and 275-acre) that are key to a community-based effort to protect forestland in the tourist-based community of Homer. The Mandes parcel is a conservation easement and the other parcel (Diamond Creek-University) is fee. The parcels are approximately 4 miles from Homer and are adjacent to the Homer Demonstration Forest. The City of Homer will hold the title of the University parcel with Kachemak Heritage Land Trust as a partner and holder of the conservation easement.

2008 and 2009 - Agulowak River Conservation Easement and active Allotments, Dillingham (Bristol Bay Borough), Alaska

Forest Legacy Funding \$ 790,876

Total Project Costs \$ 1,107,666

Total Project Acres 2,209

General Description: The State of Alaska with multiple partners acquired a conservation easement on high value habitat dominated by palustrine wetlands. Aleknagik Natives, Ltd. owns the property, which includes the entire length of the four-mile-long Agulowak River and extensive shoreline along Lake Aleknagik and Lake Nerka. It is the most strategic tract in the 1.6 mile acre Wood-Tikchik State Park (near the towns of Aleknagik and Dillingham). This conservation easement is complemented by the acquisition of four highly strategic Native allotments (395 acres) in the vicinity.

Congress has approved the FY-2010 budget. The following Alaska project has been selected for Forest Legacy Funding:

South Denali, Denali State Park (Matanuska-Susitna Borough), Alaska

Forest Legacy Program FY 2010 Funding \$ 675,000

FY 2010 Non-Federal Cost Share \$ 225,000

FY 2010 Project Costs \$ 900,000

FY 2010 Project Acres 160

Total Project Acres 307

General Description: Development of two privately owned parcels within Denali State Park threatens the natural features and uninterrupted views near a proposed visitor center on Curry Ridge. Alaska State Parks and the National Park Service are developing a visitor center to promote outdoor education and recreation while highlighting the Alaska Range, Denali (Mt. McKinley), and the surrounding environment. Located two hours north of Anchorage in a vast area of undeveloped lands, the visitor center will draw as many visitors as Denali National Park (over a million a year). This project proposes to purchase two inholdings located in the immediate viewshed of the proposed visitor center within Denali State Park. One of the parcels has been subdivided and was recently under contract to build a hotel. That contract fell through and the owner has signed an MOU with the State of Alaska for the purchase.

The selection process for FY 2011 projects has been completed. One project is on the proposed list:

Chugach State Park, Anchorage, 149 acres, \$1,000,000

General Description: This project, the first of 3 phases, seeks to secure a key access point to Chugach State Park. This highly visible and accessible Near Point property is severely threatened with conversion to non-forest uses. The Near Point property was proposed for conversion to an antennae farm in 2002 and more recently a planned unit development.

Project selection is a competitive process. Each project is ranked based on its national importance, the threat of conversion, and the strategic tie to other conservation efforts. Projects are evaluated and ranked by a regional team of state and federal coordinators in December, and then by a national interdisciplinary team in January.

More Information

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