



Forest Stewardship Program Standards and Guidelines



**Forest Service
State, Private, and Tribal Forestry
Cooperative Forestry
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Purpose of This Document

The standards and guidelines outlined below are intended to assist State and Territorial¹ partners with the implementation of the Rural Forestry Assistance and Forest Stewardship Program authorities. This document provides supplemental guidance, as appropriate, to achieve intended program outcomes.

Purpose of the Forest Stewardship Program

The purpose of the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) is to maintain and enhance the vital benefits private forestland provides to society by facilitating long-term stewardship of important private forest landscapes.

This is accomplished by assisting, educating, and inspiring forest landowners to actively manage their forest(s) and related resources sustainably. Actively managed forests are healthy forests and are less likely to be converted to other uses.

Why the Forest Stewardship Program is Important

Forests are Beneficial

The benefits of forests are wide-ranging and well-documented. They are vital to our environment, economy, and overall health and social well-being—and healthy forests are key to climate change mitigation and resilience. Research shows that the 766 million acres of forests in the United States work on our behalf to (Oswald and Smith, 2014):

- Protect the quality of our drinking water.
- Provide habitat for wildlife.
- Provide renewable wood products for our use.
- Support jobs in forest products, recreation, and related industries.
- Sequester carbon.
- Filter the air, generate oxygen, and help alleviate pollution.
- Protect land and property from flooding by reducing stormwater.
- Strengthen immune systems, lower blood pressure, boost mood, and maintain focus.
- And much more.

Privately-owned Forestland is a Vital Resource

Of the 766 million total acres of forestland in the United States, 445 million acres (58 percent) are privately-owned. Of this privately-owned forestland, 272 million acres (almost 39 percent of the total forested acres) are considered “family-owned,” meaning it is land owned by individuals or family units versus business entities (Butler et. al 2021). Given the high proportion of forest in this type of private

¹ “Territory” as used throughout this document refers to U.S. Insular Areas (American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico) and the former Trust Territories in Compacts of Free Association with the U.S. (the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia).

ownership, and given the importance of forests to society overall, what happens on these family-owned acres matters a great deal. Healthy, resilient forests are needed across all ownerships, so that benefits can flow from them to all people.

Privately-Owned Forests Face Many Challenges

Family-owned forests face challenges that are common across all ownerships, such as threats of invasive species, wildfires, and changing climate, among many others; however, the average family forest owner may have a greater struggle with these issues than publicly or business landowners because they often lack the necessary technical knowledge, labor, or funds to be able to tackle them.

There are also some unique challenges faced by family-owned forests. The greatest—and most detrimental – of these is the threat of conversion of forestland to another use, such as development. When this type of conversion happens, the benefits the forest provides are lost, oftentimes for decades or even centuries. Major factors contributing to conversion are the threats of:

- **Parcelization:** segmentation of land into smaller parcels; while this may or may not include a change in overall land use, smaller parcels tend to diminish available management options.
- **Fragmentation:** when larger parcels are broken up by physical land use changes (such as roads, rights-of-way, agricultural fields, and so forth); this reduces the ecological potential of forestlands and increases the occurrence of other risks.
- **Taxation:** many landowners are “land-rich and cash-poor.” Heavy tax burdens can cause landowners to need to sell all or part of their property or manage their forest unsustainably.

This is just scratching the surface of the myriad challenges that private forest landowners face throughout the nation. Issues and severity vary depending on the location.

Active, Science-Based Management of Private Forestland Matters

Science-based, prescriptive forest management is key to sustaining and enhancing the important benefits that flow from forestland. Active management proactively combats challenges, reducing threats and maximizing benefits over the long-term. Studies show that landowners with management plans are three times more likely to manage their lands – and actively managed forests are more likely to remain forested, intact, healthy, and resilient.

The Vital Role of the Forest Stewardship Program

Many family forestland owners are not aware of the need for and the benefits of active forest management—and those that are aware of the need generally lack the knowledge and expertise necessary to make informed decisions. Because of this fact, technical assistance, education, outreach, and connections to available resources are absolutely critical to the ongoing health of the nearly 38 percent of forests in the country that are family owned. The Forest Stewardship Program provides these critical services to family forestland owners throughout the country. Oftentimes, the first contact a landowner has with the concept of sustainable, climate-smart forest management comes through the Forest Stewardship Program or a program intimately connected with it.

The Forest Stewardship Program representatives and affiliates across the United States are critical to implementation of active forest management on privately-owned lands through:

- Providing technical assistance.
- Educating private forest landowners and others on forests and active forest management.

- Conducting outreach related to the program and to active forest management in general.
- Facilitating long-term forest planning.
- Connecting landowners with resources vital to helping them manage their land.
- And much more.

Through these actions, the Forest Stewardship Program creates a sustained flow of public benefits such as air and water quality protection and the provision of wildlife habitat, while addressing key issues in State forest action plan. State forest action plans provide the priorities and strategies for implementing the Forest Stewardship Program. States also monitor and measure the success of the program over time.

Forest Stewardship and Historically Underserved Landowners

The USDA is committed to building and maintaining trust, reducing barriers to access, and increasing USDA investments towards underserved communities. Unfortunately, there is a history of discrimination and much case law to address the discrimination, including [Pigford v. Glickman](#), a class action discrimination suit filed between black farmers and the USDA. In 1999, a Federal district judge found that the USDA had discriminated against black farmers and the USDA provided cash relief, tax payments and debt relief to farmers impacted by this discrimination.

Prior to that ruling, in 1994, the USDA commissioned a [study to analyze the treatment of minorities and women in the Farm Service Agency](#). This study looked at payment programs, including those for the Forest Incentives Program. This study found that minority participation was low and minority farmers received less than their fair share for crop payments, disaster payments, and loans.

The Forest Stewardship Program is committed to ensuring full and fair participation of all eligible landowners. States are encouraged to address barriers to access and strategies to improve participation of historically underserved landowners.

Complying with Civil Rights Requirements

By law, as a recipient of Forest Stewardship Program Federal funds from the Forest Service, states must provide equal opportunity for all people to participate in the programs and activities the state offers. State's 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."

Importance of Federal-State Partnership

The Forest Stewardship Program is a program funded and guided at the national level, managed at the State level, and implemented at the local level. This requires a close and ongoing partnership between Federal and State staff. At the national level, the Forest Stewardship Program is structured to be as flexible as possible because every state has varying needs and priorities. What is effective in one state may or may not be so in another. In some states, the Forest Stewardship Program is a major portion of their budget for the important work of delivering services to enhance stewardship of private forestland; while in other states, the Forest Stewardship Program may make up a small portion of their overall budget for related work.

No matter the actual percentage of the Federal versus State investments in the Forest Stewardship Program, all investments are critical to the overall success and reach of the program. Federal monies are applied in Federal investment areas designated by each state according to the states' needs. State monies are utilized inside and outside of the Federal investment areas, as needs and State forest action plans dictate. This allows states to better serve their full constituencies. A recent look at the State matching of Federal funding shows the power and breadth of the overall investment, showing that on average, State forestry agencies match Federal investments two to one (Forman-Cook 2018).

The USDA Forest Service has a set of national priorities and objectives that are addressed by each state within their respective [State Forest Action Plans](#). The Forest Stewardship Program is an essential tool used to address each of these national priorities:

- **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.

Role of the State Forest Stewardship Program Coordinator

The job of a State Forest Stewardship Program coordinator is of paramount importance. It is the coordinator's role to understand the fine details of the Rural Forestry Assistance and Forest Stewardship Program authorities and to work within the existing framework to oversee and tailor the program in a way that best serves the needs of the State or Territory. The coordinator serves as a connection point from the State-Federal partnership to landowners, other State staff involved with the program, and participating natural resource professionals in the private sector. State coordinators are leaders and technical experts that train related State staff and partners in the necessary details of the program and update and engage the entity that serves as the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee. The coordinator also serves as a critical liaison to program contacts at the USDA Forest Service and to other agencies, such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service, that have resources that can be brought to bear to accomplish goals on private forestland. The coordinator is responsible for reporting and monitoring and keeping all pertinent lines of communication open to facilitate the flow of information in all directions.

State coordinators have the opportunity to share success stories, an important part of communicating the overall impact of the program. They also have opportunities to meet both virtually and face-to-face with the Federal program staff as well as their counterparts in other States and Territories. This allows for successes to be shared and tested techniques to be utilized across state boundaries.

Cooperative Forestry and Landowner Assistance Authorities

The Forest Stewardship Program is authorized by the [Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 2103A](#). The program is funded through an annual appropriation to an expanded budget line item that includes the 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 (NIPF). Guidance for the delivery of education, technical and planning assistance is provided above and by the USDA Forest Service Manual, chapter [3210](#).

State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committees

As described in the [Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act](#), section 19 (16 U.S.C. 2113) Federal, State and Local Coordination and Cooperative, each State forester or equivalent State official shall establish a State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee, administered by the State forester or designee thereof. Representatives from the following agencies and organizations, if present in the state, should be invited and encouraged to become members of the committee:

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

Other existing State committees may serve as the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee if their membership includes the interests specified above and Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee functions can be addressed, such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service State Technical Committee's forestry sub-committee.

Conversely, the Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee may be used as a venue to address other partner programs or initiatives, as long as membership includes the interests specified above and Forest Stewardship Program Coordinating Committee functions are still being completed, examples could include:

- Hardwood Forest Habitat Initiative
- Coordinating Council (combined Forest Stewardship, Urban and Community Forestry, and Fire Plan Working Group)

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 (in-person, virtually or hybrid) 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 aid 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.
- 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.

Rural Forestry Assistance Program

[Rural Forestry Assistance](#) (section 3) includes State forestry assistance, which also authorizes the USDA 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.
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 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 USDA Forest Service may direct grants to partners on a state's behalf.

- Forest Stewardship and Rural Forestry Assistance funds cannot be used to directly fund cash “cost-share” individual forest management practices with individual landowners, because other Federal programs such as USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program are authorized and funded to do so.
- Forest Stewardship 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 programs and other easement acquisition programs.

Reforestation, Nurseries, and Genetic Resources

Through the Rural Forestry Assistance Program, the USDA Forest Service is the Federal agency responsible for helping states to produce, distribute, and plant seedlings on private land. In 2001, the agency created the [National Reforestation, Nursery, and Genetics Resources \(RNGR\) Program](#) within State and Private Forestry. In 2004, an agreement with the national forests and the USDA Forest Service research and development branch expanded the program to better coordinate activities and outreach, use expertise more effectively, and provide program continuity. Technical specialists assigned to the program are located across the country. The program's first priority is direct technical assistance to Federal, Tribal, State, Territorial, and private nurseries. The USDA Forest Service National Seed Laboratory is a key component of the National Reforestation, Nursery, and Genetics Resources Program, particularly important in addressing emerging germplasm conservation needs.

Using the Rural Forestry Assistance authorities, the program 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. The program's activities focus on:

1. Facilitating cost-effective 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 through developing research with universities and leveraging State and Federal agencies to provide technical assistance and training to help meet future public demand and provide environmental benefits.
3. Ensuring that forest regeneration or reforestation technical assistance is available nationally and internationally when needed to promote sustainable long-term resource productivity.

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 Team and the National Seed Lab.

Forest Stewardship Plans and USDA Conservation Programs

Authorization for nonindustrial private forest landowners to have access to many USDA Conservation Programs has continued since the [2008 Farm Bill](#). The Farm Bill explicitly recognizes Forest Stewardship Management Plans (forest stewardship plans in this document) and other forest management plans as eligible to meet program planning requirements for certain programs, where forest land is concerned (see appendix 7, section 1). Still, the Forest Stewardship Management Plan may not be sufficient to meet minimum requirements that most conservation programs have relative to compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and before a landowner is considered eligible, additional analysis may be required.

The [2018 Farm Bill](#) contained report language encouraging that any duplication of planning and analysis efforts be held to a minimum (see appendix 7, section 2). It is important that state forestry agencies and USDA agencies work closely together to understand each other's needs in an effort to best serve landowners and make the most efficient use of agency time and resources. State foresters are encouraged to consult with their [State Conservationist](#) to mutually agree to any additional information or requirements needed by Natural Resources Conservation Service 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 Forest Stewardship Management Plan

The USDA 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.

Forest Stewardship Program Implementation

Annual Timeline

There are specific Forest Stewardship program activities that can or must be completed each fiscal year. These activities include:

1. Prioritization of lands: Federal investment areas can be updated anytime during a fiscal year but must be submitted by the end of March (annually) if they are to be used with current year accomplishments. Revision of a Federal investment area does not trigger a need to formally revise the forest action plan as long as the new Federal investment area supports strategies and priorities in the forest action plan.

2. National allocation formula: the national allocation formula is run after Congress appropriates the funding for the Forest Stewardship Program.
3. Outcome-based monitoring and reporting: Due by September 30.
4. Accomplishment reporting: Due dates established by the region, usually within the first two weeks of October.

Prioritization of Lands

Each State and Territory designates a Forest Stewardship program area in acres where program activities may be implemented using both the Forest Stewardship and Rural Forestry Assistance Authorities. The program area can be designated anywhere within a State or Territory's landscape where stewardship of private forests is a priority.

However, for the purpose of determining the Federal investment area and allocating Forest Stewardship Program funding, the National Forest Stewardship Program designates maximum acres for prioritization that consists of 1) nonindustrial private forests lands that are greater than or equal to 10 acres and 2) ten percent of agriculture lands with a soil erodibility index greater than or equal to 10. These tabular data sets are provided to the States and Territories from the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service's Forest Inventory and Analysis' [National Woodland Owner Survey](#) and are made available by the National Forest Stewardship Program. The survey provides the data directly to the Forest Stewardship Program, given the specific definition of nonindustrial private forest landowners (NIPF) used by the program which is different than the family forest owner definition used in the National Woodland Owner Survey publications.

States and Territories develop their own geospatial analysis to determine where on their landscape they want to prioritize their Forest Stewardship Program Area. This area provides the State or Territory an opportunity to define their mission critical planning when working with landowners in creating, implementing, and monitoring forest stewardship plans. Planning should fit strategies and policies for the National Forest Stewardship Program and the State or Territories' Forest Stewardship Program as identified through their forest action plan.

The Forest Stewardship program areas are divided into a Forest Stewardship Federal investment area and a non-Federal investment area (figure 1). The Federal investment areas represent where Federal funding can be used for plan development, implementation, and monitoring. For plans outside of the Federal investment area, other funding will need to be used for those activities. Federal funding can be used for landowner education and assistance throughout the Forest Stewardship Program Area.

- **Forest Stewardship Federal investment areas:** Represents no more than 50 percent of State or Territory's nationally defined maximum acres for prioritization. Federally funded Forest Stewardship Program activities related to plan development, implementation, and monitoring with nonindustrial private forest landowners are used to accomplish:
 - ◆ Reducing wildfire risk to communities (such as fuels reduction, prescribed fire)
 - ◆ Enhancing wildlife habitat (such as game, and non-game)
 - ◆ Protecting water resources (such as water quality, watershed management)
 - ◆ Supporting jobs (such as rural prosperity)
- **Forest Stewardship non-Federal investment areas:** This is the remainder of the Forest Stewardship Program area where State and other leveraged funds can be used for Forest

Stewardship Program plan activities. They should be used in accordance with state or territorial objectives identified in their forest action plan. This area is not subjected to any acreage caps.

For the example in figure 1, the Forest Stewardship Program area is the same as the nationally defined maximum acres for prioritization. The Federal investment area can be no more than 50 percent of the nationally defined maximum acres for prioritization. Federal dollars for plan development can only be spent on plans in the Federal investment area unless your State or Territory is eligible for an exemption, see below.

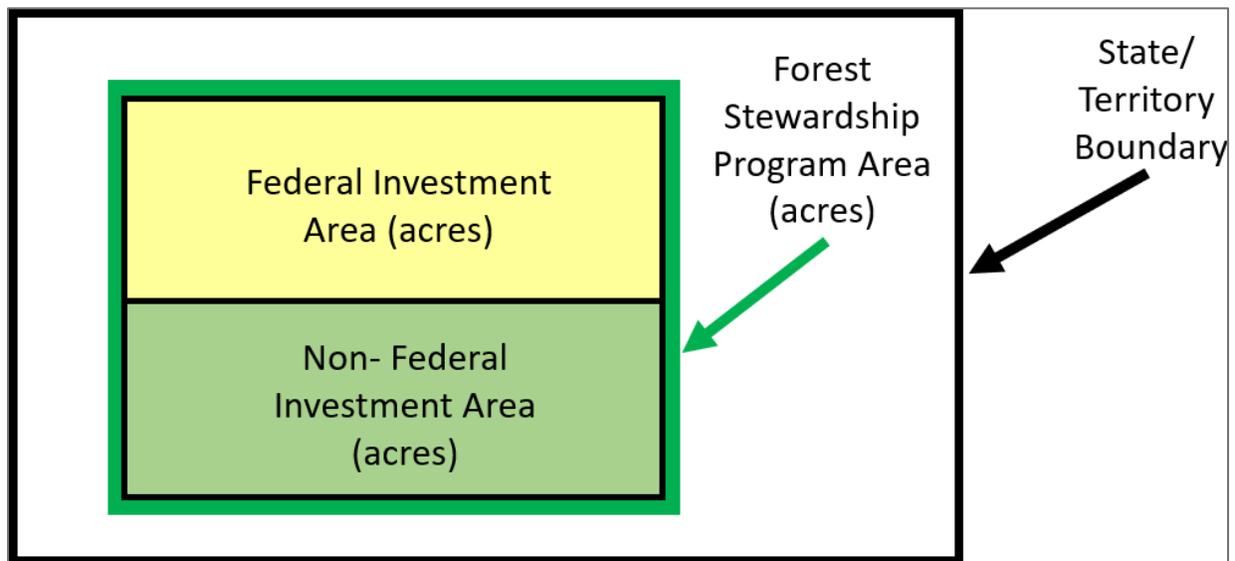


Figure 1. A theoretical representation that includes a State or Territorial boundary with a representation of a Forest Stewardship Program Area (acres) within those borders.

The National and Regional Forest Stewardship Program staff will assist a State's or Territory's Forest Stewardship Program to further define and identify these areas if needed. Once the Federal and non-Federal investment areas have been developed by a State or Territory, they are reviewed by the national Forest Stewardship Program and approved. States and Territories will have the opportunity to review and revise their Forest Stewardship Federal and non-Federal investment areas to address any changes in priorities on the same interval that they are required to review (every 5 years) and revise (every 10 years) their State forest action plans.

Exemptions

Accomplishment reporting in [SMARTar](#) (SMART Accomplishment Reporting, see appendix 5) and the annual Forest Stewardship Program national allocation formula are based on Federal and non-Federal investment areas. All States and Territories must define and identify such area in acreage. States are eligible for an exemption to funding restrictions based on one of the following criteria:

1. Rely solely on Federal funds to deliver a nonindustrial private forest landowner assistance program.
2. Have less than or equal to 500,000 privately forested acres.
3. Great Plains States for which the significant share of the forestry assistance focuses on individual trees, riparian forest buffers, windbreaks, shelterbelts, or other distributed forests which may not fit the common definition of forest cover and are generally dispersed across agricultural landscapes.

States and Territories that meet one of the exemption criteria can use their Federal funds for plan development throughout their entire Forest Stewardship Program Area. Exempt States and Territories will still see an incentive to focus their planning work in the Federal investment area, as it will provide benefits to them in future year allocations, via the forest stewardship national allocation formula.

Exempt States and Territories are:

- Alaska
- American Samoa (Territory)
- Arizona
- Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- Delaware
- Federated States of Micronesia
- Guam (Territory)
- Hawaii
- Kansas
- Marshall Islands (Republic of)
- Michigan
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- North Dakota
- Palau (Republic of)
- Puerto Rico
- Rhode Island
- South Dakota
- U.S. Virgin Islands

Submitting Federal Investment Area Data

More than one priority area is acceptable but collectively, selected, and delineated areas must be:

- Of a reasonable size (reflecting that these are truly areas where focused attention should be dedicated).
- Responsive in showing a clear strategy aimed at achieving progress on the identified issues within an area where this achievement is most needed or likely to occur.

Forest Stewardship Program Federal Investment Areas Data

The submission window for updating Forest Stewardship Federal investment areas is open annually but must be submitted by the end of March for it to be used against current budget year accomplishment monitoring. These data will then be added to the priority lands base layer in the [Stewardship Mapping and Reporting Tool \(SMART\)](#) (see appendix 5). for the purpose of viewing and tracking program accomplishments with respect to landscape priorities. Raster data should consist of the following values or classes:

- "No Data"—Areas outside of the State boundary
- "0" (non-stewardship potential)—Areas within the State boundary that are not eligible for Forest Stewardship or Rural Forestry Assistance Program delivery, including Federal lands, large water bodies, and urban centers that are not considered to be part of the wildland urban interface.

- "1" (non-Federal investment areas)—Areas within the State that are eligible for Forest Stewardship and Rural Forestry Assistance Program delivery but are not considered a priority for Federal investment. This area is not subjected to an acreage cap.
- "2" (Federal investment areas)—Areas within the State that are identified by the State as “Federal investment areas” as defined by the national Forest Stewardship Program where Federal investment areas are to be no more than 50 percent of the nationally defined maximum acres for prioritization and can include areas within the wildland urban interface.

Additional instructions for geospatial data:

- Delivered in ESRI GRID format (raster)
- GRID cell size: 30 meters by 30 meters is preferred (or multiples of 30 meters, for example 90 meters by 90 meters)
- GRID projection: World Eckert VI projection with “D_WGS_1984” datum GRID files must be compressed into a zip file and delivered with the following naming convention: USPS state abbreviation_PL.zip, for example the State of Maine would be ME_PL.zip which stands for “Maine Priority Lands.”

Landowner Eligibility

For purposes of this program, nonindustrial private forest 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 as described in the following sections:

- Educational programs
- Technical assistance
- Engagement in short-term or single practice planning processes
- Engagement in the development and use of an individual forest stewardship plan

[The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act](#) does not limit participant eligibility by parcel size, so long as the land is within the above definition of nonindustrial private forestry. The [National Woodland Owner Survey \(NWOS\)](#) provides data concerning nonindustrial private forestry categorized by the amount of existing forest (1 acre and more, 10 acres and more) and other ownership categories. The program’s national allocation funding formula uses National Woodland Owner Survey data for nonindustrial private forestry with greater than or equal to 10 acres. However, that data is not absolute eligibility criteria. Parcel size, growing conditions, cost-effectiveness, and other factors can influence landowner participation. States may set parcel size or other criteria and priorities for participation. Any restrictions should be mindful of their impact on underserved communities.

Landowner Assistance

[The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act \(CFAA\)](#) authorizes the provision of technical assistance to private landowners. Specifically, the act 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.

Congress clearly identified education and technical assistance in both the Rural Forestry Assistance and the Forest Stewardship Program authorities. Recognizing the role of education and technical assistance in leading to actively managed land that provide important public benefits. Education often provides the entry point for landowners to learn more about their land, forest management and what activities they could be doing to maintain the health of their forest. Assistance is often the next step, where landowners work directly with a natural resource professional or forester. Assistance can often lead to plan development, activities on the ground or applying for cost share or other programs to help with implementation of activities.

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 and groups of landowners. 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 assistance, consultations with individual landowners that do not immediately result in the creation of a plan. Increasing levels of consultation and planning with individual landowners can result in practice plans, forest management plans, and Forest Stewardship Management Plans. Including a landscape scale approach to working with forest landowners can provide a wider range of engagement and program benefits.

Federal funds can be used for assisting and educating landowners throughout the Forest Stewardship Program Area.

Landowner Education

Landowner education includes a wide range of efforts that facilitate landowner participation in a Forest Stewardship Program or Rural Forestry Assistance sponsored educational workshop, course, or program designed to further enable them to sustainably manage their properties. Examples include but are not limited to landowner field days, timber tax seminars, estate planning workshops, silviculture courses, wildlife management seminars, forest management webinars, and management plan writing workshops. For the purpose of accomplishment reporting, measure two (number of landowners educated) in SMARTar, this data includes landowners that have participated in a Forest Stewardship Program or Rural Forestry Assistance sponsored educational workshop, course, or program designed to further enable them to sustainably manage their properties.

Landowner outreach including videos, newsletters, brochures, publications, public educational broadcasts, online and social media can also be important tools to reach landowners and federally allocated funds can be used for these efforts as they are important tools to develop landowner interest which can turn in to education and technical assistance opportunities. Outreach metrics should not be included in landowner education accomplishment reporting.

In addition, outreach efforts should:

- Identify and address underserved communities and groups.
- Balance the needs of current participants and potential future participants (that is balance time invested in each aspect where capacity may be limited).
- Coordinate with other landowner assistance and education programs to avoid duplication and support ongoing efforts as appropriate.
- Identify opportunities for landscape-scale and multiple landowners planning and technical assistance delivery, especially where ownerships are relatively small.
- Promote and foster the development of peer-to-peer landowner networks.
- Consider collaboration across ownerships within the Federal investment areas.
- Develop appropriate landowner outreach and social marketing strategies for different and 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 delivery 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.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is working with individual landowners through providing one or more site visits, consultation or assistance in forestry related services tied specifically to management of their forest land. Technical assistance is reported in the annual accomplishment reporting as measure one: number of landowners assisted. Landowners who solely attend a technical or training session without specific assistance provided for their forestland objectives are considered to have participated solely in education.

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

Recommended Documentation

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. Collection and management of this information should follow State requirements. State records consisting of landowner case files or databases of those receiving technical assistance are recommended to include:

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

Plan Types

Forest Practice Plans

Forest practice plans address focused activities like a stand prescription or cost shared activities. These plans are 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 associated with the stand or area of interest (such as special management zones). A forest practice plan is not generally developed for an entire tract unless the tract is small or supports one timber type that will be managed as a single parcel or unit. Forest practice plans are often used to document existing conditions and make management recommendations as required by Federal or State financial assistance programs.

Forest practice plans developed as an adjunct to current forest stewardship plans are not included in this definition. Those activities will be captured during the monitoring for forest stewardship plan implementation. Practice plan accomplishments will be reported in the Federal fiscal year of the plan active date.

Forest practice plans can include, but not limited to:

- Rehabilitation plans
- Timber stand improvement plans
- Harvest plans
- Wildfire mitigation plans
- Planting and regeneration plans
- Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation practice plans
- [NRCS Design and Implementation \(DIA\)](#) 165 Plan (Formerly part of Conservation Activity Plan 106)

Forest Practice Plan Criteria

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

- 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
- Detailed map of practice area. Spatial data are not required but encouraged to determine if the practice is within a Federal investment area.
- Additional elements such as riparian zones, threatened and endangered species, and wetlands could be addressed if warranted.

Forest Management Plans

Forest management plans generally cover an entire ownership but are less comprehensive and do not include all required elements of a forest stewardship plan. The primary focus of the plan is to provide forest management information and recommendations and could address State specific guidelines or objectives like open space, tax savings programs, or other State priorities.

Forest management plans could include:

- Natural resource management plans for community forest and open spaces, if not using a forest stewardship plan.
- Multi-resource management plans for a forest legacy project, if not using a forest stewardship plan.
- Plans for State tax law programs.

Forest Management Plan Criteria

A Forest management plan will include several key elements to help landowners make good decisions about the management of their forest. Management plans should be prepared by a professional forest resource manager however State forester or a suitable representative approval is not required for these plans. These plans should include:

- The landowner's and plan writer's contact information.
- The property identification and location information.
- Clearly state landowner goals and objectives.
- Current forest stand conditions which could include past management activities.
- Detailed recommended practices.
- A detailed map of the property. Spatial data are not required but encouraged to determine if plan is within a Federal investment area.
- Additional elements such as riparian zones, threatened and endangered species, and wetlands could be addressed if warranted.

Forest Stewardship Plans

A forest stewardship plan serves as the foundation for engaging forest landowners in a plan that addresses individual landowner objectives while adhering to Federal and State forest stewardship plan guidelines. These multi-resource management plans:

- Meet the minimum standards and content requirements detailed in the criteria and plan elements below.
- Have been approved by the State forester or a suitable representative.
- Meet State guidelines.

For the purposes of calculating the Federal accomplishment metrics and Forest Stewardship Program allocation formula, forest stewardship plans must also have spatial data for the plan boundary that is entered into the SMART database. These spatial data allow plans to be located within or outside the State's designated Federal investment area and to be selected for monitoring.

Forest Stewardship Plan Criteria

All forest stewardship plans must meet the minimum standards of a forest stewardship plan and be approved by the State forester or a suitable representative and include:

- The landowner's and plan writer's contact information.
- The property identification and location information.
- Clearly state landowner goals and objectives.
- Current forest stand conditions which could include past management activities.
- Describe desired forest stand conditions.
- Include practices and activities aimed at reaching the desired forest condition or condition class for each stand.
- Document a timeline for implementation of each practice and activity.
- 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.

Resource Elements

The plan preparer will consider, describe, and evaluate resource elements present and their importance to the ownership. The extent to which a forest stewardship plan 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 resource elements and their importance to the ownership when they are present. Resource 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 and legacy planning information
- Archeological, cultural, and historical sites
- Wetlands
- Fire
- Carbon sequestration and climate resilience
- Forests of recognized importance (FORI - To be considered when aligning forest stewardship plans with [American Tree Farm System's Standards of Sustainability](#)).

Management recommendations and alternative strategies, consistent with landowner objectives, will be provided to protect or enhance all resource 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 plan with the landowner, following completion, and periodically, to assure understanding and encourage plan implementation.

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, or county regulatory programs, especially as they apply to:
 - ◆ Archeological, cultural, and historical sites
 - ◆ Wetlands
 - ◆ Threatened and endangered species

See table 1 for a list of plan criteria required and not required under the forest practice plan, forest management plan and forest stewardship plan. Any criteria not marked as required can be included if deemed necessary by the resource professional.

Table 1. Plan criteria required by plan type

Plan Criteria	Forest Practice Plan	Forest Management Plan	Forest Stewardship Plan
Prepared by a professional forest resource manager	Yes	Yes	Yes
Landowner and plan writer contact information	Yes	Yes	Yes
Property identification and location information	Yes	Yes	Yes
Landowner's goals and objectives	Yes	Yes	Yes
Description of existing conditions	Yes	Yes	Yes
Description of recent management activities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Detailed management recommendations	Yes	Yes	Yes
Detailed map of practice area	Yes	No	No
Detailed map of entire property	No	Yes	Yes
Spatial data is required	No	No	Yes
Approved by the State forester or a suitable representative	No	No	Yes
Description of desired forest stand conditions	No	No	Yes
Documentation of a timeline for implementation	No	No	Yes
Description of any suggested monitoring activities	No	No	Yes
Developed for a specified management period	No	No	Yes
Reviewed, renewed, or revised by the end of the specified management period	No	No	Yes
Resource elements are considered if present	No	No	Yes

Landscape Stewardship

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 USDA 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. In many states the Forest Service is implementing landscape stewardship as part of shared stewardship with States, counties, Tribal governments, and other partners.

While outreach and assistance to individual landowners is a key element of achieving forest stewardship objectives, 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 would benefit being included in multi-stakeholder engagement at the community or landscape level. Through landscape stewardship approaches that work with multiple partners on all lands, the technical assistance provided to private landowners can lead to greater conservation outcomes and public benefit and can be a catalyst to engage more landowners into sustainably managing their forest ownerships.

The term “landscape” means many things to different people, from vast regional areas to a constricted viewshed. A landscape approach to forest conservation includes many landowners, may cross political boundaries, and will preferably focus on all or part of a priority area or issue identified in the State forest action plan document(s). Within each priority area are a number of communities, and each encompasses a number of forested parcels and stakeholders upon which stewardship outcomes ultimately depend. Consequently, the actual extent of a landscape will vary depending on the issues and objectives identified when initially scoping the landscape stewardship effort and the approach taken to address those issues and objectives.

Landscape Stewardship Plans

Individual plans written within a landscape stewardship area should acknowledge the priority issues relevant to a landscape plan and should be written in the context of the landscape stewardship effort, so that the landowner has a greater appreciation of how their property contributes to the greater resource needs of the community. Individual landowners will choose to implement their personal management objectives in a way that is complementary to the overall community’s resource management needs. In essence, landscape plans do not replace individual landowner plans; they serve as a framework, where necessary, to guide individual landowners in their management choices so that more informed decisions can be made on the individual property.

In some areas, landscape management plans are an umbrella plan that meet all the Forest Stewardship Program requirements and serve as a tool to help plan writers streamline individual landowner plans. Landscape management plans are written for a larger area, for example an entire state, and prioritize conservation goals while still providing the landowner with recommended activities and guidance that meet their objectives and the current condition of their land.

Outcome-Based Monitoring and Reporting

The intent of the Forest Stewardship Program’s plan implementation monitoring effort is to reliably assess the extent to which current forest stewardship plans are being implemented and to demonstrate that landowners are managing their woods based on recommendations made in their forest stewardship plans. Forest stewardship plan monitoring feeds into national accomplishment reporting and provides data for the following fiscal year’s national allocation formula. Reporting will be used to tell Congress a compelling story of the public benefits derived from well-managed private forests and to elevate the importance of the Forest Stewardship Program in supplying the technical assistance landowners need.

Plan implementation monitoring is also important in focusing Federal investments towards outcome-based accomplishments. Developed in collaboration with States and Territories, the plan monitoring protocol collects meaningful, statistically reliable results, while not placing unreasonable burden on State partners. Forest stewardship plan monitoring focuses on implemented on-the-ground activities that occur within forest stewardship Federal investment areas.

Monitored plans are randomly selected and consist of a statistically significant sample (see appendix 4 for the sampling formula) of Forest Stewardship Program plans. The information gathered through monitoring will feed into metrics for the national allocation formula, specifically:

- Metric 5 (number of implemented plan acres in the forest stewardship Federal investment areas): The results of monitoring plans and the number implemented is used to calculate metric 5. The five-year average of plans monitored and implemented is calculated within SMARTar.

- Metric 6 (number of implemented plan acres in forest stewardship non-Federal investment areas): metric 5 is then used to calculate metric 6.

To facilitate monitoring, a form-centric data collection tool was developed using ESRI's Survey123 application. This application is free and can be accessed through the web on a desktop or laptop or through an app for mobile devices. The Forest Stewardship Program Monitoring Survey123 application has region specific forest management activities with drop down menus and auto populating features to simplify data entry. This monitoring tool provides States with a convenient way to collect data on implemented activities recommended in forest stewardship plans. The data is then automatically uploaded to a Forest Service database to streamline reporting. State coordinators will be able to view a summary of monitored plans and edit plans that have already been submitted in Survey123. Every calendar year a new survey for monitoring will be published and include that year's plans to monitor.

Plan monitoring information is also reflected in SMARTar, which is updated once at the end of the year by national administrators. Plan monitoring information must be submitted and processed before final accomplishment reports are submitted through SMARTar. The deadline for all regions to submit their plan monitoring data is September 30.

More detailed guidance for plan monitoring is provided each fiscal year in the annual reporting instructions documents.

Plan Monitoring Process

Early in the calendar year, a [Stewardship Mapping and Reporting Tool \(SMART\)](#) (see appendix 5) national administrator will select a random sample of forest stewardship plans in Federal investment area(s) for monitoring. Only plans that are partially or wholly within Federal investment areas will be selected for monitoring. At roughly the same time, the reporting instructions for that fiscal year will be provided containing detailed information regarding deadlines for reporting and other technical information.

- Forest stewardship plans with geospatial polygons, and which are “active” and “approved” in the SMART database, can be selected for monitoring.
- If a plan is inactive for any reason or “in progress” in the SMART (that is in the process of being updated), it cannot be selected for monitoring.
- Plans will be selected for monitoring no more than once during a 10-year period.
- New plans (those that were entered into the SMART during the current fiscal year) are not part of the sampling pool and are exempt from monitoring the first 2 years. This gives landowners 2 years to plan and implement management activities outlined in their forest management plan.
- States will collect data on implemented activities since the plan was created or last monitored, whichever occurred first.
- Plans will be monitored by a natural resource professional, preferably someone other than the plan writer.
- Monitoring can be done in-person, virtually, by phone or by email.
- States and Territories with plan monitoring programs that capture more data than Survey123 will continue to use their plan monitoring system and bulk transfer plan monitoring data to the SMART database. The Forest Service will provide the SMART plan monitoring data specifications. States

will use the data specifications to transform exported State plan monitoring data to align with the SMART database.

- States and Territories are to provide the following data for each monitored forest stewardship plan. Elements are required unless otherwise noted.
 - ◆ State
 - ◆ Plan ID
 - ◆ Associated important landscape – West only (optional)
 - ◆ Monitoring date
 - ◆ Monitoring method – on-site or remote.
 - ◆ Interviewee – landowner or landowner representative
 - ◆ Lead monitor
 - ◆ Landowner objectives
 - ◆ Management activity type
 - ◆ Activity practice including acres of implemented activity
 - ◆ Implemented consistent with forest stewardship plan – yes or no
 - ◆ Cost share – the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, State, other, or none
 - ◆ Resource objectives
 - ◆ Management barriers – optional
 - ◆ Monitoring conclusion – yes or no
 - ◆ Photos – optional
 - ◆ Map location – auto-filled based on plan ID

States can contact the Forest Mapping and Accomplishment Portal (ForMAP) help desk to request a new plan for monitoring if:

- The landowner has changed for a Forest Stewardship Program plan selected for monitoring; states will mark the plan as no longer active.
- If a plan is flagged for monitoring and it is not a Forest Stewardship Program plan.
- If a plan is flagged and is not within the Federal investment area.

Several states have other programs, such as tax programs and the American Tree Farm System, which require plan implementation monitoring and include periodic site inspections. When a property with a forest stewardship plan is inspected through such a program, the results from the site inspection can be used to fulfill forest stewardship plan monitoring requirements, without another visit to the site. States can work with the SMART national administrator to select Forest Stewardship Program plans for monitoring from within a state’s list of existing plans for monitoring to streamline their monitoring for multiple programs, if applicable.

Accomplishment Reporting SMARTar

All data reported in SMARTar is for the appropriate Federal fiscal year. Each State or Territory must report the accomplishment data listed below. SMARTar will summarize accomplishment data that is entered into the SMART. SMARTar will also allow states to check their accomplishment data and adjust for plans that have not yet been entered into the SMART. Measures 14-17 are not captured from the SMART and must be entered by the state into SMARTar:

1. Number of landowners assisted
2. Number of landowners educated
3. Acres of new or updated forest stewardship plans
4. Acres of new or updated forest stewardship plans in the Federal investment area
5. Number of new or updated forest stewardship plans
6. Total acres in the Federal investment area
7. Acres of all active Forest Stewardship plans
8. Total acres of all active forest stewardship plan in a Federal investment area
9. Total acres of all active forest stewardship plan in a Federal investment area confirmed as managed sustainably
10. Number of new or updated Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) management plans
11. Total acres of new or updated Environmental Quality Incentives Program management plans
- 12a. Acres of practice plans
- 13a. Acres of practice plans in a Federal investment area
- 12b. Acres of other forest management plans
- 13b. Acres of other forest management plans in the Federal investment area
14. Acres within landscape stewardship plans
15. Acres of landscape stewardship plans within Federal investment areas
16. Number of seedlings produced and distributed
17. Pounds of improved seed collected and 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 using available spatial analysis and plan writing and tracking tools. States are required to use the SMART and SMARTar to report accomplishments. States have the option to use the SMART to develop individual plans or upload plan boundaries in bulk using the Stewardship Accomplishment Data Loader (SADL) tool. See appendix 5 for how to access SMARTar.

National Allocation Formula

Data is collected by States and Territories and reported in SMARTar, the annual accomplishment reporting tool in the National Information Center (NIC). The annual accomplishment reporting is used to

populate the metrics for the forest stewardship national allocation formula which determines the amount of Federal funding a States and Territories will receive for the next fiscal year.

The Forest Stewardship Program receives Congressional appropriations to provide technical and financial assistance to landowners to ensure the conservation of working forest lands, to protect forests from harm, and to enhance public benefits from trees and forests. State forestry agencies develop relationships with private landowners that lead to measurable and impactful activities on the land that maintain or enhance these forest benefits. To recognize those relationships and activities, the national allocation formula allocates 60 percent of non-base funding using performance-based metrics.

The national allocation formula contains two features to minimize annual fluctuations in funding for the Forest Service regions and the States and Territories that constitute each Forest Service region. The first is the use of five-year averaging for all States and Territories performance-based metrics (see below, metrics 3-7) rather than just using one year of data each time the formula is used for allocation. The use of the 5-year average allows unforeseen events (such as natural disasters, changes in employees, funding) to have an impact that is spread out over 5 years, rather than having a large impact during the year the event occurred. The five-year average reduces the impact of the poor year by distributing it across performance from the other four years.

All States and Territories receive base funding of \$100,000. Allocation is split into program performance (60 percent) which are comprised of metrics 3-7 in the formula and program potential (40 percent) which are comprised of metrics 1-2 in the formula. See figure 2 below.

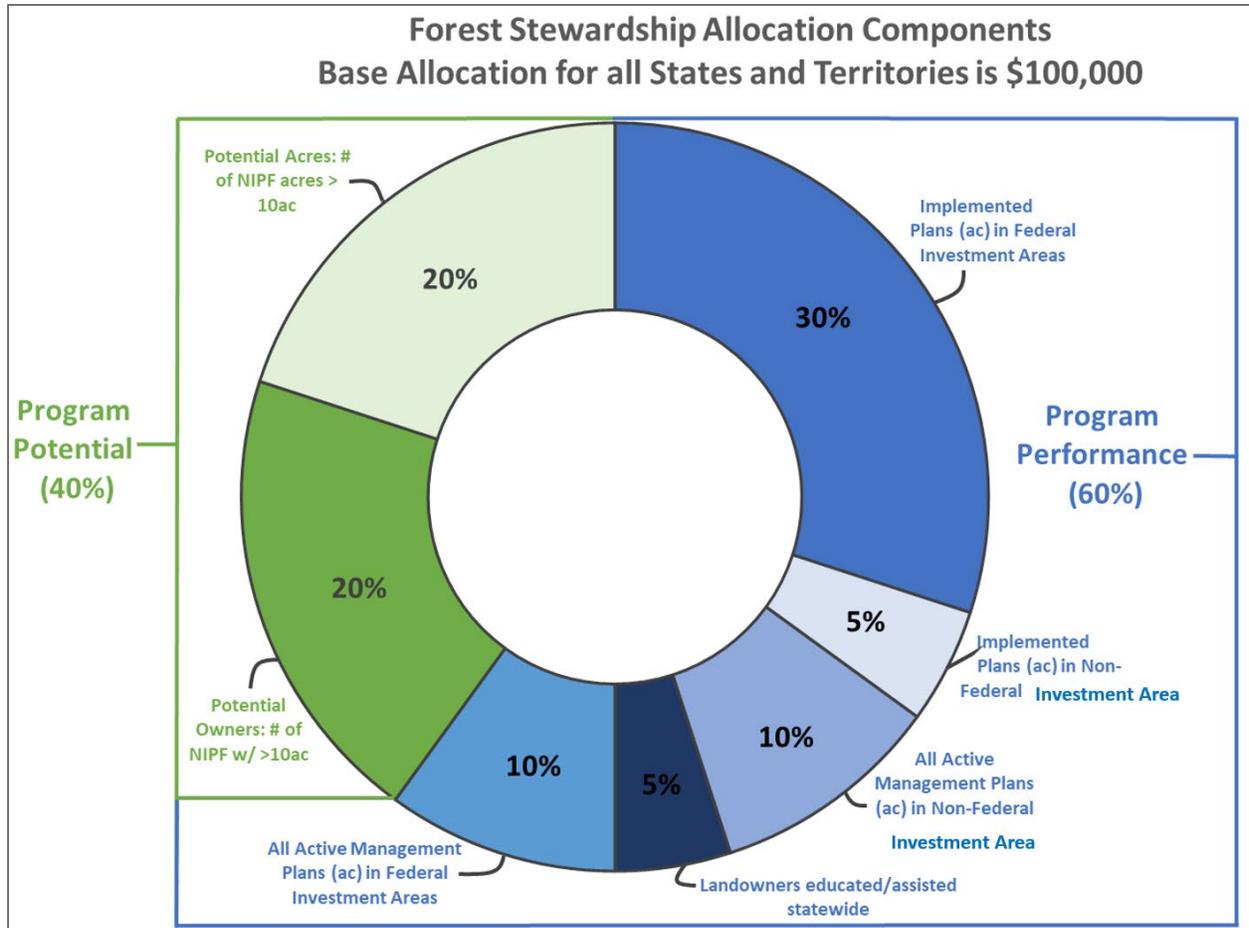


Figure 2. Forest stewardship allocation components

Data for the National Allocation Formula

Allocations are derived from base funding and seven metrics and are grouped as follows:

Base Funding

Each State and Territory is allocated \$100,000 in base funding in the national allocation formula.

Potential Performance

Potential funding is 40 percent of the allocation formula and is based on two metrics taken from the [National Woodland Owner Survey](#).

Metric 1

Metric 1 (20 percent) is the number of nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) owners with greater than or equal to 10 acres. This metric is the potential population for the Forest Stewardship Program and represents 20 percent of the allocation of funds.

Metric 1 is calculated using data from the National Woodland Owners Survey for the 50 states. Starting in 2022, the 2018 survey data will be used in the allocation formula for metric 1.

For the Territories, there is currently not a methodology to gather nonindustrial private forest owner data, however we will be working with regional staff and partners to develop one for the future. For fiscal year 2021, the number of nonindustrial private forest owners is an estimation using agricultural census data for farms for Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. For American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands, we estimated the number of nonindustrial private forest owners by multiplying metric 2 by 10 percent. For the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau, we set the estimated number of landowners at 1000 each.

Metric 2

Metric 2 (20 percent) is the number of nonindustrial private forest acres (greater than 10 acres) plus agricultural land in need of conservation (derived by taking 10 percent of agricultural land with a soil erodibility index of 10 or higher, by state). This metric is the potential acreage for the Forest Stewardship Program and represents 20 percent of the allocation of funds.

For the 50 states, metric 2 is calculated from the [National Woodland Owners Survey \(NWOS\)](#), but also includes highly erodible agricultural acres from the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Starting in 2022, the 2018 woodland survey data will be used in the allocation formula for metric 1.

For the Territories, 2006 resources planning assessment data was used for all acres because greater than 10 acres was not available. We will be working with regional staff and partners to develop an appropriate methodology to estimate these numbers in the future.

Program Performance

These metrics are based on past performance using data from the [SMARTar](#) (see appendix 5) on accomplishment reporting tool in the National Information Center. These metrics will be used to allocate 60 percent of funding to States and Territories. Each of these metrics will be averaged and normalized over 5 years to stabilize funding.

Metric 3

All acres within forest stewardship Federal investment area covered by current and approved forest stewardship management plans. This metric is 10 percent of the allocation and is calculated by:

Adding together measure (8) total acres of all active Forest Stewardship plans within the Federal investment area, measure (13a) acres of practice plans in the Federal investment area, both from SMARTar and measure (13b) acres of other forest management plans in the Federal investment area.

Metric 4

All current, approved plans in the forest stewardship non-Federal investment areas. This metric is 10 percent of the allocation and is calculated using the measures that are currently reported in SMARTar.

Add together measure (7) acres of all active forest stewardship plans, (12a) acres of practice plans and (12b) acres of other forest management plans.

Add together (8) total acres of all active forest stewardship plans in a Federal investment area, (13a) acres of practice plans in a Federal investment area and (13b) acres of other forest management plans in the Federal investment area then subtract that number from [Measure 7 plus 12a plus 12b] to get the total used for metric 4.

Metric 5

The number of implemented plan acres in the forest stewardship Federal investment area. This metric is the largest percentage of the allocation formula, representing 30 percent and is calculated by using SMARTar data from measure (9) total acres of all active forest stewardship plans within a Federal investment area confirmed as managed sustainable.

Measure 9 is calculated automatically within SMARTar. The last 5 years of acres implement are added together and divided by the last 5 years of acres monitored. Using measure 9, the implementation rate is calculated and multiplied by measure (8) total acres of all active forest stewardship plans within the Federal investment area, measure (13a) acres of practice plans in a Federal investment area and measure (13b) acres of other forest management plans in the Federal investment area to calculate all plans implemented in the Federal investment area.

Metric 6

The number of implemented plan acres in forest stewardship non-Federal investment areas. Because monitoring data is not collected in the non-Federal investment areas, metric 6 is estimated from the data collected in the Federal investment areas. This metric represents five percent of the allocation formula and is calculated by using data from SMARTar.

The number of total plans is subtracted from the number of plans in a Federal investment area to calculate the number of forest Stewardship plans, practice plans and other forest management plans in the non-Federal investment area:

- Subtract metric (8) total acres of all active forest stewardship plans within the Federal investment area from metric (7) acres covered by all active forest stewardship plans
- Subtract metric (13a) acres of practice plans in a Federal investment area from metric (12a) Acres of practice plans
- Subtract metric (13b) acres of other forest management plans in the Federal investment area from metric (12b) acre of other forest management plans.

The total plans in the non-Federal investment area are then multiplied by the implementation rate from metric 5 and added together to calculate the number of all plans that are implemented within the non-Federal investment area.

Metric 7

Number of landowners assisted and educated statewide (both Federal investment and State priority areas). This metric represents five percent of the allocation formula and is calculated by adding together measure (1) Number of landowners assisted, and measure (2) Number of landowners educated, both from SMARTar. Federal funds can be used for assisting and educating landowners throughout the Forest Stewardship Program area.

When considering how the metrics are associated within a State or Territorial boundary, metrics 1, 2, and 7 are associated with the Forest Stewardship Program area (figure 3); metrics 4 and 6 are associated with the non-Federal investment area (figure 4); and metrics 3 and 5 are associated with the Federal investment area (figure 5).

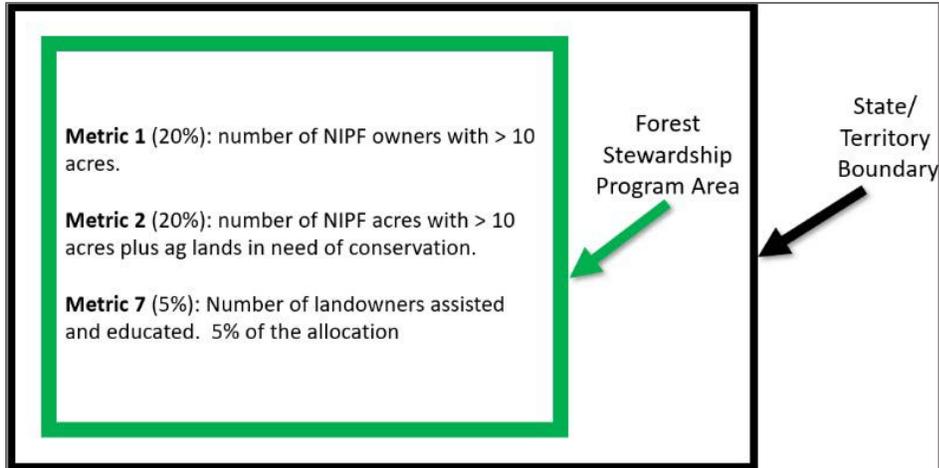


Figure 3. Allocation metrics associated with the entire Forest Stewardship Program Area

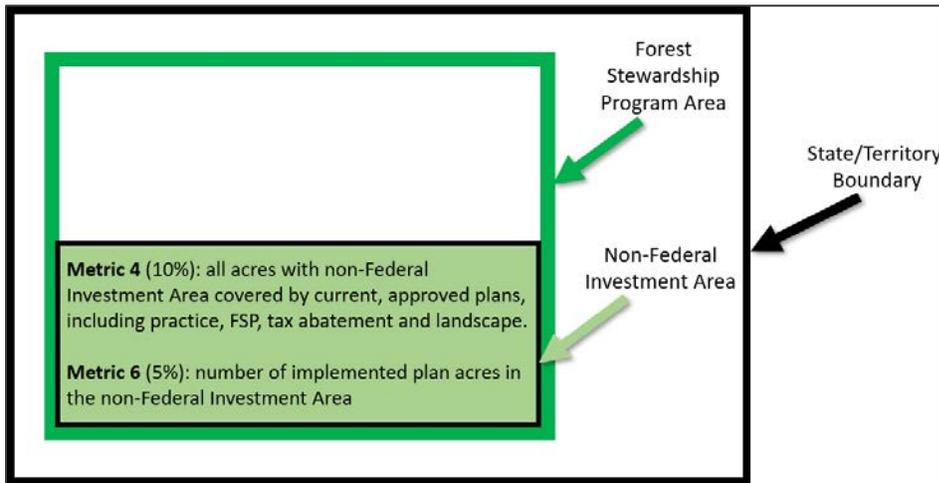


Figure 4. Allocation metrics associated with the non-Federal investment area

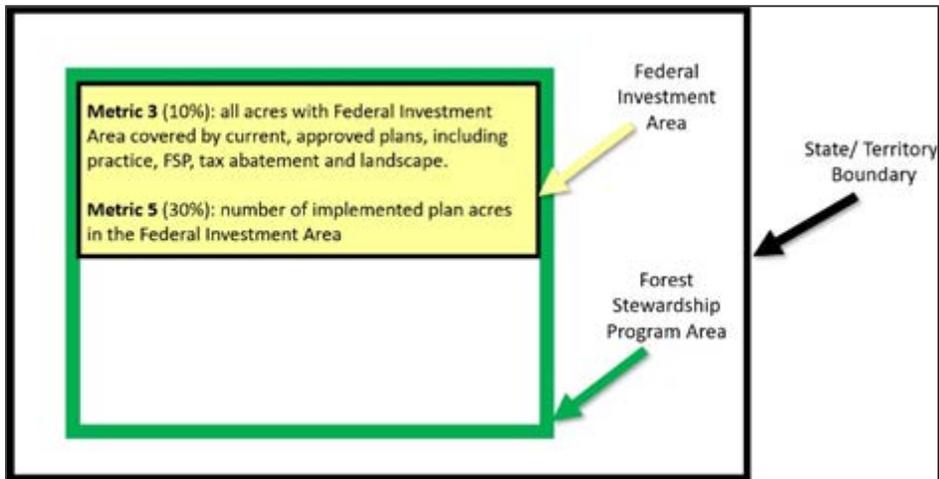


Figure 5. Allocation metrics associated with the Federal investment area

See appendix 2 for information on collecting the annual data from SMARTar for the allocation formula, data outliers, and calculating caps for metrics in the allocation formula.

How the National Allocation Formula Works

Metric data for the previous year is used to calculate the current fiscal year's allocation funding, for example fiscal year 2020 accomplishment reporting is used in the calculation for fiscal year 2021 funding. The previous year's data is an average with the four prior years data to calculate metrics within the allocation formula.

- **For metric 1-4:** the formula calculates the five-year average for each fiscal year. Then the cap number replaces any state's five-year average this is higher than the cap. Finally, each state's metric is converted to a relative proportion of the five-year capped total for the nation.
- **For metric 5 and 6:** The formula does not calculate the five-year average because SMARTar already calculates the five-year average before this data is input into the formula. The formula does replace any state's data that is higher than the cap and then converts each value into a relative proportion of the capped total for the nation.
- **For metric 7:** Metric 7 has one additional step compared to metrics 1-4. Before the values are averaged and capped, each state's value is divided by the total number of landowners within that state (metric 1). This conversion allows us to see the number of landowners assisted and educated events per landowner within the state. Then the formula calculates the five-year average for each fiscal year. Then the cap number replaces any state's five-year average this is higher than the cap. Finally, each states metric is converted to a relative proportion of the five-year capped total for the nation.

See appendix 2 for more information on how the caps are calculated.

Annually, Congress appropriates funding for the Forest Stewardship Program. After adjustments for directed spending and some administrative costs, the net available is input into the allocation formula. Based on the State allocations, funds are transferred to each Forest Service region to administer and award.

Forest Stewardship Recognition

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

1. **Identify the USDA Forest Service when promoting the Forest Stewardship Program:** State Forestry agencies and 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. **Submit success stories annually:** States are encouraged to submit yearly success stories in State fact sheets and to the regional office as a part of end-of-year grant reporting. Two-three sentences describing the program's influence and positive impacts for the landowner and public resources with 1-2 good quality photos. The regional office will contact you if more information is needed. States are encouraged to also share these stories with the communication staffer for their forestry association or other partner outlets to increase viewability. Success stories are used to increase outreach and

communications and are shared by the USDA Forest Service to promote the success of the Forest Stewardship Program.

3. **Acknowledge stewardship participants with a Forest Stewardship certificate and sign:** 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 most recent Forest Stewardship Program theme art (adopted in 2012) when purchasing Forest Stewardship certificates and signs. There is no requirement to replace existing Forest Stewardship signs.
4. **Recognize the outstanding work being done by State field foresters** a national award has been established. States will provide nominations, select, and submit their exemplary field forester winner to their respective USDA Forest Service designated area (Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance, Southern Group of State Foresters, or Council of Western State Foresters). The winner will be recognized at a designated area function meeting. Every 2 years in conjunction with the National Forest Stewardship meeting, a national “Stewardship Field Forester of the Year” will be selected from the designated area winners the two previous years.

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 and celebration for individual forest landowners, groups, organizations, and so forth.
- Selection and recognition of a “Stewardship Forest” of the year, or Forest Stewardship landowner or manager of the year.
- Regional landowner recognition by the USDA Forest Service and associated forestry association (Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters, Southern Group of State Foresters, or Council of Western State Foresters).
- Selection and recognition of a national Forest Stewardship landowner by USDA 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, State Forestry Association, National Association of State Foresters, and so forth.
- Visit and host ceremony on recognized land to honor landowner.
- Provide additional value-added items for exemplary landowner forest stewards (such as free memberships with partner organizations, poster-sized property maps, discounted seed and seedling rates through partner organizations or state-run nurseries, thumb drives with resource information, and so forth)

Work Cited

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- Forman-Cook, Whitney. May 15, 2018. Celebrating the Forest Stewardship Program. National Association of State Foresters website. <https://www.stateforesters.org/2018/05/15/celebrating-the-forest-stewardship-program/>
- Oswalt S. N. and W. B. Smith. 2014. [US Forest Resource Facts and Historical Trends](#). FS-1035. U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service.
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Appendix 1: Development of the Standards and Guidelines

The Forest Stewardship standards and guidelines were updated using feedback from a winter 2021-2022 survey that provided comments from 34 of the 58 States and Territories that currently implement the Forest Stewardship Program. The Forest Stewardship Program Guidance Committee reviewed all the feedback and used it in developing these standards and guidelines. The Forest Stewardship Program Guidance Committee included members of the USDA Forest Service, the National Association of State Foresters, and State Forestry Agency employees including:

National Association of State Foresters

- Marvin Brown, Forest Resource Management
- James Wright, Forestry Partnership Coordinator

State Forestry Agencies

- Nathan Agalzoff, Family Forestlands Coordinator, Oregon Department of Forestry, Salem, Oregon
- Chisolm Beckham, Forest Management, Reforestation Manager and Stewardship Program Manager, South Carolina Forestry Commission, Columbia South Carolina
- Joe Fox, State Forester, Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Little Rock, Arkansas
- Austin Reimer, Interim Incentives Coordinator, Oregon Department of Forestry, Salem, Oregon
- Rachel Reyna, Section Chief, Bureau of Forestry, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
- Keith Thompson, Private Lands Program Manager, Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, Montpelier, Vermont

USDA Forest Service

- Peter Bedker, Team Leader, State and Private Forestry Application Development and Support Information Management, St. Paul, Minnesota
- Arvind Bhuta, National Headquarters Forest Mapping and Accomplishment Portal (ForMAP) Program Manager, Washington DC.
- Alice Ewen, Assistant Director Cooperative Forestry, Landowner Assistance, Washington, DC
- Kathleen Friday, Pacific Southwest Region Program Manager (Pacific Islands), Forest Legacy and Forest Stewardship, Hilo, Hawaii
- Andi Giardina, Natural Resource Specialist, Washington, DC
- Caroline Kuebler, Eastern Region Forest Stewardship Program Manager, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Lynn Lewis, Southern Region Landowner Assistance Program Manager, Atlanta, Georgia
- Tom Luther, Eastern Region GIS Team Leader, Durham, North Carolina
- Dennis McDougall, Eastern Region Forest Stewardship Program Coordinator, St. Paul, Minnesota
- Laura Moser, Southwestern Region Program Manager, Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Dana Walsh, Pacific Southwest Region Program Manager, California Landowner Assistance, Vallejo, California

The standards and guidelines also incorporate the Interim Standards and Guidelines for Modernization, released in Spring 2021. This interim document was developed in collaboration between the USDA Forest Service and State Forestry Agency employees. Their names and affiliations are listed below.

State Forestry Agencies

- Nathan Agalzoff, Oregon Department of Forestry, Incentive Coordinator, Portland, Oregon
- Chisolm Beckham, South Carolina Forestry Commission, Forest Management, Reforestation Manager and Stewardship Program Manager, Columbia, South Carolina
- Keith Thompson, Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, Private Lands Program Manager, Montpelier, Vermont

USDA Forest Service

- Arvind Bhuta, National Headquarters Forest Mapping and Accomplishment Portal (ForMAP) Program Manager (acting Forest Stewardship Program Manager) Washington, DC
- Caroline Kuebler, Eastern Region Forest Stewardship Program Manager, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Lynn Lewis, Southern Region Landowner Assistance Program Manager, Atlanta, Georgia
- Janet Valle, Northern and Intermountain Regions Forest Legacy and Stewardship Program Manager, Ogden, Utah

Appendix 2: Modernizing the Forest Stewardship Program

The 115th Congress passed the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill in 2019 which directed the Forest Stewardship Program which is under United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, State and Private Forestry, Cooperative Forestry, Landowner Assistance Program or Working Forest Lands to “consider developing outcome-based reporting for this program and urges the Service to reevaluate whether allocating program funding using the current allocation formula is the most effective use of program resources ([Senate Report 115-276, 2019](#)).” As a result, the Forest Stewardship Program Modernizing Committee consisting of both Forest Service and State Forest Agency representatives developed viable options to prioritize and focus Federal investments to achieve outcomes on priority lands, serve landowners, and leverage partnerships. The Modernizing Team recommended, and the National Association of State Foresters adopted, the following actions for modernizing the Forest Stewardship Program:

- Refining the Forest Stewardship Program area and Federal investment areas (previously identified as Priority Acres, Important Forest Resource Areas, or Stewardship Program Areas) that lies within it.
- Determining how Federal dollars are spent in the Forest Stewardship Program area.
- Reporting and monitoring outcome-based accomplishments.
- Redefining and adjusting the Forest Stewardship allocation formula.

Appendix 3: Glossary

Accomplishment Reporting

Annual data collected by the States to highlight program accomplishments. This reporting is submitted through SMARTar and is a requirement for Federal Forest Stewardship Program funding.

Federal Investment Areas

The National Forest Stewardship Program identifies a maximum acre for prioritization that consists of both 1) nonindustrial private forests lands that are greater than or equal to 10 acres, and 2) ten percent of agriculture lands with a soil erodibility index greater than or equal to 10. The Forest Stewardship Federal investment areas represents no more than 50 percent of State or Territory's nationally defined maximum acres for prioritization. This area is where federally funded Forest Stewardship Program activities related to plan development can be implemented to assist private landowners with:

- Reducing wildfire risk to communities (such as fuels reduction, prescribed fire)
- Enhancing wildlife habitat (such as game, and non-game)
- Protecting water resources (such as water quality, watershed management)
- Supporting jobs (such as rural prosperity)

Forest Stewardship Program Areas

Each State and Territory designates their own Forest Stewardship Program area where they implement activities using both the Forest Stewardship and Rural Forestry Assistance Authorities. The Program area can be spatially applied to anywhere on a State or Territory's landscape where stewardship of private forests is the priority.

National Allocation Formula

Formula used each fiscal year to distribute the funds Congress appropriates to the Forest Stewardship Program.

Non-Federal Investment Areas

Acreage defined and identified by the State or Territory, this area is where Federal funds cannot be used for Forest Stewardship activities related to plan development.

Appendix 4: Sampling Formula for Selecting Forest Service Plans to Monitor

$$(N * p * (1 - p)) / ((N - 1) * (d^2/z^2) + (p * (1 - p))) / 5$$

Where:

- p equals the estimated proportion of plans being implemented (we use 0.85)
- d equals the desired degree of precision (we use 0.05)
- z equals the desired confidence level (we use 1.64)
- N equals the number of eligible plans in a state (such as population size)
- Dividing by five at the end, gives the 5-year sample for monitoring.

Appendix 5: Allocation Formula Data

This appendix includes additional details on collecting the annual data from SMARTar for the allocation formula, data outliers, and calculating caps for metrics in the allocation formula.

SMARTar Data Retrieval

Data for Forest Stewardship Program national allocation formula are derived from the data submitted to SMARTar. SMARTar is the accomplishment reporting portal for the Forest Stewardship Program which can be accessed through the National Information Center (NIC) for State and Private Forestry webpage: <https://apps.fs.usda.gov/nicportal/home.cfm?action=display>

A government eAuthorization account (<https://www.eauth.usda.gov/home>) is needed before an account can be established. To request accounts, for the portal, SMARTar, and the SMART contact the Forest Mapping and Accomplishment Portal (ForMAP) help desk (www.formap.info) at 303-275-5341.

The following steps are required to ascertain the reports for all States and Territories.

1. On the right side of the screen under the NIC Applications subwindow the user selects SMARTar. This takes the user to the SMARTar page which shows the current year accomplishments for the Forest Stewardship Program.
2. The user selects “Reports” under the “Quick Links” subwindow
3. Under the “Quick Links” subwindow, is the “current fiscal year” subwindow, make sure to change this to the prior year accomplishments so you can determine the allocation for the subsequent year. For example if looking at fiscal year 2021 funding use the accomplishments from fiscal year 2020 to drive the allocation formula.
4. Once the correct fiscal year is set, select “Accomplishments by States”
5. The user can select the whole data set by highlighting all the content, copying, and then pasting the data into a blank Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet is now ready for the outlier analysis and conversion to the allocation formula metrics.

Data Outliers

Some of the metrics used in the allocation formula include a very large range, meaning that states with very large values for their metrics can have an outsized impact on the allocation of funds. To address this variability in data, caps were designated for the metrics.

Calculating Caps

An outlier analysis was conducted to determine the caps for each metric.

- Metric 1 number of nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) owners with greater than 10 acres: the cap was set at the upper outlier bounds:
 - ◆ Calculate the different between the first and third quartile; multiply that number by 1.5; then add it to the third quartile number.
- Metric 2 number of nonindustrial Private Forest acres (greater than 10 acres) plus highly erodible soil: the cap was set at the third quartile

- Metric 3 Plan acres within Forest Stewardship Federal investment area(s): the cap was determined by calculating the upper outlier bounds:
 - ◆ Calculate the different between the first and third quartile; multiply that number by 1.5; then add it to the third quartile number.
- Metric 4 Plan acres in Forest Stewardship non-Federal investment areas: the cap was determined by calculating the upper outlier bounds:
 - ◆ Calculate the different between the first and third quartile; multiply that number by 1.5; then add it to the third quartile number.
- Metric 5 number of implemented plan acres in the Forest Stewardship Federal investment area: the cap was determined by calculating the upper outlier bounds:
 - ◆ Calculate the different between the first and third quartile; multiply that number by 1.5; then add it to the third quartile number.
- Metric 6 number of implemented plan acres in Forest Stewardship non-Federal investment area: the cap was determined by calculating the upper outlier bounds:
 - ◆ Calculate the different between the first and third quartile; multiply that number by 1.5; then add it to the third quartile number.
- Metric 7 number of landowners assisted and educated statewide: because this number is a proportion of each state total number of landowners, the cap is put at one.

Appendix 6: Updated SMARTar Definitions

Table 2. SMARTar previous and current definitions

Measure number	Previous SMARTar Names	Current SMARTar Names
1	Landowner Assistance	Number of landowners assisted
2	Landowner Education	Number of landowners educated
3	New or revised Forest Stewardship Management Plans – Total Acres	Acres of new or updated forest stewardship plans
4	New or revised Forest Stewardship Management Plans – Priority Acres	Acres of new or updated forest stewardship plans in a Federal investment area
5	New or revised Forest Stewardship Management Plans - number of plans	Number of new or updated forest stewardship plans
6	Total Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas	Total Acres in the Federal investment areas
7	Acres covered by current Forest Stewardship Plans	Acres of all active forest stewardship plans
8	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas covered by current Forest Stewardship Plans	Total acres of all active forest stewardship plans in a Federal investment area
9	Total number of acres in Important Forest Resource Areas being managed sustainably, as defined by a current Forest Stewardship Plan	Total acres of all active forest stewardship plans in a Federal investment area confirmed as managed sustainably
9a	Total number of acres of active plans that were selected for monitoring	Acres of plans selected for monitoring
9b	Total number of acres of active plans that were verified as implemented through monitoring	Acres of plans verified as implemented through monitoring
10	New or revised Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Management Plans - number of plans	Number of new or updated Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) management plans
11	New or revised Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Management Plans – Total Acres	Total acres of new or updated Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) management plans
12	Acres covered by Practice or other Forest Management Plans	Not applicable
12a	Not applicable	Acres of practice plans
13a	Not applicable	Acres of practice plans in a Federal investment area
12b	Not applicable	Acres of other forest management plans
13b	Not applicable	Acres of other forest management plans in the Federal investment area
13	Acres in Important Forest Resource. Areas covered by Practice or other Forest Management Plans	Not applicable
14	Acres covered by Landscape Stewardship Plans	Acres within landscape stewardship plans
15	Acres in Important Forest Resource. Areas covered by Landscape Stewardship Plans	Acres of landscape stewardship plans within Federal investment areas.
16	Number of seedlings produced or distributed	Number of seedlings produced or distributed
17	Pounds of improved collected or produced	Pounds of improved seed collected or produced

Appendix 7: Regulation Excerpts

1. Excerpts from 16 U.S.C Section 3839
 - a. Plan of operations To be eligible to receive payments under the program, a producer shall submit to the Secretary for approval a plan of operations that—
 1. specifies practices covered under the program;
 2. includes such terms and conditions as the Secretary considers necessary to carry out the program, including a description of the purposes to be met by the implementation of the plan;
 3. in the case of a confined livestock feeding operation, provides for development and progressive implementation of a comprehensive nutrient management plan, if applicable; and
 4. in the case of forest land, is consistent with the provisions of a forest management plan that is approved by the Secretary, which may include—
 - A. a forest stewardship plan described in SECTION 2103A OF THIS TITLE;
 - B. another practice plan approved by the State forester; or
 - C. another plan determined appropriate by the Secretary.
 - b. Avoidance of duplication The Secretary shall—
 1. consider a plan developed in order to acquire a permit under a water or air quality regulatory program as the equivalent of a plan of operations under subsection (a), if the plan contains elements equivalent to those elements required by a plan of operations; and
 2. to the maximum extent practicable, eliminate duplication of planning activities under the program under this subpart and comparable conservation programs.
2. Excerpts from the 2018 forests in the Farm Bill (FIFB) Coalition Summary of Changes in comparison to the 2018 FIFB platform:
 - 2018 Farm Bill - Modest conference report language: “The Managers encourage NRCS to continue to work with the U.S. Forest Service and state forestry agencies to streamline and align forest management plan requirements in private forestry assistance programs administered by each of these agencies.”
 - 2018 Farm Bill - Modest conference report language: “The Managers also encourage NRCS to allow use of landscape-wide or area-wide forest management plans to meet the requirements of forest management plans in NRCS programs.”