FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM
PROJECT SCORING GUIDANCE
(Updated April 2022)

Introduction:

This document provides guidance to the National Review Panel on how to score and rank individual Forest Legacy Program (FLP) projects according to national core criteria, project readiness, and other evaluation considerations. This process is aligned with and supports current Administration priorities including Executive Order 14008 *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad;* and the challenge that President Biden has proposed for America: Conserving 30% of our lands and waters by 2030.

Objectives of this scoring guidance is to:

- Provide a clear and defensible ranking process that can be easily articulated to program participants and partners; and

- Ensure fair, equitable, and thorough review of all projects by the National Review Panel.

The outcome from the National Review Panel will be a ranked and prioritized list of FLP projects.

See the annual reply due letter to Regions/IITF for more information on the evaluation process and considerations.

Changes to this year's scoring guidance include:
- Added *Carbon Sequestration/Climate Resilience* attribute under "Importance" to highlight alignment and interdependence between land conservation and ecosystem function, climate resilience and carbon management.
- Changed "Strategic" language, including edited Low/Medium/High definitions. Edits were made to allow use of a greater range of scores between projects in this section.
- Added to Conservation Initiative, Strategy or Plan to 1) Further emphasize the importance of the projects impact to strategic efforts and not just that a project is within a geographic area of strategic focus, and 2) Clarify that the strategic section can call attention to new plans and plans under development.
- Added *Other Landscape Scale Goals & Public Benefits* attribute under "Strategic" to explain a project's contributions to the advancement of other large scale conservation goals and public benefits.
- Removed higher required readiness score for projects greater than $7 million. In lieu of a required readiness score, the National Panel will apply a higher degree of scrutiny to all elements, including past performance and readiness.
- Removed the following due diligence/readiness criteria: "For conservation easement properties, a stewardship plan or multi-resource management is completed". WO is working to remove this component from FLIS. This will not be a scored component of readiness but is still required prior to project completion.
- Added a note in Importance about benefits to underserved communities. A definition

of underserved communities follows that note.

Potential changes for future years:
- Additional clarification around expectations for project readiness, state capacity, and timely completion of projects after grant award.
- Updates to readiness criteria, including potential consolidation of some due diligence components for clarity.
- Further consideration of project contributions and impacts to resilience and adaptation to climate change.

National Project Selection:

Region/IITF Role:
- Work with State Lead Agencies (States) to produce eligible, high quality, and "ready" FLP projects;
- Work with States to ensure the proposed project meets eligibility and other requirements;
- Work with States to evaluate the State's fulfillment of core program requirements;
- Work with States to identify which projects can be phased and the funding threshold;
- Provide the National Review Panel with information on each State's compliance with core program requirements, status of outstanding grants, past performance, and project readiness using the state status matrix template. *(See annual reply due letter for more details)*

Washington Office Role:
- Work with Regions/IITF to produce highly competitive FLP submissions that are also "ready".
- Ensure that project selections meet congressional direction and national program goals.

National Review Panel Role:
- Score projects using the national core criteria (Importance, Threatened, and Strategic);
- Develop a National List of ranked projects with recommended funding levels considering project scores, project readiness, and other evaluation considerations.

Project Requirements:

Before projects are submitted to the National Review Panel for consideration, Regions/IITF will work with States to ensure the following eligibility and other project requirements are met:

- Projects comply with the [May 2017 Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines](#), as amended (see *Part III – Project Eligibility and Selection*);
- Requested federal funds do not exceed $20 million per state (1-3 projects per state);
- Non-federal cost share must be at least 25 percent of the total project cost;
- Estimated costs of each tract must be rounded to the nearest $5,000;
- All pertinent project information is entered in the Forest Legacy Information System (FLIS) by September 23, 2022 or earlier if the Region/IITF sets an earlier date;
- Projects are consistent with the goals of the States' Forest Legacy Assessment of Need as incorporated in the State Forest Action Plan;

- Projects are within, or partially within, a designated Forest Legacy Area;
- Projects have been reviewed and evaluated by the State Forest Stewardship Coordination Committee and approved by the State Lead Agency;
- Project tracts have a minimum of 75 percent forestland, or a plan to reforest;
- The landowner(s) is willing to sell or donate the interest in perpetuity;
- The State has provided documentation to the Region/IITF supporting the readiness score in FLIS;
- Written letters of support have been provided to the Region/IITF for all supporting parties listed in the project proposal;
- If the proposed project falls within the boundaries of a designated Federal management unit, a written letter of support from the applicable Federal Official has been provided to the Region/IITF. This letter should be updated if the project is a resubmittal or continuing phase; and,
- Projects are sufficiently "ready" to be completed <u>within two years of grant award</u>.
- A market analysis has been completed for each tract in the project.

<u>Project Descriptions:</u>

Project briefs must represent the property proposed for acquisition, not the attributes of a larger proposed project area, previously acquired phases or the general geographic area where a project is located. Attributes of a larger project may be discussed in the General Description and in the Strategic section.

Projects with multiple landowners must show these as multiple tracts within the project table and in the project map. A multi-tract project will be scored based on how all the tracts fit within the criteria. For example, if only one tract meets the highest point criteria, the project will not likely obtain the highest points.

If a project has multiple phases, the Review Panel will focus on evaluating the phase and associated tracts that are being proposed for the applicable fiscal year. Accordingly, the project proposal should be clear through all sections on the relative importance, threat, and strategic contribution of the tracts being currently proposed. If many different tracts are being proposed, then the project proposal should speak to the collective attributes of the group of tracts being proposed for the applicable funding year.

Project briefs provided to the National Review Panel are expected to be an accurate representation of the property. During project implementation, any changes to the project size, configuration, or the estate presented for funding consideration can only be made with the approval of the Forest Service. If a project changes substantially from what was originally proposed, then project changes may also require additional review and approval by the WO and National Review Panel.

All photos should include descriptions as well as credit information. States and project partners are granting the US Forest Service permission to use all photos uploaded into FLIS for program purposes with appropriate credits.

National Core Criteria:

First, the National Review Panel members will evaluate and score each project based on the core criteria listed below (Importance, Threat, and Strategic). Second, the National Review Panel will, as a full group, evaluate and determine relative rank and funding levels for each project using the additional considerations described below under Additional Considerations.

Importance – This criterion focuses on the attributes of the property and the environmental, social, and economic public benefits gained from the protection and management of the property and its resources, now and into the future. This criterion reflects ecological assets as well as the economic and social values conserved by the project and its level of significance.

National significance of a project is demonstrated in two ways:

1. A project that solidly represents a majority of the components outlined below under "Attributes to Consider" is viewed as nationally significant because of its strong alignment with the purposes of the Forest Legacy Program.

2. A project that supports Federal laws (such as Endangered Species Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, and Clean Water Act) contributes to Federal initiatives or contains or enhances Federal designations (such as Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Scenic Byways, National Recreation Trails, and cultural resources of national importance). When determining Federal importance, interstate/international resources (such as migratory species, or trail and waterways that cross state or international boundaries) will also be considered.

Scoring consists of evaluating a project for the attributes below and identifying a point score. More points will be given to projects that demonstrate multiple public benefits of significance. Significance of attributes is demonstrated by the quality and scope of the attributes. A project does not need to have all the attributes listed to receive maximum points for this category nor is it an exhaustive list of possible attributes. More points will be given to projects that exemplify a particular attribute or combination of attributes.

For a project to receive the maximum point score, it must contain a majority of the attributes, and must significantly address one or more of the Federal laws or initiatives noted above. In rare situations a project may be granted a high score based on a single attribute if that attribute is truly singular in nature (e.g., containing the last population of an endangered species).

A project brief that discusses the majority or all the attributes, but demonstrates only limited importance for each attribute, should not receive maximum or perhaps even medium ranking. The measure is the significance of the attributes discussed, not simply that there is an entry for each attribute.

- *High Importance* (21-30) points) – The project contains a majority of the attributes, and those attributes are nationally significant and of high-quality, or one or more attributes are exceptionally important.

- *Medium (11-20 points)* – The project contains a majority of attributes, several of which are significant and of high-quality.

- *Low (0-10)* – The project contains only a few attributes, or it could contain all of them, but does so in a limited, marginal, or tertiary way or importance of attributes are important regionally or locally but not nationally.

Discussion about how the project fits within a landscape conservation initiative should be included under the "Strategic" category and not in this section.

Benefits of projects for underserved communities and environmental justice initiatives should be highlighted where applicable. For example, benefits can be discussed within economic benefits, water, cultural, public access, or climate resilience. Benefits for underserved communities can also be discussed in the Strategic section.

Underserved communities: "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality (pursuant to Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government). Namely, these are Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality

Attributes to consider: The descriptions listed below represents the ideal project for each attribute. *These attributes are not listed in priority order.*

- ➢ Economic Benefits from Timber and Potential Forest Productivity – This category includes three independent components: (1) Landowner demonstrates sustainable forest management in accordance with a management plan. Additional points should be given to land that is third party certified (such as Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council, and American Tree Farm System). (2) Forestry activities contribute to the resource-based economy for a community or region. (3) The property contains characteristics (such as highly productive soils) to sustain a productive forest over time.

- ➢ Economic Benefits from Non-timber Products and Recreation– Provides non-timber revenue to the local or regional economy through non-timber forest products (maple syrup, pine straw, ginseng collection, etc.); recreation and tourism (local or regional benefits related to lodging, rentals,bikes, boats, outdoor gear, guided tours for fishing, hunting, or birdwatching, etc.); hunting leases; and/or ranching.

- ➢ Threatened or Endangered Species Habitat – The property has documented threatened or endangered plants and animals or designated habitat. Documented occurrence and use of the project area should be given more consideration in point allocation than if it is habitat without documented occurrence or use. Federally listed species should be given more

consideration than state-only listed species when evaluating the significance of this attribute. *See Attachment A for a glossary of terms for Threatened and Endangered species information.*

➢ <u>Fish, Wildlife, Plants, and Unique Forest Communities</u> – The property contains unique forest communities and/or important fish or wildlife habitat as documented by a formal assessment or wildlife conservation plan or strategy developed by a government or a non-governmental organization. The importance of habitat to an international initiative to support and sustain migratory species can be viewed as national importance if conserving the property will make a significant contribution. Occasional use of the property or a modest contribution to an international initiative does not raise the property to national importance.

➢ <u>Water Supply, Aquatic Habitat, and Watershed Protection</u> – (1) The property has a direct relationship with protecting the water supply or watershed, such as providing a buffer to public drinking water supply, containing an aquifer recharge area, or protecting an ecologically important aquatic or marine area, and/or (2) the property contains important riparian area, wetlands, shorelines, river systems, or sensitive watershed lands. When allocating points consider the importance of the resource, the scope and scale of the property, magnitude and intensity of the benefits that will result from protection of the property. Merely being located within an aquifer recharge area or in a water supply area should not be given the same consideration as a property that makes a significant conservation contribution to water, riparian, and aquatic resources and habitats.

➢ <u>Cultural/Tribal/Historic</u>– The property contains features of cultural, tribal, and/or historical significance that are documented by a governmental, tribal, or a non-governmental organization. A Federal designation should receive greater consideration.

➢ <u>Public Access</u> – Protection of the property will maintain or establish new/expanded access by the public for recreation (including waterfront access); however, restrictions on specific use and location of recreational activities may be allowed. More consideration should be given to projects that expand or provide certainty of public access as a result of the proposed project.

➢ <u>Scenic</u> – The property is located within a viewshed of a government designated scenic feature or area (such as a trail, river, or highway). Federal designation should be given more consideration than state-only designations when evaluating the significance of this attribute.

➢ <u>Carbon Sequestration/Climate Resilience, Adaptation to Climate Change*</u> – Protection of the property will result in benefits related to climate resilience and adaption, and carbon sequestration.

*Many of the elements in Importance relate to climate resilience and adaptation. For example, forest productivity, health, rare or unique plant communities where species range is discussed, and water resources. Landscape scale conservation and its impacts on resilience and adaptation are also discussed in Strategic. Carbon sequestration and management are important impacts of the program and of land conservation. The

potential long terms carbon management contributions may be best viewed as optimizing carbon sequestration among the host of values and services from conserved forest rather than a focus on maximization of carbon within a limited span of time. Sustainable carbon management results from effective conservation and management of ecosystems; maintaining, restoring and enhancing health and productivity. Forest Service General Technical Review-GTR WO-95 2017 Considering Forest and Grassland Carbon in Land Management provides a good discussion and overview of carbon as a consideration in forest management.

Threatened – This criterion estimates the likelihood for conversion. More points will be given to projects that demonstrate multiple conditions; however, a project need not have all the conditions listed to receive maximum points for this category.

During the evaluation of a threat, a landowner interested in conserving their land should not be penalized in allocating points because they are not marketing their lands, have not subdivided their land, or sought approval for a subdivision plan. Also, a property with an approved subdivision plan should not, without question, receive a high score in the Threatened section. The attributes outlined below must be considered to determine if the conditions exist to make conversion of a property likely and points should be allocated accordingly.

If the property has been acquired by a third party at the request of and/or with the support of the State, threatened will be evaluated based on the situation prior to the third-party acquisition.

In many cases the threat of conversion is fueled by residential or industrial development. However, this is not the only driver. Other types of conversion may include agricultural expansion, installation of wind or solar technology, or other uses that substantially remove or fragment forest cover. These other types of conversion may also be considered based on the degree of threat or how much of a given parcel is threatened.

- Likely (11-20 points) – Multiple conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses likely;
- Possible (1-10 points) – A few conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses possible; or
- Unlikely (0 points) – Current conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses unlikely.

Discussion about which project attributes will be threatened if the project is converted should be included under the "Importance" category and not in this section.

Attributes to consider: The descriptions listed below represent the ideal project for each attribute. *These attributes are not listed in priority order.*

- ➢ Lack of Protection – The lack of temporary or permanent protections (e.g., current zoning, temporary or permanent easements, moratoriums, and encumbrances that limit subdivision or conversion) that currently exists on the property and the likelihood of the threat of conversion.

defined, and potential contributions of how the project advances those goals should be highlighted.

➢ Complement Protected Lands – How the project is strategically linked to enhance already protected lands including past FLP projects, already protected Federal, State, or non-governmental organization lands, or other Federal land protection programs (REPI, NRCS, NOAA, etc.)

➢ Other Landscape Scale Goals and Public Benefits – How the project strategically contributes to the advancement of larger scale conservation goals and public benefits. Examples of larger scale goals and benefits could include but are not limited to climate resilience and mitigation, reduced community impacts from wildfire, floods, invasive species, etc., expanded public access, and protection of critical water supplies. Provide specifics on the project's contributions to the larger scale goals and benefits. Projects that benefit diverse/socio-economically underserved communities and/or address environmental justice should receive additional consideration.

Additional Considerations:

The following items will be considered by the National Review Panel when developing the final list of ranked projects and associated funding levels, and not by the individual panel members when scoring projects:

1. Core Program Requirements: The National Review Panel may remove a project from consideration if a State is deficient in core program requirements. Regions/IITF may also choose not to submit projects for consideration for those States with deficiency in core program requirements. *See below for more details on core program requirements.*

2. State Priority Ranks **-** States may include priority ranking if more than one project is submitted, but this it is not required. For projects with multiple tracts, states can choose to prioritize these tracts as applicable. The National Review Panel is not bound by a State's priority ranking of projects. If the National Review Panel ranks projects out of a State's priority order, then the panel will call that State to discuss the situation. However, the panel will not move a lower ranked project up the list to maintain the State's priority ranking.

3. Outstanding Grant Funds: Prior to the National Review Panel, Regions/IITF will provide the amount of unspent funds for existing project grants, dates of grant awards, and number of projects and tracts a State has that are outstanding.
The National Review Panel will give additional attention to projects from States that have no outstanding grant balances, have not recently received funds, or are competing for the first time.

States with outstanding grant funding that is three years or older (FY2019 or older obligated grant funds) may not be placed highly on the prioritized project list. Regions/IITF may provide rationale (in the state status matrix) for considering projects

when <u>extraordinary</u> circumstances exist for a State with three year or older obligated grant funding.

States with greater than $10 million in outstanding funds and/or multiple outstanding projects/tracts, regardless of age, may have their projects placed lower on the prioritized project list. For States with any outstanding grants in any amount, the Region/IITF should confirm (in the state status matrix) that the State has sufficient capacity to successfully undertake these additional project grants and can complete the new proposed project(s) within two years after receiving grant award (if funded). The panel will have access to the proposed (or funded) FY23 projects in addition to outstanding grants.

4. <u>Readiness and Performance</u>: The National Review Panel will closely evaluate and consider readiness and performance data for all projects. This information will be used when prioritizing projects, recommending funding levels for projects, and evaluating second and third projects for a State.
   For this consideration, the Panel will use the following data:
   a. Project readiness score as tallied in FLIS (*see below for more details*);
   b. Average time to close projects for the last three projects (data from FLIS).
   c. Amount of funds leveraged for the proposed project (data from FLIS);
   d. Average funds leveraged for the last three completed projects (data from FLIS).
   The Region/IITF will provide this information to the National Review Panel on the state status matrix. The National Review Panel will apply a higher degree of scrutiny to readiness and past performance the larger the proposal funding request.
   See below for more details on readiness elements and scoring.

<u>Climate Resilience</u>: The National Review Panel will be provided a climate resilience score for each proposed project based on geospatial alignment with [Resilient and](#) [Connected Landscapes](#) data developed by The Nature Conservancy. The National Review Panel may use this information when determining ranks for projects with similarscores. Note: This national dataset does not currently cover Hawaii or any of the territories. These states/territories can provide supplemental information through the Region/IITF to demonstrate contribution to climate resilience and connectivity.

<u>State Core Program Requirements</u> – Prior to project submissions, each Region/IITF will evaluate and confirm the State's fulfillment of the following core program requirements. States that do not meet these requirements may not be eligible for submitting project proposals to the National Review Panel or may have their projects removed from consideration during the panel process.
1. Completed baseline reports for all closed conservation easement tracts;
2. Completed forest stewardship plans or multi-resource management plans for all closed tracts;
3. Developed, and is adhering, to written conservation easement monitoring policies and procedures;
4. For conservation easement tracts, conducted annual monitoring for all closed tracts and recorded information in FLIS;

5. For fee simple acquisition tracts, conducted five-year self-certification that management of tracts meets program purposes;
6. Addressed, or is in the process of addressing, all major conservation easement violations, and has recorded information in FLIS;
7. Implemented a record keeping protocol for all FLP tracts;
8. Developed, and is implementing, an action plan to address recommendations in State Program Review;
9. Developed, and is implementing, an action plan to address recommendations in Quality Assurance Inspection, and;
10. Is up-to-date on grant reporting requirements (project and administrative).

Prior to the due date, Forest Service WO and Region/IITF program staff will discuss any identified deficiencies to ensure consistent treatment of States' projects and will share the outcome with the State.

We expect that the Region/IITF will work closely with the State to address deficiencies ahead of the national review process. States that are working to remedy deficiencies may still be allowed to submit project proposals if there is a written plan in place tomeet the core program requirements in a timely manner.

In the rare case that a Region/IITF identifies persistent deficiencies in core program requirements, the Region/IITF may choose either to not submit the State's projects for consideration or notify the WO that the State's projects should not be reviewed and ranked by the National Review Panel.

Readiness – To demonstrate project readiness, completed due diligence items need to be specified (including completion date) in FLIS and credit will only be given to those items completed and documented (one tally for each completed item, with a minimum of one and maximum tally of six). Multi-tract projects must have the readiness task completed for a majority of the tracks being proposed for the given funding year before an affirmative tally is given. Note that the first readiness item (market analysis) is required for all proposed projects.

The State must provide documentation to the Region/IITF demonstrating completion of each of the below items to support the readiness score shown in FLIS. Readiness scores can only be counted in the affirmative for items completed by the national FLIS deadline (September 23, 2022).

Where applicable, a Region/IITF can provide updated readiness scores to the National Review Panel if additional items are completed before the panel convenes in November.

1. Cost estimate for the project tract(s) based on a comparative market analysis*. (Required)
2. Draft conservation easement/deed language, or other comparable documentation, specific to the proposed project that demonstrates landowner and State agreement on easement or fee provisions including the requirements in the Implementation Guidelines (see *Section 14 – Conservation Easement Language* or *Section 15 – Fee*

Simple Purchase Deed Language for specific examples).

3. Cost share commitment has been obtained from specified source(s) and documented through funding commitment letters**, bargain sale agreement with landowner, etc.
4. A signed option or purchase agreement is held by the State or at the request of the State **OR** at the request of the State, fee title has been pre-acquired by a third party.
5. Title search has been completed and reviewed, including identifying any temporary or permanent protections and reviewing whether existing encumbrances impact project eligibility.
6. Minerals rights have been evaluated through a title search and/or other research **AND** if rights are severed, then a minerals assessment and determination of remoteness has been completed.

*Comparative Market Analysis - For full fee acquisitions, estimate of market value based on recently sold, similar properties in an applicable market area. For conservation easement projects, an estimate of market value "as is" and an estimate of market value "as if encumbered with the proposed conservation easement" using comparable properties that are similarly encumbered. The difference between the "as is" and the "as if" market values would represent the estimated cost to acquire the conservation easement. If an appraisal has been recently completed for the subject property, then it can be considered as a data point for the market analysis along with other applicable market research. A market analysis does not need to be conducted by an appraiser. The market analysis will include information about who prepared it, the date of the market analysis, information used and the source of that information.

**Letter of Commitment – Signed letter that indicates the signatory's commitment of resources to the proposed project should federal funds be awarded.

Endangered and Threatened Species Glossary of Terms

One of the core criteria used to evaluate Forest Legacy Program proposals is the presence of documented threatened or endangered plants and animals or designated habitats and wildlife corridors on the tracts being submitted for consideration (Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat). Forest Legacy Program applicants often use a mixture of federal and state laws and plans, as well as international and non-profit resources, to highlight threatened and endangered species that are found within the project area. The purpose of this document is to provide a guide for panel reviewers to understand the different categories and terms that applicants might use in this section of the proposal, and what the full scale looks like under each category so the National Review Panel can evaluate the proposals more consistently.

Federal Level (Endangered Species Act)

United States Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service
(Vertebrates/Invertebrates Animals, Flowering/Non-flowering plants)
- Endangered
- Threatened
- Proposed
- High Candidate
- Low Candidate

Forest Service
- Sensitive
- Species of Conservation Concern

State Level
Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAP)
- Endangered
- Threatened
- Species of Concern

International Level
International Union for Conservation of Nature
- Extinct in the Wild
- Critically Endangered
- Endangered
- Vulnerable
- Near Threatened
- Least concern

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- Appendix I – species threatened with extinction and prohibition on international trade
- Appendix II – species may become threatened and trade is closely controlled
- Appendix III – species included at request of State parties that regulate trade in the species

Non-governmental Organizations

NatureServe
- G1 – Critically Imperiled: At very high risk of extinction due to extreme rarity (often 5 or fewer populations), very steep declines, or other factors.
- G2 – Imperiled: At high risk of extinction due to very restricted range, very few populations (often 20 or fewer), steep declines, or other factors.
- G3 – Vulnerable: At moderate risk of extinction due to a restricted range, relatively few populations (often 80 or fewer), recent and widespread declines, or other factors.

Audubon
Important Bird Areas (IBA) Priority Levels
- Global – Highest priority and globally important
- Continental – High priority
- State – Priority for the state

The Nature Conservancy
Resilient Lands – places that are most climate resilient and will retain high quality habitat
- Far above average
- Above average
- Slightly above average
- Average
- Far below average
- Slightly below average
- Below average

Connected Landscapes – climate corridors and movement zones to facilitate species range shifts
- Climate corridor – high amounts of flow become concentrated in relatively small channels or pinch points
- Climate flow zone – intact natural areas where high amounts of flow can spread-out and expand in many directions

Recommendations and Best Practices for the Project Brief Map

The following are observations and recommendations related to maps that are part of a Forest Legacy Program project application. These recommendations are the result of feedback from previous members of the National Project Review panel over multiple years. Following these recommendations on how to improve a map is not a requirement; these are suggestions to help in the development of a competitive application.

- First impressions matter: Many reviewers have indicated that the map was the first item they reviewed on a project brief. If the map was difficult to read, reviewers became confused from the outset about why the project was important, threatened, or strategic.

- Tell the same story: It is important to ensure that the project brief content and the map tell the same story and that the story is accurate (e.g., if a proposed tract is being highlighted for its public recreation amenities and none of those amenities are identified on the map, then it is difficult for reviewers to give you full points for that attribute).

- Style suggestions**:** The information portrayed on map should be clear, concise, and easy to read. Some map style suggestions are below:

  o Reserve bright colors for project area and other FLP areas (e.g., highlight the proposed FLP project tracts in a color that stands out).
  o Other projected lands are easy to spot as saturated earth tones (e.g., gradient shades of green to differentiate federal, state, and privately conserved land).
  o The map is easier to analyze if the base map is light gray or a neutral color, so it does not distract from the map message.
  o Label FLP tracts on the map with the year funded, proposed, or completed.
  o Do not clutter the map with unnecessary labels (e.g., local roads that don't pertain to navigation to the property or a landmark).
  o Be consistent with tract names/labeling. The map should use the same tract labels as they appear in the table on the first page of the project brief and/or referenced in the text.
  o Scale the project map to show how the project tracts fit into the area's conservation landscape. If the map is too localized, reviewers cannot understand how it ties to other conserved land. Conversely, if the map area is too large, it may be difficult to see what is adjacent to the proposed tract. Consider including a regional inset map to show where the project area is located within the state and to highlight conserved land nearby.