



Cost-share Programs to Assist North Carolina Woodland Owners

As a North Carolina landowner, you may want to create more wildlife habitat, thin your forest or restore it following a natural disaster. Cost-share programs available to woodland owners under the USDA Farm Bill can help make managing your land more affordable by providing the financial support and technical know-how you need.

These are the major cost-share programs available to North Carolina's private woodland owners under the 2014 Farm Bill and through N.C. state agencies:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

This program provides financial and technical resources to help you create wildlife habitat, and manage your forest. EQIP can also support you in developing a forest management plan, which you will need to qualify for other Farm Bill programs. EQIP gives you up to 75 percent of the cost of your project, or 100 percent of the income you forego to implement it, with a maximum of \$450,000 over 10 years. EQIP can help you if you want to:

- Create, restore or improve habitat for wildlife;
- Restore or protect marshes, swamps or other wetlands;
- Control erosion, restore damaged soils or protect ground or surface water; or
- Implement thinning, controlled burns or other conservation activities.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

If you have undertaken at least one eligible improvement project on your land over the past 10 years, you may be eligible for reimbursement of up to \$200,000 under CSP, a Farm Bill program that encourages landowners to begin, improve

or maintain conservation activities that protect their property's soil, water and natural resources.

CSP awards address seven resource concerns: soil quality, soil erosion, water quality, water quantity, air quality, plant resources and animal resources. The N.C. State Conservationist is responsible for focusing awards on three to five priority resource concerns for the state. Forest landowners who implement "bundles" of woodland conservation measures receive higher rankings and are eligible to receive more funding.

Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP)

This new Farm Bill program consolidates three former cost-share programs into one new program designed to provide financial incentives to landowners to protect





working agricultural land, including privately owned forestland, from development. Two types of easements are available under ACEP:

- **Agricultural easements** protect the conservation values of working lands by keeping them in agricultural use. These values include clean water and wildlife habitat. To enroll land, landowners are required to have an easement plan that promotes the long-term viability of their land. Under ACEP, forest owners may receive up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement.
- **Wetland reserve easements** include farmland, forested wetlands or converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored. The goal is to provide habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species, improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity and provide opportunities for educational, scientific and recreational activities. Easements that protect and enhance habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife are given priority under this program.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):

The largest land conservation program in the country, the Conservation Reserve Program is administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency. It provides financial support for landowners to establish protective cover, including planting trees or creating wildlife habitat, on environmentally sensitive lands. In exchange for taking land out of production, CRP offers annual rental payments for the land and up to 50 percent of the landowner's costs. In North Carolina (and eight other

southern states), the program has a special focus on restoring the native longleaf pine to its former range.

Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP):

If your land has been damaged by fire, drought, flood or another natural disaster, you may be eligible for funding under EFRP, which pays for up to 75 percent of the costs of emergency conservation measures. Administered by the USDA's Farm Service Agency, this program is designed specifically for private woodland owners who have suffered losses in a natural disaster. To qualify for funding, the damage to your land must create new conservation problems that, if not dealt with, would harm the natural resources on the land or significantly affect future land use.

North Carolina Forest Development Program (FDP)

FDP is a continuing effort designed to encourage private landowners to reforest after harvest and to place their idle and under-productive forestland into full timber production. Practices include site preparation, seedling and planting costs, and chemical or mechanical release of seedlings and sprouts from competing



vegetation. These practices apply to the management of hardwoods as well as pines. There are also a number of eligible “forest stand improvement” practices meant to enhance existing woodlands. A landowner will be reimbursed typically 40 percent of the actual cost per acre (or prevailing rate) for a practice on a maximum of 100 acres per year, and the landowner must agree to maintain the new stand of trees for at least a 10-year period.

Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program (SPBPP)

The N.C. Forest Service administers a cost-share program aimed at preventing outbreaks of the southern pine beetle, the most destructive forest insect in North Carolina. The Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program, funded through a grant from the U.S. Forest Service, will reimburse private forest landowners in North Carolina 50 percent of actual or prevailing cost on practices that manage young pine stands for the prevention of southern pine beetle infestations. Each landowner can receive reimbursements through the program for up to \$10,000.

Learn More!

- **MyLandPlan.org.** This website for woodland owners contains extensive, easy-to-understand information and resources. It includes a comprehensive listing of cost-share programs available under the USDA Farm Bill, with guidance on how to apply for financial assistance: <http://mylandplan.org/content/farm-bill-forests>
- **Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)** Farm Bill website: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/farm-bill>
- **Information on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>



[wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip)

- **Information on the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):** <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp>
- **Information on the Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP):** <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep>
- **Information on the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):** <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=crp>

- **Information on the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP):** http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=diap&topic=efrp#P45_1675

- **USDA Service Center Locator.** By clicking North Carolina on this map, you can find a USDA office in your county that can provide assistance in applying for cost-share programs under the Farm Bill: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>

- **North Carolina Forest Service.** The agency website describes the Forest Development Program (FDP): http://ncforestservice.gov/Managing_your_forest/fdp.htm and the Southern Pine Beetle

Prevention Program (SPBPP): http://ncforestservice.gov/forest_health/fh_spbpp.htm

Information for this fact sheet was compiled from a variety of sources, including the American Forest Foundation, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the USDA Farm Service Agency and the North Carolina Forest Service.