

Forest Legacy Tracts

Forest Legacy Tracts refer to the actual property(ies) being considered for purchase. Only lands within a Forest Legacy Area may be considered for purchase. Thus, all proposed tracts will have met the criteria established for forest legacy lands at the national and state level. In addition, we anticipate that numerous tracts may be offered concurrently and there will be a need to prioritize the requests sent in for consideration by the U.S. Forest Service.

Criteria for Selecting Forest Legacy Tracts

The following criteria will be applied to tracts being considered for purchase. The more of the criteria that applies to a tract, the higher it will rank in priority. Additionally, the Forest Stewardship Committee may develop ranking sheets to use in the evaluation process that awards points to the criteria. Actual points may be applied for each criterion or the FSP Committee may choose to merely weight the criteria.

All proposed parcels must meet the three or more of the following criteria:

- Large tracts or block(s) of environmentally important forest of significance within an area, or tracts with the capability of adding to existing blocks in significant ways that maintain or add to the continuity of the forest area.
- Tracts having the ability, or potential, to produce forest resource products in perpetuity.
- Tracts contributing towards maintaining or improving the water quality of the area.
- Tracts providing additional variety of natural resource benefits such as fish, wildlife, and recreation opportunities.
- Tracts containing significant attributes beyond the economic contribution, such as public access that are at risk of being closed or lost if not protected by FLP.
- Tracts with existing land trust or other agencies that are willing and able to monitor the property are present.
- Tracts that could connect existing protected areas of public or private ownership. Tracts that contain rare forest communities within them or have the potential of supporting these communities.
- Tracts that are deemed eminently threatened or at risk of being converted in the region, as described in the section on threats.
- Tracts that landowners are willing to donate all or some of the property or property rights to the program.

All Forest Legacy Tracts will be required to have a long-range, multiple resource, or forest stewardship, management plan prepared that is updated at least every ten years, or when ownership changes, to reflect changing goals and management techniques. They will meet the current Forest Stewardship Program standards for management plans. Easements will require landowners to maintain the health of the forest through utilizing principles of sustainable forestry. Any harvesting that occurs on Forest Legacy Tracts must follow an approved cutting plan and will apply water quality BMP's. The State Forester, or his designee, will be responsible for approving all management plans.

Application and Ranking of Requests

Once an area within FLA is targeted and "activated", local public notices will be distributed and meetings will be held to inform the landowners in the targeted areas of the FLP and the opportunities to participate. Organizations willing and able to participate in the monitoring of properties will be contacted. If the public support and monitoring organizations exist, applications will be accepted.

Appendix D contains examples of the application which uses questions reflecting the rating criteria set in this document. This will be distributed to the interested landowners. Landowners will be expected to complete the applications with the assistance of the local DNR forester, or other knowledgeable professional to insure that the information is complete and correct. Applications will go to the Forest Stewardship Committee for review and discussions.

Points will be awarded to the applications for the number of above criteria met. Actual point amounts for each criterion will be determined by FSP Committee and adjusted to reflect the importance of each attribute in the FLA and target area.

Since site visits and inspection of the actual property will be necessary for properties being considered, an inspection consent agreement will also be completed at the time of landowner application.

Applicants will be notified of how their application was scored once the FSP has completed their assessment and made recommendations to the State Forester.

Monitoring

Since the process favors tracts where existing land trust or conservation groups are active, the monitoring responsibilities will be shifted to local organizations, local governments, and/or agencies where possible. These organizations will need to determine that harvests are done according to the approved plan, the management plan is updated at least every 10 years, BMP's for water quality are employed where necessary, and the conditions and terms of the easement are met. Enforcement will be the sole responsibility of the easement holder.

In some instances it may be determined that the DNR needs to conduct some or all of the monitoring. This would be applicable when the tract has species, habitat, or qualities of particular interest to the Department, or when the area, as part of its management plan, is being used to increase the knowledge-base of the Department.

Although all areas designated as Forest Legacy Areas have active local organizations, local governments, conservation groups and trusts interested in the Program, because of the vastness of the areas and the limited funds available for the program, Wisconsin has decided to identify and involve local groups for monitoring as needed. As an area is targeted for a purchase(s), the area is "activated" and local public input solicited. It is during this process that potential monitoring groups will be identified based on the property or properties targeted, interest of the group, and interest of the WDNR. Because individual purchases will have elements of specialized interests to certain groups (i.e.: prairie enthusiasts, The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, etc.) monitoring groups will be matched to the appropriate property and characteristics.

The conservation easement is the cornerstone for protecting these Forest Legacy tracts. Forest Stewardship or multi-resource management plans will be required on the easement to guide forest management activities. Monitoring will be conducted for a two-fold purpose. First to determine that the management plan/easement is managed according to contract, and second, to assess whether the management recommended is meeting the intended objectives.

Monitoring efforts will be recorded and reported to the Forest Stewardship Committee on an annual basis.