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Forest Service Assistance Programs

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Summary

Congress has established several forestry assistance programs within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to support the management of state and private forests. These programs are under the jurisdiction of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, which often examine them in the periodic legislation to reauthorize agricultural programs, commonly known as farm bills. For example, in the 2018 farm bill (Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018; P.L. 115-334), Congress reauthorized and modified existing programs and established some new forestry assistance programs.

Forestry assistance programs (in contrast to agriculture conservation programs that include forestry activities) are primarily administered by the USDA Forest Service (FS). These Forest Service assistance programs generally provide technical and educational assistance such as information, advice, and aid on specific projects. Other programs provide financial assistance, usually through grants (with or without matching contributions from recipients) or cost-sharing (typically through state agencies, with varying levels of contributions from recipients). Many programs provide both technical and financial assistance.

Forest Service assistance programs have various objectives. Some of the assistance programs provide support for planning and implementing forestry and related land management practices (e.g., Forest Stewardship, Urban and Community Forestry). Other programs provide assistance for forest restoration projects that involve more than one jurisdiction and address regional or national priorities (e.g., Landscape Scale Restoration). Other programs provide support for protecting forestlands from wildfires, insects and diseases, and from converting forestland to nonforest uses (e.g., Community Forest and Open Space Conservation, Forest Legacy). For example, the Forest Health program provides support for protecting both federal and nonfederal forests from continuing threats, although most of the funding goes to federal forests. Programs also exist to enhance state and rural wildfire management capabilities (e.g., State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance) and to promote the use of forest products (e.g., Wood Innovation). International Forestry is often included as a Forest Service assistance program, because it provides technical forestry help and because it is funded through the FS appropriations account for forestry assistance programs (State and Private Forestry). Some programs are implemented jointly or have been combined for administrative purposes.

By law, most of the programs provide assistance to state partner agencies. The state agencies can use the aid on state forestlands or to assist local governments or private landowners. How the states use the resources is largely at the discretion of the states, though it must be consistent with the authorization of each program and with the national priorities for state assistance established by Congress in the 2008 farm bill.

Most—but not all—Forest Service assistance programs are available nationally and are permanently authorized to receive discretionary funding; none have mandatory spending. Overall funding for the Forest Service assistance programs in FY2020 is \$368.1 million, a slight increase over total FY2019 appropriations (\$367.7 million). The FY2019 appropriations reflect \$355.7 million in regular appropriations plus an additional \$12.0 million in emergency supplemental funding to respond to damage from hurricanes and wildfires. Overall funding has remained relatively stable over the past 15 years in nominal dollars but has declined in inflation-adjusted constant dollars. Over that time, funding for Forest Service assistance programs has ranged between 5% and 9% of the total annual Forest Service discretionary appropriation. The Trump Administration requested \$243.6 million in funding for FY2021.

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There are approximately 765 million acres of forestlands in the United States, most of which are privately owned (443 million acres, or 58%) by individuals, families, Native American tribes, corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and other groups (see **Figure 1**).¹ The federal government has numerous programs to support forest management on those private forests and on nonfederal public forests (such as those owned by state, county, and local governments). These programs support a variety of forest management and protection goals, including activities related to planning for and responding to wildfires, as well as supporting the development of new uses and markets for wood products. These programs are primarily administered by the Forest Service (FS) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and often with the assistance of state partner agencies.

This report describes current forestry assistance programs mostly funded and administered through the State and Private Forestry (SPF) branch of the FS.² Following a brief background and overview, this report presents information on the purposes of the programs, types of activities funded, eligibility requirements, authorized program duration and funding level, and requested and enacted program appropriations.

Other agencies, inside and outside of USDA, also administer programs that may have forest conservation or protection benefits. For example, the USDA Farm Service Agency administers several programs, including the Emergency Forest Restoration program, which provides assistance to nonindustrial forest landowners to restore forests following catastrophic events.³ The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service administers the Healthy Forests Reserve program, which funds agreements, contracts, or easements to assist landowners with forest restoration or enhancement projects.⁴ The Department of the Interior administers a community assistance program to support collaborative community planning and projects to mitigate wildfire risk.⁵ These programs are outside the scope of this report.

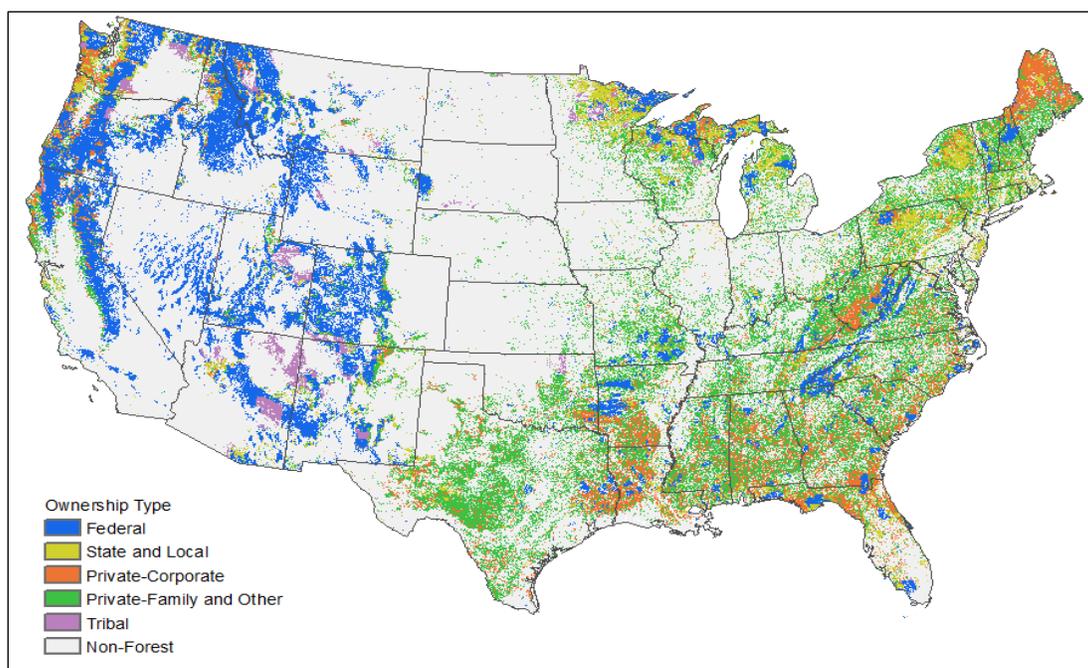
¹ Sonja N. Oswalt et al., *Forest Resources of the United States: A Technical Document Supporting the Forest Service 2020 Update of the RPA Assessment*, USDA, FS, 2019, at https://www.fia.fs.fed.us/program-features/rpa/docs/2017RPAFIATABLESFINAL_050918.pdf.

² Assistance for forestry practices, to promote wood and forest products, and to support energy generation using forestry material is also available through other federal agencies. For more information, see CRS Report R45943, *The Farm Bill Energy Title: An Overview and Funding History*, and CRS Report R40763, *Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs*.

³ Funding for this program is often provided as needed in supplemental or emergency appropriations acts, and it was last funded in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (P.L. 114-113). For more information, see CRS Report R42854, *Emergency Assistance for Agricultural Land Rehabilitation*. For more information on other Farm Service Agency assistance programs, see CRS In Focus IF10288, *Overview of Bioenergy Programs in the 2018 Farm Bill*, and CRS Report R41296, *Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP): Status and Issues*.

⁴ For information on this programs, see CRS Report R40763, *Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs*.

⁵ For more information, see the Department of the Interior, Office of Wildland Fire Community Assistance website at <https://www.doi.gov/wildlandfire/community-assistance>.

Figure I. Forest Landownership in the Conterminous United States

Source: CRS analysis of data from Jaketon H. Hewes, Brett J. Butler, and Greg C. Liknes, *Forest Ownership in the Conterminous United States circa 2014 - geospatial data set*, Forest Service Research Data Archive, 2017, at <https://doi.org/10.2737/RDS-2017-0007>.

Background

Providing federal assistance for nonfederal forest landowners has been a component of USDA's programs for more than a century. Initial forestry assistance efforts began with the creation of the USDA Division of Forestry in 1881 (to complement forestry research, which began in 1876). Forestry assistance and research programs grew slowly, and in 1901 the division was upgraded to the USDA Bureau of Forestry. In 1905, the bureau merged with the Interior Department's Division of Forestry (which administered the forest reserves, later renamed national forests) and became the USDA Forest Service (FS). The FS has three primary mission areas: managing the National Forest System, conducting forestry research, and providing forestry assistance.

The Senate and House Agriculture Committees have jurisdiction over forestry in general, forestry assistance, and forestry research programs. Congress authorized specific forestry assistance programs in the Clarke-McNary Act of 1924.⁶ This law guided those programs for more than half a century, until it was revised in the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (CFAA).⁷ The House and Senate Agriculture Committees often examine these programs in the periodic omnibus legislation to reauthorize agriculture and food policy programs, commonly known as the farm bill.⁸

⁶ P.L. 68-270; 43 Stat. 653.

⁷ 16 U.S.C. 2101 et seq.

⁸ For more information on the farm bill, generally, see CRS Report R44913, *Farm Bill Primer Series: A Guide to Agriculture and Food Programs in the 2014 Farm Bill*, and CRS In Focus IF10187, *Farm Bill Primer: What Is the Farm Bill?*

- The 2008 farm bill established national funding priorities (e.g., conserve working forests, protect and restore forests, and enhance public benefits from private forests); enacted a standardized process for states to assess forest resource conditions and strategize about funding needs (referred to as statewide assessments); and established, modified, and repealed specific assistance programs, among other provisions.⁹
- The 2014 farm bill reauthorized and modified some existing programs and repealed several programs, mostly programs whose authorizations had expired or programs that had never received appropriations.¹⁰
- The 2018 farm bill reauthorized, modified, and repealed existing programs and provided statutory authorization and congressional direction for two current programs that were operating under existing, but broad, authorizations (the Landscape Scale Restoration program and Wood Innovation program). The 2018 farm bill also reauthorized the requirement for statewide assessments.¹¹

The funding authorization for many of the agricultural programs—including three forestry programs—is scheduled to expire at the end of FY2023 unless Congress provides for an extension or reauthorizes them.

Overview

The FS administers most forestry assistance programs, but state partners (e.g., state forestry or natural resource agencies) typically implement the programs. In these cases, the FS provides technical and financial aid to the states, which then provides information and assistance to private landowners or specified eligible entities.¹² The 2008 farm bill expanded some agricultural conservation programs to include forestry practices, and thus direct federal financial assistance to private forest landowners may be feasible through those conservation programs.¹³ See **Table 1** for a brief summary of the FS programs addressed in this report; more information on each program is available in the “Forest Service Assistance Programs” section of this report.

To be eligible to receive funds for most of the programs, each state must prepare a State Forest Action Plan, consisting of

- a statewide *assessment* of forest resource conditions, including the conditions and trends of forest resources in the state; threats to forestlands and resources, consistent with national priorities; any areas or regions of the state that are a priority; and any multistate areas that are a regional priority; and

⁹ The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

¹⁰ The Agricultural Act of 2014. For more information on the 2014 farm bill, see CRS Report R43076, *The 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79): Summary and Side-by-Side*. For more information on the forestry provisions in the 2014 farm bill, see CRS Report R43431, *Forestry Provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79)*.

¹¹ The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, P.L. 115-334. For more information on the 2018 farm bill, see CRS Report R45525, *The 2018 Farm Bill (P.L. 115-334): Summary and Side-by-Side Comparison*. For more information on the forestry provisions in the 2018 farm bill, see CRS Report R45696, *Forest Management Provisions Enacted in the 115th Congress*.

¹² States may request to receive one consolidated payment for all the authorized cooperative forestry assistance programs (16 U.S.C. 2108).

¹³ For information on USDA conservation programs, see CRS Report R40763, *Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs*.

- a long-term statewide forest resource *strategy*, including strategies for addressing the threats to forest resources identified in the assessment; and a description of the resources necessary for the state forester to address the statewide strategy.¹⁴

The State Forest Action Plans are to be reviewed every 5 years and revised every 10 years.¹⁵ All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 8 territories are covered by a State Forest Action Plan. Each state must also publish an annual funding report and have a State Forest Stewardship Coordination (FSC) Committee.¹⁶ Chaired by the state forester and composed of federal, state, and local representatives (including representatives from conservation, industry, recreation, and other organizations), the FSC Committee makes recommendations on statewide priorities on specific programs as well as on the development and maintenance of the State Forest Action Plan.

National Funding Priorities and Objectives

In 2007, the Forest Service (FS) initiated an effort to “redesign” its State and Private Forestry (SPF) programs to improve program delivery and effectiveness. As a result of this process, FS—in conjunction with state partners—identified three nationwide themes and objectives to provide a framework for prioritizing and allocating funds and resources. Congress codified these national priorities in the 2008 farm bill (16 U.S.C. §2101(c)). The three priorities are as follows:

Conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses. Objectives include identifying and conserving high-priority forest ecosystems and landscapes and promoting active and sustainable forest management strategies.

Protect forests from threats. Objectives include identifying, managing, and reducing forest and ecosystem threats (e.g., uncharacteristic wildfire, insects and disease, and invasive species) and conducting post-disturbance forest restoration activities.

Enhance public benefits from trees and forests. Objectives include promoting the ecological, economic, and community benefits derived from trees and forests, including protecting water quality and quantity; conserving wildlife and fish habitat; providing open space; and providing outdoor recreation opportunities.

¹⁴ These requirements were added by the 2008 farm bill (16 U.S.C. §2101a). To see each state’s Forest Action Plan, see National Association of State Foresters (NASF), at <https://www.stateforesters.org/forest-action-plans/>. For all of the programs in this report, the term *state forester* may also include any other equivalent state official.

¹⁵ For more information, see NASF, “Forest Action Plans,” at <https://www.stateforesters.org/forest-action-plans/keeping-the-plans-current/>.

¹⁶ As authorized in the 1990 farm bill (§1222), 16 U.S.C. §2113(b).

Table I. Forest Service Assistance Programs

Program	Authorization		Type of Aid	Eligible Recipients	Primary Activities
	U.S. Code Citation or Authorizing Statute	Discretionary Funding Level and Expiration (if applicable)			
Collaborative Forest Restoration	P.L. 106-393 ^a	\$5 million	Financial	Collaborative groups in New Mexico	Forest restoration projects
Community Forest and Open Space Conservation	16 U.S.C. §2103d	Such sums as necessary	Financial	Local governments, tribes, nonprofit organizations	Purchase forestlands threatened with conversion to other uses
Cooperative Fire Protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Fire Assistance • Volunteer Fire Assistance 	16 U.S.C. §2106	Such sums as necessary	Technical and financial	States	Systems for fire prevention, control, and use; fire equipment and training; etc.
Forest Health Protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Lands • Cooperative Lands 	16 U.S.C. §2104	Such sums as necessary	Technical and financial	States	Survey, prevent, suppress, or control insects and diseases
Forest Legacy	16 U.S.C. §2103c	Such sums as necessary	Financial	States	Purchase forestlands or easements for forests threatened with conversion to other uses
Forest Stewardship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance to States • Rural Forestry Assistance 	16 U.S.C. §2103a 16 U.S.C. §2107 16 U.S.C. §2102	Such sums as necessary	Technical and financial	States	Planning; forest and watershed restoration; reforestation; wildlife habitat improvement; and others
International Forestry	16 U.S.C. §4501	Such sums as necessary	Technical and financial	Other countries	Planning and management; fire, insect, and disease prevention and control; rehabilitation
Landscape Scale Restoration	16 U.S.C. §2109a	\$20 million through FY2023	Financial	State	Forest restoration projects
Urban & Community Forestry	16 U.S.C. §2105	Such sums as necessary	Technical and financial	State, tribal, local governments, private organizations	Planning; education; tree planting and maintenance
Wood Technology and Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Wood Energy/Innovation • Hardwood Technology Transfer • Rural Revitalization • Wood Innovation Grant Program 	7 U.S.C. §8113 16 U.S.C. §1650 7 U.S.C. §6601 7 U.S.C. §7655d	\$25 million through FY2023 Such sums as necessary \$5 million through FY2023 No specific funding authorization	Technical and financial	State, tribal, and local governments, other organizations	Education; technology development and transfer; market development; applied research

Source: CRS.

a. The Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (P.L. 106-393) has not been classified to the U.S. Code.

Types of Assistance

The FS assistance programs may provide technical assistance, financial assistance, or both. Technical assistance includes providing guidance documents, skills training, data, or otherwise sharing information, expertise, and advice, either broadly or on specific projects. Technical assistance may also include the development and transfer of technological innovations. Financial assistance is typically delivered through formula or competitive grants (with or without contributions from recipients) or cost-sharing (with varying levels of matching contributions from recipients). As an example, the Forest Health Protection program provides both types of assistance: financial assistance in the form of funding for FS to perform surveys and to control insects or diseases on state or private lands (with the consent and cooperation of the landowner) and technical assistance in the form of data, expertise, and guidance for addressing specific insect and disease infestations.

Funding

Most—but not all—FS assistance programs are available nationally and are permanently authorized to receive discretionary funding. All FS assistance programs require funding through the annual discretionary appropriations process, and are typically funded in the annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations acts; none have mandatory spending. Most of the assistance programs are funded through the FS’s State and Private Forestry (SPF) account, although some programs are funded or allocated from other accounts or programs.

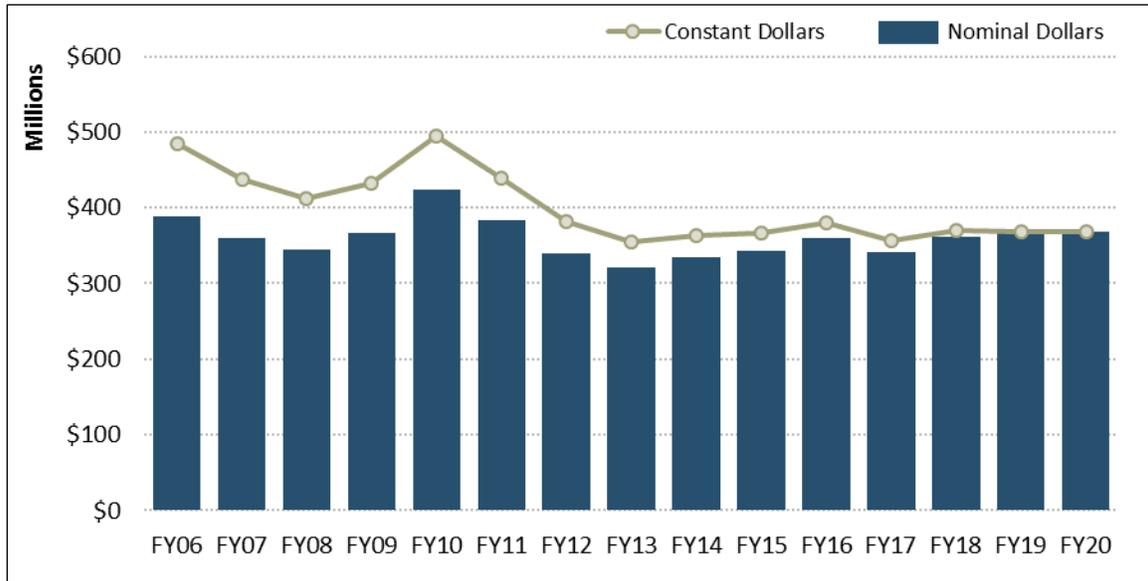
Funding for FS assistance programs has remained relatively stable over the past 15 years in terms of nominal dollars but has declined in terms of inflation-adjusted constant dollars (see **Figure 2**). The average annual appropriation over that time, from FY2006 through FY2020, was \$359.8 million, with a peak of \$423.5 million in FY2010 and a low of \$321.8 million in FY2013 (figures in nominal dollars).¹⁷ For the third consecutive year, funding increased year-over-year in FY2020, to \$368.1 million. When adjusting for inflation, overall funding also peaked in FY2010 and has remained fairly constant since FY2013. Funding in FY2020 was 25% below FY2010 levels and 24% below FY2006 levels (in inflation-adjusted current dollars). In total, these FS assistance programs made up 7% of the FS’s total annual discretionary appropriation on average across those 15 years (from FY2006 through FY2020).¹⁸

The Administration requested \$243.6 million in FY2021 and proposed to eliminate funding for several of the programs and decrease funding for the others (see **Table 2** for FY2016-FY2020 appropriations and the FY2021 budget request; more information on each program is available in the “Forest Service Assistance Programs” section of this report).

¹⁷ When adjusted to FY2019 constant dollars, the average annual appropriation from FY2006 through FY2020 was \$400.6 million, the peak in FY2010 was \$494.3 million, and the low in FY2013 was \$355.3 million.

¹⁸ For more information on Forest Service appropriations, see CRS In Focus IF11416, *Forest Service: FY2019 and FY2020 Appropriations*, by Katie Hoover.

Figure 2. Funding for FS Assistance Programs, FY2006-FY2020



Source: CRS analysis using data compiled from the tables prepared by the House Committee on Appropriations and annual agency budget documents.

Notes: Figures reflect total annual discretionary appropriations for FS assistance programs, including appropriations provided through the FS’s State and Private Forestry, Wildland Fire Management, and National Forest System accounts. Figures adjusted to FY2019 constant dollars using the annual GDP deflator price index reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Income and Products Accounts Tables, Table I.1.9.

Table 2. FS Assistance Programs Appropriations, FY2016-FY2020 Enacted and FY2021 Requested

(nominal dollars, in millions)

Program	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021 Request
Collaborative Forest Restoration Program ^a	4.0	4.0	3.0	—	—	—
Community Forest & Open Space Conservation	2.0	2.0	4.0	4.8	4.0	0
Cooperative Fire Protection ^b	91.0	93.0	96.0	107.3	100.0	98.1
State Fire Assistance	78.0	78.0	80.0	81.0	82.0	81.1
Volunteer Fire Assistance	13.0	15.0	16.0	17.0	18.0	17.0
Supplemental	—	—	—	9.3	—	—
Forest Health Protection ^c	99.6	94.5	98.0	98.4	100.0	84.6
Federal Lands	58.9	55.5	55.5	56.5	56.0	50.9
Cooperative Lands	40.7	39.0	42.5	42.0	44.0	33.8
Forest Legacy ^d	62.3	50.3	61.1	62.5	64.0	
Forest Stewardship ^e	23.0	20.0	26.5	22.0	21.0	20.7
International Forestry	8.0	8.0	9.0	9.0	12.0	0

Program	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021 Request
Landscape Scale Restoration	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0
Urban and Community Forestry	28.0	28.0	28.5	29.5	32.0	0
Wood Technology and Innovation ^f	27.1	27.7	22.1	20.2	21.1	26.2
Total	359.2	341.6	362.2	367.7	368.1	243.6
Percentage of Total FS Discretionary Appropriations^h	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%	3%

Source: CRS analysis using data compiled from the tables prepared by the House Committee on Appropriations, communications with the Forest Service Legislative Affairs staff, and Forest Service annual budget documents, including the FY2021 Budget Justification, available from at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/budget-performance>.

Notes: Figures reflect rescissions and supplemental funding as noted. The programs are funded through the FS's State and Private Forestry (SPF) account, unless otherwise specified. Columns may not add due to rounding.

- a. According to Forest Service Legislative Affairs staff, as of April 2019, the charter for the advisory committee required for the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP) is expired, and activities under this program—such as soliciting new project proposals—will not resume until the advisory committee has been re-chartered. The FY2021 budget request does not include a specific request for funding the CFRP, which was previously funded through allocations from the Wildland Fire Management (WFM) account.
- b. The Cooperative Fire Protection program is sometimes referred to as *Cooperative Fire Assistance (CFA)* for appropriations purposes. FY2019 figures reflect \$9.3 million in emergency supplemental funding for disaster recovery purposes. Those funds were not further allocated between the State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance programs. CFA was funded through the WFM account in FY2016 and FY2017, and in the SPF account starting in FY2018. The Administration's FY2021 budget request proposed changing the names of those programs to *National Fire Capacity* and *Rural Fire Capacity*, respectively.
- c. The Forest Health Protection program is sometimes referred to as *Forest Health Management (FHM)* for appropriations purposes. The total FHM figures reflect emergency supplemental appropriations provided to the Cooperative Lands program: \$1.5 million in FY2018 and \$0.4 million in FY2019.
- d. The Forest Legacy figures reflect rescissions of \$12.0 million in FY2017, \$5.9 million in FY2018, and \$1.5 million in FY2019.
- e. These Forest Stewardship figures reflect emergency supplemental appropriations of \$6.0 million in FY2018 and \$1.5 million in FY2019. The Administration's FY2021 budget request proposed changing the name of this program to *Working Forest Lands*.
- f. Wood Technology and Innovations includes funding for several programs, including grants for wood innovation, biomass and wood energy market development, and related research programs. The funds are allocated from several FS appropriations accounts, including SPF, WFM, and Forest and Rangeland Research.
- g. The Cooperative Lands figures reflect emergency supplemental appropriations of \$1.5 million in FY2018 and \$0.4 million in FY2019.
- h. For information on FS FY2019 and FY2020 appropriations, see CRS In Focus IFI 1416, *Forest Service: FY2019 and FY2020 Appropriations*, by Katie Hoover, *Forest Service: FY2019 and FY2020 Appropriations*. For additional information on FS total discretionary appropriations, congressional clients may contact the report authors.

Unfunded and Repealed Programs

Some FS programs have been repealed by previous farm bills, or have gone unfunded by Congress for several years. **Table 3** lists these programs and the most recent congressional action. Some activities authorized by these unfunded or repealed programs may continue to be performed or provided by FS through other authorizations or funding sources.

Table 3. Unfunded and Repealed Forest Service Assistance Programs

Program Name	Action-Year	Description
Biomass Commercial Utilization Program	Repealed in 2018 farm bill (§8403)	This program was authorized to provide financial assistance to offset the cost of biomass for owners or operators of facilities which use biomass as a raw material to produce energy (16 U.S.C. §6531).
Community Fire Protection	Unfunded since established in 2002 farm bill ^a	A program authorized to assist communities in reducing threats from wildfire (16 U.S.C. §2106c). Some activities are performed through the Cooperative Fire Protection programs.
Community Wood Energy Program	Unfunded since established in 2008 farm bill; modified by the 2018 farm bill	Originally authorized as a program to provide financial assistance for state and local governments to acquire wood energy systems for public buildings, the 2018 farm bill (§8644) expanded the program to also include assistance for the construction of manufacturing or processing plants that use or produce innovative wood products and renamed it to the Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Program (7 U.S.C. §8113, see below). ^b Authorization for up to \$25 million in annual appropriations expires in FY2023.
Economic Action Programs (EAP)	Unfunded since FY2010	EAP consisted of several programs to provide technical assistance to promote economic development of forest and wood products and in forestry-dependent communities. Some programs have been repealed, others have been unfunded since at least FY2010, and others have continued under different names or as part of a different program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAP National Forest Dependent Rural Communities 	Unfunded since FY2010	A program to provide financial and technical assistance to rural communities (7 U.S.C. §§6611-6617).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAP Cooperative National Forest Products Marketing Program 	Repealed in 2014 farm bill	The funding authorization for this forest marketing program had expired in FY1991. Some activities have since been authorized in other programs, (e.g., the Wood Technology and Innovations Program).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAP Modern Timber Bridge Initiative 	Unfunded since FY2004	An EAP program to promote wood products for use in transportation applications. Also known as the Wood in Transportation program.
Emergency Reforestation Assistance	Unfunded since FY1993	A program to provide seedlings or reimburse the reforestation costs for commercial tree stands damaged from wildfire, damaging weather, or insect or disease infestation (16 U.S.C. §2106a).
Forest Biomass for Energy Program	Repealed in 2014 farm bill ^b	A program to provide competitive funding for research and development of forest biomass for energy.
Forest Land Enhancement Program	Repealed in 2014 farm bill	A program to provide cost-share assistance to forest landowners for specified forest management activities.
Pest and Disease Revolving Loan Fund	Unfunded since established in 2008 farm bill	A program to provide financial loans to local governments to purchase authorized equipment to perform specified forest management activities (16 U.S.C. §2104a).
Watershed Forestry Assistance	Repealed in 2014 farm bill	A program to promote forestry best management practices and water quality technical assistance for nonindustrial private forestland and tribal forestland.

Source: CRS.

- a. The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, P.L. 107-171 §8003.
- b. For more information on this program specifically and energy assistance programs generally, see CRS Report R45943, *The Farm Bill Energy Title: An Overview and Funding History*, by Kelsi Bracmort.

Forest Service Assistance Programs

The following section provides basic information on each of the FS assistance programs, including

- brief program description;
- program activities;
- eligibility requirements;
- the FS appropriations account budget line item (BLI) that provides funding for the program;
- authorized funding levels and any funding restrictions;
- FY2020 funding level in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94);
- FY2021 funding level requested by the Administration;
- statutory authority, recent amendments, and *U.S. Code* reference;
- expiration date of program authority unless permanently authorized; and
- program’s website link.

Information for the following tables is drawn largely from agency budget documents and presentations, explanatory notes, and websites. Further information about these programs may be found on the FS SPF website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf> and on the “cooperative forestry” page.

Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP)

Program purpose and description	CFRP (also known as the Community Forest Restoration Program) was established to encourage collaborative partnerships among community groups in New Mexico to improve forest ecosystem functioning and watershed conditions and reduce the threats of catastrophic wildfires or insect and disease outbreaks.
Activities	Provides cost-share grants of up to \$360,000 for forest restoration projects to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires, reestablish fire regimes, preserve old and large trees, replant deforested areas, and increase small-diameter tree utilization on public and tribal lands in New Mexico.
Eligibility requirements	Collaborative groups consisting of a diverse and balanced group of stakeholders, government, and tribal representatives are eligible to apply for funding. Projects must be on public (federal, state, county, or municipal) or tribal lands in New Mexico.
FS Appropriations account	Funds are allocated from National Forest System (NFS) Hazardous Fuels account.
Funding authority	Up to \$5 million annually.
FY2020 funding	\$0. According to Forest Service Legislative Affairs staff, as of April, 2019, the charter for the advisory committee required for the program is expired, and activities under this program—such as soliciting new project proposals—will not resume unless the advisory committee has been re-chartered.
FY2021 Administration request	The FY2021 budget request does not include a specific request for CFRP.
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title VI of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-393).
Authorization expires	Permanent authority.
Program website	https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r3/workingtogether/grants/

Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (CFP)

Program purpose and description	CFP provides financial assistance to establish community forests for community benefits by acquiring and protecting private forestlands.
Activities	Provides up to 50% cost-share grants to purchase the fee simple title of eligible private forestlands. Funding may not be used to purchase conservation easements. The lands to be purchased must be privately owned, at least five acres, 75% forested, and threatened by conversion to nonforest uses, such as residential development, mineral extraction, industrial use, or commercial uses other than timber production. The purchased lands must be managed for public economic, recreational, environmental, or education benefits to communities and provide public access.
Eligibility requirements	Local governments, Indian tribes, or qualified nongovernment organizations are eligible to apply for funding. Proposals are submitted to state foresters (or equivalent tribal officials) and then forwarded to FS. Proposal ranking and project selection criteria are outlined in 36 C.F.R. 230.5.
FS appropriations account	SPF Cooperative Forestry.
Funding authority	No specified authorization level, and FS may allocate 10% of the appropriated funds to state foresters for program administration.
FY2020 funding	\$4.0 million.
FY2021 Administration request	\$0; Administration proposes to eliminate program.
Statutory authority	Authorized in the 2008 farm bill (§8003), 16 U.S.C. §2103d.
Authorization expires	Permanent authority.
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program

Cooperative Fire Protection: State Fire Assistance (SFA)

Program purpose and description	<p>The Cooperative Fire Protection (FP) program consists of two components, State Fire Assistance (SFA) and Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA, described in the following section). The program's overall purpose is to provide assistance to encourage effective, coordinated, and uniform responses to wildfire, with an emphasis on improving preparedness (such as fire planning and initial attack capabilities) for state and local government fire agencies to respond to wildfires on nonfederal lands, and mitigation (such as hazardous fuels reduction and wildfire prevention activities) for state and local government agencies to reduce the risk of or damage from catastrophic wildfires.</p> <p>The SFA component provides assistance for preparedness activities to promote firefighter safety, capability, and capacity, and community mitigation activities to reduce wildfire risk to communities and promote community fire planning.</p>
Activities	<p>Provides financial assistance, technical training, and equipment to state foresters to promote fire protection on nonfederal lands. States may use funds for preparedness activities (e.g., development of fire readiness plans, facility maintenance); firefighting activities, training, and support (e.g., dispatch centers); to purchase, maintain, or rehabilitate equipment; and for program administration. Assistance is also provided for community mitigation programs, including conducting hazardous fuels reduction projects on nonfederal lands and supporting the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans and/or Firewise certification. Manages and provides financial assistance to states to acquire fire-related equipment through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP) and educational programs (e.g., the Smokey Bear public service campaign).</p>
Eligibility requirements	<p>Funding is provided to state foresters or equivalent state officials. A minimum level of funding is allocated annually to each state to ensure a base fire management capacity (at least \$100,000), and additional funds are allocated based on acres of nonfederal land, population, and required level of fire protection.</p>
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Cooperative Fire Assistance.
Funding authority	No specified authorization level for most activities, and up to \$35 million annually is reserved for SFA cost-share assistance.
FY2020 funding	\$82.0 million [\$100.0 million total provided for FP].
FY2021 Administration request	\$81.1 million; Administration proposes to change the program's name to National Fire Capacity [\$98.1 million total requested for FP].
Statutory authority	Authorized in CFAA and amended by 1990 farm bill (Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990; P.L. 101-624, §§1215, 1220), 16 U.S.C. §2106.
Authorization expires	Permanent authority.
Program website	CRS was unable to locate a website specific to the FP program. For information on FS wildfire programs, see https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire .

Cooperative Fire Protection: Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA)

Program purpose and description	<p>The Cooperative Fire Protection (FP) program consists of two components, State Fire Assistance (SFA, described in the preceding section) and Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA). The program's overall purpose is to provide assistance to encourage effective, coordinated, and uniform responses to wildfire, with an emphasis on improving preparedness (such as fire planning and initial attack capabilities) for state and local government fire agencies to respond to wildfires on nonfederal lands, and mitigation (such as hazardous fuels reduction and wildfire prevention activities) for state and local government agencies to reduce the risk of or damage from catastrophic wildfires.</p> <p>The VFA component supports state efforts to provide organization, training, and equipment for rural fire departments to protect and respond to wildfires on nonfederal lands in rural areas.</p>
Activities	Provides up to 50% cost-share grants and technical assistance to states to provide education, planning, training, and equipment for rural fire departments to improve fire protection capabilities and effectiveness.
Eligibility requirements	Funding is provided to state foresters or equivalent state officials. States may use the funds to support any organized, not-for-profit, fire protection organization that provides services to a community with a population less than 10,000 or whose firefighting personnel is at least 80% volunteer.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Cooperative Fire Assistance.
Funding authority	No specified authorization level for most activities, and up to \$35 million annually is reserved for VFA cost-share assistance.
FY2020 funding	\$18.0 million [\$100.0 million total provided for FP].
FY2021 Administration request	\$17.0 million; Administration proposes to change the program's name to Rural Fire Capacity [\$98.1 million total requested for FP].
Statutory authority	Specific authorization for VFA was initially provided as the Rural Community Fire Protection program in the 1973 farm bill (Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973; P.L. 93-86 §27) but was eliminated and replaced by an unrelated program in the 1996 farm bill (Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act; P.L. 104-127 §§741(a)(4) and (5)). Since then, Congress has continued to provide appropriations to the program under the broader FP program, as authorized in CFAA and amended by the 1990 farm bill (§§1215, 1220), 16 U.S.C. §2106.
Authorization expires	Permanent authority.
Program website	CRS was unable to locate a website specific to the FP program. For information on FS wildfire programs, see https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire .

Forest Health Protection (FHP): Federal Lands and Cooperative Lands

Program purpose and description	FHP was created to protect trees, forests, and wood products from negative impacts due to natural and man-made causes nationwide. The program is implemented through two subprograms: Federal Lands and Cooperative Lands.
Activities	<p>The Federal Lands subprogram surveys and monitors forest health conditions on federal lands, performs pest suppression efforts on federal and tribal trust lands (including lands managed by other federal agencies and tribal governments), and coordinates an integrated pest management program and specific prevention and suppression programs for major insects, diseases, and invasive species across all landownership types.</p> <p>The Cooperative Lands subprogram provides technical and financial assistance to states to conduct forest surveys to detect, monitor, and assess forest conditions across nonfederal lands. Financial assistance may also be provided through 50% cost-share grants for projects or programs to treat specific forest health problems.</p>
Eligibility requirements	FS can act on its own lands and other lands with consent, cooperation, and participation (including financial contributions). Other federal land management agencies submit suppression-related project requests to the FS for approval. Financial assistance is provided to states to support a base level of forest health expertise at the appropriate state partner agencies; these funds are allocated based on nonfederal forest acreage, among other factors.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Forest Health Management.
Funding authority	No specified authorization level.
FY2020 funding	\$100.0 million (\$56.0 million for Federal Lands; \$44.0 million for Cooperative Lands).
FY2021 Administration request	\$84.6 million (\$50.9 million for Federal Lands; \$33.8 million for Cooperative Lands).
Statutory authority	Authorized in the CFAA and amended by the 1990 farm bill (§1218), 16 U.S.C. §2104.
Authorization expires	Permanent authority.
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/

Forest Legacy Program (FLP)

Program purpose and description	FLP provides financial assistance to protect environmentally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses.
Activities	Provides up to 75% cost-share grants to states to acquire eligible private forestlands, either through fee-simple purchases or conservation easements. Landowners with FLP conservation easements on their property must manage the land consistent with the purposes for which the land was enrolled in the program, and may include timber production, hiking, hunting, and fishing. Financial assistance may also be provided to the states to administer the program.
Eligibility requirements	<p>Funding typically goes to state forestry agencies or equivalent to purchase and hold the title or easement. Nonprofit organizations may hold the title or conservation easement for donated tracts. A federally or state-recognized tribe may participate in partnership with the state.</p> <p>States must have and maintain State Forest Action Plans, which must include a Forest Legacy Assessment and recommendations for Forest Legacy Areas. The assessment evaluates current and future forest uses statewide and defines the criteria the state will use to identify, recommend, and prioritize threatened environmentally important forest areas as Forest Legacy Areas. The FS designates Forest Legacy Areas within the state upon approval of the state's Forest Action Plan. The acquired lands must be within a designated Forest Legacy Area, at least 75% forestland, and be acquired from a willing seller.</p> <p>Project selection is a three-step competitive process. First, the State FSC Committee evaluates proposals and makes recommendations to the state; second, the state then submits recommendations to the FS; and third, the FS makes the final selection.</p>
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Cooperative Forestry.
Funding authority	No specified authorization level. Since FY2004, funding has been provided through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. For more information, see CRS Report R44121, <i>Land and Water Conservation Fund: Appropriations for "Other Purposes."</i>
FY2020 funding	\$64.0 million.
FY2021 Administration request	\$0; Administration proposes to eliminate program.
Statutory authority	Authorized in the 1990 farm bill (§1217), 16 U.S.C. §2103c.
Authorization expires	Permanent authority.
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/private-land/forest-legacy/program

Forest Stewardship Program (FSP)

Program purpose and description	<p>FSP was established to encourage long-term stewardship on nonindustrial private forestlands (NIPFs). NIPFs are defined as “lands with existing tree cover, or suitable for growing trees, and owned by any private individual, group, association, corporation, tribe, or other private legal entity” (16 U.S.C. §2103a(c)). Forest stewardship is not defined directly or indirectly by reference in the statute.</p> <p>Since FY1993, two other programs have been funded and administered as part of FSP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Forestry Assistance (RFA), which supports reforestation and genetic resources activities, such as nursery management and seed development and storage; and • Financial, Technical, and Related Assistance to States (Assistance to States), which fosters coordination between federal and state organizations and technological development and implementation for forest data collection and use.
Activities	Provides technical and financial assistance to states, which provides information and assistance to private landowners. Technical assistance includes activities such as landowner outreach and education, development of forest stewardship management plans, and fostering stewardship planning across multiple owners for a landscape-level approach.
Eligibility requirements	State forestry agencies or equivalent. States must have and maintain State Forest Action Plans. States may use funds to provide financial assistance to private landowners.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Cooperative Forestry.
Funding authority	No specified authorization level.
FY2020 funding	\$21.0 million.
FY2021 Administration request	\$20.7 million; Administration proposes to rename as Working Forest Lands.
Statutory authority	<p>FSP was authorized in the CFAA and amended by the 1990 farm bill (§1215), 16 U.S.C. §2103a.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFA was authorized in the CFAA and amended in the 1990 farm bill (§1213), 16 U.S.C. §2102. • Assistance to States was authorized in the CFAA and amended in the 1990 farm bill (§1215), 16 U.S.C. §2107.
Authorization expires	Permanent authority.
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/forest-stewardship/program

International Forestry Programs

Program purpose and description	International forestry programs support forestry and natural resource activities outside of the United States to promote conservation and sustainable forest management and global environmental stability.
Activities	Provides financial and technical assistance to countries to promote development and transfer of technical, research, managerial, education, and administrative skills to forest managers. Includes research and assistance through the Institute of Tropical Forestry and Institute for Pacific Islands Forestry.
Eligibility requirements	Assistance is available only to countries that receive USAID support.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF International Forestry.
Funding authority	No specified authorization level.
FY2020 funding	\$12.0 million.
FY2021 Administration request	\$0; Administration proposes to eliminate program.
Statutory authority	International forestry activities are authorized in two places: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 5, 1990: the International Forestry Cooperation Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-513 Title VI), as amended by the Hawaii Tropical Forest Recovery Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-574, passed on October 29, 1992), 16 U.S.C. §4501 et seq. • November 28, 1990: the 1990 farm bill (§2405) authorized the Office of International Forestry and the Institute of Tropical Forestry and specified that the FS should request funding for International forestry through a specific budget line item, 7 U.S.C. §§6701 et seq.
Authorization expires	The authorization for the Office of International Forestry (7 U.S.C. §6704) to receive funding expired at the end of FY2018. Other International Forestry programs are permanently authorized.
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/about-agency/international-programs

Landscape Scale Restoration Program (LSR)

Program purpose and description	<p>LSR was originally established to support innovative regional or national forest restoration projects that cross multiple landownership boundaries. The 2018 farm bill statutorily codified the program to encourage collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes. The 2018 farm bill also provided congressional direction on program eligibility, criteria, and establishment, and is expected to be fully implemented in the FY2021 grant cycle. Projects with multiple ownerships are prioritized, but projects must include nonindustrial private forestland as well as state- or locally owned forestland.</p> <p>Projects may include activities authorized by other programs including FSP, FHP-Cooperative Lands, UCF, and SFA; but not VFA, FLP, or FHP-Federal Lands.</p>
Activities	<p>Provides 50% cost-share grants for cross-boundary projects that address regionally or nationally significant issues or landscapes as identified in State Forest Action Plans. Funding is provided through a two-step competitive process: proposals are first evaluated at a regional level and then at the national level. Each region (Northeast, South, and West) develops regionally specific evaluation criteria that must be consistent with national standards.</p>
Eligibility requirements	<p>Prior to the 2018 farm bill, state forestry agencies and the District of Columbia were eligible to receive funding and authorized to pass the funding to partners. Tribes, nonprofit organizations, local governments, and land grant colleges or universities were eligible to sponsor or participate as a partner in a project. The 2018 farm bill specifies that proposals must be submitted through state foresters or other appropriate state agency. It is not clear if a state pass-through of the funding will still be required after the 2018 farm bill direction is implemented.</p>
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Landscape Scale Restoration.
Funding authority	Up to \$20 million annually, through FY2023.
FY2020 funding	\$14.0 million.
FY2021 Administration request	\$14.0 million.
Statutory authority	Authorized in the 2018 farm bill (§8102(a)), 16 U.S.C. §2109a. Prior to the 2018 farm bill, the program operated under a broad authority provided in the 2008 farm bill (§8007).
Authorization expires	Permanent authority.
Program website	https://www.fs.usda.gov/naspf/working-with-us/grants/landscape-scale-restoration-grants

Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program (UCF)

Program purpose and description	UCF was created to establish, manage, and protect trees, forests, green spaces, and related natural resources in and adjacent to cities and towns.
Activities	Provides financial, technical, and related assistance to conduct tree inventories; prepare management plans; plant and care for trees; disaster planning, mitigation, response, and recovery; support workforce development; and host community activities, such as youth summer camps. Also provides 50% cost-share grants to address strategic issues and opportunities identified by the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC). The NUCFAC consists of 15 members as appointed by the Secretary.
Eligibility Requirements	No eligibility requirements specified in law. Therefore, states and territories, tribes, nongovernmental organizations, private nonprofit organizations, or individuals are eligible to apply for funding.
FS appropriations account/BLI	SPF Cooperative Forestry.
Funding authority	No specified authorization level
FY2020 funding	\$32.0 million.
FY2021 Administration request	\$0; Administration proposes to eliminate program.
Statutory authority	Authorized in CFAA and amended by 1990 farm bill (§§1215, 1219), 16 U.S.C. §2105.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization. According to FS Legislative Affairs staff, as of July 2018, the charter for NUCFAC is expired.
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf

Wood Technology and Innovation Programs

Program purpose and description	This includes several FS authorities and programs to provide financial and technical assistance to develop, promote, and market innovative uses of wood products in an effort to remove hazardous fuels and other wood residues (e.g., biomass) from National Forest System (NFS) lands, reduce the costs of forest management on public and private forestlands, and promote economic and environmental health of forest-dependent communities, among other purposes.
Activities	<p>The Wood Innovation Grant Program, a part of the broader Rural Revitalization Technologies (RRT) program, provides cost-share grants to stimulate or expand wood energy and wood products markets through projects that use wood, expand wood energy markets, and promote wood as a construction material in commercial buildings.</p> <p>The Hardwood Technology Transfer and Applied Research (HTTAR) program conducts technology transfer and development, training, and applied research in the management, processing and utilization of hardwoods, including through grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements. The program operates through the Wood Education and Resource Center (WERC), the Institute of Hardwood Technology Transfer and Applied Research (IHTTAR), and Forest Products Laboratory.</p> <p>The Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation (CWE/WI) program provides competitive cost-share grants to install community wood energy systems or build innovative wood product facilities.</p>
Eligibility requirements	State, local, and tribal governments, communities, nongovernmental organizations, institutes of higher education, school districts, communities, and special purpose districts.
FS appropriations account/BLI	Funds are allocated from other FS accounts and programs, including NFS Hazardous Fuels.
Funding authority	<p>Funding is authorized through different programs, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rural Revitalization Technologies (RRT) program is authorized to receive up to \$5 million annually, through FY2023. • HTTAR has no specified authorization level. HTTAR is authorized to generate revenue; this revenue may be deposited into the Hardwood Technology Transfer and Applied Research Fund and is available until expended. • The CWE/WI is authorized to receive up to \$25 million annually, through FY2023. Not more than 25% of funds may be used for grants for innovative wood product facilities, unless the Secretary receives insufficient proposals for community wood energy systems.
FY2020 funding	\$21.1 million.
FY2021 Administration request	\$26.2 million.
Statutory authority	<p>This group of programs relies on different authorities, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RRT was established in the 1990 farm bill (§2371), 7 U.S.C. §6601. • The Wood Innovation Grant Program was established in the 2018 farm bill (§8643), 7 U.S.C. § 7655d, and authorizes FS to annually make grants in accordance with a funding opportunity offered under the broad authority of RRT. • The HTTAR program was authorized and WERC was established in P.L. 105-277 (§343) and P.L. 106-113 (§332), 16 U.S.C. §1650. • CWE/WI Program was established in the 2008 farm bill (§9013) and the 2018 farm bill (§8644), 7 U.S.C. §8113.
Authorization expires	RRT and the Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation program expire in FY2023. HTTAR is permanently authorized.
Program website	https://www.fs.fed.us/science-technology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovations-grants

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