

North Carolina Forest Service Stewardship Incentives Program (NCFS-SIP)



Program Overview

The North Carolina Forest Service received funding through a 2020 Forest Stewardship Program Supplemental Grant from the U.S. Forest Service. A portion of this grant provides time-limited cost-share funding to assist NC forest landowners with the development of comprehensive management plans (that will qualify the landowner/property for Forest Stewardship & Tree Farm). These funds are intended to expand existing North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS) capacity to reach more landowners. Landowners will be reimbursed a flat rate based on the plan acreage of the Forest Stewardship or North Carolina (NC) Tree Farm Plan. These plans must be written by a Consulting Forester in order to qualify for the NC Forest Service Stewardship Incentives Program (NCFS-SIP).

Approximately \$100,000 is currently available for plan development, but funding is time-limited and will expire on September 31, 2021.

Eligibility

Eligible Ownerships

Funding is available for non-industrial privately-owned forestlands. A private individual, group, association, or corporation owning land in North Carolina is eligible.

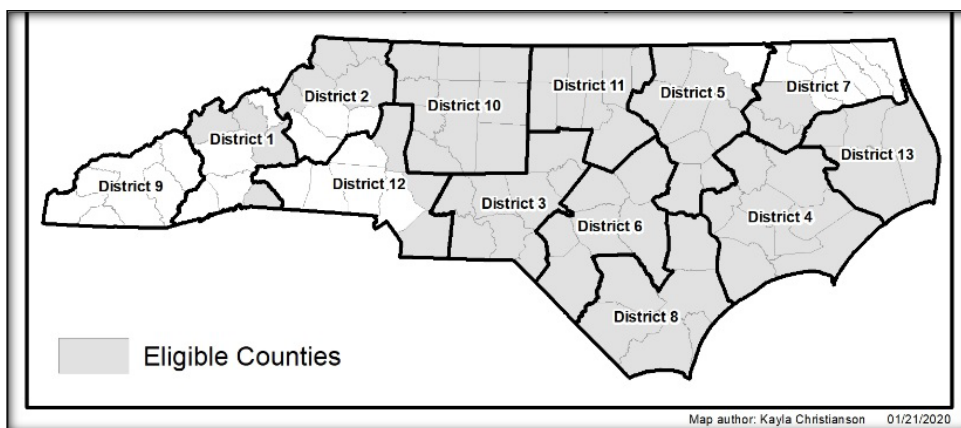
Where forestland is owned jointly by more than one individual, group, association, or corporation, as tenants in common, tenants by the entirety, or otherwise, the joint owners shall be considered as one eligible landowner and entitled to receive cost-share.

Individual landowners who share in a joint ownership, but also possess distinct, separate property in their own name, are entitled to cost-share as individuals, and the joint ownership does not affect the eligibility. Government owned lands are not eligible for cost-share (State land or Public land). Land owned by forest industry is also not eligible for cost-share.

Each eligible landowner may be approved for up to 3 plans for separate properties.

Eligible Property

NCFS-SIP funding is available in the 72 counties eligible for Hurricane Michael and Florence Disaster Recovery Supplemental Funding.



North Carolina Counties that were not declared Disaster Recovery areas for Hurricane Michael and Florence are NOT eligible for NCFS-SIP funding. These counties include: Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Swain, Macon, Jackson, Haywood, Transylvania, Buncombe, Henderson, Rutherford, Mitchell, Burke, Cleveland, Caldwell, Alexander, Catawba, Lincoln, Gaston, Mecklenburg, Northampton, Hertford, Gates, Chowan, Perquimans, Pasquotank, Camden, and Currituck.

A single NCFS-SIP plan must cover all contiguous woodland property between 10 to 10,000 acres (tracts under 10 acres are not eligible). This could include a single tax parcel or a combination of adjacent tax parcels. These parcels should be touching or separated by no more than a road or path. The entire contiguous property must be included in the plan.

Forestland must make up a portion of any eligible property, but at least 10 total acres must be dedicated to natural resource management goals (forestry, wildlife, water quality, etc.). Agricultural land may not be part of the plan unless designated for future natural resource management goals.

Private non-industrial forest lands managed under existing Federal, State, or private sector financial and technical assistance programs (including rental agreements and easements) are eligible for NCFS-SIP funding.

Eligible Plan Types

Funds are available for the development of the following comprehensive plan types:

1. Forest Stewardship Plans
2. NC Tree Farm Plans

Plans required for initial program enrollment are eligible for funding. Forest Stewardship and/or NC Tree Farm plan updates are also eligible for NCFS-SIP funding and will be paid at the same rate. Plan updates should include bringing a landowner's older, existing plan up to the current Forest Stewardship and/or NC Tree Farm standards with updated stand/area descriptions, recommendations and content. Also, if significant landscape changes have occurred, and would justify updates to the current stand description/recommendations these would qualify as plan updates under NCFS-SIP. Amendments or the use of only an addendum form as the only update would not qualify for reimbursement.

NCFS-SIP funding may only be used to reimburse landowner expenses related to the development of management plans that meet the Forest Stewardship or NC Tree Farm national standards. (NCFS Employees Note: All NCFS-SIP plans will be recorded in the 4220's as Stewardship Plans.)

Ineligible Plan Types

If a landowner has applied for other funding sources for plan preparation and received funding for both NCFS-SIP and another source, the landowner must choose one. NCFS-SIP will not pay for plans prepared through other funding sources (Ex. CAP 106 Plans through NRCS). If individual practices have been previously funded through state or federal cost-share (FDP, SPBPP, EQIP, etc.), NCFS-SIP funding is available for plan preparation for these landowners.

Eligible Plan Writers

For NCFS-SIP cost-sharing, only Consulting Foresters may develop a Forest Stewardship or NC Tree Farm plan. Consulting Foresters are encouraged to work closely with the NC Forest Service and attend NCFS-SIP training for comprehensive plan writing and map preparation guidance.

Applying for NCFS-SIP

NCFS-SIP Application Instructions

The NCFS-SIP Application, Form 4852-SIP, is a fillable PDF. The landowner must complete the NCFS-SIP “Landowner Information” section, sign & date the application in the “Signatures” section, and return the application to their local NCFS County or District Office. Forms may be filled out electronically with electronic signatures. Electronic signatures must be date and time stamped. (Adobe Acrobat Reader is an example of a widely used software can be used for electronic signatures.)

Example of Acceptable Electronic Signatures:

Signatures	John Doe	Digitally signed by John Doe Date: 2020.10.05 17:20:19 -04'00'	10/05/2020
	Signature of Landowner/Company Representative		Date
	Jonathan Murray	Digitally signed by Jonathan Murray Date: 2020.10.05 17:19:23 -04'00'	10/05/2020
	Signature of NCFS Representative		Date

The N.C. Forest Service is a division of the N.C. Department of Agriculture Consumer Services
Steve Troxler, Commissioner

Form 4852-SIP
(8/2020)

The NCFS Service Forester or the landowner’s Consulting Forester will complete the “Funding Request” section. This section can be filled out electronically as well using current practice funding rates by acreage range.

Example of Funding Request:

Funding Request	John Doe Heirs	35	22	26	77	15	14
	Property/Tract Name	Latitude			Longitude		
	Practice Needed:	Acres Requested		Cost-Share Rate:			
	Forest Stewardship Plan or Tree Farm Plan (Choose One)	52		1000			
	Total Acres:	52		1000			

A NCFS Representative must sign & date the application in the “Signatures” section, make district copies, and forward the original NCFS-SIP Application to the NCFS State Headquarters in Raleigh, NC for funding. **The NC Substitute W-9 forms is not needed until the landowner has completed the work and is requesting re-imbusement payment. Landowners that receive NCFS-SIP funding will receive a funding approval letter along with a NC Substitute W-9 form.**

Applications will be accepted at NCFS offices starting on October 26th, 2020. Funding allocations will be made on a “first come, first served” basis, based upon the date of receipt of the application at the NC Forest Service Headquarters in Raleigh, NC.

Work will not be authorized until written notice (approval letter) has been received of allotment of funds to the project. Therefore, the landowner cannot receive payment for any work started prior to the written authorization from NCFS. After notification of NCFS-SIP funding to the landowner, the Consulting Forester can move forward with plan development.

Practice Funding Rates

Approved NCFS-SIP plans will reimburse landowners at the following rates:

Plan Acres:	Flat Rate:
10-50	\$600
51-100	\$1,000
101-200	\$1,500
201-400	\$2,000
401-600	\$2,500
601-10,000	\$3,000

Timeframes for Plan Development

From the date of funding approval, the landowner will have 3 months to have their plan completed and submit documentation for payment. Extensions may be requested by NCFS Service Foresters by emailing the Forest Stewardship Coordinator with a copy to the ARF-FM. A single 1-month extension may be granted with proper justification provided by the landowner.

Cancellation of Projects

If the project application has been submitted, but has not received a funding approval letter, an email from the district office to the NCFS Headquarter in Raleigh, NC will be sufficient to remove the request from the files. A note to the District Office and county file is needed to document the reason for cancellation.

If the project has already been funded, the NCFS Service Forester should write “Cancel” across the top of the 4852-SIP, date, and sign. This cancelled 4852-SIP application should be attached to an email and should be sent to the NCFS State Headquarters in Raleigh, NC requesting that the project be cancelled. This email should be copied to the County, ADF, and ARF-FM.

Reimbursement Payments

After the plan is complete the landowner will submit the following to the local NCFS District Office for reimbursement payment:

- A copy of the completed comprehensive management plan (Tree Farm or Stewardship Plan) with map(s).
- A copy of the paid invoice for plan preparation services from the Consulting Forester.
- A Substitute W-9 form completed by the landowner with the original signatures.

The NCFS Service Foresters will review the plan using either the Forest Stewardship Program/North Carolina Tree Farm Program standards checklist. The plan must meet minimum plan standards in order to qualify for NCFS-SIP funding (Minimum Plan Standards can be found in the attached documents). The NCFS Service Foresters will have 10 working days to review the plan and accept it or contact the Consulting Forester to request changes.

If Minimum Plan Standards are not met, the NCFS Service Forester should address any resource elements or standards that need to be added with the Consulting Forester. The plan must be brought up to the Minimum Plan Standards by the consultant in order for the plan to be eligible for NCFS-SIP cost-share payment.

If the invoice is less than the approved flat rate at the time of funding, then the entire invoice amount will be paid. If the invoice is more than the approved flat rate at the time of funding, the landowner will be reimbursed the flat rate.

Amendments to Consulting Forester Plans

NCFS Service Foresters, refer to Procedure 4846.5 Amendments to Consulting Forester Plans when needing to address items that did not meet the plan standards. Some items can be addressed by the NCFS Service Forester (minor changes P&P 4846.5) and others will need to be sent back and addressed by the Consulting Forester (extensive changes P&P 4846.5).

Prior to sending a Consulting Forester's NC Tree Farm plan back for corrections, the NC Tree Farm Program Executive Director should be consulted by email or phone. The NC Tree Farm Program Executive Director can provide clarification for any plans the reviewer feels may not meet the NC Tree Farm program standards.

If the NCFS-SIP plan meets the minimum plan standards, the NCFS Service Forester will complete the "Performance Report" section of the application. The NCFS Service Forester will then generate a tract polygon and upload the shapefile to the NCFS share drive (S/: Drive). A revised process for uploading polygons is detailed in the NCFS-SIP Polygon Standards document. No final NCFS-SIP payments will be made until the Forest Stewardship Coordinator confirms the shapefile has been uploaded to the NCFS share drive.

Map Standards

Consulting Foresters are encouraged to use mapping software that allows the user to create shapefiles. (ArcMap, QGIS, etc.) Shapefiles should be shared with the NCFS Service Foresters for NCFS to verify or document the plan acres.

Consulting Foresters that do not have these types of software, **must create a map over aerial photography. All maps must be created over aerial photography.**

Consultants that use Google Earth Pro (Free Download <https://www.google.com/earth/versions/#earth-pro>) can also create maps that can easily be converted to a shapefile by the NCFS Service Forester. Google Earth Pro creates a (.kmz) file, which can be converted in ArcMap to a shapefile, in order for the NCFS Service Forester to verify the total plan acres. These files should be shared with the NCFS Service Forester.

NCFS Service Foresters, when mapping files cannot be shared by the Consulting Forester you will need to digitize the hard copy tract boundary in ArcMap. Only digitize the tract boundary. Do not digitize individual stands. (See NCFS Polygon Standards for more information)

Forest Stewardship Minimum Plan Standards

During the review process, the NCFS Service Forester will check each Forest Stewardship Plan using the Minimum Standards Checklist for Forest Stewardship Plans. “Plan Components” (Numbers 1-10) must be addressed in each Forest Stewardship Plan. The NCFS Service Forester will also check each Forest Stewardship Plan for Resource Elements (Numbers 11-27).

Each of these Resource Elements must be considered, and the ones that are relevant to the landowner and their property must be addressed within the Forest Stewardship Plan. Landowners must have multiple resource objectives but do not have to manage for all 16 Stewardship Resource Elements. The Resource Elements that are not relevant to the landowner or their property, should be addressed with the NCFS Forest Stewardship Plan Addendum. When using the NCFS Forest Stewardship Plan Addendum, **only** the resource elements that were not relevant should be included within the Addendum. The Addendum will provide standard information about the remaining resources elements to each landowner. (See NCFS Forest Stewardship Plan Addendum Template)

You can also refer to the Standards of Sustainability for the Forest Stewardship Program by using this link for additional guidance: https://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/fsp_standards_guidelines.pdf

Tree Farm Minimum Plan Standards

During the review process, the NCFS Service Forester will check each Tree Farm Plan using the North Carolina Tree Farm Program Standards Checklist for NC Tree Farm Plans for the “Plan Components”, **that must be addressed in each Tree Farm Plan**. The NCFS Service Forester will also check each NC Tree Farm Plan for “Required Plan Resource Elements to Address”, **these must also be addressed in each NC Tree Farm Plan in order to qualify for NCFS-SIP**. The “Optional Resource Elements” should be included when present, relevant to the property, and consistent with the landowner’s objectives.

You can also refer to the Standards of Sustainability for the North Carolina Tree Farm Program by using this link for additional guidance:

https://www.treefarmssystem.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/2/b0872a8dc122128baacea886ebf468f1/pdf/final_standards_guidance_7.9.15_links.pdf

NOTE: Once a Tree Farm Plan is approved the landowner must have a Tree Farm Inspector complete the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) Tree Farm Inspection Record (ATFS Form 004 revised 1/2015) in order to apply for Tree Farm Certification. Only Tree Farm Inspectors can submit Form 004 for certification.

The official Tree Farm Inspection Record (Form 004) can be found here at the following link:

https://www.treefarmssystem.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/2/3d94e793318e82c18d9c928bdcc9e982/miscdocs/0115_for_mcolor_final_092015.pdf

NCFS Document Submission for Payment

Upon approval of the comprehensive management plan, the NCFS Service Forester will submit the following to the NCFS State Headquarters Raleigh, NC for NCFS-SIP payment:

- A hard copy of the 4852-SIP Form with a completed "Performance Report" (NOTE: "Performance Report" section cannot be completed electronically)
- A copy of the paid invoice for plan preparation services.
- Most current State of North Carolina Substitute W-9 form completed by the landowner with original signatures.
- Uploaded plan polygon to the NCFS share drive (see directions in the NCFS-SIP Polygon Standards document)

The NCFS District and County offices will retain the following within the landowner's file:

- A copy of the 4852-SIP Form
- A copy of the NCFS-SIP approval letter
- A copy of the completed plan and map
- Electronic copy of the uploaded plan polygon

Program Contacts

NCFS District and County Contacts can be found at the following location:

https://www.ncforestservice.gov/contacts/contacts_main.htm

NCFS Forest Stewardship Coordinator:

Jonathan Murray

Email: jonathan.murray@ncagr.gov

Office: 919-857-4833

NCFS Forest Stewardship Program Assistant:

Mandy Tallman Marty

Email: mandy.tallman.marty@ncagr.gov

Office: 919-857-4823