



OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

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www.mfc.state.ms.us

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FORESTRY COMMISSION SEEKING PROPOSALS FOR FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

Jackson, MS—The Mississippi Forestry Commission is seeking applications for the Forest Legacy Program (FLP). The proposal deadline is September 30, 2009 for federal fiscal year 2011 funding. The FLP was created by Congress to protect environmentally important private forest lands that are threatened by present and future conversion to non-forest uses through the fee purchases or conservation easements.

Mississippi has 19.6 million acres of forestland, and 78 percent of that is owned by private, non-industrial landowners. These forestlands provide wildlife habitat, timber and recreation, protect water quality and have scenic value. “But urban and suburban sprawl and other development are causing fragmentation and conversion of these forests to other land uses,” said Charlie Morgan, State Forester. “Through the Forest Legacy Program, we are working with partners and interested landowners to protect important forested areas that may otherwise be lost to development.”

“The program offers an important opportunity for private landowners, resource agencies and conservation organizations in the state to access federal funding to protect valuable private forestlands,” said Morgan. FLP helps fund the purchase of forestland for protection or acquisition of development rights through a conservation easement. A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a government agency or conservation organization that permanently limits land uses in order to protect conservation values. The program requires a 25 percent non-federal cost share.

The FLP Assessment of Need is a planning document that identifies natural forest communities in the state and trends causing conversion of forestland to other uses. The plan defines three priority Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs) in Mississippi based on conservation values and population growth, and specifies eligibility criteria for tracts that may be considered for protection through a conservation easement or for purchase. The three Legacy Areas are Northeast FLA (Clay, Itawamba, Lee, Lowndes, Monroe, and Tishomingo Counties), Central FLA (Copiah, Hinds, Madison, Rankin, and Simpson Counties), and Southeast FLA (Forrest, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jones, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Stone, and Wayne Counties). Priority forest types and important ecological areas are described for each FLA in the

Assessment of Need, which is posted on the Forestry Commission's web site: www.mfc.state.ms.us under Forest Management.

To qualify for consideration proposals must be submitted by September 30, 2009. Potential FLP tracts must be located in one of the three designated Forest Legacy Areas, must meet the eligibility criteria set forth in the Assessment of Need and must be offered by willing sellers for either a conservation easement or for fee simple purchase. "Tracts that we will consider must be important to the public because of their ecological value, threatened by conversion and located strategically near or next to larger blocks of protected lands," said Bruce Frasier, FLP Coordinator for Mississippi. "Our tracts must compete nationally, so they really should be great examples of natural forest communities that are in urgent need of protection."

Landowners interested in applying for the Forest Legacy Program can learn more by visiting www.mfc.state.ms.us or contacting Mississippi FLP Coordinator Bruce Frasier at (601) 656-1381 or bfrasier@mfc.state.ms.us.

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