



OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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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 15, 2011 for federal fiscal year 2013 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 sprawl and other development are causing fragmentation and changes to forest lands that often degrade them,” said Charlie Morgan, State Forester. “The Forest Legacy Program is one tool to help us protect some natural forest areas that may otherwise be converted to development and lost forever.”

“Forest Legacy gives 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. Conservation easements are legal agreements between a landowner and a government agency or conservation organization that permanently limit land uses in order to protect conservation values. The program requires a 25 percent non-federal cost share.

To qualify for consideration, properties must be located in one of three priority Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs) in Mississippi that are based on conservation values and population growth. 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).

Proposals must be submitted by September 15, 2011. Potential FLP tracts must be located in one of the three designated Forest Legacy Areas, must meet the eligibility criteria set forth in the Forest Legacy Program 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 already protected lands such as parks, wildlife management areas or national forests,” said Bruce Frasier, FLP Coordinator for Mississippi. “Our tracts must compete nationally, so they really should be good 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 the Forest Legacy page on the MFC website at www.mfc.state.ms.us (under Forest Management) or contacting Mississippi FLP Coordinator Bruce Frasier at (601) 656-1381 or bfrasier@mfc.state.ms.us.

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