



**August 2009**  
**Volume 47 Number 4**  
**Article Number 4TOT4**

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## **Financial Incentive Programs for Non-Industrial Private Forest Owners Web Site**

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**Abstract:** A Web site that lists forestry and conservation financial incentive programs available to non-industrial private forest owners is described. Federal, state, and private sources are included, and the listing is on a state-by-state basis. The site is interactive and very easy to use. All the federal USDA and Department of Interior programs, state cost-share and assistance programs, forest industry landowner assistance programs, and other private programs are included. It is an ideal tool for an Extension agent who is posed the question, "Which forestry incentive or assistance programs are available in my specific geographic area?"

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## Introduction

Forestry and conservation incentive programs are of high interest to nonindustrial private forest owners. Extension professionals are often called on to provide specific information on the availability and implementation of these programs. The programs can involve cost-share for practices like reforestation or timber stand improvement, income tax credits, property tax benefits, technical assistance, and regulatory streamlining. Objectives now include things like conservation practices, wildlife habitat plans, and implementation of sustainable forestry practices. These benefits go a lot farther than the timber-oriented programs of the past.

Existing and potential financial incentive programs to promote sustainable forestry and conservation practices have been identified at the state level. Data were collected using a mailed survey of key management assistance foresters in state forestry agencies nationwide. Forestry incentive programs are not just offered at the federal level, but are also offered by states and private organizations. Tax incentives are available at both the federal and state levels. There are a myriad of programs, and the availability varies by state. Respondents identified all financial incentives available for conservation purposes by type and provided program details for their state.

Internet links with program information in each state were identified via a Web search; the search also identified any additional programs offered through agencies that respondents did not report. This resulted in a collection of Web pages that allows easy access to information on federal and state incentive programs, forest industry and other private organization landowner assistance programs, and various tax incentive programs.

The research was supported by the National Commission on Sciences for Sustainable Forestry.

## The Web Site

The Web site is located at [www.srs.fs.usda.gov/econ/data/forestincentives](http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/econ/data/forestincentives). Users can access state-level information by clicking on an individual state on a large map of the United States or by a drop-down menu listing each state. Alternatively, the user can click on federal, state, or private and a complete listing of all federal, state, or private programs will appear on a state-by-state basis. Clicking on a specific program will take the user to the Web site at the state level for that program (or to the corresponding federal Web site if the state agency has no Web site for that program).

**Figure 1.**  
Example of the Interactive Web Page



Federal programs include traditional USDA incentive programs like EQIP, CRP, FLP, WRP, and WHIP. These are administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Forest Service. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. The current farm bill enhanced the program's conservation and environmental aspects. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides rental payments to establish conserving covers (including trees) on eligible farmland. The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) primarily uses conservation easements to control development on environmentally significant lands. The Wetlands Reserve Program offers landowners an opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) provides assistance for development and improvement of wildlife habitat.

One major program is under the U.S. Department of Interior. Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) is designed to assist states by providing grants for protection or restoration of private lands to benefit federally listed, proposed, candidate, or other at-risk species. Specialized USDA Forest Service programs like the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention and Restoration Program are also included.

The federal programs are fairly well known, but state-level and private forestry programs are often not that well known. All 50 states have some type of preferential property tax under which forestland can be protected from fragmentation; in some states it is as agricultural or undeveloped land. States in every region have financial cost-share type programs; they are most common in the South and least common in the East. There are specialized state programs like the Indiana Land and River Enhancement Program and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Grants. Private programs include forest industry landowner assistance programs (mainly timber management and marketing), statewide forest trusts, and Tree Farm. There are specialized programs like the National Wild Turkey Federation Wild Turkey Woodlands Program.

## Summary

The broad federal forestry financial assistance programs tend to be available in all states. The full suite of federal programs surveyed is most likely to be available in states in the East, Midwest, and South, and least likely to be available in the West. The Southern Pine Beetle Prevention and Restoration Program is available in 11 southern states. Forest industry landowner assistance programs are most common in the South and East. Two states—Minnesota and Texas—have programs sponsored by state forestry associations. And two states—Indiana and Virginia—have programs sponsored by non-governmental organizations. States in every region have Tree Farm Programs active enough to have their own Web sites. And states in every region have public- or privately-sponsored statewide forest trusts.

The Financial Incentive Programs for Non-Industrial Private Forest Owners is intended as an aid to service foresters, extension agents, policy-makers, and other researchers interested in knowing what financial assistance programs are available for non-industrial private owners in each state. The Web site is an ideal tool for extension agents needing detailed information on the various programs available in their area (or any other area). Obviously, forest owners can benefit from the Web site also. It answers the question, "Which forestry incentive programs are available in my specific geographical area?" Guesswork and searching are minimized. It is hoped this Web site will be used as a tool to increase the level of stewardship practiced on the nation's non-industrial private lands.

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