

STATE BOARD OF LAND COMMISSIONERS

January 16, 2024
Information Agenda

Subject

Forest Legacy Program Overview

Background

The Forest Legacy Program anticipates bringing several projects to the Land Board in 2024. This is an overview of the Forest Legacy Program for discussion and to address any questions from Land Board members.

Discussion

The Forest Legacy Program is a voluntary initiative Idaho has participated in for two decades. The program's intent is to keep working forests working. Forest Legacy empowers private landowners to safeguard their forestland for perpetual timber production. Under the program, landowners voluntarily sell their development rights at market value, but retain land ownership, management, and revenue from their land while continuing to pay property taxes. Idaho holds the development rights in trust.

Land enrolled in the program provides a steady, reliable supply of sawlogs and fiber for industry and future mill infrastructure investments. Because the program reduces urban sprawl in the Wildland Urban Interface, wildfire risks are mitigated, leaving communities safer. The program bolsters local economies by safeguarding rural jobs and keeping property on county tax rolls. It expands recreational access because industrial landowners often open these private lands for public use for hunting, fishing, and non-motorized recreation. It also preserves wildlife habitat, water quality, and scenic landscapes.

Idaho competes for grant money from the US Forest Service to fund Forest Legacy projects. Grant funding stems from congressional authorizations and offshore oil drilling royalties. Participating landowners contribute a 25% match, typically via tax-deductible donations.

To date, there are 103,252 acres that are in the Forest Legacy Program. Idaho has grants in place to secure an additional 33,157 acres, and Idaho is currently competing for grants to enroll approximately 100,653 more acres in the Forest Legacy Program.

Attachments

1. Forest Legacy Program Fact Sheet
2. Map

FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM (FLP)

Helping private landowners keep their working forests working.

FLP, a voluntary initiative, enables landowners to safeguard their forestland for perpetual timber production, offering financial incentives similar to selling for development. Owners retain their land, pay property taxes, and manage timber harvesting.

What land qualifies for the Forest Legacy Program?

Eligible properties must be privately owned, over 5 acres, 75% forested, and within Idaho's priority landscape areas, as per the Idaho Forest Action Plan. Funding is awarded through a competitive, nationwide process.

Are Forest Legacy projects funded by Idaho's General Fund?

No. Funding stems from congressional authorizations and offshore oil drilling royalties. Participating landowners contribute a 25% match, typically via tax-deductible donations.

Will there be more working forestlands enrolled in Forest Legacy in the future?

Yes. Idaho's industrial forestland owners are eager to expand private land enrollment in FLP. Idaho is ready to compete for a share of the \$700 million national fund allocated for FLP projects.

How would a property owner start the process?

Reach out to your local land trust, a non-profit specializing in land acquisition for public benefit, as all FLP applications need a land trust sponsor.

Why is Forest Legacy important?

FLP ensures a steady supply of industry sawlogs and fiber, mitigates wildfire risks, and prevents sprawl in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). It bolsters local economies by safeguarding rural jobs and enhancing recreational access, while preserving wildlife habitat, water quality, and scenic landscapes.

How does FLP safeguard the supply of fiber for industry?

FLP keeps working forests working, helping to ensure a reliable fiber supply for industry and future mill infrastructure investments. Together with endowment forestland, FLP helps sustain long-term fiber availability for mill operations, as well as sustaining jobs within our communities.

How does Forest Legacy work?

Under FLP, forestland owners sell their development rights but retain ownership, management, and profits from their land, while reducing development in the WUI. Idaho holds these rights in trust and counties still receive tax revenues from these lands.

What does FLP do to help sustain wildlife habitat?

Priority areas in FLP often overlap with crucial habitats for threatened species. Maintaining forested land supports wildlife habitats and creates corridors for movement, aiding in the recovery of species like the Bull Trout. Fewer residential structures in these areas also minimize wildlife-human conflicts.

What does FLP have to do with mitigating fire risk?

FLP requires a Forest Stewardship Plan and sustainable management per Idaho's Forest Practices Act, which reduces vulnerability to catastrophic fires. By limiting WUI expansion, it helps ensure fire protection can be provided with fewer resources.

How does FLP improve recreational access?

Since 2003, FLP has made 93,339 of its 103,252 timberland acres (90%) available for public recreation. As Idaho grows and demand for recreation access increases, FLP incentivizes private landowners to offer public access in line with their forest management goals.



For more info scan the code or visit

<https://www.idl.idaho.gov/about-forestry/forest-legacy-program/>

