



**State of Rhode Island**  
**Department of Environmental Management**

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**FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM - Information Sheet**

Traditionally, privately owned forest lands have provided many uses and values including wood products, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities, to name but a few. These traditional uses of private forest land have declined at an alarming rate mainly due to 1) the conversion of forested tracts to non-forest uses such as for residential, commercial, or industrial development, 2) declining management of privately held forests, and 3) forest fragmentation (the breaking up of large forests into smaller tracts).

To help maintain the integrity and traditional uses of our forests, Congress created the **Forest Legacy Program**, which provides grants to the State of Rhode Island through the USDA Forest Service, to acquire land or interests in land from willing sellers. The fair market value of interests acquired are determined by standardized federal appraisal methods. Acquisitions are exclusively based on the concept of “willing seller, willing buyer”. There is **no** condemnation of land involved.

**What property is eligible?**

- Forested land which lies partly or wholly within one of the State’s designated Forest Legacy Areas and which can provide significant forest resources and values.
- The proposed easement area must be **25 acres or more** in size and contain no more than 25% non-forest land.
- Federal, State, or Municipal lands **are not eligible** for the program.

**What conditions will the property be subject to?**

- Restrictions in the form of a *conservation easement* will be attached to the deed reflecting the interests sold. At a minimum, language limiting/extinguishing future development of the property will be included in the easement.
- Use of that portion of the property under easement will be subject to a written forest management plan approved by the DEM’s Division of Forest Environment. Such plans identify landowner objectives and describe actions the landowner should take to protect and manage the soil, water, and timber resources, aesthetic quality, recreational opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat, and can be amended from time to time as environmental conditions and landowner goals change. The property owner is responsible for hiring a licensed forester to develop or update the management plan, which must be done at least once every ten years.
- Interests are acquired in perpetuity and are binding upon subsequent property transfers.

Priority is given to forest land that exhibits exceptional resource values, that has been shown to be threatened with conversion to non-forest use, and that may demonstrate economic benefits from timber production. Applications are accepted year-round and are prioritized by the State’s Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee. Annually, the top ranked projects are submitted to the Forest Service for funding consideration.

**If you are interested in more information about this program, please contact:**

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