The State of Texas contains 26 million acres of forestland, primarily in the Eastern third of the state. This forestland provides the state with its third most valuable agricultural commodity, creating more than 91,000 jobs with more than $2.3 billion in wages and salaries. In addition, forests in Texas provide non-timber benefits such as clean water, habitats for diverse wildlife, eco-tourism, historical preservation, and carbon sequestration abilities.

For these reasons, it is vitally important to protect forestland in Texas. Private non-industrial landowners own approximately 63% of the forestland in Texas, while the forest industry accounts for about 16% of forest ownership in Texas. These landowners face increasing incentives to utilize their land for non-forest purposes due to population growth and a rising demand for non-agriculturally developed land. Because of these pressures, forestland in Texas is becoming increasingly fragmented and thus the benefits of forests are being negated. Therefore, Texas displays a need for a program that fosters a long-term commitment to sustainable forest management.

The United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS) provides just such a program, known as the Forest Legacy Program (FLP). Established in the 1990 Farm Bill, the FLP strives to protect environmentally sensitive forestlands through the acquisition of conservation easements, which are legally binding agreements transferring a negotiated set of property rights from one party to another without removing the property from private ownership. The process of acquiring conservation easements through the FLP is accomplished through interactions of federal, state, and local branches of government as well as non-governmental organizations. Landowner participation in the program is entirely voluntary, and no land or interest in land will be forcefully sold.

The Texas Forest Legacy Program is a cooperative effort between the Texas Forest Service and the USDA Forest Service to protect environmentally important forestlands from conversion to non-forest uses. Working forest easements protect conservation values while allowing forest landowners in Texas to maintain the economic and recreation uses of their forests. By offering interested Texans this opportunity, the Texas Forest Service hopes to sustain the benefits of Texas forests, including economic development, enhanced water and air quality, habitat diversity, and historical preservation.

In order to participate in the Forest Legacy Program, the Texas Forest Service compiled an Assessment of Need document, available below, evaluating existing forest resources and conditions, identifying threats to Texas forests, and detailing how the program will work in Texas.

http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu/pdf/admin/ir/tflp/tflp%20aon.pdf
### SELECTION CRITERIA

- **Degree of threat:** Priority will be given to projects on properties that have proof of a high degree of threat of development or parcelization.
- **Forest resource economic benefits:** Priority will be given to properties that are likely to have significant forest resource economic benefits.
- **Public benefits:** Priority will be given to properties that are likely to have direct and indirect scenic and/or outdoor recreation benefits.
- **Water quality and watershed protection:** Priority will be given to properties that are likely to have significant water quality and watershed protection benefits.
- **Ecological/Cultural benefits:** Priority will be given to properties that are likely to have significant ecological, cultural, and environmental education benefits.
- **Proof of Readiness:** Priority will be given to projects that have community support, identified matching funds and partnership involvement.
- **Strategic Initiative:** Priority will be given to projects that fit within a larger conservation plan, strategy, or initiative, and connect to or lead to additional conservation investments in the region.

### TIMBER PRODUCTION

**As Primary Objective**

Support Texas rural communities, traditional land uses, and cultural heritage by maintaining large privately owned working forest landscapes managed according to sustainable best management practices.

### WILDLIFE

**As Primary Objective**

Promote conservation of biological diversity by protecting habitat connectivity, unique ecosystems, and endangered species.

### WATERSHED PROTECTION

**As Primary Objective**

Promote watershed protection to enhance water quality and quantity and to protect aquatic habitats.

### OPEN SPACE

**As Primary Objective**

Support open space initiatives to decrease forest fragmentation, protect unique habitats or ecological features, and reduce negative effects of urban sprawl.
Application and Submission Form for Forest Legacy Projects in Texas:
* Applicants are encouraged to seek assistance from natural resource professionals when completing this form.

SITE NAME: ____________________________
LANOWNER: ____________________________
TOTAL ACREAGE: ______________________
PROJECT ACREAGE: ____________________
PROJECT COUNTY: ______________________

LOCATION/ADDRESS OF PROJECT: ____________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
LANOWNER ADDRESS: ____________________________
CITY ____________________________ STATE: ____________ ZIP CODE: ______
TELEPHONE: ____________ E-MAIL: ____________ OTHER: ____________

Project Summary: (Brief description of the project, how will the project address one or more objectives of the AON, what will be the public benefits from the protection of this property, does the project fit within a larger conservation plan, nearness to population centers, or proximity to other federal lands, etc. Photos welcome.)
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Project Type: Conservation Easement Purchase? YES NO $__________
Fee Purchase? YES NO $__________

My signature below certifies that I am the owner of this property and that I am interested in participating in Texas' Forest Legacy Program and that the information in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: __________________

Send this Application along with a map or aerial photograph of the property with project delineations to:

Forest Legacy Program Coordinator
Texas Forest Service
301 Tower, Suite 364
Landowners who wish to participate in the program may be asked to provide the following information:

**Requirements**

(No to any of the first five questions disqualifies the project)

1) Willing seller? Y N ?

2) 25% Matching funds available? Y N ?
   Description/source: 
   
3) Clear title from willing seller/donor? Y N ?
   Description of any outstanding rights: 
   
4) The project is located within an established Forest Legacy Area? Y N ?

5) The project meets the criteria as established in the state’s FLP Assessment of Need? Y N ?

6) Are there other partners associated with this project? Y N ?
   If so, list and describe who and what role they will play:
   
7) Forest management plan in place or commitment to prepare one before closing? Y N ?
   State approved forest stewardship plan in place? Y N ?

8) Anticipated price: $________/acre $________ total

9) Donations beyond the 25% cost-share match or a less than 75% request? Y N ?
   Value/amount, explain: 
   
10) Project area is at least 75% forested? Y N ?

**Evaluation criteria**

(This project application will be used to evaluate projects and help prioritize competing projects. Therefore quantified information is encouraged)

Attach a letter (three pages maximum) that describes this project’s or property’s:

1. Threat of conversion to a non-forest use
2. Forest resource economic benefit
3. Public benefit
4. Water quality/quantity benefit
5. Ecological or cultural benefit
6. The project’s readiness to close/community support or partnerships
7. The project’s purpose within a regional and strategic conservation plan

Landowners who wish to participate in the program may be asked to provide the following information:
1) Name, address and phone number of applicant landowner.
2) All other owners of record for this tract, and their addresses.
3) Name, address and phone number of authorized agent representing landowner(s), if applicable.
4) Location of property.
5) If the landowner intends to reserve rights to forestry uses or other resource management activities, a copy or reference to the State-approved landowner Forest Stewardship Plan or multi-resource management plan.**
6) List of the significant scenic, natural, recreational, wildlife, timber and other resource values contained on the property.
7) Identification of all dams, dumps or waste disposal sites on the property.
8) Signed statement giving the FS and State lead agency permission to enter the property for review and appraisal purposes.
9) Legal description.
10) List any encumbrances or liens existing on the property including, but not limited to contracts, leases, or outstanding rights not of record.
11) Copy of plat or survey map of the property, if existing. If only a portion of the property is being offered, identify it on a plat showing the portion offered in the context of the entire tract.
12) Tract acreage and total number of acres of forests and cleared/open land.
13) List of existing permanent improvements on the tract, including houses, barns, lakes, ponds, dams, wells, roads, and other structures, and total number of acres occupied by improvements.
** A State approved Forest Stewardship Management Plan must be in place at the time of the closing. Language in the easement will refer to the plan and will require that the plan be reviewed every 5 years.