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# Forest Service Assistance Programs

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## Summary

Congress has established several forestry assistance programs within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to support the management of state and private forests. These programs are under the jurisdiction of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, which often examine them in the periodic legislation to reauthorize agricultural programs, commonly known as farm bills. For example, in the 2018 farm bill (Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018; P.L. 115-334), Congress reauthorized and modified existing programs and established some new forestry assistance programs.

Forestry assistance programs (in contrast to agriculture conservation programs that include forestry activities) are primarily administered by the USDA Forest Service (FS). Some FS assistance programs provide technical and educational assistance such as information, advice, and aid on specific projects. Other programs provide financial assistance, usually through grants (with or without matching contributions from recipients) or cost-sharing (typically through state agencies, with varying levels of contributions from recipients). Many programs provide both technical and financial assistance.

FS assistance programs have various objectives. Some of the assistance programs provide support for planning and implementing forestry and related land management practices, including projects that involve more than one ownership (i.e., state, local, and/or private ownership) and address regional or national priorities (e.g., Landscape Scale Restoration, Forest Stewardship). Other programs provide support for protecting forestlands from wildfires, insects, and diseases (e.g., Forest Health Protection, Cooperative Fire Protection). Others provide resources to prevent forestland conversion (e.g., Community Forest and Open Space Conservation, Forest Legacy). Other programs provide support for addressing concerns related to forest health, such as insect and disease infestation (e.g., Forest Health). Programs also exist to enhance state and rural wildfire management capabilities (e.g., State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance) and to promote the use of forest products (e.g., Wood Innovation). International Forestry is often included as a FS assistance program, because it provides technical forestry help and because it is funded through the FS appropriations account for forestry assistance programs (State and Private Forestry).

Most—but not all—FS assistance programs are available nationally and are permanently authorized to receive discretionary funding. Overall funding for the FS assistance programs was \$673.9 million in FY2022 and \$797.0 million in FY2023, a substantial increase relative to previous fiscal years. Much of the difference can be attributed to supplemental appropriations for FY2022 and FY2023 provided through multiple laws, including the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58) and the budget reconciliation measure commonly known as the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA;). IIJA and IRA are to continue to provide additional funding for FS assistance programs for future fiscal years. IIJA and IRA also authorized and appropriated funding for new FS assistance programs and activities, such as Community Wildfire Defense Grants, and provided additional congressional direction for existing programs.

Congress often considers whether to authorize, reauthorize, amend, or repeal forestry assistance programs, usually (but not exclusively) in a farm bill, periodic omnibus legislation to reauthorize agriculture and food policy programs. The 118<sup>th</sup> Congress may do so through a FY2023 farm bill cycle. The 118<sup>th</sup> Congress also may begin to consider the impacts, implementation, and reauthorization, repeal, and/or expiration of IIJA and IRA. Other issues facing Congress include oversight of forestry assistance programs, and funding levels of the forestry assistance portfolio.

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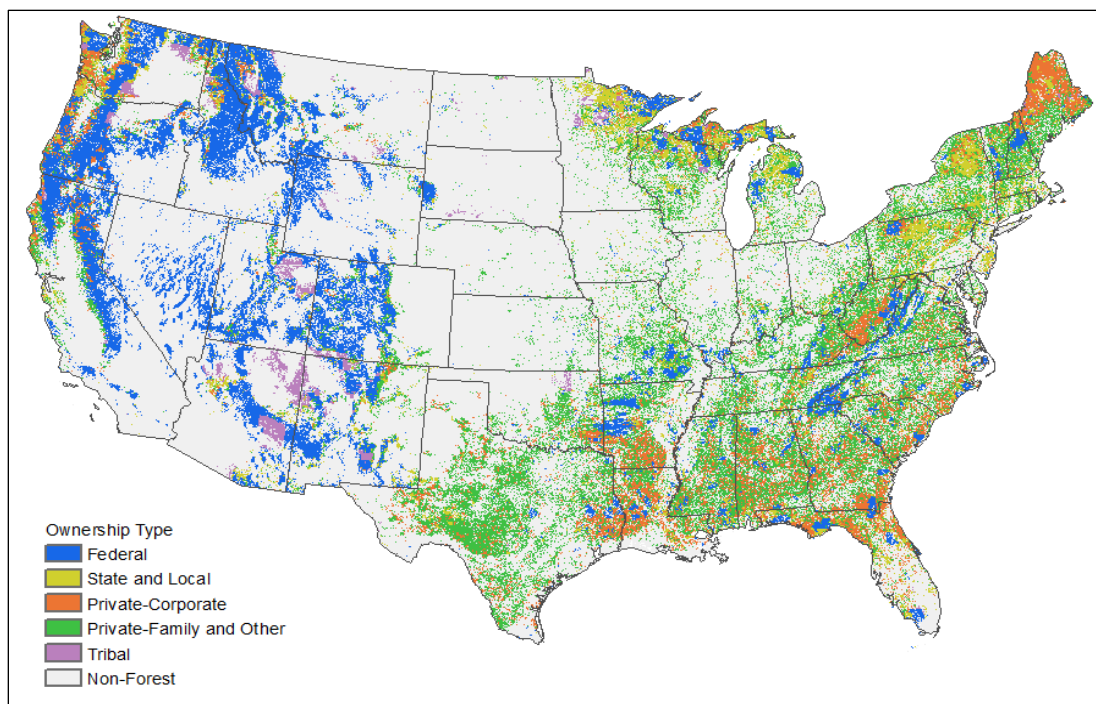
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## Introduction

There are approximately 765 million acres of forestlands in the United States, most of which are privately owned (443 million acres, or 58%) by individuals, families, Native American tribes, corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and other groups (see **figure 1**).<sup>1</sup> The federal government has numerous programs to support forest management on those private forests and on the 84 million acres (11%) of nonfederal public forests owned by state, county, and local governments. These programs support a variety of forest management and protection goals, including activities related to planning for and responding to wildfires, as well as supporting the development of new uses and markets for wood products. These programs are primarily administered by the Forest Service (FS) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and often with the assistance of state partner agencies.

**Figure 1. Forest Landownership in the Conterminous United States Circa 2014**



**Source:** CRS analysis of data from Jaketon H. Hewes, Brett J. Butler, and Greg C. Liknes, *Forest Ownership in the Conterminous United States circa 2014 - geospatial data set*, Forest Service Research Data Archive, 2017, at <https://doi.org/10.2737/RDS-2017-0007>.

**Notes:** Data are not available for Alaska, Hawaii, or the U.S. territories.

This report provides information on FS forestry assistance programs, including those authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58; see “FS Assistance in the 117th Congress: The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act”) and the budget reconciliation measure

<sup>1</sup> The figure of 765 million acres reflects forestland in the conterminous United States, Alaska, and Hawaii, but does not reflect forest resources in U.S. territories. Sonja N. Oswald et al., *Forest Resources of the United States: A Technical Document Supporting the Forest Service 2020 Update of the RPA Assessment*, USDA, FS, 2019, at [https://www.fia.fs.fed.us/program-features/rpa/docs/2017RPAFIATABLESFINAL\\_050918.pdf](https://www.fia.fs.fed.us/program-features/rpa/docs/2017RPAFIATABLESFINAL_050918.pdf). For more discussion on forest ownership, see CRS Report R46976, *U.S. Forest Ownership and Management: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Katie Hoover and Anne A. Riddle.

known as the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA; P.L. 117-169; see “The Inflation Reduction Act”). Following a brief background and overview, this report describes the applicable programs, types of activities funded, eligibility requirements, authorized program duration and funding level, and requested and enacted program appropriations. Other agencies, inside and outside of USDA, also administer programs that may have forest conservation or protection benefits. Such agencies include the USDA Farm Service Agency, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and agencies within the Department of the Interior.<sup>2</sup> These programs are outside the scope of this report.

### Origin of Forest Service Assistance

Providing federal assistance for nonfederal forest management has been a component of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) programs for more than a century. Initial forestry assistance efforts began with the creation of the USDA Division of Forestry in 1881 (to complement forestry research, which began in 1876). Forestry assistance and research programs grew slowly, and, in 1901, the division was upgraded to the USDA Bureau of Forestry. In 1905, the USDA Forest Service (FS) was established when the USDA Bureau of Forestry merged with the Interior Department’s Division of Forestry (which at the time administered the *forest reserves*; these were later renamed *national forests*). In addition to providing forestry assistance and conducting forestry research, the FS administers the National Forest System, a system of federal lands consisting of 193 million acres of national forests, national grasslands, and other land designations.

The Senate and House Agriculture Committees have jurisdiction over forestry in general, forestry assistance, and forestry research programs. Congress authorized specific forestry assistance programs in the Clarke-McNary Act of 1924 (P.L. 68-270; 43 Stat. 653). This law guided those programs for more than half a century, until it was revised in the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (CFAA; 16 U.S.C. §§2101 et seq.).

## Congressional Action on Forest Service Assistance

The House and Senate Agriculture Committees often examine forestry assistance programs in the periodic omnibus legislation to reauthorize agriculture and food policy programs, commonly known as the *farm bill*.<sup>3</sup> The 2018 farm bill reauthorized, modified, and repealed existing FS assistance programs and reauthorized requirements for statewide forest assessments.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the 2018 farm bill provided statutory authorization and congressional direction for two current programs that were operating under existing, but broad, authorizations (the Landscape Scale Restoration program and Wood Innovation program). The program authority and funding for many of the agricultural programs—including three forestry programs—provided through previous farm bills are scheduled to expire at the end of FY2023 unless Congress provides for an extension or reauthorizes them.

In addition, the IJA and IRA contained multiple provisions pertaining to FS assistance programs. These included establishing new assistance programs, providing statutory authorization and direction for existing programs, and appropriating funding. Some information on IJA and IRA program implementation is available as of the date of this report. Overall IJA and IRA

<sup>2</sup> For more information on other U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs, see CRS Report R40763, *Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs*, by Megan Stubbs; CRS Report R40763, *Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs*, CRS Report R42854, *Emergency Assistance for Agricultural Land Rehabilitation*, by Megan Stubbs; and CRS In Focus IF10288, *Overview of the 2018 Farm Bill Energy Title Programs*, by Kelsi Bracmort.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the farm bill generally, see CRS In Focus IF10187, *Farm Bill Primer: What Is the Farm Bill?*, by Renée Johnson and Jim Monke.

<sup>4</sup> The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 farm bill; P.L. 115-334). For more information on the 2018 farm bill, see CRS Report R45525, *The 2018 Farm Bill (P.L. 115-334): Summary and Side-by-Side Comparison*, coordinated by Mark A. McMinimy. For more information on the forestry provisions in the 2018 farm bill, see CRS Report R45696, *Forest Management Provisions Enacted in the 115th Congress*, by Katie Hoover et al.

authorizations and appropriations are discussed in the “FS Assistance in the 117th Congress: The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and “Inflation Reduction Act” sections at the end of this report.

## Overview

The FS assistance programs may provide technical assistance, financial assistance, or both. Technical assistance includes providing guidance documents, skills training, or data or otherwise sharing information, expertise, and advice, either broadly or on specific projects. Technical assistance also may include the development and transfer of technological innovations. Financial assistance is typically delivered through formula or competitive grants (with or without contributions from recipients) or through cost sharing (with varying levels of matching contributions from recipients). For example, the Forest Health Protection program provides both types of assistance: financial assistance in the form of funding for FS to perform surveys and to control insects or diseases on state or private lands (with the landowner’s consent and cooperation) and technical assistance in the form of data, expertise, and guidance for addressing specific insect and disease infestations.

Eligibility to participate in FS assistance programs varies. Some programs are available to a variety of recipients (i.e., nonfederal governments, nonprofit organizations, universities, or others). Others are available exclusively to state partners (e.g., state forestry or natural resource agencies). In these cases, FS provides technical and financial aid to the states, which then provide information and assistance to private landowners or specified eligible entities.<sup>5</sup> Individual private forest landowners are not generally eligible recipients for FS assistance, although they may be under some programs authorized by the Inflation Reduction Act, depending on how such programs are implemented (see “The Inflation Reduction Act”). Previous farm bills expanded some agricultural conservation programs to include forestry practices; thus, direct federal financial assistance to private forest landowners may be feasible through those conservation programs.<sup>6</sup> See **Table 1** for a brief summary of the FS programs addressed in the “Forest Service Assistance Programs” section of this report. Programs authorized by the IJA and IRA are addressed in the respective sections below.

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<sup>5</sup> States may request to receive one consolidated payment for all the authorized cooperative forestry assistance programs (16 U.S.C. §2108).

<sup>6</sup> For information on USDA conservation programs, see CRS Report R40763, *Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs*.

**Table I. Forest Service Assistance Programs**  
(excluding Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act programs)

Program	Authorization		Type	Eligible Recipients	Primary Activities
	Citation	Funding			
Community Forest and Open Space Conservation	16 U.S.C. §2103d	Discretionary; such sums as necessary	Financial	Local governments, tribes, nonprofit organizations	Purchase forestlands threatened with conversion to other uses
<i>Cooperative Fire Protection</i>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State Fire Assistance</li> <li>Volunteer Fire Assistance</li> </ul>	16 U.S.C. §2106	Discretionary; such sums as necessary	Technical and financial	States	Wildfire preparedness, prevention, control and use; fire equipment and training, etc.
<i>Forest Health Protection</i>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal Lands</li> <li>Cooperative Lands</li> </ul>	16 U.S.C. §2104	Discretionary; such sums as necessary	Technical and financial	States	Survey, prevent, suppress, or control forest pests, insects, and diseases
Forest Legacy	16 U.S.C. §2103c	Discretionary and mandatory; such sums as necessary <sup>b</sup>	Financial	States	Purchase forestlands threatened with conversion to other uses
<i>Forest Stewardship</i>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistance to States</li> <li>Rural Forestry</li> </ul>	16 U.S.C. §2103a, 16 U.S.C. §2107, 16 U.S.C. §2102	Discretionary; such sums as necessary	Technical and financial	States	Planning, forest and watershed restoration, reforestation, wildlife habitat improvement, and others
International Forestry	16 U.S.C. §4501	Discretionary; such sums as necessary	Technical and financial	Other countries	Planning and management; fire, insect, and disease prevention and control; rehabilitation
Landscape Scale Restoration	16 U.S.C. §2109a	Discretionary; \$20 million through FY2023	Financial	States, local governments, Indian Tribes, nonprofit organizations, universities, and Alaska Native Corporations	Forest restoration projects



Program	Authorization		Type	Eligible Recipients	Primary Activities
	Citation	Funding			
Urban & Community Forestry	16 U.S.C. §2105	Discretionary; such sums as necessary	Technical and financial	State, tribal, local governments; private organizations	Planning, education, tree planting and maintenance
<i>Wood Technology and Innovation</i>					
• Community Wood Energy / Innovation	7 U.S.C. §8113	Discretionary; \$25 million through FY2023	Technical and financial	State, tribal, and local governments; other organizations	Education; technology development and transfer, market development, applied research
• Hardwood Technology Transfer and Applied Research	16 U.S.C. §1650	Discretionary; such sums as necessary			
• Rural Revitalization Technologies	7 U.S.C. §6601	Discretionary; \$5 million through FY2023			
• Wood Innovation Grant	7 U.S.C. §7655d	No specific funding authorization			

**Source:** CRS.

**Notes:** Information on FS assistance provisions in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, P.L. 117-58) and budget reconciliation measure known as the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA, P.L. 117-169) is not included here due to incomplete information about each law's implementation.

- a. The Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (P.L. 106-393) has not been classified to the *U.S. Code*.
- b. The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is permanently authorized to receive such sums as necessary through discretionary appropriations. Starting in FY2021, however, the Great American Outdoors Act (P.L. 116-152) provided for mandatory appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for FLP, among other programs.

To be eligible to receive funds for most programs—particularly programs authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (CFAA) or added as amendments to the CFAA<sup>7</sup>—each state must prepare a State Forest Action Plan, consisting of

- a statewide *assessment* of forest resource conditions, including the conditions and trends of forest resources in the state; threats to forestlands and resources, consistent with national priorities; any areas or regions of the state that are a priority; and any multistate areas that are a regional priority; and

<sup>7</sup> Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (CFAA; 16 U.S.C. §§2101 et seq.).

- a long-term statewide forest resource *strategy*, including strategies for addressing the threats to forest resources identified in the assessment; and a description of the resources necessary for the state forester to address the statewide strategy.<sup>8</sup>

The State Forest Action Plans are to be reviewed every 5 years and revised every 10 years.<sup>9</sup> All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 8 territories are covered by a State Forest Action Plan. Each state must also publish an annual funding report and have a State Forest Stewardship Coordination (FSC) Committee.<sup>10</sup> Chaired by the state forester and composed of federal, state, and local representatives (including representatives from conservation, industry, recreation, and other organizations), the FSC Committee makes recommendations on statewide priorities on specific programs as well as on the development and maintenance of the State Forest Action Plan.

### National Funding Priorities and Objectives

In 2007, the FS initiated an effort to “redesign” its State and Private Forestry (SPF) programs to improve program delivery and effectiveness. As a result of this process, FS—in conjunction with state partners—identified three nationwide themes and objectives to provide a framework for prioritizing and allocating funds and resources. Congress codified these national priorities in the 2008 farm bill (16 U.S.C. §2101(c)). The three priorities are as follows:

**Conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses.** Objectives include identifying and conserving high-priority forest ecosystems and landscapes and promoting active and sustainable forest management strategies.

**Protect forests from threats.** Objectives include identifying, managing, and reducing forest and ecosystem threats (e.g., uncharacteristic wildfire, insects and disease, and invasive species) and conducting post-disturbance forest restoration activities.

**Enhance public benefits from trees and forests.** Objectives include promoting the ecological, economic, and community benefits derived from trees and forests, including protecting water quality and quantity; conserving wildlife and fish habitat; providing open space; and providing outdoor recreation opportunities.

## Forest Service Assistance Program Administration

FS assistance programs are implemented using three broad program structures:

- **Programs directly implemented by the FS.** In these programs, prospective awardees apply directly to the FS, and the FS makes the funding decision and award. Examples include the wood technology and innovation programs, the Urban and Community Forestry program, and the Community Wildfire Defense Grant program authorized in P.L. 117-58 (see “The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act”).
- **Two-tiered programs involving state governments and the FS.** In these programs, states select, rank, or otherwise choose if and how projects from their state are considered by the FS, and the FS makes the final award decision. For example, for the Forest Legacy Program (FLP), states are responsible for creating a priority ranking of state projects, which the state forwards to the FS to compete in a nationwide competitive process.

<sup>8</sup> These requirements were added by the 2008 farm bill (16 U.S.C. §2101a). To see each state’s Forest Action Plan, see National Association of State Foresters (NASF), at <https://www.stateforesters.org/forest-action-plans/>. For all of the programs in this report, the term *state forester* may also include any other equivalent state official.

<sup>9</sup> For more information, see NASF, “Forest Action Plans,” at <https://www.stateforesters.org/forest-action-plans/keeping-the-plans-current/>.

<sup>10</sup> As authorized in the 1990 farm bill (§1222 of P.L. 101-624), 16 U.S.C. §2113(b).

- **State-administered programs.** In these programs, states are the only eligible recipients of funding. Funding may be competitive, or the FS may distribute funding via formula grants. Examples include the Cooperative Fire, Forest Health and Forest Stewardship programs.

The program structure of FS assistance programs may impact administration decisions. For example, FS is directly involved in funding and project selection decisions for the programs they administer, allowing the agency to choose projects that most closely reflect national priorities. FS, however, may play a lesser role, or even no role, in project selection and/or uses of funding for two-tiered or state-administered programs. State-administered programs may reflect more local priorities and needs (subject to the federal authorizing statute). Two-tiered programs occupy a hybrid space, where federal influence over project selection is moderated by state participation. Therefore, administration of programs with this structure may reflect both federal and local priorities.

In state-administered programs, states have numerous options for using the federal funding. These options may include passing on funding or related resources to other groups, such as nonprofit organizations, cities and counties, or landowners, through a variety of processes—for example, through subgrants or through services provided free of charge to interested forest landowners. States also may use the funding internally, such as for capacity building or program development. In some cases, states may use funding to administer substantially similar programs, even though the underlying federal statute does not require it. For example, many states use Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) funding to issue subgrants to volunteer fire departments. In general, the significance of FS assistance funding to state governments’ forestry budgets compared to other sources is unclear.

Unlike other USDA programs related to land management, funding for FS assistance programs has not generally been disbursed directly to landowners for land management purposes. Instead, funding is available to other eligible recipients who determine the funding’s ultimate use. Therefore, the impact of FS assistance programs on individual forest landowners—if any—is generally indirect. Congress has recently authorized funding for FS assistance programs that are explicitly intended for forest landowners to manage their property (see “The Inflation Reduction Act”). It is unclear how administration of these authorities may differ from other FS assistance programs, or how they may affect on-the-ground forest management.

## Funding

Excluding programs in the IIJA and IRA, many FS assistance programs are available nationally and are permanently authorized to receive discretionary funding. IIJA authorized discretionary appropriations for a specified time period, primarily for new programs, and IRA provided mandatory funding for existing programs, though the funding is available for many years.

With one exception, all FS assistance programs require funding through the annual discretionary appropriations process and typically are funded in annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations acts. Most of the assistance programs are funded through the FS’s State and Private Forestry (SPF) account, although some programs are funded or allocated from other accounts or programs. The exception is the Forest Legacy Program (FLP). In FY2020 and previous years, the FLP received discretionary appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).<sup>11</sup> The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) made the LWCF

<sup>11</sup> 54 U.S.C. §200301. For more information, see CRS Report R44121, *Land and Water Conservation Fund*: (continued...)

mandatory spending starting in FY2021.<sup>12</sup> Mandatory funding for FLP was \$83.8 million in FY2022 and estimated to be \$77.9 million in FY2023.<sup>13</sup> The IRA provided additional mandatory funding for FLP.

FY2022 and FY2023 funding reflects a substantial increase compared to historical funding trends for FS assistance programs relative to historical funding. Until FY2021, funding for FS assistance programs had remained relatively stable over the prior 10 years in terms of nominal dollars but had declined in terms of inflation-adjusted constant dollars. FY2021 funding of \$277.8 million reflected a decrease in funding relative to earlier years, primarily due to changes in FS's budgetary structure (see **Figure 2**).<sup>14</sup> These fluctuations are minor compared to FY2022 and FY2023. In FY2022, Congress provided a total of \$673.9 million in funding for FS assistance programs, comprising \$285.2 million of funding through regular FY2022 appropriations and \$355.4 million in supplemental funding, (see "Supplemental Appropriations for FY2022, FY2023, and Beyond" text box).<sup>15</sup> For FY2023, Congress provided a total of \$797.0 million in funding, including \$307.6 million in regular discretionary appropriations and \$453.4 million in emergency-designated supplemental appropriations for FS assistance programs. Compared to FY2021, funding more than doubled in FY2022 and increased by an additional 18% in FY2023.

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*Appropriations for "Other Purposes"*, by Carol Hardy Vincent and CRS Report R46563, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Processes and Criteria for Allocating Funds*, coordinated by Carol Hardy Vincent.

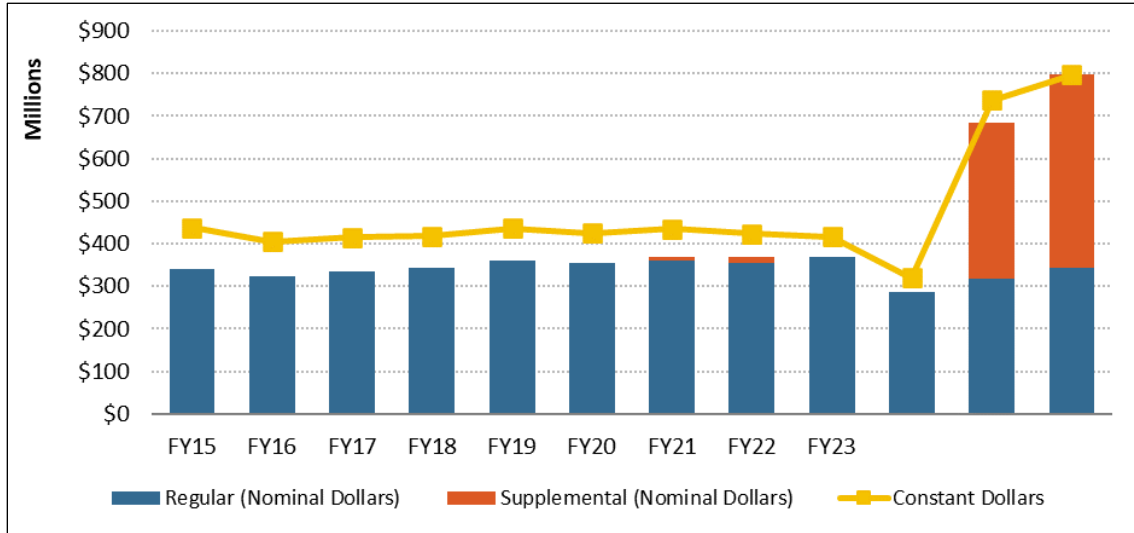
<sup>12</sup> The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA, P.L. 116-152). For more information, see CRS In Focus IF11636, *The Great American Outdoors Act (P.L. 116-152)*, by Carol Hardy Vincent, Laura B. Comay, and Bill Heniff Jr.

<sup>13</sup> Forest Service, FY2024 budget justification, p.55. The GAOA requires the President to submit annually to Congress "detailed account, program, and project allocations" for the full amount available for specified programs, including for the Forest Legacy Program, and provided for Congress to make alternative funding allocations to those programs.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to GAOA shifting funding for the Forest Legacy Program to mandatory appropriations, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, FY2020 (P.L. 116-260) established budgetary changes that separated out operations and salaries costs, which resulted in decreases to account-level appropriations. For more information on the budgetary changes, see U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021*, committee print, prepared by U.S. Government Publishing Office, 117<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., March 2021, Legislative Text and Explanatory Statement, Book 2 of 2 (Washington: GPO, 2021), p. 1406.

<sup>15</sup> Regular FY appropriations were not enacted by the start of the fiscal year, but two continuing resolutions (CRs) provided funding at FY2021 levels through February 18, 2022.<sup>15</sup> The first continuing resolution enacted for FY2022 provided funding at FY2021 levels through December 3, 2022 (P.L. 117-43, Division A); the second continuing resolution provided funding through February 18, 2022 (P.L. 117-70).

**Figure 2. Funding for FS Assistance Programs, FY2014-FY2023**



**Source:** CRS analysis using data compiled from the tables prepared by the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations and annual agency budget documents.

**Notes:** Figures reflect total annual discretionary appropriations, including rescissions and supplemental funding, for FS assistance programs, including appropriations provided through the FS’s State and Private Forestry (SPF), Wildland Fire Management, and National Forest System accounts. Figures in and after FY2021 also reflect funding appropriated to the SPF account for salaries and expenses. Figures adjusted to FY2022 constant dollars using the Bureau of Labor Statistics annual consumer price index for all urban consumers (CPI-U), not seasonally adjusted, converted to a fiscal year basis, series ID CUUR0000SA0.

### Supplemental Appropriations for FY2022, FY2023, and Beyond

The 117<sup>th</sup> Congress passed four bills that appropriated supplemental funding for FY2022, FY2023 and, in some cases, future fiscal years. These were

- Division B of P.L. 117-43 (the first enacted continuing resolution for FY2022) provided \$50.0 million in supplemental appropriations for FY2022 for FS's SPF account for necessary expenses related to wildfires, hurricanes, and other natural disasters from calendar years 2019, 2020, and 2021.
- The Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (P.L. 117-328, Division N) provided \$510.0 million to several FS accounts for expenses related to wildfires, hurricanes, and other natural disasters in calendar year 2022. Of this, \$148.0 million was allocated to the FS SPF account for FY2023.
- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58) provided \$1.53 billion total for the five-year period from FY2022 through FY2026, allocated between preexisting FS assistance programs and for new activities authorized by IIJA. Congress directed that the SPF funding be provided in equal amounts of \$305.4 million annually across those five years.
- The budget reconciliation measure known as the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA; P.L. 117-169) provided \$2.75 billion in supplemental appropriations, to remain available from FY2022 to FY2031, allocated between preexisting FS assistance programs and new activities authorized by the IRA.

**Table 2. FS Assistance Discretionary Appropriations, FY2020-FY2023 Enacted and FY2024 Requested or Available**

(nominal dollars, in millions)

Program	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024 Requested or Available
Community Forest & Open Space Conservation	4.0	4.0	5.5	6.0	7.0
Cooperative Fire Protection <sup>a</sup>	100.0	92.4	116.6	118.6	97.0
State Fire Assistance	82.0	73.4	75.0	76.0	76.0
Volunteer Fire Assistance	18.0	19.0	20.0	21.0	21.0
Supplemental	0.0	0.0	21.6	21.6	—
Forest Health Protection <sup>b</sup>	100.0	46.2	48.0	150.0	55.0
Federal Lands	56.0	15.5	16.0	17.0	20.0
Cooperative Lands <sup>b</sup>	44.0	30.7	32.0	33.0	35.0
Supplemental	—	—	—	100.0	—
Forest Legacy <sup>c</sup>	64.0	-5.8	—	—	—
Forest Stewardship	21.0	11.9	12.0	12.5	14.0
Supplemental	—	—	—	—	—
International Forestry	12.0	15.4	17.0	20.0	22.0
Landscape Scale Restoration	14.0	14.0	14.0	17.0	14.0
Supplemental	—	—	—	—	—
Urban and Community Forestry	32.0	31.9	36.0	40.0	42.0
Supplemental	—	—	—	—	16.6
Wood Technology and Innovation <sup>d</sup>	13.5	16.5	33.3	36.0	36.0
Salaries and Expenses <sup>e</sup>	—	51.3	57.7	65.1	76.7

Program	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024 Requested or Available
<i>Supplemental</i>	—	—	—	—	17.6
<b>Total</b>	360.5	277.8	340.1	465.2	363.7
<b>Other Supplemental Appropriations<sup>f</sup></b>	—	—	333.8	331.8	—
<b>Grand Total</b>	360.5	277.8	673.9	797.0	363.7
<b>Percentage of Total FS Discretionary Appropriations<sup>g</sup></b>	5%	4%	6%	8%	—

**Source:** CRS analysis using data compiled from the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, communications with the Forest Service (FS) Legislative Affairs staff, and FS annual budget documents, including the FY2024 Budget Justification, available from at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/budget-performance>.

**Notes:** Table reflects rescissions and supplemental funding as noted. The 117<sup>th</sup> Congress provided discretionary supplemental appropriations for FS state and private forestry through three bills: P.L. 117-43, the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act; P.L. 117-328, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023; and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, P.L. 117-58). These bills provided discretionary supplemental appropriations for a variety of purposes, including preexisting FS assistance programs and new programs. The budget reconciliation measure commonly known as the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA, P.L. 117-169) funded forest assistance activities through mandatory appropriations, which are not included here. For more information on IRA appropriations and authorities, see “The Inflation Reduction Act.” The programs in the table are funded through the FS’s State and Private Forestry (SPF) account, unless otherwise specified. Columns may not add due to rounding. For FY2024, the table includes requested funding from the FY2024 Forest Service budget justification. This table does not include programs that have not received appropriations or requested funding between FY2019-FY2024.

- a. The Cooperative Fire Protection program is sometimes referred to as *Cooperative Fire Assistance (CFA)* for appropriations purposes. FY2022 and FY2023 figures reflect \$21.6 million in supplemental funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58), allocated between SFA (\$17.6 million) and VFA (\$4 million). CFA was funded through the WFM account in FY2017, and in the SPF account starting in FY2018.
- b. The Forest Health Protection program is sometimes referred to as *Forest Health Management (FHM)* for appropriations purposes. The total FHM figures reflect emergency supplemental appropriations provided to the Cooperative Lands program: \$100 million in FY2023.
- c. The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) figures reflect rescissions of \$5.8 million in FY2021. Starting in FY2021, FLP is funded through mandatory appropriations and no discretionary funds were requested or provided.
- d. Wood Technology and Innovations includes funding for several programs, including grants for wood innovation, biomass and wood energy market development, and related research programs. The funds are allocated from several FS appropriations accounts, including SPF, WFM, and Forest and Rangeland Research. See Forest Service FY2024 budget justification special exhibit on biomass and wood innovation, p. 30a-214.
- e. The FY2021 appropriations law (P.L. 116-260) established a new budgetary structure for FS’s discretionary appropriations accounts, including the establishment of a *salaries and expenses* budget line item in the SPF account, among other changes.
- f. This entry reflects unallocated supplemental funding or supplemental funding for programs established in IIJA not otherwise reflected in the table. Supplemental appropriations provided for preexisting FS assistance programs are included under the relevant program. For more information on IIJA, see “The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.”
- g. For information on FS discretionary appropriations, see CRS In Focus IF12141, *Forest Service: FY2023 Appropriations*; CRS In Focus CRS In Focus IF11974, *Forest Service: FY2022 Appropriations*; and CRS Report R46557, *Forest Service Appropriations: Ten-Year Data and Trends (FY2011-FY2020)*.

# Forest Service Assistance Programs

The following section provides basic information on each of the FS assistance programs authorized prior to the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, including

- brief program description;
- program activities;
- eligibility requirements;
- the FS appropriations account budget line item (BLI) that provides funding for the program;
- authorized funding levels and any funding restrictions;
- statutory authority, recent amendments, and *U.S. Code* reference;
- expiration date of program authority unless permanently authorized; and
- program’s website link, if known.

Information for the following tables is drawn largely from agency budget documents and presentations, explanatory notes, and websites.

## Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (Community Forest Program)

<b>Program purpose and description</b>	The Community Forest program provides financial assistance to establish community forests for community benefits by acquiring and protecting private forestlands.
<b>Activities</b>	Provides up to 50% cost-share grants to purchase the fee simple title of eligible private forestlands. Funding may not be used to purchase conservation easements. The lands to be purchased must be privately owned, at least five acres, 75% forested, and threatened by conversion to nonforest uses, such as residential development, mineral extraction, industrial use, or commercial uses other than timber production. The purchased lands must be managed for public economic, recreational, environmental, or education benefits to communities and provide public access.
<b>Eligibility requirements</b>	Local governments, Indian tribes, or qualified nongovernment organizations are eligible to apply for funding. Proposals are submitted to state foresters (or equivalent tribal officials) and then forwarded to FS. Proposal ranking and project selection criteria are outlined in 36 C.F.R. 230.5.
<b>FS appropriations account</b>	SPF Cooperative Forestry.
<b>Funding authority</b>	No specified authorization level, and FS may allocate 10% of the appropriated funds to state foresters for program administration.
<b>FY2023 funding</b>	\$6.0 million.
<b>FY2024 Request</b>	\$7.0 million.



<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in the 2008 farm bill (§8003), 16 U.S.C. §2103d.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authority.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program">https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program</a>

## Cooperative Fire Protection: State Fire Assistance

<b>Program purpose and description</b>	<p>The Cooperative Fire Protection (FP) program consists of two components, State Fire Assistance (SFA) and Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA, described in the following section). The program's overall purpose is to provide assistance to encourage effective, coordinated, and uniform responses to wildfire, with an emphasis on improving preparedness (such as fire planning and initial attack capabilities) for state and local government fire agencies to respond to wildfires on nonfederal lands, and mitigation (such as hazardous fuels reduction and wildfire prevention activities) for state and local government agencies to reduce the risk of or damage from catastrophic wildfires.</p> <p>The SFA component provides assistance for preparedness activities to promote firefighter safety, capability, and capacity, and community mitigation activities to reduce wildfire risk to communities and promote community fire planning.</p>
<b>Activities</b>	<p>Provides financial assistance, technical training, and equipment to state foresters to promote fire protection on nonfederal lands. States may use funds for preparedness activities (e.g., development of fire readiness plans, facility maintenance); firefighting activities, training, and support (e.g., dispatch centers); to purchase, maintain, or rehabilitate equipment; and for program administration. Assistance is also provided for community mitigation programs, including conducting hazardous fuels reduction projects on nonfederal lands and supporting the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans and/or Firewise certification. Manages and provides financial assistance to states to acquire fire-related equipment through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP) and educational programs (e.g., the Smokey Bear public service campaign).</p>
<b>Eligibility requirements</b>	<p>Funding is provided to state foresters or equivalent state officials as formula grants. A minimum level of funding is allocated annually to each state to ensure a base fire management capacity (at least \$100,000), and additional funds are allocated based on acres of nonfederal land, population, and required level of fire protection.</p>
<b>FS appropriations account</b>	SPF Cooperative Fire Assistance.
<b>Funding authority</b>	No specified authorization level for most activities, and up to \$35 million annually is reserved for SFA cost-share assistance.
<b>FY2023 funding</b>	\$83.6 million (\$76.0 million through regular appropriations and \$17.6 million through IIJA; \$118.6 million total provided for FP).
<b>FY2024 Request</b>	\$76.0 through regular appropriations; FS is set to receive \$31.6 million in advance appropriations for FY2024 through IIJA.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in CFAA and amended by 1990 farm bill (Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990; P.L. 101-624, §§1215, 1220), 16 U.S.C. §2106.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authority.
<b>Program website</b>	CRS was unable to locate a website specific to the FP program. For information on FS wildfire programs, see <a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire">https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire</a> .

## Cooperative Fire Protection: Volunteer Fire Assistance

<b>Program purpose and description</b>	<p>The Cooperative Fire Protection (FP) program consists of two components, State Fire Assistance (SFA, described in the preceding section) and Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA). The program's overall purpose is to provide assistance to encourage effective, coordinated, and uniform responses to wildfire, with an emphasis on improving preparedness (such as fire planning and initial attack capabilities) for state and local government fire agencies to respond to wildfires on nonfederal lands, and mitigation (such as hazardous fuels reduction and wildfire prevention activities) for state and local government agencies to reduce the risk of or damage from catastrophic wildfires.</p> <p>The VFA component supports state efforts to provide organization, training, and equipment for rural fire departments to protect and respond to wildfires on nonfederal lands in rural areas.</p>
<b>Activities</b>	Provides up to 50% cost-share grants and technical assistance to states to provide education, planning, training, and equipment for rural fire departments to improve fire protection capabilities and effectiveness.
<b>Eligibility requirements</b>	Funding is provided to state foresters or equivalent state officials as formula grants. States may use the funds to support any organized, not-for-profit, fire protection organization that provides services to a community with a population under 10,000 or whose firefighting personnel is at least 80% volunteer.
<b>FS appropriations account</b>	SPF Cooperative Fire Assistance.
<b>Funding authority</b>	No specified authorization level for most activities, and up to \$35 million annually is reserved for VFA cost-share assistance.
<b>FY2023 funding</b>	\$25.0 million (\$21.0 million through regular appropriations and \$4.0 million through IJJA; \$118.6 million total provided for FP).
<b>FY2024 Request</b>	\$21.0 million through regular appropriations; FS is set to receive \$8.4 million in advance appropriations for FY2024 through IJJA.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Specific authorization for VFA was initially provided as the Rural Community Fire Protection program in the 1973 farm bill (Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973; P.L. 93-86 §27) but was eliminated and replaced by an unrelated program in the 1996 farm bill (Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act; P.L. 104-127 §§741(a)(4) and (5)). Since then, Congress has continued to provide appropriations to the program under the broader FP program, as authorized in CFAA and amended by the 1990 farm bill (§§1215, 1220), 16 U.S.C. §2106.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authority.
<b>Program website</b>	CRS was unable to locate a website specific to the FP program. For information on FS wildfire programs, see <a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire">https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire</a> .

## Forest Health Protection: Federal Lands and Cooperative Lands

<b>Program purpose and description</b>	FHP was created to protect trees, forests, and wood products from negative impacts due to natural and man-made causes nationwide. The program is implemented through two subprograms: Federal Lands and Cooperative Lands.
<b>Activities</b>	<p>The Federal Lands subprogram surveys and monitors forest health conditions on federal lands, performs pest suppression efforts on federal and tribal trust lands (including lands managed by other federal agencies and tribal governments), and coordinates an integrated pest management program and specific prevention and suppression programs for major insects, diseases, and invasive species across all landownership types.</p> <p>The Cooperative Lands subprogram provides technical and financial assistance to states to conduct forest surveys to detect, monitor, and assess forest conditions across nonfederal lands. Financial assistance may also be provided through 50% cost-share grants for projects or programs to treat specific forest health problems.</p>
<b>Eligibility requirements</b>	FS can act on its own lands and other lands with consent, cooperation, and participation (including financial contributions). Other federal land management agencies submit suppression-related project requests to the FS for approval. Financial assistance is provided to states to support a base level of forest health expertise at the appropriate state partner agencies; these funds are allocated as formula grants based on nonfederal forest acreage, among other factors.
<b>FS appropriations account/BLI</b>	SPF Forest Health Management.
<b>Funding authority</b>	No specified authorization level.
<b>FY2023 funding</b>	\$150.0 million (\$17.0 million for Federal Lands; \$33.0 million for Cooperative Lands through regular appropriations and \$100.0 million through supplemental emergency appropriations).
<b>FY2024 Request</b>	\$55 million through regular appropriations (\$20.0 million for Federal Lands, \$35.0 million for Cooperative Lands). FS is set to receive \$12.9 million in advance appropriations for FY2024 through IIJA.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in the CFAA and amended by the 1990 farm bill (§1218), 16 U.S.C. §2104.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authority.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/foresthealth/index">https://www.fs.usda.gov/foresthealth/index</a>

## Forest Legacy Program

<b>Program purpose and description</b>	FLP provides financial assistance to protect environmentally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses.
<b>Activities</b>	Provides up to 75% cost-share grants to states to acquire eligible private forestlands, either through fee-simple purchases or conservations easements. Landowners with FLP conservation easements on their property must manage the land consistent with the purposes for which the land was enrolled in the program, and may include timber production, hiking, hunting, and fishing. Financial assistance may also be provided to the states to administer the program.
<b>Eligibility requirements</b>	Funding typically goes to state forestry agencies or equivalent to purchase and hold the title or easement. Nonprofit organizations may hold the title or conservation easement for donated tracts. A federally or state-recognized tribe may participate in partnership with the state.

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	States must have and maintain State Forest Action Plans, which must include a Forest Legacy Assessment and recommendations for Forest Legacy Areas. The assessment evaluates current and future forest uses statewide and defines the criteria the state will use to identify, recommend, and prioritize threatened environmentally important forest areas as Forest Legacy Areas. The FS designates Forest Legacy Areas within the state upon approval of the state's Forest Action Plan. The acquired lands must be within a designated Forest Legacy Area, at least 75% forestland, and be acquired from a willing seller.  Project selection is a three-step competitive process. First, the State FSC Committee evaluates proposals and makes recommendations to the state; second, the state then submits recommendations to the FS; and third, the FS makes the final selection.
<b>FS appropriations account/BLI</b>	SPF Cooperative Forestry.
<b>Funding authority</b>	No specified authorization level. Since FY2004, funding has been provided through discretionary appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Starting in FY2021, funding from the LWCF is mandatory. For more information, see CRS In Focus IF11636, <i>The Great American Outdoors Act (P.L. 116-152)</i> and CRS Report R46563, <i>Land and Water Conservation Fund: Processes and Criteria for Allocating Funds</i> .
<b>FY2023 funding</b>	\$77.9 million (mandatory appropriations).
<b>FY2024 Request</b>	\$94.0 million (mandatory appropriations).
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in the 1990 farm bill (§1217), 16 U.S.C. §2103c.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authority.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/forest-legacy">https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/forest-legacy</a>

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## Forest Stewardship Program

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<b>Program purpose and description</b>	FSP was established to encourage long-term stewardship on nonindustrial private forestlands (NIPFs). NIPFs are defined as “lands with existing tree cover, or suitable for growing trees, and owned by any private individual, group, association, corporation, tribe, or other private legal entity” (16 U.S.C. §2103a(c)). Forest stewardship is not defined directly or indirectly by reference in the statute.  Since FY1993, two other programs have been funded and administered as part of FSP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural Forestry Assistance (RFA), which supports reforestation and genetic resources activities, such as nursery management and seed development and storage; and</li> <li>• Financial, Technical, and Related Assistance to States (Assistance to States), which fosters coordination between federal and state organizations and technological development and implementation for forest data collection and use.</li> </ul>
<b>Activities</b>	Provides technical and financial assistance to states, which provide information and assistance to private landowners. Technical assistance includes activities such as landowner outreach and education, development of forest stewardship management plans, and fostering stewardship planning across multiple owners for a landscape-level approach.
<b>Eligibility requirements</b>	State forestry agencies or equivalent. States must have and maintain State Forest Action Plans. States may use funds to provide financial assistance to private landowners.
<b>FS appropriations account/BLI</b>	SPF Cooperative Forestry.
<b>Funding authority</b>	No specified authorization level.
<b>FY2023 funding</b>	\$12.5 million
<b>FY2024 Request</b>	\$14.0 million. \$19.3 million is available through IJA.

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<b>Statutory authority</b>	FSP was authorized in the CFAA and amended by the 1990 farm bill (§1215), 16 U.S.C. §2103a. RFA was authorized in the CFAA and amended in the 1990 farm bill (§1213), 16 U.S.C. §2102. Assistance to States was authorized in the CFAA and amended in the 1990 farm bill (§1215), 16 U.S.C. §2107.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authority.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/forest-stewardship/program">https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/forest-stewardship/program</a>

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## International Forestry Programs

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<b>Program purpose and description</b>	International forestry programs support forestry and natural resource activities outside of the United States to promote conservation and sustainable forest management and global environmental stability.
<b>Activities</b>	Provides financial and technical assistance to countries to promote development and transfer of technical, research, managerial, education, and administrative skills to forest managers. Includes research and assistance through the Institute of Tropical Forestry and Institute for Pacific Islands Forestry.
<b>Eligibility requirements</b>	Assistance is available only to countries that receive USAID support.
<b>FS appropriations account/BLI</b>	SPF International Forestry.
<b>Funding authority</b>	No specified authorization level.
<b>FY2023 funding</b>	\$20.0 million
<b>FY2024 Request</b>	\$22.0 million
<b>Statutory authority</b>	International forestry activities are authorized in two places: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 5, 1990: the International Forestry Cooperation Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-513 Title VI), as amended by the Hawaii Tropical Forest Recovery Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-574), 16 U.S.C. §4501 et seq.</li> <li>• The 1990 farm bill (§2405) authorized the Office of International Forestry and the Institute of Tropical Forestry and specified that the FS should request funding for International Forestry through a specific budget line item, 7 U.S.C. §§6701 et seq.</li> </ul>
<b>Authorization expires</b>	The authorization for the Office of International Forestry (7 U.S.C. §6704) to receive funding expired at the end of FY2018. Other International Forestry programs are permanently authorized.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/international-programs">https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/international-programs</a>

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## Landscape Scale Restoration Program

<b>Program purpose and description</b>	LSR was originally established to support innovative regional or national forest restoration projects that cross multiple landownership boundaries. The 2018 farm bill statutorily codified the program to encourage collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes. The 2018 farm bill also provided congressional direction on program eligibility, criteria, and establishment. Projects with multiple ownerships are prioritized, but projects must include nonindustrial private forestland as well as state- or locally owned forestland.  Projects may include activities authorized by other programs, including FSP, FHP-Cooperative Lands, UCF, and SFA; but not VFA, FLP, or FHP-Federal Lands.
<b>Activities</b>	Provides 50% cost-share grants for cross-boundary projects that address regionally or nationally significant issues or landscapes as identified in State Forest Action Plans. Funding is provided through a two-step competitive process: proposals are first evaluated at a regional level and then at the national level. Each region (Northeast, South, and West) develops regionally specific evaluation criteria that must be consistent with national standards.
<b>Eligibility requirements</b>	States, tribes, nonprofit organizations, local governments, and land grant colleges or universities are eligible to sponsor or participate as a partner in a project. The 2018 farm bill specifies that proposals must be submitted through state foresters or other appropriate state agencies.
<b>FS appropriations account/BLI</b>	SPF Landscape Scale Restoration.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Up to \$20 million annually, through FY2023.
<b>FY2023 funding</b>	\$17.0 million
<b>FY2024 Request</b>	\$14.0 million. \$100,000 is available through IIJA.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in the 2018 farm bill (§8102(a)), 16 U.S.C. §2109a. Prior to the 2018 farm bill, the program operated under a broad authority provided in the 2008 farm bill (§8007).
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authority.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/landscape-scale-restoration">https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/landscape-scale-restoration</a>

## Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program

<b>Program purpose and description</b>	UCF was created to establish, manage, and protect trees, forests, green spaces, and related natural resources in and adjacent to cities and towns.
<b>Activities</b>	Provides financial, technical, and related assistance to conduct tree inventories; prepare management plans; plant and care for trees; carry out disaster planning, mitigation, response, and recovery; support workforce development; and host community activities, such as youth summer camps.  Also provides 50% cost-share grants to address strategic issues and opportunities identified by the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC). The NUCFAC consists of 15 members appointed by the Secretary.
<b>Eligibility Requirements</b>	No eligibility requirements specified in law. Therefore, states and territories, tribes, nongovernmental organizations, private nonprofit organizations, or individuals are eligible to apply for funding.
<b>FS appropriations account/BLI</b>	SPF Cooperative Forestry.
<b>Funding authority</b>	No specified authorization level.

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<b>FY2023 funding</b>	\$40.0 million
<b>FY2024 Request</b>	\$42.0 million. \$16.6 million is available through IJA.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in CFAA and amended by 1990 farm bill (§§1215, 1219), 16 U.S.C. §2105.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf">https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf</a>

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## Wood Technology and Innovation Programs

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<b>Program purpose and description</b>	Several FS authorities and programs provide financial and technical assistance to develop, promote, and market innovative uses of wood products in an effort to remove hazardous fuels and other wood residues (e.g., biomass) from National Forest System (NFS) lands, reduce the costs of forest management on public and private forestlands, and promote economic and environmental health of forest-dependent communities, among other purposes.
<b>Activities</b>	<p>The Wood Innovation Grant Program (Wood Innovations), a part of the broader Rural Revitalization Technologies (RRT) program, provides cost-share grants to stimulate or expand wood energy and wood products markets.</p> <p>The Hardwood Technology Transfer and Applied Research (HTTAR) program conducts technology transfer and development, training, and applied research in the management, processing, and utilization of hardwoods, including through grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements. The program operates through the Wood Education and Resource Center (WERC), the Institute of Hardwood Technology Transfer and Applied Research (IHTTAR), and Forest Products Laboratory.</p> <p>The Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation (Community Wood) program provides competitive cost-share grants to install community wood energy systems or build innovative wood product facilities.</p>
<b>Eligibility requirements</b>	State, local, and tribal governments, communities, nongovernmental organizations, institutes of higher education, school districts, communities, and special purpose districts.
<b>FS appropriations account/BLI</b>	Funds are allocated from other FS accounts and programs, including NFS Hazardous Fuels.
<b>Funding authority</b>	<p>Funding is authorized through different programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Rural Revitalization Technologies (RRT) program is authorized to receive up to \$5 million annually, through FY2023.</li> <li>• HTTAR has no specified authorization level. HTTAR is authorized to generate revenue; this revenue may be deposited into the Hardwood Technology Transfer and Applied Research Fund and is available until expended.</li> <li>• The Community Wood program is authorized to receive up to \$25 million annually, through FY2023. Not more than 25% of funds may be used for grants for innovative wood product facilities, unless the Secretary receives insufficient proposals for community wood energy systems.</li> </ul>
<b>FY2023 funding</b>	\$36.0 million
<b>FY2024 Request</b>	\$36.0 million
<b>Statutory authority</b>	<p>This group of programs relies on several different authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RRT was established in the 1990 farm bill (§2371), 7 U.S.C. §6601.</li> <li>• The Wood Innovation Grant Program was established in the 2018 farm bill (§8643), 7 U.S.C. § 7655d, and authorizes FS to annually make grants in accordance with a funding opportunity offered under the broad authority of RRT.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HTTAR program was authorized and WERC was established in P.L. 105-277 (§343) and P.L. 106-113 (§332), 16 U.S.C. §1650.</li> <li>• The Community Wood Program was established in the 2008 farm bill (§9013) and the 2018 farm bill (§8644), 7 U.S.C. §8113.</li> </ul>
<b>Authorization expires</b>	RRT and the Community Wood program expire in FY2023. HTTAR is permanently authorized.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/science-technology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovation">https://www.fs.usda.gov/science-technology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovation</a>

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## FS Assistance in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress: The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act

The 117<sup>th</sup> Congress' passage of IJJA and IRA significantly expanded the scope and scale of the FS assistance portfolio. These laws authorized new FS assistance programs covering both new and preexisting forestry issues, and appropriated substantial funding for FS assistance. The following sections discuss the authorizations and appropriations in the laws.

Taken together, IJJA and IRA substantially expanded the FS assistance program portfolio through FY2031—and particularly through FY2026, when IJJA's provisions expire—including by significantly increasing funding and authorizing multiple new programs. Particularly, IJJA and IRA expanded the FS assistance portfolio by

- **Addressing new issues** that were not the main purpose of preexisting FS assistance programs. IJJA added and funded programs that addressed seven new issue areas: reverse-911 communications, firewood banks, community wildfire defense, support for wood processing facilities, temporary water crossing rental programs, invasive species, and aquatic landscape scale restoration—none of which were the central subjects of preexisting FS assistance programs. The IRA included six provisions expanding the purposes or providing additional direction for existing FS assistance programs, including three provisions addressing a new issue, forest carbon.
- **Providing opportunities for the FS to design programs in uncharacteristic ways, should the agency choose.** For example, the IRA authorized funding for the purpose of supporting individual forest landowners, which is atypical for FS assistance programs—though it did not specify that funding necessarily be disbursed directly to them, meaning the FS could organize the funding to be state-administered. Other provisions did not specify the eligible recipients of authorized funding; did not specify how funding should be awarded (i.e., which recipients were eligible, processes for awarding funding) or otherwise left implementation decisions open for agency interpretation.
- **Providing substantial funding increases for FS assistance.** Because the funding authorized by IRA may be obligated by the FS at any point through FY2031, the total annual funding available through IRA and IJJA together cannot be predicted. However, IJJA alone—without considering the effects of IRA—more than doubled the total FS assistance budget for FY2022 and FY2023. Impacts on individual programs may be even greater. For illustration, IRA provided \$1.5 billion in funding for the Urban and Community Forestry program from FY2022 and FY2031. If this was allocated evenly over those 10 years



(\$150.0 million a year), the annual funding would be nearly quadruple the program’s annual FY2023 funding (approximately \$40.0 million). This increased funding increase is to allow FS to substantially expand the number and/or size of projects initiated under FS assistance programs and expand funding transfers to state governments.

IIJA and IRA also are a departure from typical legislative action on FS assistance in that Congress acted on the FS assistance portfolio outside of the regular farm bill cycle. This may introduce timing considerations if Congress were to act on IIJA and IRA forest assistance provisions other than allowing them to expire (see text box “Forest Service Assistance Legislative Action: IIJA, IRA and Farm Bill Cycle Timing”).

## The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

IIJA authorized and appropriated funding for a variety of FS forestry assistance, research, and federal land management activities and programs.<sup>16</sup>

- IIJA authorized \$4.29 billion for FS across the five-year period from FY2022 to FY2026, of which \$1.39 billion was authorized specifically for forestry assistance activities. These provisions are summarized in the following section.
- IIJA appropriated \$5.44 billion for FS across the five-year period from FY2022 through FY2026, of which \$1.53 billion was appropriated specifically for FS’s State and Private Forestry account for implementing forestry assistance activities. These appropriations are summarized in the “IIJA Appropriations” section, below.

### IIJA Authorizations

This section summarizes the program and funding authorizations in IIJA related to FS forestry assistance activities.

- **Section 40803—Wildfire Risk Reduction** authorized \$2.31 billion over five years (FY2022 through FY2026) for the Secretary of Agriculture—acting through the Chief of the FS—and directed the allocation of those funds across several activities, including improving wildfire response readiness, improving technological capacities, preparing wildfire risk maps, funding research, reducing fuels, and conducting post-fire recovery and restoration.<sup>17</sup> At least three of the specified activities included an assistance component.<sup>18</sup>
- **Section 40804—Ecosystem Restoration** authorized \$1.23 billion over five years (FY2022 through FY2026) for the Secretary of Agriculture—acting through the Chief of the FS—and directed the allocation of those funds across several activities related to conducting forest restoration activities on federal and

<sup>16</sup> P.L. 117-58. The law also established forestry assistance programs in the Department of the Interior. Although outside of the scope of this report, these provisions are identified in footnotes for informational purposes.

<sup>17</sup> P.L. 117-58 §40803(a). This section also authorized funding for the Department of the Interior for establishing a pilot program to provide financial assistance to local governments for the acquisition of equipment to modify vehicles into fire engines.

<sup>18</sup> Additional assistance programs may be identified as more information becomes available and the FS begins to implement the provisions.

nonfederal land.<sup>19</sup> At least five of the specified activities included an assistance component.<sup>20</sup>

- **Section 40808—Joint Chiefs Landscape Scale Restoration Partnership (JCLRP) Program** authorized \$180 million over two years (FY2022 and FY2023) for the Secretary of Agriculture—acting through the Chief of the FS and the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)—for conducting landscape restoration activities to mitigate wildfire risk, protect water quality and quantity, and improve wildlife habitat on eligible private, tribal, state, and federal lands. The law allocated at least 40% of the authorized funds to FS, at least 40% to NRCS, and 20% may be allocated for program administration or other related purposes.

In some cases, Congress authorized funding for specific activities that do not directly correspond to existing programs. In addition, the law provided varying levels of additional congressional direction or details on implementation across provisions. In some cases, the law directed the FS to provide assistance, with no additional direction. In other cases, the law provided additional direction pertaining to either the type of assistance (e.g., financial), instrument (e.g., grants, loans), or other implementation requirements (e.g., eligible recipients, matching requirements). In still other cases, the law directed FS to perform certain activities on federal and nonfederal land, but did not specify that the activity on nonfederal land was an assistance program per se. Such programs are included herein as assistance programs, until and unless program implementation details become available and suggest otherwise.

Due to these reasons, it remains unclear how some IJA provisions will be implemented by FS, including whether they will be implemented as new programs or as part of existing programs. Until sufficient detail is available on all IJA provisions, and to ensure information on IJA is organized together for easy reference, they are included in this section but not as stand-alone programs in the “Forest Service Assistance Programs” section of this report.

**Table 3** describes the provisions of relevant sections of the IJA.

<sup>19</sup> P.L. 117-58 §40804(a). This section also authorized funding for the Department of the Interior for establishing a grant program for implementing cross-boundary ecosystem restoration programs.

<sup>20</sup> Additional assistance programs may be identified as more information becomes available and the FS begins to implement the provisions.

**Table 3. Forest Service Assistance Authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58)**

Section	Authorized Funding (millions) <sup>a</sup>	Assistance Type	Assistance Purpose	Eligible Recipients	Additional Congressional Direction	Implementation <sup>b</sup>	FY2024 Funding (Millions)
<b>Section 40803: Wildfire Risk Reduction</b>							
(c)(4)	\$30	Unspecified financial assistance	Establish and operate reverse-911 operations	States, Indian tribes, localities	None	CRS was unable to identify specific implementation information.	\$8.3 <sup>c</sup>
(c)(12) and (f)	\$500	Grants	Establish Community Wildfire Defense Grants (CWDGs) to develop or revise community wildfire protection plans (CWPPs) or implement CWPP projects	At-risk communities (defined at 16 U.S.C. 6511), including Indian tribes	<p>Specifies the following criteria to the CWDG awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grants to develop or revise CWPPs may be up to \$250,000 and require at least a 10% nonfederal cost-share.</li> <li>Grants to implement CWPP projects may be up to \$10 million and require at least a 25% nonfederal cost-share.</li> </ul> <p>Directs the FS to prioritize projects in communities that are at high or very high wildfire hazard potential or low-income, or have experienced a severe disaster. Authorizes cost-share waivers for underserved communities and specifies that funding is not available to communities without specified wildfire-related building ordinances and located within the continental United States.<sup>d</sup></p>	The FS has awarded funds to 100 projects in 22 states and on the lands of 7 tribes. The next application period is expected to be announced in 2023. <sup>e</sup>	\$242.0

Section	Authorized Funding (millions) <sup>a</sup>	Assistance Type	Assistance Purpose	Eligible Recipients	Additional Congressional Direction	Implementation <sup>b</sup>	FY2024 Funding (Millions)
(c)(17)	\$8	Unspecified financial assistance	Provide feedstock and fund operations of firewood banks	Firewood banks	None	The FS has awarded funds to nine partners, including national- and regional- discretionary grant projects and a national partner identified through a Request for Information (RIF) process. FS expects to issue additional grants with FY2023 funding.	\$1.6
<b>40804: Ecosystem Restoration</b>							
(b)(3) and (d)(3)	\$400	Financial assistance, including loans or loan guarantees	Establish, expand, retrofit, or otherwise improve facilities that use byproducts from specified ecosystem restoration projects	Wood processing facilities	Specifies that financial assistance is available for entities with wood processing facilities established or planning to be established in close proximity to units of federal land and Indian forest and rangeland classified as in very high or high need of vegetation removal for forest health purposes, and which the presence of the facility would or does substantially decrease the cost of restoration projects on federal land.	The first application period for these grants closed on December 20, 2022. A second application period for the wood processing facility grant program opened on January 31, 2023, and closed on March 23, 2023. As of June 29, 2023, FS announced awards to 42 awardees in 15 states. It is unclear if this includes both previous rounds of applications.	\$40.0
(b)(5)	\$50	Grants	Establish rental programs for temporary water crossing structures used in timber harvesting	States, Indian tribes	None	The FS has announced awards to 15 states and 10 tribes and Alaska Native corporations.	\$12.6

Section	Authorized Funding (millions) <sup>a</sup>	Assistance Type	Assistance Purpose	Eligible Recipients	Additional Congressional Direction	Implementation <sup>b</sup>	FY2024 Funding (Millions)
(b)(6)	\$100	Grants	Eradication of invasive species on nonfederal and federal land	None specified	In addition to the grants, specifies that the funding authorized in this section is available for activities related to the detection, prevention, and eradication of invasive species, including research and detection at points of entry. <sup>f</sup>	The first FS application period for a state capacity grant program established under this section closed for applications on December 16, 2022 and the application period for high-priority regional invasive species projects closed on February 3, 2023.	\$17.9 <sup>g</sup>
(b)(9)	\$130	Unspecified assistance	Establish a national revegetation effort on federal and nonfederal land	None specified	Also directs the FS to implement the National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration. <sup>h</sup>	FS has awarded some FY2022 funds through noncompetitive grant awards to states and tribes and is planning on offering another round of noncompetitive grant awards in FY2023.	\$24.5
(b)(10) and (f)	\$80	Unspecified assistance	Establish an aquatic landscape scale restoration program on federal and nonfederal lands	None specified	Directs FS, in coordination with the Department of the Interior, to solicit collaboratively developed proposals for funding of up to \$5 million for five-year projects to restore fish passage or water quality on federal and nonfederal land and to prioritize for selection proposals that would result in the most miles of stream restoration for the lowest amount of federal funding.	The FS has allocated \$25.5 million to 11 projects in 9 states and Puerto Rico. Funded projects were primarily on federal land, though some projects appear to include adjacent nonfederal land. In FY2023, the FS expects to solicit additional proposals for funding.	\$0. <sup>i</sup>

Section	Authorized Funding (millions) <sup>a</sup>	Assistance Type	Assistance Purpose	Eligible Recipients	Additional Congressional Direction	Implementation <sup>b</sup>	FY2024 Funding (Millions)
<b>40808: Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Partnership Program (JCLRP)</b>							
a-h	\$180 (for FY2022 and FY2023 only) <sup>i</sup>	Unspecified assistance	Assist landowners to implement eligible activities to reduce wildfire risk, protect water quality or supply, or improve habitat for at-risk species	Landowners (for activities on state, tribal, and private land)	Formalizes the JCLRP, a joint program administered by the FS and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and authorizes FS to conduct eligible activities on NFS land and NRCS to conduct eligible activities on private and tribal land.	Of the 39 JCLRP projects that received funding for FY2023, 3 received IIJA funds.	Not specified

**Source:** CRS, using the legislative text of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, P.L. 117-58). Implementation information was obtained through a variety of sources, including communication with the Forest Service’s (FS’s) legislative affairs office, annual budget justifications, infrastructure websites, program websites, and resources published by the Biden Administration at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/build/>, including the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Maps Dashboard at <https://d2d.gsa.gov/report/bipartisan-infrastructure-law-bil-maps-dashboard>. Funding information derives from the Forest Service FY2024 budget justification, Table FS-90.

**Notes:** This table includes IIJA provisions that authorize the FS to provide assistance to nonfederal entities (e.g., states, individuals, nonprofit organizations). The authorities listed also may apply to other agencies, such as other U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies and the Department of the Interior (DOI) as noted. This column provides information on funding for the respective IIJA provision, as specified in Table FS-90 of the FY2024 Forest Service budget justification. Funding includes FY2024 appropriations, transfers, and carryover from FY2023. Funding is through the SPF account unless otherwise noted.

- a. Unless otherwise noted, funding is authorized from FY2022 through FY2026.
- b. Implementation information as of June 29, 2023.
- c. The reverse-911 program is funded through the wildland fire management (WFM) account.
- d. This section of the IIJA does not include a definition of *low-income* or *underserved*. For more information, see <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/grants>.
- e. For more information, see <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/grants> and <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2023/03/20/biden-harris-administration-invests-nearly-200m-bipartisan>.
- f. IIJA also authorized \$100 million for DOI under this section.

- g. The FY2024 FS budget justification specifies that \$8.1 million will be available for federal lands and \$9.7 million will be available for cooperative lands through the preexisting Forest Health Protection program.
- h. For more information, see USDA Supporting the National Native Seed Strategy, Press Release, August 4, 2021, available at <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2017/03/13/usda-supporting-national-native-seed-strategy>. See also the Bureau of Land Management's National Seed Strategy website available at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/natural-resources/native-plant-communities/national-seed-strategy>.
- i. The FS FY2024 budget justification lists this amount as being available for "Landscape Scale Restoration." It is somewhat unclear if this funding refers to both the aquatic landscape scale restoration program established in this section or the preexisting Landscape Scale Restoration program. For more information, see <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/natural-resources/collaborative-aquatic-landscape-restoration>.
- j. The IIJA authorized \$180 million combined for FY2022 and FY2023 for FS and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). IIJA specified that not less than 40% of the funds shall be allocated to the FS, not less than 40% shall be allocated to NRCS, and the remaining 20% is to be available for program administration and other purposes, as determined by the Chiefs of the FS and NRCS. For more information, see <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/joint-chiefs-landscape-restoration-partnership>.

## IIJA Appropriations

The IIJA appropriated \$1.53 billion total for the five-year period from FY2022 through FY2026 to the FS's State and Private Forestry (SPF) account, the primary account through which FS receives funding for assistance programs. Congress directed the SPF funding to be provided in equal amounts of \$305.4 million annually across those five years and further allocated some of the funding toward new and existing assistance programs:

- \$718.0 million total (\$143.6 million annually) for implementing IIJA Sections 40803 and 40804.
- In addition to amounts provided above, another \$500.0 million for implementing the Community Wildfire Defense Grant program established in IIJA Section 40803(c)(12) and (f). In total, the CWDG program received \$1.0 billion in funding (\$200 million annually).
- \$88.0 million total (\$17.6 million annually) for the State Fire Assistance program (see “Cooperative Fire Protection: State Fire Assistance” for more information).
- \$20.0 million total (\$4.0 million annually) for the Volunteer Fire Assistance program (see “Cooperative Fire Protection: Volunteer Fire Assistance” for more information).
- Up to 3% (\$45.8 million in total, \$9.2 million annually) for salaries, expenses, and administration.
- Up to 0.5% (\$7.6 million in total, \$1.5 million annually) for oversight purposes.

See **Table 2** for FY2024 appropriations information and **Table 3** for specified IIJA programs and authorities.

## The Inflation Reduction Act

The budget reconciliation measure known as the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funded several FS forestry assistance, research, and federal land management activities through mandatory appropriations.<sup>21</sup> The IRA provided \$5.00 billion in FY2022 mandatory appropriations for the FS, to remain available for 10 years (through FY2031), of which \$2.75 billion is for FS forestry assistance activities:

- **Section 23002—Competitive Grants for Nonfederal Forest Landowners** provided \$550.00 million in FY2022 mandatory appropriations to remain available for 10 years (through FY2031) allocated across five competitive grant programs. Four of these programs are to be implemented under the authority of 16 U.S.C. 2109 (see “Landscape Scale Restoration Program”), and are focused on supporting forest landowners in climate mitigation, carbon sequestration, or forest resilience-related activities. The fifth program was an expansion of the authority at 7 U.S.C. 7655d (the Wood Innovations grant program; see “Wood Technology and Innovation Programs”).
- **Section 23003—State and Private Forestry Conservation Programs** provided \$2.20 billion in mandatory FY2022 appropriations to remain available for 10 years (through FY2031) allocated between the Forest Legacy Program (see “Forest

<sup>21</sup> P.L. 117-169. The law included other provisions pertaining to the Department of the Interior. Although outside of the scope of this report, some of these provisions are identified in footnotes for informational purposes.



Legacy Program”) and specific activities under the Urban and Community Forestry program (see “Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program”).

Congress generally provided funding for activities under existing programs. In most cases, the law provided specific, additional direction for the purposes or uses of the funding beyond that provided by the underlying authority. These are included below as separate assistance programs for clarity’s sake (see **Table 4**). However, it remains unclear how the IRA’s provisions will be implemented by FS, including whether they will be implemented as part of the existing programs or separately (i.e., under separate requests for proposals under the existing program, or as separate, named programs). As such, they are included in this section but not as stand-alone programs in the “Forest Service Assistance Programs” section of this report.<sup>22</sup>

Some questions remain regarding the specific meaning of some IRA provisions. For example, many provisions under Section 23002 of the IRA are to be implemented under the authority of the Landscape Scale Restoration program, which has broad eligibility criteria. However, several of the IRA provisions refer to *underserved* landowners or landowners of parcels of a certain size. It is unclear whether these terms authorize these groups as eligible recipients, refer to them as the targets of the program’s benefits, both, or something else.

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<sup>22</sup> For additional information on IRA implementation, see the White House Inflation Reduction Act Guidebook, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/cleanenergy/inflation-reduction-act-guidebook/>.

**Table 4. Forest Service Assistance Funded by the Inflation Reduction Act (P.L. 117-169)**

Section	Appropriated Funding (millions) <sup>a</sup>	Assistance Type	Assistance Purpose	Underlying Program <sup>a</sup>	Additional Congressional Direction	Implementation <sup>b</sup>
<b>Section 23002: Competitive Grants for Nonfederal Forest Landowners</b>						
(a)(1)	\$150	Competitive grants	Climate mitigation and forest resilience practices in the case of underserved forest landowners <sup>c</sup>	Landscape Scale Restoration (16 U.S.C. 2109)	Requires 20% cost-share match, which may be waived at the Secretary's discretion; waives 50% matching requirement at 16 U.S.C. 2109(h).	CRS was unable to identify specific implementation information.
(a)(2)	\$150	Competitive grants	Support participation of underserved forest landowners in markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience <sup>b</sup>	Landscape Scale Restoration (16 U.S.C. 2109)	Requires 20% cost-share match, which may be waived at the Secretary's discretion; waives 50% matching requirement at 16 U.S.C. 2109(h).	CRS was unable to identify specific implementation information.
(a)(3)	\$100	Competitive grants	Support participation of owners of forests less than 2,500 acres in size in markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience	Landscape Scale Restoration (16 U.S.C. 2109)	Requires 20% cost-share match, which may be waived at the Secretary's discretion; waives 50% matching requirement at 16 U.S.C. 2109(h).	CRS was unable to identify specific implementation information.
(a)(4)	\$50	Competitive grants	Provide payments to owners of private forest land to implement practices to increase carbon sequestration	Landscape Scale Restoration (16 U.S.C. 2109)	Requires 20% cost-share match, which may be waived at the Secretary's discretion; waives 50% matching requirement at 16 U.S.C. 2109(h). Payments shall not preclude landowners from participating in other "public and private sector financial incentive programs." States and "other eligible entities" are eligible.	CRS was unable to identify specific implementation information.

Section	Appropriated Funding (millions) <sup>a</sup>	Assistance Type	Assistance Purpose	Underlying Program <sup>a</sup>	Additional Congressional Direction	Implementation <sup>b</sup>
(a)(5)	\$100	Competitive grants	In addition to other purposes of Wood Innovations grant program, construct facilities to further the program's purposes and haul hazardous fuels for utilization	Wood Innovations grant program (7 U.S.C. 7655d)	Grant amounts limited to \$5 million; recipients must provide at least 50% cost-share match using nonfederal funding.	CRS was unable to identify specific implementation information. It is unclear if this provision will be implemented separately from the broader Wood Innovations grant program (see "Wood Technology and Innovation Programs").
<b>23003: State and Private Forestry Conservation Programs</b>						
(a)(1)	\$700	Competitive grants	Projects for the acquisition of land and interests in land	Forest Legacy Program (16 U.S.C. 2103(c))	None	CRS was unable to identify specific implementation information. It is unclear if this provision will be implemented separately from the broader Forest Legacy Program (see "Forest Legacy Program").
(a)(2)	\$1,500	Competitive grants	In addition to other purposes of Urban and Community Forestry grant program, provide multiyear, programmatic grants for tree planting and related activities	Urban and Community Forestry (16 U.S.C. 2105(c))	Nonfederal cost-share may be waived at the Secretary's discretion. States, local governments, the District of Columbia, governments of insular areas (as defined in section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3103), Indian tribes, and nonprofit organizations are eligible for funding.	For FY2023, FS allocated \$250 million to state and territorial governments to provide urban forestry subgrants. The FS also issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity for grants under this section on April 12, 2023, which closed on June 1, 2023.

**Source:** CRS.

**Notes:** This table includes provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA, P.L. 117-169) that fund assistance to nonfederal entities (e.g., states, individuals, nonprofit organizations) that is to be administered by the Forest Service (FS). All provisions referred to an existing Forest Service assistance program under which the grants were to be made. For more information on those programs' provisions, see the respective report section. Each authority listed above complies with the underlying program's provisions unless otherwise noted. The FY2022 funding is to remain available through FY2031.

- a. Eligible recipients are based on the underlying program, unless otherwise noted in the "Additional Congressional Direction" column.
- b. Implementation information as of June 29, 2023.
- c. This section of the IRA does not include a definition of *underserved*.

## Issues and Options for Congress

### Oversight

The amount of information available about the uses and impacts of FS assistance program funding is varied. For some programs, detailed information on program expenditures and project results is available.<sup>23</sup> In other cases, little information is available on uses of program funding, particularly for formula grants to states, where most expenditures occur at the state level. In the past, the FS and state governments have faced allegations of impropriety regarding award and use of FS assistance funds.<sup>24</sup> One option for Congress may be to conduct oversight of various aspects of the FS's administration of assistance programs, such as:

- **What specific activities have been funded**, such as the nature of funded activities, the geographic location of activities, and the types of partners who have received funding.
- **How funds are awarded**, such as whether processes are competitive and transparent, both at the federal and state levels;
- **The impacts of funded activities**, using whatever metrics Congress determines, including measures specific to individual programs' intended purposes. For example, Congress may seek to determine if wildfire incidence or severity was reduced in areas that received funding from the Cooperative Fire programs. This could include seeking information on FS assistance funding's significance to states, such as its share of state forestry budgets.

Options for conducting oversight include directing the FS to inventory or report on the desired aspects of IJA and IRA implementation, seeking outside programmatic analysis (e.g., from the Government Accountability Office, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, or similar groups equipped to provide in-depth program analysis) or, in the case of concerns about impropriety, seeking assistance from the USDA Office of the Inspector General. Unless Congress also addressed assistance programs legislatively (see "A Next Farm Bill," below), an oversight approach could allow the FS and the states to maintain their current administration of the laws.

### A Next Farm Bill

The forestry title of the farm bill generally reauthorizes, amends, repeals, and creates new FS assistance programs to address a wide variety of forestry issues. Although the FS assistance portfolio has fluctuated over time, with changes to the number of programs and the issues they address, the basic approach to FS assistance has remained the same: provide financial and technical assistance to institutions and groups (i.e., states, local governments, nonprofits, businesses, and others) to implement forest-related projects and build capacity in forestry.

<sup>23</sup> For example, see the information on funded projects and project accomplishments under the wood technology and innovations programs at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/science-technology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovation>, or under the Community Forest program at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest>.

<sup>24</sup> For example, the FS and the State of Alaska were alleged to have improperly awarded and used FS assistance funding for participating on a rulemaking process regarding federal forests. For more information, see CRS Report R46505, *The Alaska Roadless Rule: Eliminating Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) in the Tongass National Forest*, by Anne A. Riddle.

An issue for the potential 2023 farm bill includes whether (and how) to address the FS assistance provisions that expire in FY2023: the funding authorization for the Landscape Scale Restoration program, and the authorities for the RRT and Community Wood programs. Congress may particularly consider the entire portfolio of wood technology and innovation programs in deciding whether to reauthorize and/or amend RRT and Community Wood, or allow them to expire. For example, Congress may determine that some programs could be allowed to expire without substantial losses of wood technology assistance programming, or that programs with similar missions could be combined. Congress also may consider the FS assistance programs authorized in IJA and IRA, although the timing of those bills' expirations may complicate their consideration in the farm bill (see "IJA and IRA" and the "Forest Service Assistance Legislative Action: IJA and IRA and Farm Bill Cycle Timing" text box).

## IJA and IRA

IJA and IRA substantially expanded the FS assistance portfolio for the near term. The amount of information available about the uses and impacts of forest assistance provisions of the bills is varied. For some provisions, detailed information on expenditures is available.<sup>25</sup> In other cases, little information is available on allocations and uses of program funding, for a variety of reasons, including the relatively short time since the bills' passage (particularly IRA), distribution and administration through state partners, and others. As with all FS assistance programs, an option for Congress may be to conduct oversight of various aspects of the FS's administration of the bills, such as how IJA and IRA forest assistance funding is being used and the impacts of that funding (see "Oversight" for further discussion). Congress also may be interested in how IJA and IRA programs are being administered, particularly for authorizations that did not specify certain implementation details, including how funding is awarded (e.g., through competitive processes or formula processes), what recipients are eligible, and similar issues. Congress also may be interested in how funding is being obligated over time, particularly IRA funding. Options for conducting oversight of IJA and IRA are similar to those discussed in the "Oversight" section, including directing the FS to inventory or report on the desired aspects of IJA and IRA implementation, or seeking outside programmatic analysis (e.g., from GAO, the National Academies, or similar groups equipped to provide in-depth program analysis).

Unless Congress were to address IJA and IRA legislatively, the bills will expire in FY2026 (for IJA) and FY2031 (for IRA). Should Congress seek to act legislatively on the forestry assistance provisions of IJA and IRA prior to their expiration Congress' options include acting on the bills' legislative provisions directly, or acting to incorporate aspects of those provisions into other legislation—using IJA and IRA as examples for further legislative activity. Some options include

- **Legislation that Reauthorizes, Repeals, or Amends the FS Assistance Provisions of IJA and IRA.** Congress may consider repealing, reauthorizing, or amending some or all of the forestry provisions in IJA and IRA. Reauthorizing all of the provisions would maintain the increased size and topical breadth of the FS assistance portfolio, and would allow the FS to maintain its implementation of IJA and IRA provisions, including determining program design in applicable situations. Conversely, repealing all of the programs could result in forgone projects and the loss of dedicated programs for some issue areas from the FS assistance portfolio, while potentially reducing federal budget outlays and/or

<sup>25</sup> For example, see the information on funded projects and project accomplishments under the wood technology and innovations programs at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/science-technology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovation>, or under the Community Forest program at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest>.

eliminating programs that aren't functioning as Congress intended. Congress also could take a program-by-program approach to repealing, reauthorizing, and/or amending individual provisions, particularly if program impacts are mixed. Repeal of IJJA and IRA forest assistance provisions would likely also need to address funds appropriated for the provisions (see below). Reauthorization may have special timing considerations (see the “Forest Service Assistance Legislative Action: IJJA, IRA and Farm Bill Cycle Timing” text box).

- **Legislation that Creates New FS Assistance Programs.** Under such an approach, Congress could create new FS assistance programs incorporating whatever features of IJJA and IRA forestry assistance programs Congress desires—such as the programs’ purposes, eligibility and/or selection criteria, authorizations for funding, or others. This approach could allow Congress the freedom to design new programs informed by IJJA and IRA, without directly relying on IJJA and IRA’s existing legislative provisions. This approach could “overlap” in time with IJJA and IRA, in which case, direction to the agency to integrate the programs could be needed to avoid risking duplication of IJJA and IRA programming. Or, this approach could be used after IJJA and IRA’ expiration, at the potential cost of lost institutional capacity or forgone projects in the interim.
- **Legislation that amends preexisting FS assistance programs to incorporate issues addressed by IJJA or IRA.** Congress could amend preexisting FS assistance programs to include new issue areas or new authorized project types that are the subject of IJJA or IRA programs. In some cases, the FS already appears to administer some IJJA and IRA programs alongside preexisting programs, which may indicate programs that can be combined or eliminated to avoid duplication of effort.<sup>26</sup>
- **Legislation that incorporates program design elements from IJJA and IRA into preexisting FS programs.** Congress could enact legislation amending preexisting FS assistance programs to incorporate program design elements from IJJA and IRA, either by amending the authorizing statute or by directing the FS to adopt regulations or guidance.
- **Legislation that Adjusts the Funding Levels Available through IJJA or IRA.** Both IJJA and IRA provided for funding in years after enactment: IJJA provided advance appropriations for the years FY2022 to FY2026, and IRA provided mandatory appropriations for the years FY2022 to FY2031. Congress could reduce or increase the funding appropriated for future years. Congress could only reduce funding if it was still available for obligation.<sup>27</sup> The impacts of such an approach would depend on the action Congress took and the provisions it affected. Changing funding would likely affect the number of projects that could be conducted under the relevant program(s); in the case of programs administered as formula grants to states, it could also affect state capacity in relevant issue areas or impact state forestry budgets.

<sup>26</sup> For example, the FS appears to administer two grant programs authorized in IJJA alongside the wood technology and innovation programs. See <https://www.fs.usda.gov/science-technology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovation>.

<sup>27</sup> For more information see, CRS Report R43482, *Advance Appropriations, Forward Funding, and Advance Funding: Concepts, Practice, and Budget Process Considerations*, by Jessica Tollestrup and Megan S. Lynch.

### Forest Service Assistance Legislative Action: IJJA, IRA and Farm Bill Cycle Timing

Negotiations over the expected FY2023 farm bill may be shaped by the temporary expansion of the Forest Service assistance portfolio through IJJA and IRA. However, the timing of those bills' passage and expiration (FY2021 - FY2026 for IJJA and FY2022-FY2031 for IRA) may complicate those negotiations. Since the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-624), congressional action on FS assistance has been generally focused within the forestry title of the farm bill, creating a predictable "forum" for Congress to address FS forestry assistance. Few years would have elapsed since the passage of IJJA and IRA and the potential 2023 farm bill cycle. This means, should Congress choose to act on IJJA and IRA in the future (see "IJJA and IRA"), timing options include

- Acting on IJJA and IRA through the potential FY2023 farm bill. In this case, relatively limited information on IJJA and IRA's implementation may influence Congress to act—or not—in ways it otherwise wouldn't;
- Waiting until IJJA and IRA's expiration to act on the FS assistance provisions in the bills. Doing so may require Congress to depart from political norms on congressional action on FS assistance, and could face an uncertain congressional environment for such actions, such as changes in control of Congress or competing issues on the congressional agenda;
- Allowing IJJA and IRA to expire, and addressing the provisions in the subsequent farm bills. Doing so may cause lapses in FS administration of the associated programs, creating inefficiencies if aspects of the laws are continued, and may result in forgone projects; allowing IJJA and IRA to expire may also be desirable should their implementation not meet congressional intent;
- A hybrid approach, where Congress chooses to act on individual provisions when information availability and political conditions make such action practicable.

If Congress were to reauthorize the IJJA and IRA provisions, modify them, or both, there would be a range of potential fiscal impacts. If the legislative option were to include any new or adjusted mandatory spending (i.e., by using IRA's existing mandatory funding structure), then it could be subject to congressional pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) or other budgetary rules. If the new mandatory spending were to result in an increase in the deficit (in excess of the baseline), these rules would require budgetary offsets through increasing revenue or decreasing other spending, unless Congress were to waive or set aside these rules.<sup>28</sup> If these provisions were included in a farm bill (or similar legislation with many provisions), it is possible that offsets could come from unrelated programs. Alternatively, Congress could fund the programs through the regular annual discretionary appropriations process, like most preexisting FS assistance programs. This would provide less certainty of funding from year to year, as funding for the programs would compete with other congressional priorities within overall budget constraints. This option would also allow Congress to exert more control of the programs through the discretionary appropriations process and to annually evaluate the costs and benefits of the programs against other federal priorities.

## Funding

Most FS assistance programs have permanent authorities and receive appropriations annually through the discretionary appropriations process. Congress generally considers the appropriate level of funding for FS assistance programs through the annual discretionary appropriations process and, somewhat more rarely, through the enactment, amendment, reauthorization, or expiration of statutes providing for mandatory spending for relevant programs (i.e., the Forest Legacy Program, and the IRA). As described in the "Funding" section, funding for FS assistance programs has remained relatively steady since FY2010, and is a very small fraction of the overall FS budget (see **Figure 2**).

<sup>28</sup> For an overview of federal budget procedures, see CRS Report 98-721, *Introduction to the Federal Budget Process*, or CRS Report R45789, *Long-Term Budgeting within the Congressional Budget Process: In Brief*.



An issue for Congress may be whether the size of the FS assistance budget reflects congressional priorities. Federal funding for the Forest Service has generally focused on wildland fire management (typically, but not entirely, on federal lands), and management of the National Forest System. However, Congress is generally interested in cross-boundary forestry issues, such as reducing wildfire risk, which require an “all-lands” approach for effective management. Congress may consider whether the FS assistance budget is appropriate to address such cross-boundary issues, given that it is the primary mechanism by which the federal government supports nonfederal forest management. In light of the large funding increases provided by IJA and IRA, Congress also may consider the appropriate funding levels for FS assistance after the laws’ expiration (or before), possibly by considering oversight information about whether implementation of those programs under current funding levels meets congressional expectations.

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