



Forest Land Enhancement Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. ***What is FLEP?*** FLEP is the Forest Land Enhancement Program, authorized under title VIII of the 2002 US Farm Bill. FLEP is intended to improve the practice of sustainable forestry on private land through the enhancement and restoration of forest resources. FLEP accomplishes its goals through a combined investment in technical assistance, educational assistance and cost-share repayment.
2. ***Who is eligible for cost-share?*** Any landowner with 5 or more acres of forest land or land suitable for establishing forest may receive cost-share. The landowner must agree to follow the prescriptions in her/his Landowner Forest Stewardship Plan and maintain the practices for 10 years.
3. ***How can FLEP help me?*** FLEP can provide you with the tools to realize your forest management goals and objectives and help you be a better steward of your land. In addition to cost-share, FLEP includes assistance for private forest landowners through technical assistance and educational assistance.
4. ***What practices are available through FLEP?*** A variety of practices are available to aid in forest and wildlife management including – developing a Landowner Forest Stewardship Plan, reforestation, forest stand improvement, water quality improvement, fish and wildlife habitat management, forest health improvement, invasive species control, and fire and catastrophic event rehabilitation.
5. ***How do I get started?*** Contact your regional DEC office to speak to a DEC Service Forester and request a free Landowner Forest Stewardship Plan and an application for additional practices that may be cost-sharable. You can access additional information on FLEP, such as the Landowner's Guide to FLEP, at www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/forestrypage or through your local DEC or Cornell Cooperative Extension Office.
6. ***Why is a Landowner Forest Stewardship Plan required before I can receive cost-share for other practices?*** A Landowner Forest Stewardship Plan serves as a benchmark or standard for owners to make wise decisions that support sustainable forestry practices. The plan is written to reflect the individual goals of the landowner.
7. ***I have a Stewardship Plan for part of my property, is that enough?*** No. Cost share for developing a Landowner Forest Stewardship Plan is only available when all forest land or land suitable for establishing forest within a contiguous

ownership is included. Properties that are crossed by roads, water bodies, utilities corridors, etc., are considered contiguous.

8. ***If my property is large, is there a limit to the amount of cost-share I can receive?*** Yes. Eligible landowners can receive cost share for treatment of up to 50 acres of land each year. However, Landowner Forest Stewardship Plans can be prepared for properties up to 1,000 acres in size. Participants may not receive more than \$5,000 in FLEP cost share payments in any given year or \$25,000 total through 2007.
9. ***If I can make a profit on a timber sale can I get any cost-share?*** You may receive cost share for any of the practices that do not directly yield a profit (e.g., marking timber, installing wildlife practices, etc.). You can not receive cost-share payments for practices that provide you income, such as the marketing or administration of a timber sale.
10. ***Who can obligate funds and authorize payments?*** Only DEC Service Foresters or their representatives may obligate funds and authorize payments. Private sector foresters must work through a DEC Service Forester to have funds approved and obligated.
11. ***Who decides which projects get funded?*** A DEC Service Forester will review the incoming applications and determine whether the requested practices are eligible and feasible, and whether funds are available. The DEC Service Forester must act on the request within 45 days of receiving the application.
12. ***How long will it take until I receive my cost-share payment?*** Once you complete the practices, you must submit documentation of the actual costs (paid invoices, cancelled checks, receipts, landowner work log, etc.) of installing the practices. The DEC Forester will authorize the cost share payment within 30 days of receiving all of the required documentation from the applicant. The DEC is partnering with the New York Woodland Stewards (NYWS) to coordinate cost-share payments to landowners. The check will come from NYFOA. Landowners should not contact NYWS directly, but rather through their DEC forester.
13. ***Why wasn't I approved?*** There are 2 reasons that an application may not be approved. The first is that the landowner did not meet the eligibility requirements for the practices he/she applied for. The second is that no funds are available at the time the application was submitted.
14. ***If I am not selected this year, will you hold my application for next year?*** Yes, assuming your application was denied because of lack of funds. Landowners who submit applications that don't meet eligibility requirements will be notified of the deficiency. If sufficient funds are not available, you will be notified and DEC will hold your application until funds become available unless the applicant requests modification or cancellation.
15. ***How long do I have to complete my forest enhancement activities, and can I get an extension if I need additional time?*** You have 6 months from the time the

DEC Forester approves your application to complete the requested practices and notify the DEC Forester you have finished the practice. For some special practices, like tree planting, additional time maybe allocated at the initial approval. Participants may request one extension of up to 6 months. The request must be made in writing to the DEC Forester at least 15 days prior to the original termination date. Most important, know the duration allocated and complete and report all tasks within that to avoid having your request canceled.

16. ***If I do some of the labor myself, can I be reimbursed for my time and, if so, how much is my time worth?*** The value of your time is based on data from national and state agricultural statistics services. Manual labor is \$10 / hour, chain saw work is \$18 / hour for equipment and operator, brush-hogging with tractor is \$25 / hour for equipment and operator, and bull dozer work is \$68 / hour for equipment and operator. Record the number of hours worked in each category on the FLEP Daily Work Log Sheet.
17. ***Do I have to pay a matching amount?*** Yes. Cost share rates vary by practice, but are typically 50% or 75% of the cost of the practice. The landowner must pay the remaining 25% - 50% of the cost of installing the practice. If the landowner contributes labor for installing the practices, the value of that labor can be counted toward the match.
18. ***What are the tax implications of cost-share payments?*** A final determination is pending from the IRS. The USDA Secretary has requested that FLEP payments be waived as gross income. If the IRS agrees, then FLEP payments do not have to be included as gross income for Federal income tax purposes. FLEP payments must be reported even if they aren't included as gross income.
19. ***Where can I go to hire a forester or other contractor?*** There are several options. First, contact your local DEC office for a copy of the Cooperating Forester Directory. You could also ask the DEC office or CCE office for a copy of the Forestry Extension article "Working with Foresters" which lists a variety of strategies. Recommendations for other contractors can be made through your forester, neighbors, or others.
20. ***What happens if I sell my property before the 10 years is up?*** The practice must be maintained for the 10 year period. If the new owner fails to maintain the practice the original owner can be held accountable for repayment of the cost-share amount. Landowners selling their property with practices installed should work with an attorney to modify the sale contract to protect the practice.
21. ***What if I lease the property where I would like to install FLEP practices?*** A person who has a long-term lease or easement on a given parcel of land may participate in the program provided that the lease covers the 10-years that they are required to maintain the practices.
22. ***Where else can I get cost-share money for my land?*** Other Federal, State, and local cost-share programs are available to provide assistance to landowners,

though many of these programs target lands other than forests. The USDA provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to landowners through programs like the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUIP). The US Fish and Wildlife Service has a Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) to help landowners conserve, enhance and protect habitat for wildlife species of concern. The New York City Watershed Agricultural Council has a local program to help forest landowners in the New York City Watershed plan and implement forestry practices in a manner that will ensure water quality protection. Your local Extension office or USDA Service Center can assist.