

## **Forest Land Enhancement Program**

The Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) is funded under the Federal 2002 Farm Bill. The objective of FLEP is to enhance stewardship efforts that support the sustainable use of forest resources on non-industrial private lands. These private lands are critical to the health, beauty and economy of New York. Private forests represent 85% of the forest land (15% public and industrial) and provide approximately 70% of the raw material for forest industries. Private forests provide clean air and water, wildlife habitat, and recreational and enterprise opportunities.

The Forest Land Enhancement Program promotes sound stewardship of non-industrial, privately-owned forest land by offering owners **technical assistance, educational programs and cost-sharing grants** as explained further in this brochure.

### **Technical Assistance**

Professional foresters are available to provide guidance to private forest landowners to promote sound forest resource management practices and forest stewardship on the ground. The NYS DEC Bureau of Private Land Services is primary provider of technical assistance in this program. DEC foresters should be contacted before a landowner initiates any projects with hopes of receiving cost-share payments. In addition to the DEC foresters who provide technical assistance, the private sector offers foresters who can guide landowners in their management decisions. *Even if landowners do not utilize resources from the cost-share and educational programs, technical assistance helps owners achieve their goals. To receive technical assistance, contact your local DEC office.* DEC foresters can make free visit to your property for consultation and can provide a list of Cooperating Foresters.

### **Educational Programs**

Educational programs inform landowners, foresters, and other resource professionals about the FLEP, how to use the guidelines of FLEP effectively, and how forest management practices can help landowners reach their goals while practicing sustainable forest management. The FLEP educational program is coordinated by the State Extension Forester in consultation with the DEC, through the Cornell Cooperative Extension system. The educational program seeks to inform through broad-scale initiatives and to enable enhanced practices through more intensive educational initiatives. FLEP educational programs are open to all individuals and complement ongoing extension education provided statewide and through county associations of the Cornell Cooperative Extension and outreach efforts of DEC. FLEP educational program activities will include direct mailing to thousand of forest owners, press releases, workshops and training for forest owners, training for foresters, training for Master Forest Owner volunteers, and public presentations to civic and community groups. DEC and the New York Forest Owners Association will partner with CCE in delivering FLEP education programs.

### **Cost-Sharing Assistance**

Cost-share programs reimburse forest owners for a portion of actual expenses associated with forest management practices having prior approval by the State Forester. This financial assistance has proven to be an effective incentive that encourages landowners to play a more active management role than without cost-sharing and to continue management activity after approved practices are completed. Cost-share practices must be approved by a DEC forester before they are initiated by the forest owner. Forest owners need a DEC-approved Landowner Forest Stewardship Plan (see FLEP # 1 below) before they are eligible for cost-sharing, but plans

are developed free of charge by the DEC or with partial reimbursement from private sector foresters under FLEP Practice 1, with DEC approval. Forest owners must implement their approved practice within 6 months of approval and can typically treat up to 50 acres per year, receive up to \$5,000 annually, with a minimum total of \$25,000 in cost-share payments through 2007 (the end of the current Farm Bill program authorization). Development of plans is reimbursable up to 75% of the actual cost and other practices are reimbursable at 50% or 75%, depending on the practice. \$250,000+ per year is available for cost-sharing in New York for 2003 through 2007.

### **Approved Practices**

Below is a summary of practices approved for FLEP cost-share assistance in New York. Full details on the practices are available in the state's priority plan from the DEC Division of Lands and Forests website or from a DEC forester.

**FLEP 1 - Forest Stewardship Planning:** Develop a Landowner Forest Stewardship Plan (LFSP) or upgrade an existing plan to meet NYS approved standards. Plans may be prepared by private sector foresters with a cost-share rate of 75% of actual costs for new plans or upgraded plans, not to exceed established program maximum rates. A stewardship plan must be approved by DEC before the landowner is eligible for other FLEP practices.

**FLEP 2 - Afforestation or Reforestation:** To encourage regeneration of forest cover through site preparation, planting, seeding, fencing, or tree shelters for the purposes of timber or fiber production or carbon sequestration. The planting plan may be part of the LFSP. Cost-share rate is 50%. Planting is limited to non-invasive native or naturalized species and cannot be used for orchard, ornamental, nursery or Christmas tree purposes.

**FLEP 3 - Forest Stand Improvement:** To enhance growth and quality of wood fiber. The cost-share rate of 75% is appropriate for activities such as tree marking, thinning, cull removal, or grapevine removal. Marking will be by an approved silvicultural prescription. Crop tree release is an eligible activity when following the approved guide.

**FLEP 4 - Agroforestry Implementation:** Not available.

**FLEP 5 - Water Quality Improvement:** To improve or protect water quality, riparian areas, forest wetlands and forest watersheds through the establishment, maintenance, renovation, and/or restoration of approved practices. The cost-share rate of 75% may be used for water control forestry best management practices, design and layout of access corridors, and soil stabilization with plants to restrict erosion and protect water quality.

**FLEP 6 - Fish and Wildlife Habitat Improvement:** To create, protect, or maintain fish and wildlife habitat through establishment, maintenance, and restoration practices. The cost-share rate of 50% may be applied to activities such as wildlife crop tree release, wild fruit tree maintenance, installing artificial cavities and hibernacula, creating forest openings, establishing streamside vegetation, and enhancing seeps.

**FLEP 7 - Forest Health Practices:** To improve, protect, and restore forest health relative to detection of or damage by insects, disease, and animals affecting established stands. The cost-share rate of 75% covers practices such as tree marking for stand improvement and thinning. Marking guidelines must be based on an approved silvicultural guide. The practice does not include cost-sharing for applications of chemical or biological agents for control of forest pests such as gypsy moth.

**FLEP 8 – Invasive Species Control:** To limit the spread of invasive species in forested environments through eradication or management practices that support the forest owner’s management goals. The cost-share rate of 50% can chemical control. Chemical or biological controls must adhere to label guidelines. This practice is not for orchard, ornamental, nursery or Christmas tree purposes.

**FLEP 9 – Wildfire and Catastrophic Event Reduction:** Not available.

**FLEP 10 – Wildfire and Catastrophic Event Rehabilitation:** To restore and rehabilitate forests following catastrophic natural events such as wildfire, wind, and ice storms. The cost-share rate of 50% includes activities such as stabilizing firebreak soils or burned areas, tree designation for stand improvement, and thinning. Three marking and thinning must follow an approved silvicultural guide.

**Summary**

FLEP is a useful tool to help forest owners enhance and ensure the sustainable use of their forests. This in turn supports the numerous benefits that private forests provide to communities and society. Before undertaking any activity, consult with and seek approval through your local DEC forester.

# Forest Land Enhancement Program

Promoting sound stewardship and sustainable use of natural resources on non-industrial, private forest lands through:

EDUCATION  
COST SHARING GRANTS  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

USDA Forest Service  
NYS Dept. Environmental Conservation  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
New York Forest Owners Association

[www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/forestrypage/flep](http://www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/forestrypage/flep)

