Forest Legacy Program

Request for Proposals

Program Year – Fiscal Year 2022

Deadline for Proposal Package Submission:

Thursday, August 6, 2020 by 5:00 p.m.

Important Application Information

Project proposals, applications and map for the Forest Legacy Program for the FY2022 grant round are due to the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) by **THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2020** by 5:00 p.m. (the "Due Date").

Applications for the program are available by contacting Andrew Fotinos at 434-270-4090; andrew.fotinos@dof.virginia.gov or at the VDOF website at http://dof.virginia.gov/land/legacy/index.htm. Separate applications are available for either an offer to: (1) encumber the property by a conservation easement, or (2) sell the property in fee simple.

The appropriate application must be completed by the landowner(s) and provided to the Project Advocate (the "Advocate"). The Advocate collects the application(s), researches the attributes of the property and creates a proposal and map, which are used for in-state review and ranking. The proposal, application and map are due to VDOF by the due date stated above. Landowners should provide their application for the program to the Advocate as early as possible so the Advocate can research, prepare and submit the proposal materials by the due date.

Introduction

The Forest Legacy Program assists state governments in identifying and protecting important forested lands through conservation easements and fee simple land purchases. Conservation easements allow private individuals to retain ownership, while providing for the conservation of forested lands. Fee simple purchases provide for additional state properties, held in the public interest, to be maintained and managed as working forests, natural areas or wildlife management areas. Both tools provide the Commonwealth's private landowners the opportunity to help conserve important forested lands, in perpetuity, for future generations.

VDOF seeks proposals for the Forest Legacy Program for the Federal 2022 fiscal year. Successful applicants may be awarded a grant in an amount up to 75% of the appraised conservation easement value, or the appraised property value if a fee simple purchase, based on Federal appraisal standards.

Application Process

Landowners interested in the Forestry Legacy Program must prepare an application for the program and also choose an Advocate to research the property's amenities in a series of statewide databases, prepare a proposal and a GIS-quality map for the property and possibly combine several properties (ownerships) in an effort to increase the competitiveness of the property.

The Advocate is usually a land trust or other private land conservation organization, but may also be the land conservation staff of a governmental entity, or any other interested organization. These organizational entities have staff and resources that allow for improved GIS map making and conservation value identification, both necessary in the current competitive environment. Use of Advocates also utilizes the collective knowledge and experience of Virginia's land conservation organizations and agencies and draws from the client base of these various entities.

Program Information

Projects and Tracts

Proposals for the Forest Legacy Program are offered as a project, which may be a compilation of several individual tracts (sometimes with separate ownership) that have some logical connection. This connection might be that the tracts fall within the same minor watershed, are located within a land trust focus area, are within an area designated by the locality as a conservation area, or collectively contribute to the conservation of an important resource designated by a land conservation organization as worthy of conservation.

Tracts are the individual parcels of property offered by the landowner (in the application) for program consideration and consist of one or more county tax map parcels.

Forest Legacy Areas

Tracts are eligible for the program if they are located wholly or partially within the Forest Legacy Area (FLA) for the state. A map of the current FLA is found in the appendix to this document (FLA shown in green). The potential applicant or the Advocate should examine the map to determine if the tract appears to be within the FLA. If the eligibility of the tract cannot be determined from examining this map, the applicant or the Advocate may submit a sketch or tax map parcel map to VDOF to determine if the tract falls within the FLA.

Forest Legacy Program Requirements

Each tract approved in the Forest Legacy Program must meet the following conditions:

- The tract of land must be 50 acres in size or larger
- The tract must be at least 75 percent forested (or the landowner must be willing to plant trees on open fields to meet this percentage)

Landowner(s) participating in the Forest Legacy Program must:

- be a "willing seller"
- be willing to encumber their property with a perpetual conservation easement, or be willing to sell their property in fee simple
- if a conservation easement, allow annual on-site monitoring of the property
- be willing to sell the easement or fee simple rights at less than the full appraised value according to Federal appraisal standards (Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions)
- be willing, if program administrative funds are not adequate, to pay a portion of the due diligence costs necessary to acquire the conservation easement or land in fee simple by having these costs deducted from the amount offered for the purchase

- be willing to pay for a survey of the property if an area less than an entire tax parcel (or multiple entire tax parcels) is offered for the program, or if the acreage of the property offered can not be validated.
- be willing to sign a non-binding letter of intent, prior to national project review, showing commitment and interest in placing a conservation easement on, or selling, their land
- in the case of an easement, provide a Forest Stewardship Management Plan or multiple-resource forest management plan for the property for review by VDOF and the USDA Forest Service prior to closing; it may be necessary for the landowner(s) to pay the cost of preparing the plan

Proposal Format

A project proposal is prepared by the Advocate and includes information about the proposed area/properties being offered for Forest Legacy Program funding. The information provided should be broken into the major categories of importance, threatened and strategic, and can be provided in text or in a bulleted format.

Alternately, the Advocate may choose to provide project information by completing and submitting a Form 10.6 Forest Legacy Program Property Data Sheet for each property that is part of a proposal. The Form 10.6 is available on the VDOF website.

The Advocate is advised to review the databases provided as web links in the Form 10.6 to gather project information whether or not they plan to provide a proposal using a narrative or bulleted format, or a proposal that includes property data sheets.

Offering A Proposal For The Program

Required Contents of a Proposal

A proposal for the Forest Legacy Program must contain the following:

1. One (1) original narrative project proposal, or an original Form 10.6 Forest Legacy Program Property Data Sheet, for each property (ownership) being offered for consideration
2. One (1) originally-signed (by the respective landowner(s)) Forest Legacy Application for each property (ownership) that is being offered for consideration
3. A GIS-quality map showing the location of each property (ownership) being offered, their proximity to each other and to conservation boundaries, focus areas, or other conserved lands
4. Five (5) copies of the above materials (items 1, 2 and 3)

Process for Advocates to Submit Proposal Packages

A completed proposal package for the program must be submitted by the Due Date (see page 1).

Mail to Virginia Department of Forestry, Attn: Andrew Fotinos, P.O. Box 100, Salem, VA 24153. If hand delivering or sending via a non-USPS carrier, deliver to 210 Riverland Drive, Salem, VA 24153.

Electronic documents (created or scanned) received by email (or file transfer service) are acceptable. Maps provided must be in color.

Delivery (paper or electronically) must be by the due date.

Proposal Review And Ranking

State Review and Ranking

Proposal packages are reviewed by the Forest Legacy Subcommittee at their fall meeting, usually in mid-September. Advocates will be expected to present the proposal before the subcommittee at this meeting and will be notified of the scheduled day for the meeting.

State ranking is based on the information found in the project proposal. In addition, the subcommittee may have questions related to the project that can be answered during the proposal presentation. The Proposal Evaluation Sheet, located in the Appendix to this document, is used to score and rank the proposals received.

Up to three proposals can be forwarded to the Virginia Forest Stewardship Committee for consideration, and then recommended to the State Forester for review, approval and final ranking.

National Review, Ranking and Possible Funding

Virginia proposals that are being submitted for national review and ranking are entered by VDOF and the Advocate into the Forest Legacy Information System (FLIS). The landowner may need to provide additional information to the Advocate about how the property is unique. This will help to prepare a quality write-up in FLIS for national review. In addition, the Advocate will be soliciting letters of support for the proposal and may ask the landowner for assistance with generating these letters (which are listed in FLIS).

A National Panel composed of representatives from across the country will meet in January 2021 to consider and rank projects submitted in FLIS from the states. The final ranking of the National Panel will be forwarded to the Office of the President for Federal Fiscal Year 2022 budget consideration. The Congress will then consider the President's Budget and authorize grant award amounts in the Appropriations Act.

Additional Sources of Information and Assistance

USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy website, http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flp.shtml – this website provides links to additional information about the Forest Legacy Program.

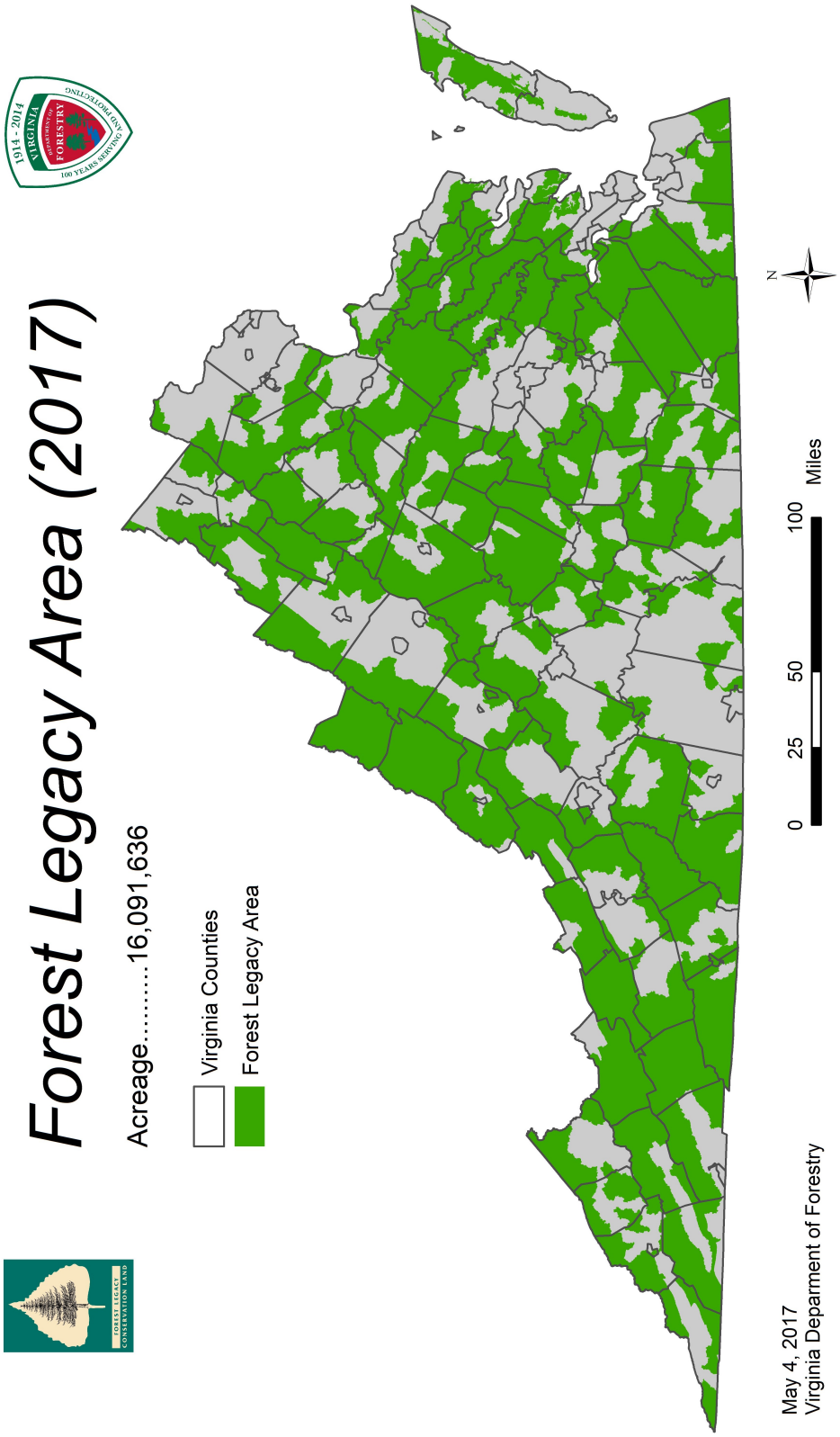
Department of Forestry; the following link at the VDOF website has complete application documents for downloading; http://dof.virginia.gov/land/legacy/index.htm

United States House District website, http://www.house.gov – this website will provide Congressional district information.

Contact Information

Andrew Fotinos
Phone 434-270-4090
FAX 540-387-5445
Email: andrew.fotinos@dof.virginia.gov

Appendix


Forest Legacy Area (2017)
Acreage.....16,091,636
Virginia Counties
Forest Legacy Area
0 25 50 100 Miles
N
May 4, 2017
Virginia Deparment of Forestry

Virginia Forest Legacy Program

Proposal Evaluation Sheet Example

Property/Project: _____

Landowner Name(s): _____

_____

County/City: _____ Acres: _____

Evaluator Name: _____ Date of Evaluation: _____

Importance Scoring (30 points maximum)

Economic Benefits from Timber and Potential Forest Productivity: _____ Points

Land managed according to a Forest Management Plan.
Land is 3rd party certified (SFI, FSC, Tree Farm).
Forestry activity contributes to resource-based economy.
Contains characteristics (slope, soils) to sustain a productive forest.

Economic Benefits from Non-Timber Products: _____ Points

Provides non-timber revenue to the local or regional economy [hunting leases, non-timber forest products (pine straw, pine tipping, ginseng collection), guided tours (fishing, hunting, bird watching) and recreation/tourism (rentals, bikes, boats, outdoor gear)].

Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat: _____ Points

Property contains documented T & E species (consider numbers shown below during scoring).
Number of Federally Listed Species: _____
Number of State Listed Species: _____

Fish, Wildlife, Plants and Unique Forest Communities: _____ Points

Contains unique forest communities as documented by a formal assessment or wildlife conservation plan or strategy.

Water Supply, Aquatic Habitat and Watershed Protection: _____ Points

Protects a water supply or watershed (ie. provides a public drinking water supply, an aquifer recharge area or protects an ecologically important aquatic or marine area.
Contains important riparian area, wetlands, shorelines, river systems or sensitive watershed lands.

Public Access: _____ Points

Will maintain or establish access by the public for recreation (restrictions on specific use or location of activities are okay).

Scenic: _____ Points

Is located within the viewshed of a formally-designated scenic feature such as a trail, river, or highway.

Historic / Cultural / Tribal: _____ Points

Contains features of historical, cultural and/or tribal significance, formally documented by a governmental or non-governmental organization.

Subtotal Points (30 Points Maximum for Importance) _____ Points

Threatened Scoring (20 points maximum)

Lack of Protection: _____ Points

Lack of temporary or permanent protections that currently exist (zoning, permanent easements, encumbrances that limit subdivision); the likelihood or the threat of conversion.

Land and Landowner's Circumstances: _____ Points

Landowner circumstances including: property held in an estate, aging landowner, future use by heirs is uncertain, property is for sale or has a sale pending, owner anticipates owning property for a short duration, owner has received purchase offers, land has an approved subdivision plan; owner has sold subdivisions to the property, etc.

Adjacent Land Use: _____ Points

Adjacent land use characteristics: rate of development growth and conversion, rate of population growth (percent change), rate of change in ownership.

Ability to Develop: _____ Points

Physical attributes that will facilitate conversion: access, buildable ground, zoning, slope, water/sewer, electricity, etc.

Subtotal Points (20 Points Maximum for Threatened) _____ Points

Strategic Scoring (30 points maximum)

Conservation Initiative, Strategy or Plan: _____ Points

Fits within a larger conservation plan, strategy, or initiative as designated by a government or non-government entity.

Compliments Protected Lands: _____ Points

Strategically linked to enhance previously protected land (past FLP projects, protected Federal, State, or NGO lands), or other Federal land protection programs (NRCS, NAWCA, NOAA, etc.)

Subtotal Points (30 Points Maximum for Threatened) _____ Points

Total State Score for Project (80 Points Maximum) _____ Points