

# Riparian Forests for Landowners Program

## Program Guide for Field Staff – Watershed Program



### Overview and Program Goals

The Riparian Forests for Landowners (RFFL) program is a flexible funding program that provides riparian forest buffer installation and one year of maintenance at no cost to landowners. The program intends to fill gaps created by other programs, which are traditionally geared towards agricultural producers or public land.

### Parameters

- ◆ Program allows flexible planting densities, allowing 200 to 435 trees per acre.
- ◆ Program allows flexible species composition, allowing hardwood (tree and shrub species), conifer or a mixture of the two, with no set percentages.
- ◆ Program allows flexible buffer establishment sites. Funding supports buffer establishment on any identifiable water feature, man-made or natural.
- ◆ Buffer width must be between 35 and 300 feet.
- ◆ Planting stock is limited to bare-root seedlings, containerized plugs and live stakes (potted, ball and burlap, and caliper trees are too costly).
- ◆ Planting site must have lower than 20% invasive species cover prior to enrollment.
- ◆ RFFL cannot piggyback on other cost-share programs.
- ◆ RFFL funds are for private landowners, but projects on public land will be considered on a case-by-case in Part 2.

### Implementation

RFFL has two phases, identified as “Part 1” and “Part 2” below. Both phases will begin simultaneously.

#### Part 1

This phase of the program identifies contractors who provide turn-key service to one or more of Virginia’s major watersheds. Contractor turn-key services include outreach, planning, implementation and one year of maintenance.

- ◆ Watershed Team responsibilities include:
  - Tract creation in IFRIS (if needed).
  - Cost-share plan accomplishment entry into IFRIS.
  - District forester notification of projects in their districts.
  - Field staff notification when planting quality and survival checks are needed.
- ◆ Field staff responsibilities include:
  - On-site verification of **planting quality** and **survival** within 10 business days following notification from the Watershed Team, communicating those results to the Watershed Team within five business days of inspection. If maintenance activities occur after the survival check, verification of **maintenance completion**.
  - Deliverables include:
    - Either a **Form 7.12** for pine or **Form 7.14** for hardwood and mixed plantings.

- Final tally sheet from the Stand Assessment Tool, following survival check.
- Two series of accomplishments need to be entered following each verification:
  - Establishment (Watershed Team will notify staff of needed accomplishments for project.)
    - Site Preparation – Chemical and/or Mechanical (if both are used, enter each separately)
    - Riparian Buffer Establishment
    - Tree Planting – Rural or Urban
    - Planting Quality Exam
  - Maintenance (Watershed Team will notify staff of needed accomplishments for project.)
    - Tree Planting – Rural or Urban (if replanting is needed)
    - Site Preparation (if needed prior to replanting)
    - Release – Herbicide and/or Mechanical
    - Invasive Species Management (if required)
    - Seedling Survival Exam using Stand Assessment Tool

## Part 2

This phase is executed primarily by DOF, with field staff assuming the additional responsibilities with heavy support by the Watershed Team.

- ◆ Field staff responsibilities include:
  - Outreach and planning for both the implementation and maintenance phases of the project.
  - On-site verification of **planting quality** and **survival** within 10 business days following notification from the Watershed Team, communicating those results to the Watershed Team within five business days of inspection. If maintenance activities occur after the survival check, provide verification of **maintenance completion**.
  - Deliverables for each phase include:
    - Implementation
      - A **Form 7.8** cost share plan
      - Tract entry into IFRIS
      - A **Form 7.12** for pine or **Form 7.14** for hardwood and mixed plantings
    - Maintenance
      - A short stand plan (can be an email) detailing maintenance needs
      - Final tally sheet from the Stand Assessment Tool following survival check
  - Two series of accomplishments need to be entered following each verification:
    - Establishment (Watershed Team will notify staff of needed accomplishments for project.)
      - Open Field Planting Exam
      - Cost-Share Plan
      - Site Preparation – Chemical or Mechanical (if both are used, enter each separately)
      - Riparian Buffer Establishment
      - Tree Planting – Rural or Urban
      - Planting Quality Exam
    - Maintenance (Watershed Team will notify staff of needed accomplishments for project.)
      - Stand Plan
      - Tree Planting – Rural or Urban (if replanting is needed)
      - Site Preparation (if needed prior to replanting)
      - Release – Herbicide and/or Mechanical
      - Invasive Species Management (if required)
      - Seedling Survival Exam using the Stand Assessment Tool
- ◆ Watershed Team responsibilities include:
  - Project approval and issuance of tracking number.
  - The recruitment, management and payment of all contractors.