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TECHNICAL RELEASE

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WEB SITE LISTS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS FOR NON-INDUSTRIAL PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

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INTRODUCTION: Forestry incentive programs are of high interest to non-industrial private forest owners. They can involve cost share for things like reforestation or stand improvement, income tax credits, property tax benefits, technical assistance, and regulatory streamlining. These benefits go a lot further than the timber-oriented programs of the past. Objectives now include things like conservation practices, wildlife habitat plans, and implementation of sustainable forestry practices.

GENERAL FEATURES: The five authors identified existing and potential financial incentive programs to promote sustainable forestry on non-industrial private lands. Forestry incentive programs are not just at the federal level, but are also offered by states and private entities. There are a myriad of programs available, and the availability varies by state. The authors have created a web site which identifies which programs are available in each state at the federal, state, and private levels. Then it links to each program's own web site in that state, so that forest owners can directly obtain information, make contacts, and enroll in the programs.

The web site is hosted at www.srs.fs.usda.gov/econ/data/forestincentives/. It is intended as an aid to service foresters, policy-makers, and other researchers interested in knowing what financial assistance programs are available to nonindustrial private forest owners in each state. We anticipate that better knowledge of the existing programs and their relative strengths and weaknesses will help guide the design of future assistance programs and increase their effectiveness in improving the level of stewardship practiced on the nation's nonindustrial private forests.

Foresters still refer to the Forestry Incentives Program (FIP) when forestry cost-share is discussed, but that program has actually been de-authorized. Today, the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP), established in 1991, provides fundamental forest landowner assistance. The FSP is not a cost-share program, but cost-share assistance for implementation is available through related assistance programs. The purpose of the FSP is to assist private forest owners to manage their forest and related resources more actively, to keep these lands in a productive and healthy condition for present and future owners, and to increase the economic and environmental benefits of these lands. FSP focuses on providing services to landowners not currently managing their forest land according to a resource management plan that embodies multi-resource stewardship principles. Landowner participation in the program requires preparation of a forest stewardship management plan and good faith efforts to implement it.

The web site discusses FSP and also covers the following other federal programs: the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Forest Legacy Program (FLP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUIP), the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP), the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention and Restoration Program (SPBPRP).

The federal programs are fairly well known. But state-level and private forestry incentive programs are often less known. The web site lists state programs such as forestry cost-share, property tax abatement, and conservation programs. At the private level, programs like statewide forest trusts and Tree Farm are also listed.

RESULTS: The authors' survey indicates that only two federal financial assistance programs—the Forest Stewardship and Forest Land Enhancement Programs—are available in every state. The full suite of federal programs surveyed is most likely to be available in states in the East, Midwest, and South and least likely to be available in the West. The Southern Pine Beetle Prevention and Restoration Program is available in 11 states in the South.

All 50 states have some type of preferential property tax under which forest land can be protected from fragmentation and conversion, but in some states forest land is classified as agricultural or undeveloped land. States in every region also have their own financial assistance programs directed toward non-industrial private forests, and at least one state in every region has more than one. The proportion of states having such programs is highest in the South and lowest in the East.

Table 1. Percentage of states where federal financial assistance programs are available, by region.

	East	Midwest	South	West
Forest Stewardship Program	100%	100%	100%	100%
Conservation Reserve Program.....	64%	100%	100%	46%
Environmental Quality Incentives Program.....	100%	92%	100%	85%
Forest Land Enhancement Program.....	100%	100%	100%	100%
Forest Legacy Program	100%	77%	92%	92%
Landowner Incentive Program.....	73%	85%	62%	31%
South. Pine Beetle Prevention & Restoration.....	N/A	N/A	77%	N/A
Wetlands Reserve Program.....	100%	100%	92%	31%
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	82%	100%	100%	38%

States in every region also have programs sponsored by private entities. Most are timber management and marketing assistance programs sponsored by individual forest industry firms; these programs are most common in the South and East, and least common in the West. Two states—Minnesota and Texas—have programs sponsored by state forestry associations. And two states—Indiana and Virginia—have programs sponsored by nongovernmental organizations.

States in every region also have Tree Farm programs active enough to have their own web sites. And states in every region have public or privately-sponsored statewide forest trusts.

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