



2008 FARM BILL WESTERN FORESTRY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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This document looks at several common questions on forestry-related provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill and compliments the NASF Farm Bill Summary.
www.stateforesters.org/files/Farm%20Bill%20Conference%20Report-Summary%202008.doc

QUESTION: How do the provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill align with the USDA Forest Service State & Private Forestry Redesign?

ANSWER: The Farm Bill includes several provisions that align with the S&PF Redesign such as the setting of national priorities, requirements for the long-term state-wide assessments and strategies and direction for the competitive allocation of funds.

The Bill directs the Secretary of Agriculture to focus on three national priorities: 1) conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses, 2) protect forests from threats and restore appropriate forest types in response to threats and 3) enhance public benefits from private forests. The Bill includes language that sets up the procedure for long-term state assessments of forest resource conditions and a strategy for addressing threats identified in the Assessment. When approved, these will satisfy the planning requirements of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA). The Bill authorizes up to \$10 million a year which can include other funds made available in the CFAA for planning.

The Redesign Implementation Committee will be releasing a document with more information on the Farm Bill Provisions related to the S&PF Redesign.

QUESTION: How have the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program been restructured to include forestry?

ANSWER: The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) was significantly restructured but the opportunities for forested land were not increased to the level that the Council of Western State Foresters and other entities had advocated for during the drafting process.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a different story. The opportunities for forested land within this program have been increased along with the funding levels over the life of the Farm Bill. The purposes of EQIP are expanded to include forest management and forest management is now an eligible 'production system', an important distinction that will facilitate forested land becoming an integral part of the program. The definition of "eligible land" includes non-industrial private forest lands as well as land on which forest-related products are produced and the definition of a conservation practice has been revised to include forest management.

These changes highlight the intent of Congress to increase the opportunities for forested land. The relationships between State Foresters and their State Technical Committees are an important part of the successful incorporation of forested land conservation into EQIP. State Foresters are now a 'required' member of the State Technical Committees which will increase the opportunity for dialogue between the two entities. The WFLC recently surveyed the western states and territories and published the results in a report, *Environmental Quality Incentives Program – A Western*

Summary providing information on states and how they are working with their Technical Committees to further opportunities in EQIP. (www.wflcweb.org/infomaterials/reports.php)

QUESTION: What provisions within the Farm Bill address the need for research on forest biomass for energy? How does the 2007 Energy Bill Renewable Biomass Definition impact the viability of these Farm Bill programs?

ANSWER: There are several provisions within the Energy Title that address the need for biomass assistance. The **Biomass Crop Assistance Program** supports establishment and production of eligible crops for energy and non-industrial private forest landowners not enrolled in certain other programs can qualify to receive up to 75% cost recovery to establish eligible crops if they have a Forest Stewardship plan or the equivalent.

The **Forest Biomass for Energy program** authorizes the USDA Forest Service to develop a competitive research and development program that will promote the use of forest biomass to energy. Priorities of this program include technology development and integration of forest biomass in biorefineries. The **Community Wood Energy program** sets up a Forest Service matching grant program that provides for feasibility studies and community wood energy systems. Support for the conversion of public buildings to wood-based power and the development of sustainable wood supply plans are the goals of this grant program that has \$5 million authorized for FY09-FY12.

The Farm Bill Energy Title did not include a revision of the renewable biomass definition contained in the 2007 Energy Bill's renewable fuels standard section. Many organizations were advocating for the Farm Bill to provide for a 'fix' for the concerns with the Energy Bill's definition of renewable biomass that would include materials from Federal lands. Although this revision was not included in the Energy Title of the Farm Bill, the definition of renewable biomass in the Farm Bill is an all-inclusive definition. The fact that the Energy Title did not include the negative definition from the Energy Bill is important as the EPA begins the rulemaking process for the programs in the Energy Bill.

QUESTION: The CWSF pushed for the Freely Associated States (FAS) of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau to regain the ability to access CFAA programs. Was this provision carried through to the final Farm Bill?

ANSWER: The Farm Bill includes language restoring the FAS' ability to access funding and technical assistance. Their ability to receive funding through the CFAA was compromised when the compacts were changed. A definitional issue caused the forestry assistance for the FAS to be called into question. The Farm Bill restores the FAS' ability to receive forestry assistance such as cooperative fire protection and forest stewardship and provides the opportunity for access to CFAA programs that these islands did not previously have access to such as forest legacy.

QUESTION: The Senate approved version of the Farm Bill included a provision that changed the current structure of the Legacy Program. Did this provision carry through to the final Farm Bill?

ANSWER: No. The Senate approved the Farm Bill with a provision changing the application process of the Legacy program. This provision would have allowed tribal entities to apply directly with the US Forest Service without having to work with the State Forester. It was felt that this process change would eliminate the benefits of working together to provide a more inclusive look at the best projects across the landscape. This provision was not approved by the Farm Bill Conference Committee and therefore was not included in the approved Farm Bill. The Legacy Program process will continue as it does currently. This exchange reinforces the need for strengthened partnership and ties between feds, states and tribal entities.