



CALL FOR FOREST LEGACY PROPOSALS FOR SPECIAL IRA FUNDING CYCLE – DUE 1/19/2024

October 11, 2023

Dear Forest Legacy Ranking Committee, Conservation Partners, Forest Landowners, and others:

Project proposals seeking consideration for funding under the Forest Legacy Program for the Inflation Reduction Act FY 24 funds can now be submitted until the deadline at 4:30 p.m. CST January 19, 2024 . The Forest Legacy Committee (FLC) of the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (SFSCC) will convene on in January to review and rank projects for which funding is being sought. Please be aware that the Forest Legacy Program is a 75/25 matching grant and at least 25% nonfederal funding match is required. A copy of this request for proposal submission packet can be viewed or downloaded from the Division of Forestry Forest Legacy Program webpage:

<https://www.tn.gov/agriculture/forests/protection/legacy.html> in the program Materials section.

The submission packet should include information that the submitter feels qualifies the tract for inclusion in the Forest Legacy Program (see attached documents). Please provide two (2) print copies and one (1) digital copy of all materials in your submission for use by the FLC in evaluating and scoring your project. Also provide us with the landowner's contact information to verify their interest and intent to participate. Any tract owner or representative is welcome to appear at the ranking meeting and if they notify us in advance within one week of schedule meeting.

Project Eligibility Requirements *(includes both standard FLP requirements and additional IRA criteria):*

- **Forest Legacy Area:** The project is situated within (whole or in part) a designated Forest Legacy Priority Area. <https://www.tn.gov/agriculture/forests/protection/legacy.html>
- **Forest Cover:** The project has at least 75 percent forest cover (or can be reforested to at least 75 percent forest cover)
- **Consistent with FLP:** The project can be managed consistent with the purpose for which it was acquired by FLP.
- **Willing Landowner:** The landowner is willing to sell or donate the interest in perpetuity
- **Local / County Support:** The County Mayor(s) have reviewed the project proposal, which should include a summary of potential tax revenue impact and additional revenue sources (if applicable) and provided letters of support. Properties occurring in multiple counties need letters of support from each respective county.
- **Local / Legislator Support:** State Representative(s) and Senators have received a copy of the County Mayor(s) letter of support and reviewed the project proposal. Properties occurring in multiple congressional districts must have the project proposal sent for review by each respective state legislators.
- **Future Management:** For fee acquisitions and projects seeking to sell a conservation easement: A current *Multi-Resource Management Plan* or abstract detailing owner's management intent must be established at the time of application. The management objectives identified within the *Multi-Resource Management Plan* or abstract detailing owner's management intent must be consistent with the purposes of the Forest Legacy Program and further Tennessee's programmatic objectives through planned practices promoting forest health and active forest management.

- **Monitoring Agreement:** A perpetual annual (for conservation easements) or every 5 years (for fee acquisition) monitoring agreement with a non-TDF entity.
- **TDF Agreement:** A willingness to sign an agreement between TDF and project submitter outlining roles and responsibilities as they pertain to preparing project submission documents and, if funded, requisite documents for the Forest Legacy Program and the Tennessee Real Estate Asset Management team.
- **IRA Requirements:** Visit the US Forest Service FLP website for the complete *Proposal Submission Process and Scoring Guidance*. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/FY24%20Project%20Scoring%20Guidance%20-%20IRA.pdf>

States can submit up to five projects in each round for funding consideration within the following project types/category:

- 1) One Large Landscape project – *not to exceed \$50 million per project.*
- 2) One State-Tribal Partnership project – *not to exceed \$50 million per project.*
- 3) Three Strategic Small Tract projects – *not to exceed \$1.5 million per project.*

Your project proposal packet must include a letter of intent to me or the FLC from the respective landowner before the FLC will consider their tract. A sample is attached. A letter of intent is not a commitment, but it does imply that the landowner is familiar with the program and its objectives, and as such intends to participate in the program. We need the contact information of the willing seller, including phone number, and email, with each letter of intent. To that end interested landowners will be called before the deadline to discuss the program with them.

For those submitting more than one tract for funding consideration, we ask that you prioritize them in a cover letter in the packet of information you send. See the attached TENNESSEE RANKING SHEET the review committee will use to make ranking decisions. See the attached project submission checklist for additional project proposal guidance.





Those wishing to have tracts considered for funding must have their submissions to the following address by **4:30 PM CST, JANUARY 19TH, 2024**. Please contact Heather Slayton at (615-837-5432; heather.slayton@tn.gov) if you have questions or need additional information. For more information on the Forest Legacy Program in Tennessee see Appendix D, for the Tennessee Forest Action Plan (<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/agriculture/documents/forestry/2020-tn-fap/2021/2020-TN-FAP.pdf>) and the national Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines (https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/15541-forest-service-legacy-program-508.pdf).

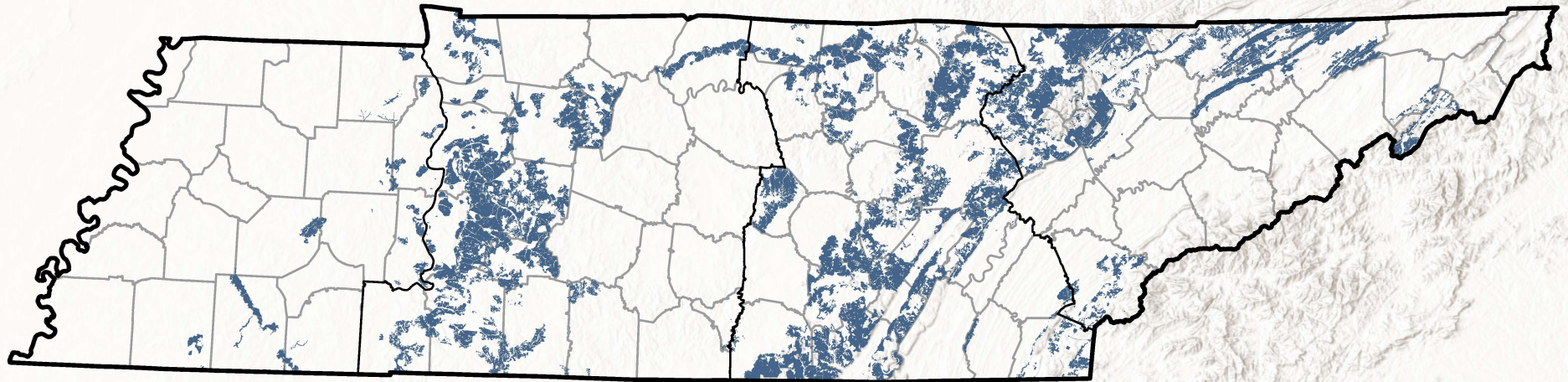
Sincerely,



Heather Slayton
Assistant State Forester
Division of Forestry
P.O. Box 40627
Nashville, TN 37204

Forest Legacy Program Priority Areas

-  Tennessee's Priority Areas, 2020-2030
-  Tennessee Counties
-  TDF District Boundaries
-  Tennessee



Tennessee Forest Legacy Program Criteria

- 1) Property is a forested tract with at least 20 acres of contiguous forest.
- 2) Property is located in one of the top 60% of timber milling counties.
- 3) Property is located in an area with significant risk to ecosystem function, defined as becoming lightly stressed, stressed, impacted, or damaged by 2030 due to the extent of impervious surface and urbanization.
- 4) Property is identified in The Nature Conservancy's Resilient and Connected Prioritized Network.

0 25 50 75 100 125 150 Miles



Tennessee 2020 Forest Action Plan Map Series

Map by: P.M.M. updated 12-19-23

SUGGESTED FORM LETTER OF INTENT

Name and Address of Participant

Re: **LETTER OF INTENT**

Very brief statement of your intended participation. (Example: Regarding 235 acres of Forest Land I own in Jones County, TN)

Tennessee Division of Forestry
Heather Slayton, Assistant State Forester
Forest Legacy Program Manager
State of Tennessee
P. O. Box 40627
Melrose Station
Nashville, TN 37204

Dear Ms. Slayton,

This letter is to state my intent to (select one) donate my land in fee simple or donate a conservation easement or sell a conservation easement to the Tennessee's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) subject to approval of the FLP and the US Forest Service, availability of grant award and subject to approval of all due diligence.

I understand that a Multi-Resource Management Plan, clear title, Appraisal, Appraisal Review, Baseline Documentation Report (for conservation easements only), Minerals Remoteness Opinion, survey, clear title, legal description and/or other necessary due diligence may be performed for and on my property. The persons who perform this work will advise me in advance of their schedule to do so under a separate consent to enter agreement.

Please note that this letter is intended only to set out in general terms my intentions to participate in the program. It is not intended to oblige me to make a donation nor is it a binding contract with regard to any transaction and should not be concluded by anyone as a contract. While I fully intend to continue with the process should my tract be accepted for inclusion in the Forest Legacy Program, I remain free to stop the process at any time I choose to do so.

Sincerely,

Name of Landowner

2024 Tennessee Forest Legacy Program
PROJECT SUBMISSION CHECKLIST – FLP IRA PROPOSALS
Due to Tennessee Department of Forestry on _____, 2024

With your FLP submission, you must include the following:

- ____ Narrative report of 5 pages in Word explaining how the proposed tract addresses the elements of the Tennessee Ranking Sheet. The suggested format is 1 page for tract summary (location, history, management, national significance, political and local support, etc.); and 1 page for each ranking element (Importance, Threatened, Strategic, and Readiness).
- ____ Name(s), address(es), telephone, and e-mail address of the owner(s) of the property.
- ____ List of existing permanent improvements on the proposed FLP tract; house, barns, ponds
- ____ Map identifying any dumps, rubbish sites or waste disposal sites on the property.
- ____ Statement of whether property boundary has been surveyed and marked (include survey if available)
- ____ Current deed
- ____ Recent title commitment or title search (if available)
- ____ Copies of liens, easements, leases, or other restrictions on the property
- ____ Identification of ownership of the mineral estate, and type of minerals present
- ____ Current Multi-Resource Management Plan or abstract detailing owner's management intent
- ____ Estimate of the number of acres offered to the FLP
- ____ Landowner's major forest objectives
- ____ If a fee simple purchase, what agency will assume management of property.
- ____ Landowner's Letter of Intent (required)
- ____ County Mayor(s) letters of Support (required)
- ____ State legislators have received copies of County Mayor(s) letters of Support and have reviewed the project proposal (required)
- ____ Estimated market value (in dollars) of property or tract
- ____ Basis for the estimated market value of property or tract. An appraisal or market analysis is required to submit a FLP proposal to the U.S. Forest Service
- ____ Source of the 25% matching funds (e.g., bargain sale, another tract, cash donation, partner, etc.).
- ____ Large scale map indicating location of property
- ____ Digitized map showing proposed FLP acreage boundaries (Shape file preferred).
- ____ Proximity to other Forest Legacy tracts and other protected lands (federal, state, local government, private easements)

Tennessee Forest Legacy Program Project Application Scoring – IRA PROPOSALS
Deadline for Applications - 4:30 p.m. January 19, 2024

This document provides guidance to the Tennessee Forest Legacy Ranking Committee on how to score individual Forest Legacy Program (FLP) projects, including additional clarification on the core national criteria, project readiness and other evaluation considerations used in this process. This guidance mirrors criteria used by the National Review Panel, who ultimately scores and ranks submissions from the states. **This is a competitive grant program. To be considered for IRA funding, proposals must also meet the IRA “Special Emphasis criteria listed below and the Standard National Core Criteria. Please see <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/FY24%20Project%20Scoring%20Guidance%20-%20IRA.pdf> for the IRA Proposal Submission Process and Scoring Guidance.**

IRA SPECIAL EMPHASIS CRITERIA : *Please check one of the 3 following categories and provide a one page narrative on how your proposed project aligns with the Special Emphasis Criteria.*

See link above for more details and summary below. States can submit up to five projects in each round for funding consideration within the following project types/category:

- _____ 1) **One Large Landscape project** – *not to exceed \$50 million per project.*
- _____ 2) **One State-Tribal Partnership project** – *not to exceed \$50 million per project.*
- _____ 3) **Three Strategic Small Tract projects** – *not to exceed \$1.5 million per project.*

1. IRA Special Emphasis Criteria – Large Landscape Projects:

These projects should focus on large scale, high impact opportunities in ecological and economically significant landscapes where a significant federal investment available at one time will achieve a conservation outcome with exceptional public benefits. This opportunity is limited to conservation easement and fee simple acquisition transactions with a single legal entity (individual, family, or corporate landowners) with high leverage/non-federal contributions by the landowner, state, and other partners. Proposals may include multiple tracts but they all must be legally held by the same entity or where a single organization exercises legal control for all proposed tracts on land collectively owned (e.g. timber investment management organization). Projects with multiple tracts must be negotiated and executed as a single negotiated transaction to ensure all lands and interests included in the proposal are legally protected. States may request up to \$50 million of federal funding per project in this category. States may only submit one project for consideration in this category per round. How does your project align with the following?

1) **High impact** – exceptional economic, social, and environmental benefits and high strategic importance in a priority landscape aligned with National Core Criteria (as described in preceding sections). Applicants should expand on the exceptional quality and unique strategic benefits of the proposed project to supplement the information provided under the National Core Criteria (Strategic, Threatened, Important) below.

2) **National goals** - significant contributions to one or more of the following national goals: a.

Climate resilience b. Carbon sequestration c. Habitat connectivity d. Benefits for disadvantaged or Tribal/indigenous communities

3) **High leverage** – projects with higher non-federal cost share than the minimum required of 25 percent will be given greater consideration.

4) **Efficiency of scale** – a large investment now will be more cost effective and efficient than phasing over time.

5) **High readiness and capacity** – States will need to demonstrate high readiness and capacity for successful project implementation within 3 years of grant award. Recent performance and current capacity will be carefully considered.

6) **Stewardship Capacity** – State has sufficient funding and plans in place for long term monitoring and stewardship of this large acreage project.

2. IRA Special Emphasis Criteria State-Tribal Partnership Projects:

Projects where the State works in partnership with Tribes to identify and conserve lands with high importance and significant benefits for those Tribes. This opportunity is open to fee simple acquisitions only. Only privately held lands are eligible for acquisition under this opportunity. The State and Tribe will manage the acquired property together for long-term stewardship, with the terms of the relationship between the State and Tribe documented in a formal agreement and/or in the recorded deed. The terms of the partnership agreement between the State and Tribe do not need to be finalized at the time of acquisition but do need to be formalized with mutual agreement by closing. The goal of this funding opportunity is to encourage and support meaningful partnerships between States and Tribes to identify, acquire, and co-manage properties with significant Tribal cultural and economic benefits as well as other public benefits. Acquired lands will be held by the State (or unit of state government), for the purpose of perpetual conservation and joint stewardship in partnership with the Tribe (as outlined in the formalized agreement and/or deed). States may work with federally and state recognized Tribes, as well as equivalent governmental representatives of native indigenous communities. Projects could include lands either near or adjacent to trust lands, or lands in other areas with historical and cultural importance to the partner Tribes. States may request up to \$50 million of federal funding for this project category. States may submit one project within this category per round. How does your project align with the following?

1) **Active Engagement of Tribes** – Meaningful support and involvement of Tribes (beyond letters of support) in the design, implementation, and stewardship of the project.

2) **Strong Partnerships** – Establishes or enhances long-term, stewardship-oriented relationships between States and Tribes. There is legal certainty and clarity around the agreement to co-manage the land.

3) **Tribal/Cultural Values** – Supports the protection of tangible or intangible cultural resources and/or traditions. The State and Tribe will work together to manage public access to protect cultural resources and traditions. Tribal members will have access to the property for cultural purposes.

3. IRA Strategic Small Tract Projects Special Emphasis Criteria:

These projects support the conservation of strategic inholdings or adjacent properties to already conserved lands, including strategic tracts that complement previous FLP investments. Each tract will need to be submitted as a stand-alone project, not bundled with other tracts as is allowed under the annual LWCF process. For the purposes of this opportunity, a “tract” is defined as contiguous land under the same legal ownership. States may submit either conservation easement or fee simple acquisitions for this funding opportunity. Emphasis will be on projects with non-industrial family and individual forest owners, but strategic tracts held by corporate entities may be considered as well. States may request no more than \$1.5 million of federal funding per tract and per landowner. States may submit three projects within this category per round. Cost-share waiver or reduction is available on a case-by-case basis for this funding opportunity where there are substantial benefits for disadvantaged communities (see above cost-share waiver/reduction instructions).

- 1) **High strategic value** – Inholdings or adjacent properties to already conserved lands (lands held in federal, state, or local public ownership; conservation easements, etc.), including tracts that complement previous program investments.
- 2) **National goals** - contributions to one or more of the following national goals: a. Climate resilience
b. Habitat connectivity
c. Benefits for disadvantaged communities
- 3) **Public access** – Public access is expected, with the goal of enhancing public access to existing protected lands where applicable and strategic. • Public Access is access provided on a non-discriminatory basis at reasonable times and places but may be limited to protect cultural and natural resources or public health and safety. • Exceptions to the public access expectation will be rare and based upon justification of other applicable strategic values (habitat connectivity, protection of cultural/natural resources, and/or lack of public access on adjacent protected parcels, etc.)
- 4) **High readiness and capacity** – States will need to demonstrate high readiness and capacity for successful project implementation within 12 months of grant award.
- 5) **Stewardship capacity** – State has sufficient funding and plans in place for long term monitoring and stewardship of small tracts with multiple landowners.

STANDARD FLP NATIONAL CORE CRITERIA:

In addition to evaluating projects on basis of the IRA Special Emphasis Criteria above, we will consider the Forest Legacy Program Core Criteria and score each project based on alignment with the Importance, Threatened, and Strategic criteria. Note: these are the same criteria considered in the annual Standard (Land and Water Conservation Fund) proposal process.

IMPORTANCE

This criterion focuses on the attributes of the property and the environmental, social, and economic public benefits gained from the protection and management of the property and its resources, now and into the future. This criterion reflects ecological assets as well as the economic and social values conserved by the project and its level of significance. National significance of a project is demonstrated in two ways: First, a project that solidly represents a majority of the attributes outlined is viewed as nationally significant because of its strong alignment with the purposes and Strategic Direction of the Forest Legacy Program. Second, national significance can be demonstrated by a project that (1) supports Federal laws, such as Endangered Species Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, and Clean Water Act, (2) contributes to Federal initiatives, or (3) contains or enhances Federal designations such as Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Scenic Byways, National Recreation Trails, and cultural resources of national importance. When determining Federal importance, interstate/international resources (such as migratory species, or trail and waterways that cross state or international boundaries) should also be considered.

Scoring consists of evaluating a project for the attributes below and identifying a point score. More points will be given to projects that demonstrate multiple public benefits of significance. Significance of attributes is demonstrated by the quality and scope of the attributes. More points will be given to projects that exemplify a particular attribute or combination of attributes.

Note: Discussion about how the project fits within a landscape conservation initiative should be included under the "Strategic" category and not in this section.

Benefits of projects for underserved communities and environmental justice initiatives should be highlighted where applicable. For example, benefits can be discussed within economic benefits, water, cultural, public access, or climate resilience. Benefits for underserved communities can also be discussed in the Strategic section. Attributes that will be considered include:

Economic Benefits from Timber and Potential Forest Productivity – This category includes three independent components: (1) Landowner demonstrates sustainable forest management in accordance with a management plan. Additional points should be given to land that is third party certified (such as Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council, and American Tree Farm System). (2) Forestry activities contribute to the resource-based economy for a community or region. (3) The property contains characteristics (such as highly productive soils) to sustain a productive forest over time.

0-10 _____

Economic Benefits from Non-timber Products and Recreation – Provides non-timber revenue to the local or regional economy through non-timber forest products (maple syrup, pine straw, ginseng collection, etc.); recreation and tourism (local/regional benefits related to lodging, rentals, bikes, boats, outdoor gear, guided tours for fishing, hunting, or birdwatching, etc.); hunting leases; and/or ranching.

0-5 _____

Threatened or Endangered Species Habitat – The property has documented threatened or endangered plants and animals or designated habitat. Documented occurrence and use of the project area should be given more consideration in point allocation than if it is habitat without documented occurrence or use. Federally listed species should be given more consideration than state-only listed species when evaluating the significance of this attribute.

0-5 _____

Fish, Wildlife, Plants, and Unique Forest Communities - The property contains unique forest communities and/or important fish or wildlife habitat as documented by a formal assessment or wildlife conservation plan or strategy developed by a government or a non- governmental organization. The importance of habitat to an international initiative to support and sustain migratory species can be viewed as national importance if conserving the property will make a significant contribution. Occasional use of the property or a modest contribution to an international initiative does not raise the property to national importance.

0-5 _____

Water Supply, Aquatic Habitat, and Watershed Protection – (1) The property has a direct relationship with protecting the water supply or watershed, such as providing a buffer to public drinking water supply, containing an aquifer recharge area, or protecting an ecologically important aquatic or marine area, and/or (2) the property contains important riparian area, wetlands, shorelines, river systems, or sensitive watershed lands. When allocating points consider the importance of the resource, the scope and scale of the property, magnitude and intensity of the benefits that will result from protection of the property. Merely being located within an aquifer recharge area or in a water supply area should not be given the same consideration as a property that makes a significant conservation contribution to water, riparian, and aquatic resources and habitats.

0-5 _____

Historic/Cultural/Tribal – The property contains features of cultural, tribal, and/or historical significance that are documented by a governmental, tribal, or a non- governmental organization. A Federal designation should receive greater consideration.

0 = no sites; 5 = designated sites _____

Public Access – Protection of the property will maintain or establish new/expanded access by the public for recreation (including waterfront access); however, restrictions on specific use and location of recreational activities may be allowed. More consideration should be given to projects that expand or provide certainty of public access because of the proposed project.

0-5 _____

Scenic – The property is located within a viewshed of a government designated scenic feature or area (such as a trail, river, or highway). Federal designation should be given more consideration than state-only designations when evaluating the significance of this attribute.

0-5 _____

Carbon Sequestration/Climate Resilience, Adaptation to Climate Change – Protection of the property will result in benefits related to climate resilience and adaptation, and carbon sequestration.

0-5 _____

TOTAL SCORE: Importance (possible maximum of 50 points) _____

THREATENED

This criterion estimates the likelihood for conversion. More points will be given to projects that demonstrate multiple conditions; however, a project need not have all the conditions listed to receive maximum points for this category. During the evaluation of a threat, a landowner interested in conserving their land should not be penalized in allocating points because they are not marketing their lands, have not subdivided their land, or sought approval for a subdivision plan. Also, a property with an approved subdivision plan should not, without question, receive a high score in the Threatened section. In many cases the threat of conversion is fueled by residential or industrial development. However, this is not the only driver. Other types of conversion may include agricultural expansion, installation of wind or solar technology, or other uses that substantially remove or fragment forest cover. These other types of conversion may also be considered based on the degree of threat or how much of a given parcel is threatened. The following will be considered:

Third Party Ownership - If property has been acquired by a third party with the support of the State, the threat will be evaluated based on the situation prior to the third-party acquisition.

Lack of Protection- The lack of temporary or permanent protections (e.g., current zoning, temporary or permanent easements, moratoriums, and encumbrances that limit subdivision or conversion) that currently exist on the property and the likelihood of the threat of conversion.

Land and Landowners Circumstances – Land and landowner circumstances such as property held in an estate, age of landowner, interest of ownership and stewardship of property by heirs of current landowners is uncertain, property is for sale or has a sale pending, landowner anticipates owning the property for a short duration, landowner has received purchase offers, land has an approved subdivision plan, landowner has sold subdivisions of the property, etc.

Adjacent Land Use- Adjacent land use characteristics such as existing land status, rate of development, growth, and conversion, rate of population growth (percent change), rate of change in ownership, etc.

Ability to Develop- Physical attributes of the property that will facilitate conversion, such as access, buildable ground, zoning, slope, water/sewer, electricity, etc.

Likelihood of conversion to non-forest uses.

- **Likely** – 16 - 30 points. Multiple conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses likely. Circumstances indicate conversion may occur soon or within 5 years. Characteristics include: land has a subdivision plan, landowner has received offers from developers, landowner has sold off subdivisions of the property, land is located in a rapidly developing area, landowner(s) are elderly, or nearby comparable land has been recently sold for development.
- **Possible** – 1 - 15 points. A few conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses possible. Circumstances indicate conversion could occur within 5 to 10 years: Characteristics include: land is in an attractive location for development such as waterfront or an outdoor recreation area.
- **Unlikely**(within 10 years) – 0 points

Note: Individual project scores for Threatened will be determined as a committee consensus. If property has been acquired by a third party with the support of the State, Threatened will be evaluated based on the situation prior to the third party acquisition.

TOTAL SCORE: Threatened (maximum of 30 points) _____

STRATEGIC

This criterion reflects the project’s relevance or relationship to conservation efforts on a broader perspective considering scale, location, and relative contribution to landscape scale conservation goals. When evaluating strategic, three considerations should be made: 1) how the project contributes to an existing or new a conservation initiative, strategy, or plan; 2) how the project complements protected lands; and 3) the relative contribution of the project to landscape scale conservation goals and public benefits. Relevant national or multi-state conservation plan or strategies include but are not limited to the Southern Forest Land Assessment, Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture Study, USFWS Habitat Conservation Plan strategy, Partners in Flight Land Conservation Plan, North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and TNC Ecoregional Conservation Planning strategy. Relevant state conservation strategies include but are not limited to TN Forest Action Plan, TN Conservation Heritage Trust Fund Preliminary Assessment of Needs, and TN State Wildlife Action Plan. Attributes considered include:

Conservation Initiative, Strategy, or Plan- How the project contributes to either an existing or new conservation initiative, strategy, or plan. Describe the relative contribution of the property to achieving the conservation goals of the plan, strategy, or initiative considering scale, location, and project attributes. Conservation plans that have been formally designated by a governmental, tribal, or non-governmental entity should be given more consideration. Contributions to a new strategy or a strategy under development may also be discussed. This can be useful if a project would contribute to, or catalyze, a new conservation initiative, strategy, or plan. For new initiatives specific goals should be defined, and potential contributions of how the project advances those goals should be highlighted.

Complement Protected Lands - How the project is strategically linked to enhance already protected lands including past FLP projects, protected Federal, State, or non-governmental organization lands, or other Federal land protection programs (REPI, NRCS, NOAA, etc.)

Other Landscape Scale Goals and Public Benefits - How the project strategically contributes to the advancement of larger scale conservation goals and public benefits. Examples of larger scale goals and benefits could include but are not limited to climate resilience and mitigation, reduced community impacts from wildfire, floods, invasive species, etc., expanded public access, and protection of critical water supplies. Provide specifics on the project's contributions to the larger scale goals and benefits. Projects that benefit diverse/socio-economically underserved communities and/or address environmental justice will receive additional consideration.

- High - 31 - 40 points - The property makes an exceptional strategic contribution to: a conservation initiative, strategy, or plan; complementing protected lands; and/or landscape scale conservation goals and benefits.
- Average -16 - 30 points - The property makes a substantial strategic contribution to: a conservation initiative, strategy, or plan; complementing protected lands; and/or landscape scale conservation goals and benefits.
- Low - 0 - 15 points - The property makes a modest strategic contribution to: a conservation initiative, strategy, or plan; complementing protected lands; and/or landscape scale conservation goals and benefits.

Note: The submitted project map should support this category and it is important to make sure the text and map are consistent.

TOTAL SCORE: Strategic (maximum of 40 points) _____

PROJECT READINESS

Project readiness is defined as the degree of due diligence completed. To demonstrate project readiness, completed items need to be specified (including completion date) credit will only be given to those items completed and documented. Multi-tract projects must have the readiness task completed for a majority of the tracks being proposed for the given funding year before an affirmative tally is given. Note that the first readiness item (market analysis) is required for all proposed projects.

Each due diligence item is worth 1 point, with a maximum score of 8 points for this section.

1. A Forest Stewardship plan or multi-resource management plan is completed.
2. Project is a donation or fee title acquisition.
3. Cost estimate for the project tract(s) based on a comparative market analysis*. (Required)
4. Draft conservation easement/deed language, or other comparable documentation, specific to the proposed project that demonstrates landowner and State agreement on easement or fee provisions including the requirements in the *Forest Legacy Program Implementation*

Guidelines (see Section 14 – Conservation Easement Language or Section 15 – Fee Simple Purchase Deed Language for specific examples).

https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/15541-forest-service-legacy-program-508.pdf

5. Cost share commitment has been obtained from specified source(s) and documented through funding commitment letters, bargain sale agreement with landowner, etc.
6. A signed option or purchase agreement is held by the State or at the request of the State OR at the request of the State, fee title has been pre-acquired by a third party.
7. Title search has been completed and reviewed, including identifying any temporary or permanent protections and reviewing whether existing encumbrances impact project eligibility.
8. Minerals rights have been evaluated through a title search and/or other research AND if rights are severed, then a minerals assessment and determination of remoteness has been completed.

***Comparative Market Analysis** - For full fee acquisitions, estimate of market value based on recently sold, similar properties in an applicable market area. For conservation easement projects, an estimate of market value “as is” and an estimate of market value “as if encumbered with the proposed conservation easement” using comparable properties that are similarly encumbered. The difference between the “as is” and the “as if” market values would represent the estimated cost to acquire the conservation easement. If an appraisal has been recently completed for the subject property, then it can be considered as a data point for the market analysis along with other applicable market research. A market analysis does not need to be conducted by an appraiser. The market analysis will include information about who prepared it, the date of the market analysis, information used and the source of that information.

TOTAL SCORE: Project Readiness (maximum of 8 points) _____

TOTAL STATE CORE CRITERIA SCORE (maximum of 126 points):

Importance ___ + Threat ___ + Strategic ___ + Project readiness ___ = Total ___