



# OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

660 North Street, Suite 300, Jackson, MS 39202

[www.mfc.ms.gov](http://www.mfc.ms.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **FORESTRY COMMISSION SEEKING PROPOSALS FOR FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM**

Jackson, MS—The Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) is seeking applications for the Forest Legacy Program (FLP). The proposal deadline is August 15, 2013 for federal fiscal year 2015 funding. The FLP was created by Congress to protect environmentally important private forest lands that are threatened by present and future conversion to non-forest uses through fee purchases or conservation easements.

Mississippi has 19.6 million acres of forestland, and 78 percent of that is owned by private, non-industrial landowners. “Our forestlands provide wildlife habitat, timber and recreation, protect water quality and have scenic value,” said Charlie Morgan, State Forester. “But changes to forest lands such as subdividing them into smaller parcels, urban sprawl and fragmenting them through roads and infrastructure can degrade those ecological services. The Forest Legacy Program is a great way to help protect some really important natural forest areas that may otherwise be converted to development and lost forever.”

The MFC completed our first FLP project in Jackson County, MS in September 2012 on the Escatawpa River and has recently received news that another project in the Pascagoula River basin will be funded.

“Forest Legacy provides federal funds to help private landowners, resource agencies and conservation organizations in Mississippi protect natural forests that are important ecologically, as working forests, for hunting and other outdoor recreation and for other similar purposes,” said Morgan. The program funds the purchase of forestland for protection or the acquisition of development rights through a conservation easement. Conservation easements are legal agreements between a landowner and a government agency or conservation organization that permanently limit land uses in order to protect conservation values. A 25 percent non-federal cost share or match is required.

To qualify for consideration, FLP projects must be located in one of three priority Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs) in Mississippi that are based on conservation values and population growth. The three areas are Northeast FLA (Clay, Itawamba, Lee, Lowndes, Monroe, and Tishomingo Counties), Central FLA (Copiah, Hinds, Madison, Rankin, and Simpson Counties), and Southeast FLA (Forrest, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jones, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Stone, and Wayne Counties).

Proposals must be submitted by August 15, 2013. Potential FLP tracts must be located in one of the three designated Forest Legacy Areas, must meet the eligibility criteria set forth in the *Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need* found on the MFC website and must be offered by willing sellers for either a conservation easement or for fee simple purchase. “Tracts that we will consider must be important to the public because of their ecological value, threatened by conversion and located strategically near or next to larger blocks of already protected lands such as parks, wildlife management areas or national forests,” said Jim Hancock, FLP Coordinator for Mississippi. “Our tracts must compete nationally, so they really should be natural forest communities that are in urgent need of protection.”

Anyone interested in applying for the Forest Legacy Program can learn more by visiting the Forest Legacy page on the MFC website at <http://www.mfc.ms.gov/forest-legacy.php> or by contacting Mississippi FLP Coordinator Jim Hancock at (601) 359-2812 or [jhancock@mfc.state.ms.us](mailto:jhancock@mfc.state.ms.us).

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