



OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

660 North Street, Suite 300 Jackson, MS 39202

www.mfc.state.ms.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 30, 2014

Contact:
Jim Hancock
Grant Coordination Forester
(601) 359-2812
jhancock@mfc.state.ms.us

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, 2014 for federal fiscal year 2016 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 to protect over 500 acres on the Escatawpa River and have another project underway in Greene and George Counties that will protect 2,100 acres.

“Forest Legacy provides federal funds from the USDA Forest Service to help private landowners, resource agencies and conservation organizations in Mississippi protect natural forests that are important ecologically as working forests, for outdoor recreation and for other similar purposes,” said Morgan. The program funds the purchase of forest lands for public use or the acquisition of development rights through a conservation easement on private lands. 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.

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, 2014. 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 or working forests that are in urgent need of protection from conversion to another land use.”

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.

###