



CALL FOR FOREST LEGACY PROPOSALS FOR FY 28 FUNDING CYCLE – DUE 5/22/2026

March 23, 2026

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

Project proposals seeking consideration under the Forest Legacy Program for Federal Fiscal Year 2028 funds can now be submitted until the deadline at 4:30 p.m. CST May 22, 2026. The Forest Legacy Committee (FLC) of the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (SFSCC) will convene on June 1, 2026 @ 9:00 am CST 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 qualifies the tract for inclusion in the Forest Legacy Program (see attached documents). Please provide one (1) digital copy of all materials in your submission for use by the FLC in evaluating and scoring your project. Also provide 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 if they notify the Forest Legacy Program Manager advance prior to close of business on **May 27, 2026**.

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 FAP:** Consistent with the *TN Forest Legacy Assessment of Need* as incorporated into the *Tennessee Forest Action Plan* <https://www.tn.gov/agriculture/forests/protection/ag-forests-action-plan.html>.
- **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 conservation easements: A current *Multi-Resource Management Plan (MRMP)* or abstract detailing owner's management intent must be established at the time of application. The management objectives identified within the *MRMP* 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.
- Readiness: Acquisition can be completed withing two years of grant award, if funded.
- Budget: Federal FLP fund request not to exceed \$20 million.

Your project proposal packet must include a letter of intent to the State Forester 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 nashvilleforestry@tn.gov by 4:30 PM CST, May 22, 2026 (Email Subject Line: 2026 FOREST LEGACY PROJECT PROPOSAL). Please contact Shane Harrington at (615)-487-7787; shane.harrington@tn.gov or Allana Funderburk at allana.funderburk@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/agriculture/forests/protection/ag-forests-action-plan.html>) 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,

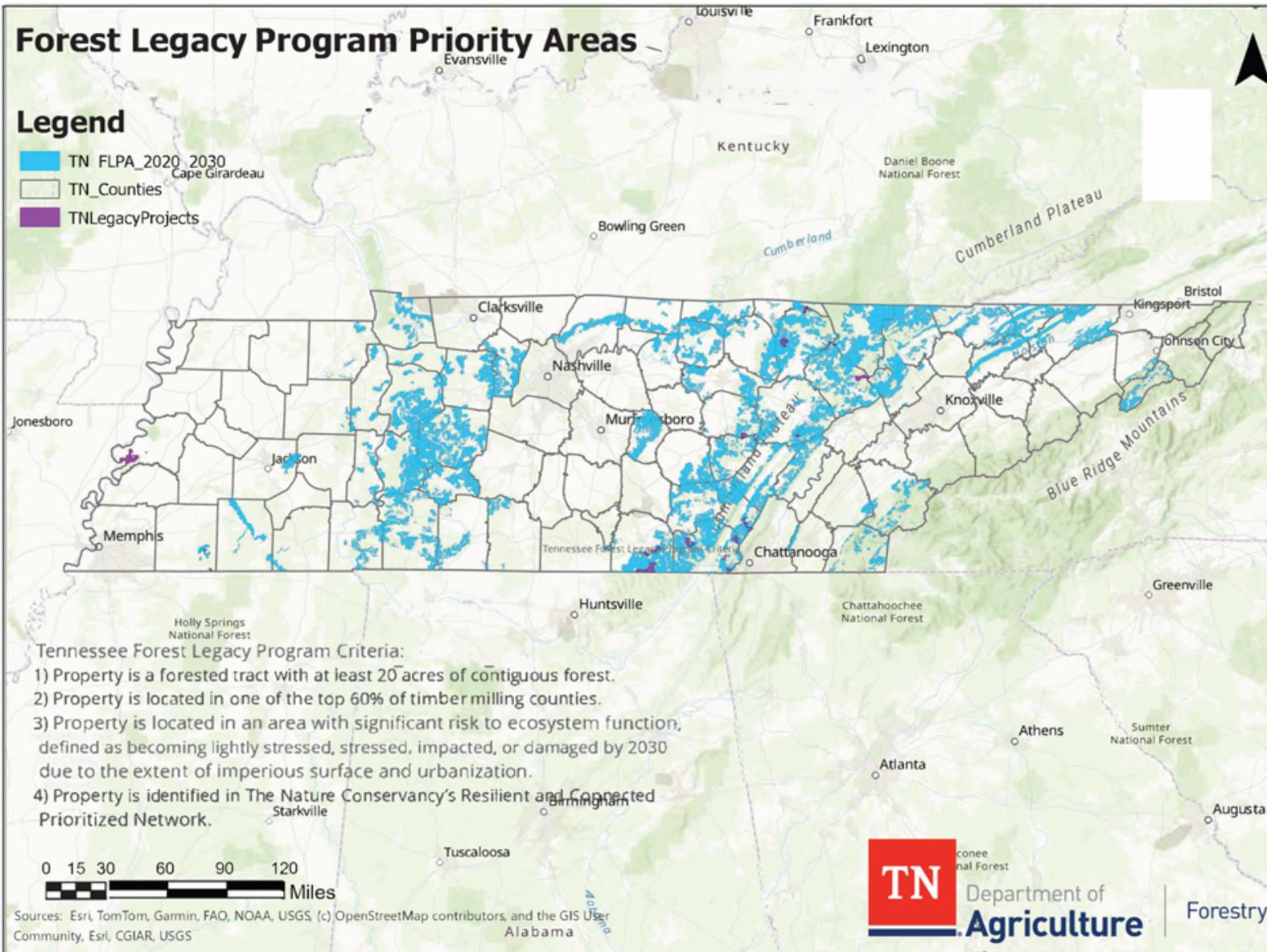


Heather Slayton
State Forester
Division of Forestry
P.O. Box 40627
Nashville, TN 372

Forest Legacy Program Priority Areas

Legend

- TN FLPA_2020_2030
- TN_Counties
- TNLegacyProjects



SUGGESTED FORM LETTER OF INTENT

Date

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
Shane Harrington Forest Management Chief
Forest Legacy Program Manager
State of Tennessee
P. O. Box 40627
Melrose Station
Nashville, TN 37204

Dear Mr. Harrington,

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 USDA 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

2026 Tennessee Forest Legacy Program
PROJECT SUBMISSION CHECKLIST – TN FLP PROPOSALS
Due to Tennessee Department of Forestry on May 22, 2026

With your FLP submission, you must include the following:

NAME OF PROJECT: _____

____ Narrative report (max 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 identifying current owner(s)

____ 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, and total acres owned

____ Landowner's major forest management objectives

____ If a fee simple purchase, what agency will assume management of property (must be a local, or state agency)

____ Landowner's Letter of Intent (required – see attached sample)

____ 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

____ Appraisal or other basis for the estimated market value of property or tract such as a Comparative Market Analysis.¹

¹ 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

- ____ Source of the 25% matching funds (e.g., bargain sale, another tract, cash donation, partner, etc.).
- ____ Large scale map indicating location of property in state, vicinity.
- ____ Digitized map showing proposed FLP acreage boundaries (GIS Shape file preferred).
- ____ Proximity to other Forest Legacy tracts and other protected lands (federal, state, local government, private easements)
- ____ Optional: List of supporters for which you will provide written letters of support (if the proposal is selected for nomination by the review panel).

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.

**Tennessee Forest Legacy Program Project Application Scoring
Proposal Deadline for Applications - 4:30 p.m. CST May 22, 2026**

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 FLP funding, proposals must meet the Standard National Core Criteria (below).**

STANDARD FLP NATIONAL CORE CRITERIA:

We will consider the Forest Legacy Program National Core Criteria and score each project based on its alignment with the national **Importance, Threatened,** and **Strategic** criteria.

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 and the economic and social values conserved by the project and its level of significance. Significance of attributes is demonstrated by the quality, scope, and impact of the attributes, which may be illustrated through (but not limited to) the following: Support of Federal Laws (such as Endangered Species Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, or Clean Water Act); and, Contributions to Federal Initiatives or Federal Designations (such as Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Scenic Byways, National Recreation Trails, and National Historic Sites).

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 exemplify a particular attribute or combination of attributes, or multiple public benefits. Note: Discussion about how the project fits within a landscape conservation initiative should be included under the **“Strategic”** category and not in this section.

Attributes that will be considered for **Importance** 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 (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 _____

Public Access² – 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 _____

² 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. Access provided to only specific individuals or groups by landowner permission does not count as public access for this purpose.

Wildlife Habitat: Threatened or Endangered Species – 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 _____

Wildlife Habitat: 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. Contributions to international initiatives to support and sustain migratory species can be considered here if the property will make a significant contribution, e.g. the target species has been documented to regularly use the property during seasonal migration.

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 _____

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

0 = no sites; 5 = designated sites _____

Tribal – The property provides meaningful benefits to Tribal and other indigenous communities, contains features or resources of cultural significance, and/or utilizes management techniques significant to Tribes (traditional ecological knowledge). Greater consideration should be given to projects that have been developed with active involvement and partnership with a Tribe, or where a Tribal organization has documented the importance of the property for cultural practices, resources, and benefits.

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 _____

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. Conversion to non-forest uses can include residential or industrial development, agricultural expansion, installation of wind or solar technology, or other uses that substantially remove or fragment forest cover. This criterion considers the degree of threat and how much of a given parcel would be impacted by the conversion to non-forest uses.

The following will be considered:

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 may 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 may 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. National or multi-state conservation plan or strategies include but are not limited to the Southern Forest Land Assessment, Joint Venture plans, USFWS Habitat Conservation Plan strategy, Partners in Flight Land Conservation Plan, North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and TNC Ecoregional Conservation Planning strategy. State conservation strategies include but are not limited to TN Forest Action Plan, TN Conservation Heritage Trust Fund Preliminary Assessment of Needs, and State Wildlife Action Plan. Attributes considered include:

Conservation Initiative, Strategy, or Plan- How the project contributes to 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, define specific goals, and highlight potential contributions of how the project advances those goals.

Complement Protected Lands - How the project is strategically linked to or enhances already protected lands, including past FLP projects, public lands (Federal, State, or local), or private lands conserved through permanent easements. Provide specifics on how the proposed tracts connect to and maintain landscape-scale benefits, e.g. ecological resilience, wildlife migration, watershed function, and scenic viewshed integrity.

Other Landscape Scale Goals and Public Benefits – How the project strategically contributes to the advancement of larger scale conservation goals and public benefits. Examples could include: Forest health and resilience; Reduced community impacts from wildfire, floods, invasive species; Expanded public access; and Protection of critical water supplies. Provide specifics on the project's contributions to the larger scale goals and benefits.

- **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 tracts being proposed for the given funding year before an affirmative tally is given.

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 or appraisal.
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) _____

NAME OF PROJECT: _____

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

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