



# Environmental Quality Incentives Program Forestry Initiative



U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Connecticut

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Helping People Help the Land

## ***What is the Forestry Initiative?***

Forests not only provide clean water, they form the backbone of rural economies by providing a sustainable source of renewable energy, forest products, outdoor-related recreational opportunities, and tourism. Forests include a wide array of natural communities that are home to countless types of fish and wildlife, many of which depend on large contiguous forest blocks. However, with much of this land being subdivided and sold, these vast forests are now at risk. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Forestry Initiative is an opportunity to improve wildlife habitat, forest health and productivity, and water quality on private forest lands.

## **Who is Eligible?**

Owners of private forest lands who have an interest in a forestry operation or private woodlot are eligible. Producer records must be on file with the USDA Farm Service Agency, and be compliant with the conservation provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill. They must own or control the land, and agree to implement conservation practices according to the contract schedule.

Land is not eligible for EQIP if it is currently enrolled in another USDA Farm Bill program such as the Conservation Reserve or the Wetland Reserve Programs. Publicly owned lands are not eligible.

## ***How Does Funding Work?***

Connecticut is one of only seven states offering this initiative. Landowners in those states should call or visit their local USDA Service Center to submit an application and complete the necessary paperwork to establish eligibility.

Landowners are encouraged to have a current Forest Management Plan. NRCS will review the plan and determine the practices that are recommended to improve wildlife habitat, forest health and productivity, and water quality both on and offsite. Forestry Initiative applications will be grouped for competitive ranking with the highest ranked applications selected for contract development.

Practices may not be started until the contract is signed by NRCS, unless the applicant requests a waiver from the state conservationist.

## ***What is the Contract Period?***

EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term that ends one year after the last scheduled practice is implemented for a period up to 10 years.

Contracts provide pre-determined program payments to the producer for the implementation of the planned practices, according to a schedule developed with the producer.

The schedule lists the conservation practice extent (amount), date to be installed, and payment. The practices are subject to NRCS Technical Standards and Specifications, and any deviation from the contract is considered a contract violation.

### ***What are the Payment Rate and Terms?***

Program payment rates are calculated at approximately 75% of the typical cost of implementing the practice, as determined by the resource concern being addressed. If the applicant is a beginning farmer or socially disadvantaged or limited resource producer, the rates are higher – up to a maximum of 90%.

Payments are made after conservation practices are implemented to the standards agreed to in advance. Contracts are subject to payment limitations. No applicant may receive more than \$300,000 during any 6-year period.

### ***How Does Sign-Up for EQIP Work?***

Applications may be submitted any time during the year. A signed application filed with the local NRCS office indicates an interest in developing a conservation plan as the first step in the application process.

A contract offer is developed during the annual ranking period. The final offer approved by the applicant is based on the conservation plan and is ranked on how well the proposed practices meet national, state, and local environmental objectives, as well as the cost-efficiency.

### ***What Conservation Practices are Covered?***

- Forest Stand Improvement
- Early Successional Habitat Development Management
- Tree/Shrub Establishment
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
- Stream Crossing
- Riparian Forested Buffer
- Stream Habitat Improvement and Management
- Forest Trails and Landings
- Access Control
- Conservation Cover
- Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
- Wetland Restoration
- Access Road

### ***Who Do I Contact For More Information?***

<b>Connecticut Offices</b>		
<b>Danielson Field Office</b> Raymond Covino, District Conservationist (860) 779-0557, Ext. 102	<b>Norwich Field Office</b> Javier Cruz, District Conservationist (860) 887-3604, Ext. 307	<b>Windsor Field Office</b> Vivian Felten, District Conservationist (860) 688-7725, Ext. 118
<b>Hamden Field Office</b> Diane Blais, District Conservationist (203) 287-8038, Ext. 101	<b>Torrington Field Office</b> Kathleen Johnson, District Conservationist (860) 626-8258, Ext. 200	<b>Tolland State Office</b> Joyce Purcell, ASTC-Programs (860) 871-4028