

Forest Conservation Easement Program Act

Statement of Support

The undersigned organizations support the inclusion of the Forest Conservation Easement Program (FCEP) Act in the conservation title of the Farm Bill with mandatory funding. The purpose of FCEP is to keep forests as forests through the use of conservation easements that purchase development rights from willing private and tribal landowners to prevent conversion to non-forest uses. Private forests in a conservation easement can remain privately owned and working.

FCEP is designed to:

- Significantly improve and enhance the ability of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to effectively conserve working forests at scale through conservation easements;
- Prioritize keeping forests as forests continuing to provide a multitude of environmental, economic, and societal benefits;
- Help landowners restore, enhance, and protect habitat for at-risk species while increasing carbon sequestration; and
- Provide landowners with two proven options for placing voluntary conservation easements on their land, with one held by the federal government and one held by eligible entities like land trusts.

It accomplishes this via two program components: **Forest Land Easements** (modeled after Agricultural Land Easements under NRCS's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program) and **Forest Reserve Easements** (as the successor to and modeled after NRCS's Healthy Forests Reserve Program).

Under **Forest Land Easements (FLE)**, eligible entities such as land trusts, state and local agencies, and tribes, purchase working forest conservation easements from willing private and tribal landowners. Landowners may continue to manage their land as a working forest. NRCS will provide up to 50 percent of the fair market value for the purchase of the easement, with the remaining share coming from any combination of cash resources from the entity, landowner donation/bargain sale, and costs associated with the acquisition of the easement. In the case of forests of special environmental significance or land owned by socially disadvantaged landowners, NRCS will provide up to 75 percent of the fair market value.

Under **Forest Reserve Easements (FRE)**, NRCS helps landowners restore, enhance, and protect forest resources by purchasing easements on private and tribal lands, while allowing landowners to continue working forest production and related uses. Enrolled land will be subject to a forest reserve easement plan that describes the practices and measures necessary to restore, maintain, and enhance habitat for at-risk species. Landowners will also have the option to enter into safe harbor agreements or similar assurances to avoid future regulatory restrictions on the use of that land under the Endangered Species Act. NRCS will purchase permanent easements from the landowner for fair market value of the easement and will provide financial assistance up to 100 percent of the eligible costs of practices and measures identified in the forest reserve easement plan. Financial assistance for 30-year easements and contracts will be 75 percent of that which would be paid for a permanent easement.

FCEP will fill gaps in federal forest easement funding to ensure we can preserve working forestlands at scale and put working forestland on par with other working lands.

Signed,

Adirondack Land Trust, NY	Catch-A-Dream Foundation, North America	French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, PA
Agricultural Stewardship Association, NY	Catoctin Land Trust, MD	Friends of the Mississippi River, MN
Alabama Forest Land Trust, AL	Center for Large Landscape Conservation, MT	Friends of Wilson Pond Area, Inc, ME
Alachua Conservation Trust, FL	Central Virginia Land Conservancy, VA	Galveston Bay Foundation, TX
Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, VA	Chesapeake Conservancy, Mid-Atlantic	Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance of Land Trusts, WI
American Bird Conservancy, National	Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts, OR	Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, MI
American Chestnut Land Trust, MD	Coastal Land Trust, AL	Green Diamond Resource Company, National
American Forest Foundation, National	Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust, ME	Greenbelt Land Trust, OR
American Forest Management, National	Colorado Open Lands, CO	Groundswell Conservancy, WI
American Forests, National	Columbia Land Trust, OR/WA	HeadWaters Land Conservancy, MI
American Woodcock Society, National	Congaree Land Trust, SC	Heart of the Lakes, MI
Appalachian Mountain Club, Eastern U.S.	Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, National	Houston Safari Club, TX
Appalachian Trail Conservancy, National	Conservation Florida, FL	Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Inc., NY
Archery Trade Association, National	Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, FL	Ice Age Trail Alliance, Inc., WI
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, National	Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports, National	Idaho Forest Owners Association, Inc., ID
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, National	Defenders of Wildlife, National	Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners Association, IN
Baker Valley Tree Farm LLC, NY	Delta Waterfowl, National	Izaak Walton League of America, National
Baltimore Green Space, MD	Ducks Unlimited, National	Jamestown, Eastern U.S.
Bayou Land Conservancy, TX	Dutchess Land Conservancy, Inc., NY	Jefferson Land Trust, WA
Bernheim Forest and Arboretum, KY	Eagle Valley Land Trust, CO	Kaniksu Land Trust, ID/MT
Bitter Root Land Trust, MT	Environmental Real Estate Solutions, NY	Kennebec Land Trust, ME
Black Landowners Agricultural and Conservation Land Trust, Southeast	Estes Valley Land Trust, CO	Kennebunkport Conservation Trust, ME
Bluegrass Land Conservancy, KY	Florida Conservation Group, FL	Kentucky Natural Lands Trust, KY
Blue Ridge Land Conservancy, VA	Florida Forestry Association, FL	Kentucky Woodland Owners Association, KY
Boone and Crockett Club, National	Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina, NC	KKAC Organization, AR
Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust, ME	Forest Investment Associates, National	L&C Carbon, OR
Caddo Lake Institute, TX/LA	Forest Landowners Association, National	Land Clinic, CA
Capital Region Land Conservancy, VA	Forest Society of Maine, ME	Land Trust Alliance, National
Carbon180, National	Forest Stewards Guild, National	Leavitt Lake Ranches, CA
Catawba Lands Conservancy, NC	Forever Maryland, MD	Leelanau Conservancy, MI
	Forterra NW, WA	Legacy Land Conservancy, MI
	Franklin Farm LLC, MD	Loon Echo Land Trust, ME
		Lowcountry Land Trust, SC

**Signatories as of 3/4/25*

Lyme Timber Company, National
Mahoosuc Land Trust, Inc., ME
Maine Appalachian Trail Land
Trust, ME
Maine Coast Heritage Trust, ME
Manada Conservancy, PA
Manulife Investment Management
Timberland and Agriculture,
National
Massachusetts Forest Alliance, MA
Michigan Society of American
Foresters, MI
Minority Outdoor Alliance, GA
Mississippi Land Trust, MS/AR
Mississippi River Trust,
AR/MS/LA
Mohonk Preserve, NY
Montana Association of Land
Trusts, MT
Mother Lode Land Trust, CA
Mule Deer Foundation, National
National Alliance of Forest
Owners, National
National Association of Forest
Service Retirees, National
National Association of State
Foresters, National
National Bobwhite & Grassland
Initiative Foundation, National
National Deer Association,
National
National Wild Turkey Federation,
National
National Woodland Owners
Association, National
Native Prairies Association of
Texas, TX
Natural Land Institute, IL
Natural Lands, PA/NJ
New Jersey Conservation
Foundation, NJ
New River Land Trust, VA
North American Grouse
Partnership, National
Northeast Carbon Alliance,
Northeast
Northern Neck Land Conservancy,
VA
Northern Prairies Land Trust, SD

Northern Virginia Conservation
Trust, VA
Northwest Arkansas Land Trust,
AR
Open Space Institute, Eastern U.S.
Openlands, IL
Orion: The Hunters Institute, MT
Outdoor Alliance, National
Palmer Land Conservancy, CO
Palouse Land Trust, ID
Partners in Forestry Cooperative,
MI/WI
Pheasants Forever, National
Pines and Prairies Land Trust, TX
Pingree Associates, ME
Pope & Young Club, National
PotlatchDeltic, National
Potomac Conservancy,
MD/VA/WV/DC
Prairie State Conservation
Coalition, IL
Putnam Land Conservancy, FL
Quail Forever, National
Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust,
ME
Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, NY
Resource Management Service,
LLC, National
Rhode Island Land Trust Council,
RI
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation,
West
Ruffed Grouse Society, National
Safari Club International
Foundation, National
Salisbury Association Land Trust,
CT
Santa Fe Conservation Trust, NM
Scenic Hudson, NY
Scenic Rivers Land Trust, MD
Sebasticook Regional Land Trust,
ME
Shasta Land Trust, CA
Shenandoah Valley, Conservancy,
VA
Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council,
CA

Society for the Protection of NH
Forests, NH
Society of American Foresters,
National
Somerset Woods Trustees, ME
Southern Appalachian Highlands
Conservancy, TN/NC
Southern Virginia Land
Conservancy, VA
Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation,
National
Summit Land Conservancy, UT
Sustainable Forestry Initiative,
National
Tall Timbers, FL
TennGreen Land Conservancy, TN
Texas Conservation Alliance, TX
Texas Land Trust Council, TX
The Carbon Fund, National
The Climate Trust, National
The Conservation Fund, National
The Frontera Land Alliance,
TX/NM
The Molpus Woodlands Group,
LLC, National
The Nature Conservancy, National
The Vital Ground Foundation, MT
The Watershed Association, TX
The Westervelt Company, National
The Wildlife Society, National
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership, National
Top Notch Farms, LLC, NY
Trust for Public Land, National
Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust,
NY
Unique Places to Save, National
Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, NH
Valley Conservation Council, VA
Vinalhaven Land Trust Inc., ME
Wagner Forest Management, Ltd.,
NH/ME
Washington Association of Land
Trusts, WA
WeConservePA, PA
Western Foothills Land Trust, ME
Western New York Land
Conservancy, NY

Western Pennsylvania
Conservancy, PA
White Oak Initiative, Eastern U.S.
Whitetails Unlimited, National
Wolf River Conservancy, TN

Wild Sheep Foundation, National
Wildlife Forever, National
Wildlife Management Institute,
National
Wildlife Mississippi, MS

Winston County Self Help
Cooperative, MS