

# 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  
Agricultural Stewardship  
Association, NY  
Alabama Forest Land Trust, AL  
Alachua Conservation Trust, FL  
Alliance for the Shenandoah  
Valley, VA  
American Bird Conservancy,  
National  
American Chestnut Land Trust,  
MD  
American Forest Foundation,  
National  
American Forest Management,  
National  
American Forests, National  
American Woodcock Society,  
National  
Appalachian Mountain Club,  
Eastern U.S.  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy,  
National  
Archery Trade Association,  
National  
Association of Fish and Wildlife  
Agencies, National  
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers,  
National  
Baker Valley Tree Farm LLC, NY  
Baltimore Green Space, MD  
Bayou Land Conservancy, TX  
Bernheim Forest and Arboretum,  
KY  
Bitter Root Land Trust, MT  
Black Landowners Agricultural and  
Conservation Land Trust, Southeast  
Bluegrass Land Conservancy, KY  
Blue Ridge Land Conservancy, VA  
Boone and Crockett Club, National  
Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust,  
ME  
Caddo Lake Institute, TX/LA  
Capital Region Land Conservancy,  
VA  
Carbon180, National

Catawba Lands Conservancy, NC  
Catch-A-Dream Foundation, North  
America  
Catoctin Land Trust, MD  
Center for Large Landscape  
Conservation, MT  
Central Virginia Land  
Conservancy, VA  
Chesapeake Conservancy, Mid-  
Atlantic  
Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts,  
OR  
Coastal Land Trust, AL  
Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust,  
ME  
Colorado Open Lands, CO  
Columbia Land Trust, OR/WA  
Congaree Land Trust, SC  
Congressional Sportsmen's  
Foundation, National  
Conservation Florida, FL  
Conservation Foundation of the  
Gulf Coast, FL  
Council to Advance Hunting and  
the Shooting Sports, National  
Defenders of Wildlife, National  
Delta Waterfowl, National  
Ducks Unlimited, National  
Dutchess Land Conservancy, Inc.,  
NY  
Eagle Valley Land Trust, CO  
Environmental Real Estate  
Solutions, NY  
Estes Valley Land Trust, CO  
Florida Conservation Group, FL  
Florida Forestry Association, FL  
Foothills Conservancy of North  
Carolina, NC  
Forest Investment Associates,  
National  
Forest Landowners Association,  
National  
Forest Society of Maine, ME  
Forest Stewards Guild, National  
Forever Maryland, MD

Forterra NW, WA  
Franklin Farm LLC, MD  
French & Pickering Creeks  
Conservation Trust, PA  
Friends of the Mississippi River,  
MN  
Friends of Wilson Pond Area, Inc.,  
ME  
Galveston Bay Foundation, TX  
Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's  
Alliance of Land Trusts, WI  
Grand Traverse Regional Land  
Conservancy, MI  
Green Diamond Resource  
Company, National  
Greenbelt Land Trust, OR  
Groundswell Conservancy, WI  
HeadWaters Land Conservancy,  
MI  
Heart of the Lakes, MI  
Houston Safari Club, TX  
Hudson Highlands Land Trust,  
Inc., NY  
Ice Age Trail Alliance, Inc., WI  
Idaho Forest Owners Association,  
Inc., ID  
Indiana Forestry & Woodland  
Owners Association, IN  
Izaak Walton League of America,  
National  
Jamestown, Eastern U.S.  
Jefferson Land Trust, WA  
Kaniksu Land Trust, ID/MT  
Kennebec Land Trust, ME  
Kennebunkport Conservation  
Trust, ME  
Kentucky Natural Lands Trust, KY  
Kentucky Woodland Owners  
Association, KY  
KKAC Organization, AR  
L&C Carbon, OR  
Land Clinic, CA  
Land Trust Alliance, National  
Leavitt Lake Ranches, CA  
Leelanau Conservancy, MI

*\*Signatories as of 4/9/25*

Legacy Land Conservancy, MI  
 Loon Echo Land Trust, ME  
 Lowcountry Land Trust, SC  
 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  
 Minnesota Forest Industries, MN  
 Minnesota Forest Resources  
 Council, MN  
 Minnesota Society of American  
 Foresters, MN  
 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  
 Seabasticook 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