



**DELIBERATIVE, PRE-DECISIONAL, FOR INTERNAL COORDINATION ONLY**

**Topic:** Implementation of Landscape Scale Restoration Program pursuant to 2018 Farm Bill

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**Issue Summary:** Section 8102 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) amended Section 13A of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2109a) to establish the State and Private Forest Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) Program. Direction for the implementation of LSR will be provided as a directive, to be made available for public comment prior to issuance.

**Background:** The 2018 Farm Bill codified the Landscape Scale Restoration Program, directing the Forest Service to establish a competitive grant program to provide financial and technical assistance to encourage collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscape. Prior to the 2018 Farm Bill, the Forest Service implemented LSR through annual appropriations (beginning in FY2014) which included LSR as a budget line item and funding mechanism for a competitive process focused on priorities in State Forest Action Plans.

Over the past 12 months, the Forest Service has been working in consultation with State Foresters and other key stakeholders to implement the changes identified in the Farm Bill. A small work group was convened with the three regional NASF organizations to work through areas of agreement before final approval of the LSR guidance at the December 2019 State and Private Forestry Board Meeting.

While publication of the directive and public notice and comment is pending, the Forest Service is moving forward to implement key provisions of the 2018 Farm Bill through the Landscape Scale Restoration Program FY 21 Interim guidance.

**Important changes to the Program that may generate comments:**

- The proposed directive defines "rural," which is a locational criteria for selected projects, as any area other than an urbanized area, such as a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants according to the latest U.S. census. This definition is used by many USDA programs, but there is variation, and we anticipate comment from those who'd prefer a different approach. For example, some USDA programs focus benefits on areas with population of 25,000 or less.
- Eligible applicants are expanded to also include a Tribe, unit of local Government, non-profit organization (defined as a 501c3), university and an Alaska Native Corporation. Newly eligible applicants such as non-profits may have concerns around the application process and how to access the program.
- Tribal trust lands do not qualify under the definition of non-industrial private forest lands since they are held in trust by the United States and are not private lands.

**Recommendation:** We recommend approval of the directive and federal register notice.

