

Forest Landowner Support Program

Healthy Forests for Birds, People, and Rural Communities

Privately owned forests provide essential habitat for many migratory bird species that rely on healthy forests for their annual journeys. These forests also protect water supplies, reduce wildfire risk, and support rural economies and forest product markets. Because private landowners manage a majority of the nation's forestland, their stewardship is critical to conservation outcomes for birds and the communities that depend on healthy landscapes. However, many of these landowners, especially those with small acreage, lack access to the technical and financial assistance needed to keep forests productive and intact.

The Forest Landowner Support Program (FLSP) helps fill this gap by providing private forest owners with the tools, expertise, and partnerships necessary to manage their land effectively and keep forests as forests.

Why FLSP Matters

Bird populations are declining across North America, and habitat loss on private lands is a key driver. At the same time, many family forest owners face barriers to managing their land for conservation:

- **Habitat Loss and Fragmentation:** Forests are at risk of development or mismanagement, reducing critical habitat for birds. FLSP offers a voluntary, market-based alternative that helps keep forests intact.
- **Targeted Conservation for Private Lands:** Many existing programs aren't designed for forest owners' unique needs, like those with small acreage. FLSP offers forest-specific outreach and assistance to help landowners implement bird-friendly management practices and access other conservation opportunities.
- **Wildfire and Habitat Resilience:** Investments in fuel reduction and forest management improve habitat quality while reducing wildfire risk.
- **Sustaining Working Forest Landscapes:** Conserved forests continue to support local economies and forest product markets, helping keep forests as forests rather than being converted to other uses.

FLSP complements existing programs, like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Reserve Program, helping private forest landowners, especially small-acreage and underserved owners, effectively use those programs while expanding long-term stewardship on working forestland.



Cerulean Warbler
Photo: USDA/DJ McNeil

Bottom Line

The Forest Landowner Support Program was created with temporary funding and does not yet have permanent authorization in the Farm Bill.

As Congress works to develop the next Farm Bill, Audubon supports providing permanent authorization for the Forest Landowner Support Program. Doing so would ensure private forest landowners have consistent and reliable access to the technical and financial assistance needed to conserve working forests.

Strengthening this program will help conserve and restore critical forest habitat, support migratory bird populations, and sustain the working landscapes that benefit rural communities and local economies and the long-term health of America's forests.

We urge Congress to support the Forest Landowner Support Program and include it within Farm Bill reauthorization

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