



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



NEW JERSEY
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SOCIETY

New Jersey Fact Sheet: Why Should You Have a Forest Stewardship Plan?

What Is a Forest Stewardship Plan?

A Forest Stewardship Plan is a tool that guides management of a variety of natural resources on forestland. While a Forest Stewardship Plan can focus on timber production and other marketable forest products, it must also consider other issues such as wildlife, water resources, or historic features found on the property. This emphasis on protection and management of noncommercial forest resources is a key difference between a Forest Stewardship Plan and a traditional Forest Management Plan.

The USDA Forest Service first began encouraging landowners across the country to develop Forest Stewardship Plans for their woodlands in 1991 under the emerging USDA Forest Stewardship Program. Over time, the USDA Forest Stewardship Program has evolved, and today it is administered individually by each state's Forest Service. While each state still follows the guidelines set forth in the federal program, they have tailored specific requirements to meet local needs.

In New Jersey, Forest Stewardship Plans are typically developed for a 10-year period. Eligible lands include private, nonindustrial forestlands that are at least five acres in size. Land that does not have existing trees or woody vegetation may be eligible if it is capable of growing woody vegetation. More information on Forest Stewardship Plan requirements may be found on the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (NJDEP) Forest Stewardship Program website (see link under "For more information").

Forest Stewardship Plans can often be written to meet the requirements of the NJ Farmland Assessment program, and can help qualify a landowner for preferential property tax treatment. A professional forester can help you ensure that your plan meets the requirements.

What Is Included in a Forest Stewardship Plan?

A Forest Stewardship Plan starts with an assessment of the landowner's objectives for managing the property and an inventory of the resources that are already found on the parcel. The Plan should provide a written description of the existing conditions, and establish a framework for meeting



This forest is being managed under a Forest Stewardship Plan that emphasizes forest health and the habitat needs of rare plant and animal species. Photo by Jean Lynch, New Jersey Audubon.

the landowner's goals while addressing any resource concerns. This should include specific recommendations and prescriptions. Sometimes, management strategies can be adjusted to address multiple goals at once. An example would be directing timber management to favor tree species that will provide a food source required by a particular wildlife species of interest. The plan should include a schedule of activities to guide the process so that the landowner can better understand what to do, and when to do it.

Normally, the landowner's goals for managing the property dictate which topics are covered in greatest detail, and not all topics may be applicable on every parcel. Issues relating to regulatory concerns, such as the presence of threatened and endangered species or freshwater wetlands, are always required to be addressed in a plan. Following are some of the primary topics discussed in a typical Forest Stewardship Plan:

- The landowner's goals for management
- The property's land use history
- Tree composition and timber resources

- Understory vegetation and herbaceous components
- Water and riparian resources
- Soils
- Wildlife resources
- Threatened and endangered species
- Invasive species
- Aesthetics
- Recreation
- Historic and cultural resources
- Carbon storage

Many landowners who have an existing “traditional” Forest Management Plan choose to upgrade it to a Forest Stewardship Plan. During the plan preparation, additional resources are considered and existing databases for rare wildlife, plants, and cultural resources are reviewed for relevant information about the site. This process may lead a landowner to a new area of interest as they assume the role of steward for these unique organisms or features.

How Can I Get a Forest Stewardship Plan for My Property?

In New Jersey, most Forest Stewardship Plans are prepared by consulting foresters or other qualified natural resource professionals. The NJDEP maintains a list of foresters who are approved by the state to prepare plans. The cost for preparing a plan is paid by the landowner, and fees vary depending on many factors. Once a plan has been prepared, it is submitted to the local regional office of the NJ Forest Service for review and approval by the Regional Forester.

Financial assistance for preparing the Forest Stewardship Plan, as well as for implementing it, is available to landowners through their local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) service center. Landowners with more than 10 acres of forestland may be eligible for cost-share assistance to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan under NRCS’s Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Forest Stewardship Plans cost-shared by NRCS



A Forest Stewardship Plan can include a range of objectives, including forest products such as firewood. Photo by Don Donnelly, New Jersey Audubon.



A Forest Stewardship Plan includes steps to protect wetlands and other sensitive resources. Photo by Don Donnelly, New Jersey Audubon.

must be developed by an NRCS-approved Technical Service Provider (TSP); a list of TSPs can be secured from your local NRCS Service Center or through the website link provided below. After the Forest Stewardship Plan is approved, EQIP funding may also be available to assist with the implementation of the practices detailed in the plan.

NRCS office locations and more detailed information about NRCS assistance and the EQIP program can be found at: www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/

For More Information

NJDEP Forest Stewardship Plan Requirements

www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/forest/min_guide_nj_stew.pdf

General Information on NRCS Forestry Programs

www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/forestry/index.html

Information on NRCS EQIP Program

www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/documents/EQIPForestryFactSheet08FB.pdf

Locating an NRCS TSP

<http://techreg.usda.gov/CustLocateTSP.aspx>

NJDEP Forest Service Regional Offices and Contact Information

www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/forest/njfs_regional_offices.html

List of NJDEP-Approved Consulting Foresters

www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/forest/ACF.pdf

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