



File Code: 5420

Date: July 27, 2011

Route To:

Subject: FY2013 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Project Nominations

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs, WO Directors

REPLY DUE OCTOBER 14, 2011

By this letter we are requesting project nominations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 LWCF, due to the Washington Office by October 14, 2011.

The LWCF program provides a vital opportunity to acquire lands to meet the vision for America's Forests as outlined by Secretary Vilsack. Investments in land utilizing LWCF appropriations protect irreplaceable national treasures and conserve natural resources for future generations. Land acquisition addresses many important public needs, including recreation opportunities identified in the President's 'America's Great Outdoors Initiative,' habitat enhancement, watershed protection, preservation of cultural resources, and mitigation of the effects of climate change.

Forest Service acquisitions compete for limited funding with nominations from the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Ongoing efforts are being made to work collaboratively with these agencies along with our non-governmental partners to protect and enhance broader landscape resource values.

The FY2013 LWCF project selection process has two stages. Regions will evaluate projects using the Strategic Landscape Acquisition Ranking System (SLARS). Following in November, a national panel will review each region's nominated projects using the national scoring criteria (enclosed for reference). The selection will be competitive, merit-based and coordinated by the Washington Office (WO) Lands and Realty Management Staff. The final project list will be selected by a national panel comprised of an inter-disciplinary team of WO and regional representatives. The WO will forward a prioritized project list to the Office of Management and Budget through the Department of Agriculture. Those LWCF acquisitions that contribute to Secretary Vilsack's goals outlined in the Department's Strategic Plan will compete favorably. The Department's strategic plan is available at www.usda.gov

Because of anticipated reductions to LWCF funding for FY2013, new commitments to large, multi-year projects, will be challenging to accommodate. Therefore, we recommend that Regions focus on projects already in process and smaller acquisitions that can be completed in the FY2013 fiscal year.

Each Region may submit up to 5 projects. Project submissions shall include: a one page fact sheet (sample enclosed), standardized map that meets legislative mapping requirements outlined in interim directive 1510-2011-1, one page of photos, an optional supplemental page detailing how the Region evaluated the project under SLARS, and optional letters of support. As you



develop your nominations, consider Agency objectives and policy concerning landownership adjustment. For guidelines refer to FSM 5402, 5403, 5420.2, 5420.3 and 5421.34, including:

1. Giving priority to acquisitions that would consolidate National Forest System lands within existing National Forest boundaries (FSM 5403.1, policy 1 & 11), providing there is broad public support for the acquisition.
2. Nominating properties as free of encumbrances as possible. Avoid acquisitions that are subject to special conditions or covenants that limit the Forest Service's authority to manage the lands for National Forest purposes. (FSM 5403.1, Policy 22)
3. Giving priority to acquisitions that meet goals and objectives of Forest land and Resource Management Plans. (FSM 5403.1, Policy 11), and the Agency's 2011 Watershed Condition Framework.
4. Nominations with split mineral estates must be identified in the fact sheet. Split Estates are generally not encouraged and should have a compelling justification.

Please carefully review project submissions to ensure the accuracy of data submitted, including acres to be acquired, estimated acquisition costs, public support, past funding and accomplishments, and feasibility to complete acquisition in a timely manner. Your care in submitting accurate and thorough project nominations ensures the Forest Service land acquisition program's continued credibility with Congress and our many stakeholders.

Please contact Jeffrey Vail, Assistant Director of Lands and Realty Management at (202) 205-2818, for additional information.

/s/ Joe Meade (for)
JOEL D. HOLTROP
Deputy Chief, National Forest System

cc: Jeffrey Vail
Tracy A Kremer
Joe Meade