

2013 STRATEGIC LAND ACQUISITION RANKING SYSTEM (SLARS)

The SLARS criteria reflect the purposes of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 and applicable goals of the Forest Service Strategic Plan, FY 2007-2012 and the US Department of Agriculture's Strategic Plan, FY2010-2015. The objective is to allow the Regions opportunity to prioritize their most important projects consistent with the resource-related criteria to establish overall consistency for project submissions. For the 2013 fiscal year, each region can submit up to 5 projects.

To identify a score for each project, enter the following information into the SLARS Spreadsheet, which is attached. Rate each project with a single score for each criterion. A project may include one or more tracts of land, which together may comprise a project area.

For each criterion, regions are to rank their project submissions in descending order, depending upon which project comes closest to achieving each criterion. For example, with Criteria 1, Healthy Watersheds, regions shall award 100 points to the project that best meets the criterion of directly contributing to watershed protection. The project that is second best in this category will receive 90 points, third 80 points, and so on. Only one project in each region may be awarded 100 points in any category. If a project will not directly contribute to watershed protection, it is to be awarded 0 points. The same process for project scoring will apply for all other criterion, meaning a project that receives 100 points in one category may be awarded a lesser point allocation in other categories. The intent of this scoring process is to refine and provide greater precision in project rankings.

Regions may award 200 points towards their top priority. Regions may rely upon a number of factors in determining which project is its priority, such as whether a project's acquisition has a particular urgency, has unique resource attributes, or is close to completion after multiple prior phased acquisitions, or enjoys particular public or Congressional support. The addition is SLARS Criterion 10: Regional Priority. The regions shall award 200 points to the **number one** regional priority project.

Introductory Information.

- A. Project Name. Enter project or tract name. Example: Wide River Riparian Areas.
- B. Region. Use the two-digit numeric code. Example: "02" for Region 2.
- C. Forest. Enter forest name. Example: "BEAVERHEAD NF".
- D. State. Use the standard two-digit abbreviation for State(s). Example: "CA" for California.

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- E. Congressional District. Use the two-digit numeric code for congressional district. Example: 01.
- F. Acres. Acreage rounded to the nearest whole acre.
- G. Amount Requested. Funding request rounded to the nearest whole dollar. Provide an estimate of value per parcel for multi-parcel submissions.
- H. Regional Priority. Enter priority points based on regional priority or need for the project.

<u>Priority</u>	<u>Points</u>
1	200
2	90
3	80
4	70
5	60
6	50
7	40
8	30
9	20
10	10

Strategic Plan, Goal 1. Restore, Sustain, and Enhance the Nation’s Forests and Grasslands.

Goal 1, Outcome: Forests and grasslands with the capacity to maintain their health, productivity, diversity, and resistance to unnaturally severe disturbance.

Goal 1, Objective 1.5: Restore and maintain healthy watersheds and diverse habitats.

SLARS Criterion 1: Healthy Watersheds.

Land acquisition provides an opportunity to protect or restore healthy watersheds. Assign points to projects in the order in which each project most closely approximates the Healthy Watershed criterion – 100 points for highest, 90 points for second highest, 80 for third highest, and so on. If a project does not directly contribute to watershed protection, award 0 points for that project. (The USDA Strategic Plan, pages 2-3, discusses conservation and uses on National Forest System land.)

100 points. Acquisition of the tract(s) comprising the project area directly contributes to the protection of watersheds more than any other project in the region.

Second Best = 90 points. Third = 80. Fourth = 70. Fifth = 60. Sixth = 50. Seventh = 40. Eighth = 30.

0 points. Acquisition of the tract(s) does not directly contribute to the protection of watersheds.

SLARS Criterion 2: Wetlands and Riparian Habitat.

Land acquisition provides an opportunity to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands and riparian areas. Assign priority points based on the situation that describes the project's contribution to wetland and riparian area restoration and protection. Refer to wetlands and riparian areas definitions in FSM 2520.

100 points. The tract(s) directly contributes to protection of riparian and wetland habitat more than any other project in the region.

Second Best = 90 points. Third = 80. Fourth = 70. Fifth = 60. Sixth = 50. Seventh = 40. Eighth = 30.

0 points. The tract(s) does not include significant riparian and wetland habitat.

SLARS Criterion 3: Diverse Habitats for Threatened or Endangered Species.

Land acquisition provides an opportunity to protect or restore diverse habitats for fish, wildlife and plants on the Federal list of threatened or endangered species. Assign priority points based on the project's capacity to protect or restore diverse habitats for threatened or endangered species.

100 points. Acquisition of the tract(s) comprising the project area will protect diverse habitats used by Federally listed threatened or endangered species more than any other project in the region.

Second Best = 90 points. Third = 80. Fourth = 70. Fifth = 60. Sixth = 50. Seventh = 40. Eighth = 30.

0 points. Acquisition of the tract(s) neither protects nor contributes to the protection or restoration of diverse habitats used by Federally listed threatened or endangered species, Regionally listed species, or State listed species.

SLARS Criterion 4: Adaptation to Reduce Climate Change Impacts.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change defines adaptation as the adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects. From a management perspective, this involves developing forest, grassland, and urban landscapes to be resilient to climate change. The acquisition program can be used as a tool to facilitate the adaptation of ecosystems to the effects of climate change to assure habitat connectivity within and among intact ecosystems, create buffers around core habitat areas, and/or protect climate "refugia", i.e., areas where targeted species and

habitat types are less susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Meeting the criteria achieve climate adaptation objectives.

100 points. More than any other project in the region, acquisition of the tract(s) will enhance the climate resilience of a forest or grassland for the benefit of targeted species and/or habitat types based on the strategies listed above. Give consideration to a tract(s) that falls within a forest or grassland that has been identified by a federal, state, or private entity as important to the support of climate adaptation for specie and/or habitat types and ecosystem services targeted by this project.

Second Best = 90 points. Third = 80. Fourth = 70. Fifth = 60. Sixth = 50. Seventh = 40. Eighth = 30.

0 points. Acquisition of the tract(s) does not directly contribute to the protection of wildlife transit corridors or areas critical for conservation for adaptation purposes.

Strategic Plan, Goal 3. Conserve Open Space.

Goal 3, Outcome: Maintain the environmental, social, and economic benefits of forests and grasslands by reducing and mitigating their conversion to other uses.

Goal 3, Objective 3.1: Protect forests and grasslands from conversion to other uses.

Goal 3, Objective 3.2: Projects that consolidate or provide key linkage to adjacent lands administered by other Federal, State, Local or Tribal Governments and/or nongovernmental organizations.

SLARS Criterion 5: Climate Change Mitigation.

The Forest Service Strategic Framework for Responding to Climate Change and Open Space Conservation Strategy provide guidance regarding agency actions to meet the challenge of climate change. Land acquisition provides an opportunity to support climate change mitigation by protecting carbon stored in forests and grasslands and future carbon sequestration on those lands. Land acquisition prevents the conversion of forest and grasslands for development, thereby preventing the release of stored carbon. Further, land acquisition can create opportunities for restoration of impaired native forests and grasslands, which often leads to a higher rate of future carbon sequestration from the tract.

100 points. Acquisition of the tract(s) comprising the project area will protect a greater quantity of existing carbon stocks than any other project in the region, in total or per-acre, or offers the greatest potential for additional carbon sequestration and storage if the acquired tracts are managed consistent with applicable management prescriptions in the Forest Plan. Potential for conversion of the tract(s) to other uses, and therefore loss of carbon mitigation values, is high due to an approved development plan for the property

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and/or published federal or state growth projections for the area showing high probability of conversion.

Second Best = 90 points. Third = 80. Fourth = 70. Fifth = 60. Sixth = 50. Seventh = 40. Eighth = 30.

0 points. There is no threat of conversion to other uses or, if acquired, the tract(s) in the project area will be managed under land management prescriptions that allow significant development activities.

Strategic Plan, Goal 4. Sustain and Enhance Outdoor Recreation Opportunities.

Goal 4, Outcome: A variety of high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities on the Nation's forests and grasslands are available to the public.

Goal 4, Objective 4.1: Improve the quality and availability of outdoor recreation experiences.

Goal 4, Objective 4.2: Secure legal entry to national forest lands and waters.

SLARS Criterion 6: Recreational Use and Improved Public Access.

Land acquisition contributes to outdoor recreation use on national forests and grasslands. Acquisitions that enhance a forest's ability to provide public access for quality recreational opportunities are especially valued. Further considerations are addressed in President Obama's 'America's Great Outdoor Initiative.

100 Points. The project will contribute to enhanced recreational opportunities, in particular improved public access to further the purpose of the 1965 LWCF Act..

Second Best = 90 points. Third = 80. Fourth = 70. Fifth = 60. Sixth = 50. Seventh = 40. Eighth = 30.

0 Points. The project does not contribute to enhanced recreational opportunities or public access.

SLARS Criterion 7: Cultural and Heritage Resources. Assign points based on the tract's effect on preserving a heritage resource(s), including federally-designated sites, traditional and cultural properties, and tribal sacred sites.

100 points. The tract preserves a Congressionally-designated National Historic Landmark, Historic Site, NHPA-designated traditional, cultural property, or other historic property or cultural feature more than any other project in the region.

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Second Best = 90 points. Third = 80. Fourth = 70. Fifth = 60. Sixth = 50. Seventh = 40. Eighth = 30.

0 points. The tract does not preserve any significant cultural resources or historic properties, or only those that are already fully represented in associated Federal conservation/recreation unit(s).

SLARS Criterion 8: Inside Congressionally Designated Area or other Special Management Area.

Acquiring lands already located within a Congressionally- designated area boundary, improves the administration of the national forest or the Congressionally-designated area. Assign points based on the location of the project tract(s), in descending order: within Congressionally-designated landscape within forest boundaries; within Congressionally-designated areas directly adjacent to forest boundaries; and within inventoried roadless areas.

100 points. Tract(s) within a national forest boundary and within the boundary of a Congressionally-designated area, such as Wilderness or a component of the National Wild and Scenic River System, shall be given highest scoring consideration.

Second Best = 90 points. Third = 80. Fourth = 70. Fifth = 60. Sixth = 50. Seventh = 40. Eighth = 30.

0 points. Tract is not within a Congressionally-designated area, roadless inventory area, or within the boundary of a national forest or grassland.

Strategic Plan, Goal 5. Maintain Basic Management Capabilities of the Forest Service.

Goal 5, Outcome: Administrative facilities, information systems, and landownership management with the capacity to support a wide range of natural resource challenges.

Goal 5, Objective 5.2: Improve the administration of national forest lands and facilities in support of the Agency's mission.

SLARS Criterion 9: Increased Management Efficiency.

Land acquisition provides an opportunity to manage national forests more efficiently. Assign points based on the likely cost savings, or potential cost increases, resulting from the acquisition of the project tract(s).

Examples of cost savings: Reduced risk from wildfires in the urban interface; reduced threat of introduction or need to treat noxious weeds; reduced need to restore watersheds or diverse habitats; reduced costs associated with boundary management; reduced risk of

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trespass or encroachment; reduced costs from road, trail or trailhead closure, construction, reconstruction or maintenance.

Examples of increased costs: Costs associated with road, trail or trailhead closure (gates or enforcement); need for road or trail construction, reconstruction or maintenance; need to treat tract for noxious weeds; need for habitat restoration; need to resolve a trespass or encroachment to clear title; need for additional boundary management actions.

100 points. Acquisition of the project tract(s) will contribute to increased management efficiency through likely cost savings more than any other project.

Second Best = 90 points. Third = 80. Fourth = 70. Fifth = 60. Sixth = 50. Seventh = 40. Eighth = 30.

0 points. Acquisition of the project tract(s) will decrease management efficiency and likely result in increased costs.

SLARS CRITERION 10: Regional Priority.

Each region may have a priority project that rises to the top. This criterion provides an opportunity to increase the weight of each region's number one priority by allocating more points to one project. 200 points. Examples:

- Acquisitions of a tract(s) presenting the most urgency and meeting existing commitments, such as a phased project.
- Capacity to deliver a completed project within the fiscal year.
- Particularly strong public or Congressional support for a project.

Supplemental Reference Information:

Interim Directive for Legislative Maps is: 1510-2011-1

Information links:

http://www.fs.fed.us/publications/watershed/Watershed_Condition_Framework.pdf

Is the Forest Service's Watershed Condition Framework

<http://www.usda.gov> For the FY2010-2015 Department of Agriculture Strategic Plan

<http://globalchange.gov> For climate change information specific to an area

<http://www.fs.fed.us/ccrc> Is the USFS Climate Change Resource Center

<http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/files/2011/02/AGO-Report-Report-Only-2-7-11.pdf>

Is the report for the America's Great Outdoors Initiative