



COMMUNITY FOREST AND OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Program Overview

The Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (Community Forest Program) is a competitive grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service that provides funding for communities to acquire and establish community forests. The program targets private forests that are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses and empowers communities to steward the places they cherish. Community forests contribute to local and regional economies and provide benefits such as clean water, wildlife habitat, educational opportunities, forest products, and public access for recreation.



Nine Times Community Forest. Courtesy photo by Mac Stone, Naturaland Trust.

What Is a Community Forest?

Community forests are locally owned and managed forests that provide a wide range of benefits to the communities that use them. A key feature is the involvement of the community in decision making and management of the forest.



Program Requirements

- Full fee title acquisition is required. Conservation easements are not eligible.
- Program pays up to 50 percent of project costs—a 50 percent non-Federal match is required.
- Public access is required on all community forests.
- The maximum request per project is \$600,000.

Eligible Lands

- Privately owned and threatened by conversion to nonforest uses
- At least 75 percent forested and 5 acres in size
- Provide community benefits (economic, environmental, recreational, and educational) and allow public access
- Not held in trust by the United States

Eligible Applicants

- Local governments (including any municipal or county governments)
- Federally recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations
- Qualified nonprofit organizations

Since 2012, the Community Forest Program has conserved over **37,000 acres** and supported **103 community-driven projects** across **30 States and territories**.



Application Process

Nine Times Community Forest. Courtesy photo by Mac Stone, Naturaland Trust.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service issues an annual request for applications, which can be found on the website. The fiscal year 2025 application cycle will follow the timeline below:

September 2024	October 2024	January 2025	March 2025	April 2025	Summer 2025
Request for applications announced	Informational webinar	Applications due to State foresters or equivalent Tribal government officials	Eligible applications are forwarded for national consideration	National panel reviews and ranks submitted applications	Project selections announced

Project Snapshot: Rocky Branch Community Forest

Located downstream of River Falls, WI, the Rocky Branch Community Forest received Community Forest Program funding in 2020.

- Acquired by Kinnickinnic Land Trust in 2021
- 40 acres of mature hardwood forest
- 1,280 feet of Kinnickinnic River shoreline, a self-sustaining Class I trout stream with Outstanding Resource Water classification by the state of Wisconsin
- Expanded recreation access for the community, bridging a city and township park with the neighboring River Falls School Forest



The Rocky Branch Community Forest located near River Falls, WI. USDA Forest Service photo by Hannah Bergemann.

Learn more about the Community Forest and Open Space Program or apply by visiting <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program> or emailing us at sm.fs.cfp@usda.gov.

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