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# LOUISIANA FOREST LEGACY ASSESSMENT OF NEED 2026

Prepared by The Conservation Fund for  
the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry

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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT *of*  
**AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY**





## Acknowledgements

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AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY**

### *Disclaimer*

*This Assessment of Need (AON) is a planning document intended to guide the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry's implementation of the USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program (FLP). Designation of a Forest Legacy Area (FLA) or priority zone within this document does not obligate any landowner to participate in the FLP, nor does it guarantee that any specific property will be approved for funding, acquisition, or conservation easement. Participation in the FLP is entirely voluntary.*

*Forest Legacy Area and priority zone boundaries depicted in this document are intended for planning purposes only and are subject to revision. Maps included in this AON are not survey-grade and should not be used for property boundary determinations, legal description, or regulatory purposes.*

*Nothing in this document should be construed as a commitment of federal or state funding. Funding for individual FLP projects is subject to annual appropriations and competitive federal scoring processes, as described in Section 1.3 of this document.*



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# Section 1: Assessment of Need Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Forest Legacy Program

The USDA Forest Legacy Program (FLP), established by Congress in 1990 and administered by the USDA Forest Service in partnership with state forestry agencies, is a voluntary conservation program designed to protect environmentally important forest lands threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) is the lead state agency for FLP. The program supports conservation of working forests through conservation easements and fee-simple acquisitions that retain forests in private ownership while protecting important ecological and public benefits. Participation in the program is entirely voluntary and focuses on conserving large, connected forest landscapes that provide significant environmental, economic, and cultural value at both the state and regional scale.

The purpose of this *Assessment of Need* (AON) is to identify and prioritize environmentally important forest landscapes in Louisiana that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses and to establish a framework for long-term forest conservation through the FLP. The document evaluates the ecological, economic, hydrologic, cultural, recreational, and working forest values associated with Louisiana's forests; identifies major threats affecting long-term forest retention and management; establishes eligibility criteria for proposed Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs); and defines conservation priorities and goals for strategic forest landscapes across the state. This AON is intended to support voluntary, landscape-scale conservation of working forests and the public benefits they provide for future generations.

Louisiana's original FLP AON was completed in 2005 following the state's entry into the FLP and established the initial framework for identifying priority forest conservation landscapes within Louisiana. The AON was amended in 2010 to add two additional Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs). Since that time, Louisiana's forests have experienced substantial changes associated with shifting ownership patterns, economic restructuring within the forest products industry, increasing fragmentation and development pressure, major storm impacts, changing demographic trends, and evolving conservation priorities. The updated AON builds upon the original framework while incorporating new spatial datasets, statewide threat and resource analyses, stakeholder input, and current forest conditions to better reflect the current landscape and the contemporary challenges and opportunities affecting Louisiana's forests. The update additionally aligns the FLP more closely with current statewide conservation planning efforts, including the *Louisiana State Forest Action Plan* (FAP) and the *2025 Louisiana State Wildlife Action Plan* (SWAP).

Under this updated AON, the total area within designated FLAs boundaries is approximately 13.8 million acres. The total area included in the previous AON was approximately 7.13 million acres. This is a roughly 48% increase in total eligible acreage within the defined FLAs from the previous AON. The 2026 AON also establishes priority zones within each FLA, totaling 8.6 million acres within the designate priority areas.

## 1.2 Forest Legacy Goal and Objectives

The overall **Goal** for Louisiana's FLP is to protect environmentally important, privately owned forests from being converted to non-forest uses.

The LDAF has identified the following **Objectives** for the AON for the State as a whole. Not every designated FLA will support every objective, but each will be addressed by the program as a whole.

1. Identify and protect environmentally important forest lands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses
2. Reduce forest fragmentation caused by development
3. Provide buffer areas and connectivity to already protected areas
4. Protect rare, threatened, or endangered species of plants and animals; protect and enhance critical wildlife corridors
5. Provide environmental benefits through the restoration and protection of riparian zones, native forest plants and animals, and remnant forest types
6. Enhance forest diversity
7. Protect river systems, wetlands, and their associated upland habitats
8. Provide for watershed and water supply protection
9. Protect and restore coastal and near-coastal forested ecosystems to provide storm protection, watershed benefits, and climate-resilience functions for shifting populations
10. Provide employment opportunities and economic stability through maintenance of traditional forest uses and working forests
11. Promote Forest Stewardship and Best Management Practices for forestry
12. Increase the opportunity for public recreation
13. Maintain important, recognized scenic resources of the state
14. Maintain or protect properties with documented historical or culturally significant features
15. Provide for educational and research opportunities



## 1.3 National Eligibility and Scoring Criteria

All FLP projects are evaluated against four national core criteria (below). Prospective applicants should be familiar with these early in project development, as they determine competitiveness in the national funding cycle. The federal scoring guidance is provided in the FLP *National Core Criteria* in **Appendix F**, and is also noted in the Louisiana Forest Legacy Project Application in **Appendix G**.

- **Importance** (0–30 pts) - Ecological, economic, and social public benefits conserved by the project, including timber productivity, wildlife habitat (especially T&E species), watershed and water supply protection, public access, and cultural, tribal, and scenic resources.
- **Threat** (0–20 pts) - Likelihood of conversion to non-forest uses absent FLP protection, based on landowner circumstances, adjacent land use trends, and physical or regulatory conditions that could facilitate development.
- **Strategic Value** (0–30 pts) - Contribution to landscape-scale conservation goals, including proximity to and connectivity with protected lands and alignment with recognized conservation plans or initiatives.
- **Readiness** (*threshold requirement*) - Mandatory pre-acquisition steps that must be documented before submission: signed option or purchase agreement, cost-share commitment, completed title search with mineral rights evaluation, and draft conservation easement language acceptable to the landowner and State.

## 1.4 State Lead Agency and Partners

In 2005, Governor Mike Foster designated the LDAF as the lead state agency responsible for coordinating and administering the FLP in Louisiana. As the lead agency, LDAF oversees program implementation, coordination with the USDA Forest Service, project development, landowner engagement, and management of Louisiana's FLP AON.

Since the program's establishment in Louisiana, LDAF has partnered with local, state and national conservation and forestry organizations, other natural resource agencies, universities and colleges, and private landowners to promote and implement the FLP. With the assistance of a contractor, the LDAF administers the program through its Forest Management Branch. In 2025, LDAF retained The Conservation Fund to assist with the statewide update of FLP AON. This 2026 update was developed in collaboration with The Conservation Fund, the USDA Forest Service, members of the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee, partner agencies, conservation organizations, forest landowners, and other stakeholders involved in forest conservation and management throughout Louisiana.

## 1.5 Relationship to Forest Action Plan

A full update of the Louisiana State Forest Action Plan (FAP) is currently underway, with anticipated completion in 2027. This FLP AON will be attached as an appendix to the updated FAP once it is complete. Due to the simultaneous updates of both the AON and the State FAP, the priorities, data and analysis of these two guidance documents will complement each other. However, this AON is intended to meet all guidelines and requirements, as set by the USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program, as a standalone document.

# Section 2: Louisiana Forest Resource Context

## 2.1 Forest Extent, Distribution and Ownership Patterns

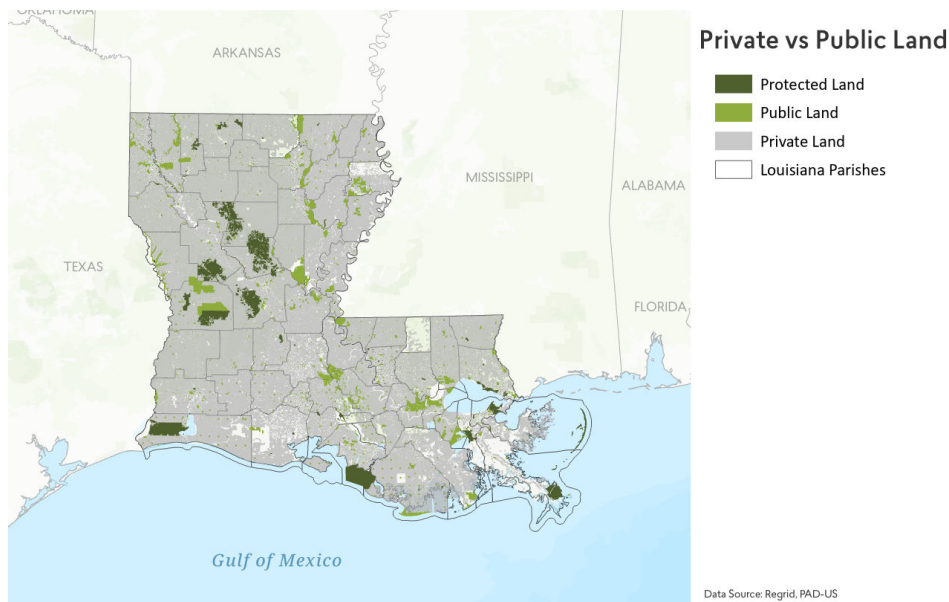
### 2.1.1 Forest Extent

Louisiana encompasses approximately 33 million acres, including roughly 28.8 million acres of land and more than 4 million acres of water. Louisiana contains approximately 14.9 million acres of forest land, representing roughly 50% of the state's total land area (Louisiana Forestry Association 2025). Forests occur throughout the state across a wide range of ecological regions, hydrologic systems, and ownership patterns. While Louisiana's total forest acreage has remained relatively stable over the long term, USDA Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data indicate import-

ant shifts in forest composition, management intensity, and stand origin. Pine-dominated systems, particularly planted loblolly-shortleaf pine forests, expanded substantially during the late 20th century, while portions of the state's bottomland hardwood forests experienced conversion to agriculture prior to subsequent stabilization and conservation-focused restoration efforts.

### 2.1.2 Forest Ownership

The forest landscape in Louisiana is overwhelmingly privately owned, with approximately 90% of the state's 14.9 million forested acres held by private ownership interests. Public landownership accounts for the remaining 10% and is managed primarily by federal and state agencies. Publicly owned forest lands in Louisiana



Map 1- Private vs Public Land Ownership

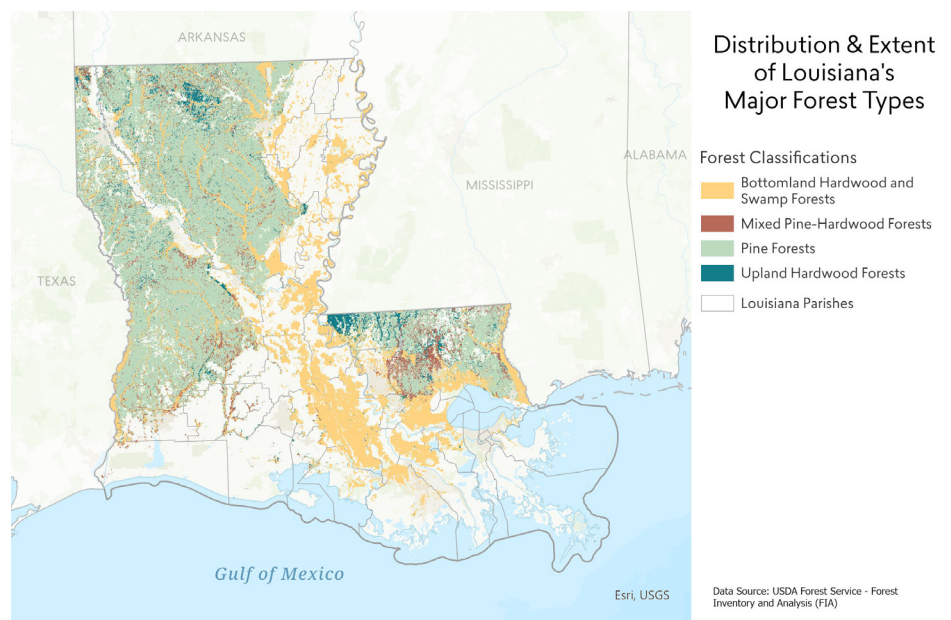
consist largely of Kisatchie National Forest, encompassing an estimated 604,000 acres, as well as several U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) refuges and state Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). It is important to note that many of Louisiana's WMAs are privately owned lands leased and managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) to provide public recreational access. As a result, long-term public access to some of these recreation areas remains dependent on continued agreements with private land-owners.

Corporate ownership entities, including Timber Investment Management Organizations (TIMOs) and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), collectively control nearly half (49%) of Louisiana's forest land. Over the last two decades, Louisiana has experienced a major shift in forest ownership structure. In 1999, traditional forest products industries - vertically integrated companies that both owned timberland and operated manufacturing facilities - held approximately 29% of the state's forest land. By 2010, that figure had declined to approximately 10% as many companies divested timberland holdings to institutional investors or converted to REIT structures for financial and tax advantages. Although this transition occurred nationwide, the shift was particularly pronounced across the Southern United States, where traditional industry ownership divested roughly three-fourths of its timberland holdings between 1998 and 2008. Louisiana experienced the largest volume of timberland transactions in the Southeast during this period, with approximately 3.6 million acres transferred through timberland sales. The transition from

vertically integrated forest industry ownership to institutional investment ownership significantly altered Louisiana's timber sector, shifting the focus from mill supply and long-term operational integration toward financial asset performance and investment return objectives. At the same time, non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners, including families, heirs' property owners, small corporate entities, and individual investors, continue to play a critical role in Louisiana's forest management landscape and collectively control millions of acres of forest land statewide.

### 2.1.3 Forest Type, Distribution and Composition

Louisiana's approximately 14.9 million acres of forest land encompass a diverse range of forest types shaped by regional soils, hydrology, topography, and disturbance regimes. Based on FIA classifications, these forests can be broadly organized into four major categories: pine forests, mixed pine-hardwood forests, upland hardwood forests, and bottomland hardwood/swamp forests. The distribution, composition, and management intensity of these forest categories vary considerably across the state and reflect the influence of both natural ecological gradients and decades of timber management, land use change, and ownership transition. These broad forest type categories occur across Louisiana's six ecological regions as described in section 2.3 of this document; more detailed descriptions of specific natural community types within each region can be found in the 2025 Louisiana State Wildlife Action Plan.



Map 2- Distribution of Major Forest Types



**Pine forests**, encompassing the loblolly-shortleaf pine and longleaf-slash pine FIA forest-type groups, represent the largest category of Louisiana's forested landscape. Louisiana's pine forests cover an estimated 5.3 to 5.6 million acres concentrated primarily across northern, western, and central Louisiana. Loblolly-shortleaf pine systems dominate this category and support the majority of the state's intensively managed timberlands and pine plantation acreage. FIA trend data indicate that planted pine acreage expanded substantially from the 1970s through the early 2000s as forest management intensification increased across the state, and loblolly-shortleaf pine forests continue to support the majority of Louisiana's commercial timber production today. Longleaf-slash pine systems, occurring primarily in central and southeastern Louisiana, are ecologically distinct from intensively managed loblolly systems. These systems are characterized by high biodiversity value, fire-adapted understory communities, and dependence on frequent low-intensity fire to maintain open-canopy conditions. These systems provide critical habitat for the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and federally threatened Louisiana pine snake and represent some of the most conservation-significant forest landscapes in the state.



Figure 1- Pine Savanna Forest (LDWF)

**Mixed pine-hardwood forests**, corresponding primarily to the oak-pine FIA forest-type group, cover approximately 1.5 to 2 million acres across transitional upland landscapes where pine and hardwood species co-occur in varying mixtures. These forests occupy an ecological middle ground between intensively managed pine systems and more diverse upland hardwood communities and are distributed broadly across central and northwestern Louisiana.

**Upland hardwood forests**, represented primarily by oak-hickory systems, cover roughly 1.4 to 1.5 million acres in northern Louisiana and are associated with well-drained upland soils and ridgeline positions. These forests provide important wildlife habitat and mast production and are generally naturally regenerated, containing older stand structures compared to the younger, actively managed pine systems that dominate much of the surrounding landscape.



Figure 2- Shortleaf Pine-Oak-Hickory Forest (LDWF)

**Bottomland hardwood and swamp forests**, comprised of the oak-gum-cypress and elm-ash-cottonwood FIA forest-type groups, cover approximately 4.0 to 4.2 million acres distributed throughout major river floodplains, coastal lowlands, and alluvial systems including the Mississippi, Red, Ouachita, and Atchafalaya basins. FIA trend data indicate modest increases in these forest types over recent decades, reflecting both natural regeneration and active restoration efforts within portions of the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley. These forested wetlands are among Louisiana's most ecologically important landscapes, providing critical functions related to flood attenuation, water quality protection, carbon storage, fisheries productivity, and habitat connectivity for migratory birds, black bear, amphibians, and other wildlife species. Like upland hardwoods, bottomland hardwood forests remain overwhelmingly naturally regenerated and generally contain older stand structures, contributing disproportionately to carbon storage, structural complexity, and biodiversity relative to their acreage.

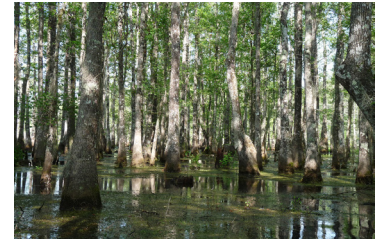


Figure 3- Black Gum Cypress Swamp (LDWF)



Figure 4- Bottomland Hardwood Forest (USFS)



## 2.2 Economic Importance of Louisiana's Forests

### 2.2.1 Forest Industry and Timber Economy

Louisiana's forests are a major economic driver for the state and represent one of Louisiana's most valuable natural resources. Forestry and forest products consistently rank among the top agricultural commodities in Louisiana, with timber regularly identified as either the state's most valuable agricultural crop or among the top two agricultural commodities by value, depending on annual market conditions. The forest industry supports a broad network of economic activities including forestry services, logging, primary and secondary wood manufacturing, pulp and paper production, transportation, and export industries.



Figure 5- Hardwood Products are integral to Louisiana's historic timber economy

According to the LSU AgCenter, the total economic contribution of Louisiana's forest industry was estimated at approximately \$11 billion in 2021, supporting more than 37,000 jobs and generating approximately \$2.2 billion in labor income statewide. Direct forest industry employment accounted for approximately 25,500 jobs, with an additional 11,500 indirect and induced jobs supported through related sectors of the economy. Forestry and forest products manufacturing are particularly important within rural parishes, where timber production, logging operations, sawmills, paper mills, and wood manufacturing facilities provide stable employment, support local tax bases, and contribute significantly to regional economies.

Louisiana's forest economy also plays an important role in regional and international trade. Forest products, including pulp, paper, lumber, plywood, veneer, and other wood products, contribute substantially to the state's manufacturing and export economy through Louisiana's extensive port and transportation infrastructure.

### 2.2.2 Forest Products and Processing Infrastructure

Louisiana's forest products sector is closely tied to the composition and distribution of the state's major forest-type groups, particularly the loblolly-shortleaf pine forests that dominate much of northern and western Louisiana and the bottomland hardwood and oak-gum-cypress forests associated with major river systems and coastal lowlands. Pine-dominated forests, including intensively managed pine plantations, form the backbone of Louisiana's commercial timber industry and support a large pulp and paper sector, as well as sawtimber, plywood, oriented strand board (OSB), poles, veneer, biomass, and other wood products manufacturing.

Common timber product classes in Louisiana include pine sawtimber, pine pulpwood, chip-n-saw, hardwood sawtimber, and hardwood pulpwood. Pine plantations in northern and western Louisiana are especially important for supplying fiber to mills across the broader southern timber market. Louisiana's timber economy has historically been heavily dependent on pulp and paper manufacturing infrastructure, with pulpwood representing a significant component of the state's timber harvest and mill supply system. Hardwood resources, particularly bottomland hardwood species such as oak, gum, and cypress, also contribute to sawtimber production and specialty wood markets, although hardwood pulpwood markets tend to fluctuate more significantly than pine product markets.

The location and viability of processing facilities—including pulp and paper mills, sawmills, plywood mills, and engineered wood product facilities—play a critical role in determining timber market access, hauling distances, timber pricing, and the long-term economic sustainability of working forests throughout the state.



Figure 6- Logging, Kisatchie National Forest (USFS)



### 2.2.3 Outdoor Recreation and Wildlife Economy

In addition to supporting Louisiana's timber and forest products sector, forests and associated wetland systems contribute substantially to the state's outdoor recreation economy. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, Louisiana's outdoor recreation economy generated approximately \$10 billion in annual value added in 2024, supported more than 60,000 jobs, and accounted for approximately 3% of the state's gross domestic product. Boating, fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, camping, hiking, and other nature-based recreation activities represent significant components of this economic activity and are closely tied to Louisiana's forests, wetlands, wildlife management areas, and public lands.



Figure 7- Hiking and overnight camping are popular activities in Kisatchie National Forest (USFS)



Figure 8- Trail Rides at Bogue Chitto State Park (LA State Parks)



Figure 9- Birding is a popular activity in Louisiana's forests (LDWF)

## 2.3 Environmental and Social Importance of Louisiana Forests

### 2.3.1 Louisiana Ecoregions

Louisiana contains six broadly recognized ecological regions that are differentiated by physiography, hydrology, soils, climate, vegetation communities, and associated wildlife species (see map). These ecological regions support a diverse range of forest systems, natural communities, and ecosystem functions across the state. Ecoregion boundaries follow the classification framework developed by The Nature Conservancy, based on subsections delineated by the USDA Forest Service (ECOMAP Team 2007). Brief descriptions of the major ecological regions found in Louisiana are provided below.

#### East Gulf Coastal Plain

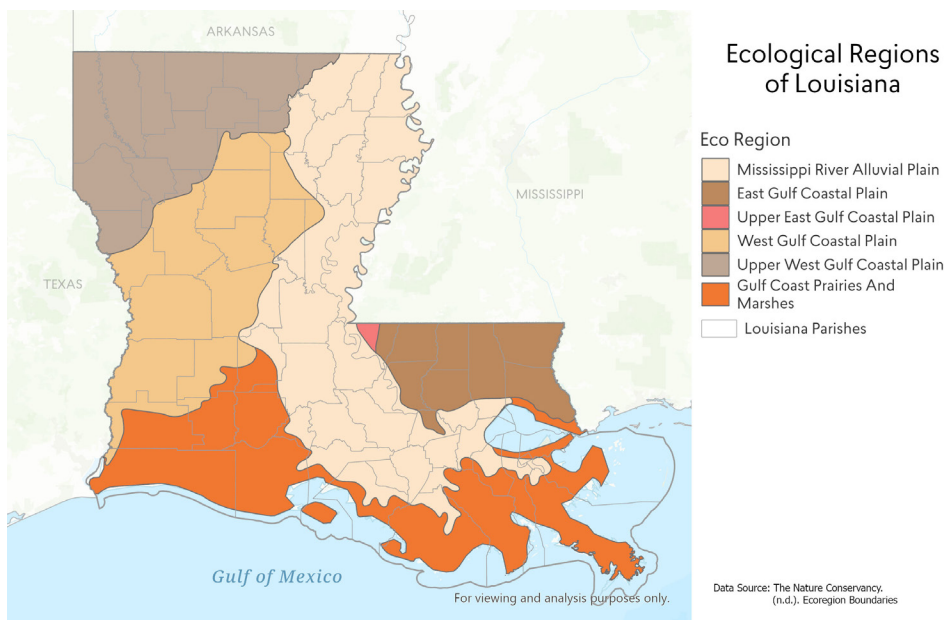
The East Gulf Coastal Plain occupies much of southeastern Louisiana, including portions of the Florida Parishes region, and is characterized by rolling uplands,

mixed pine-hardwood forests, stream systems, and relatively high levels of biodiversity and habitat connectivity. Forests within the region include loblolly pine, mixed upland hardwoods, and riparian forest systems that support important watershed functions, wildlife habitat, and recreational resources. Increasing development pressure and fragmentation within portions of the region have elevated the importance of conserving remaining connected forest landscapes.

#### Gulf Coast Prairie and Marshes

The Gulf Coast Prairie and Marshes region encompasses much of coastal Louisiana and contains a complex mosaic of marshes, coastal prairie remnants, cypress-tupelo swamps, forested wetlands, and transitional coastal forest systems. These landscapes provide critical ecological functions related to fisheries productivity, migratory bird habitat, flood attenuation, carbon storage, storm protection, and coastal resilience. Forested wetlands and coastal forest systems within the region also serve as important migration corridors for wildlife and inland transition zones for coastal ecosystems responding to sea level rise and land loss.





Map 3- Ecoregions of Louisiana

### Mississippi River Alluvial Plain

The Mississippi River Alluvial Plain is characterized by broad floodplains, alluvial soils, oxbow lakes, and extensive bottomland hardwood forests associated with the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Historically dominated by expansive bottomland hardwood systems, portions of the region were converted to agricultural production during the twentieth century, although substantial forested landscapes remain. Existing bottomland hardwood forests provide critical habitat for migratory birds, Louisiana black bear, amphibians, and numerous wetland-dependent species while also supporting important water quality, flood storage, and carbon sequestration functions.

### Upper East Gulf Coastal Plain

The Upper East Gulf Coastal Plain occupies portions of north-central and northeastern Louisiana and contains a mixture of upland hardwood forests, pine-hardwood systems, loess soils, and dissected stream systems. Forests within the region support important wildlife habitat, watershed protection functions, and recreational opportunities. The region also contains significant riparian corridors and mixed forest landscapes that contribute to regional biodiversity and ecological connectivity.

### Upper West Gulf Coastal Plain

The Upper West Gulf Coastal Plain occurs primarily within northwestern Louisiana and is characterized by rolling uplands, pine-dominated forests, mixed hardwood systems, and extensive commercial timberlands. Loblolly-shortleaf pine forests are prevalent throughout the region and support a significant portion of Louisiana's timber production and forest products infrastructure. Large, connected forest blocks within the region also provide important habitat for species associated with longleaf pine and upland pine ecosystems, including the species of concern such as Louisiana pine snake and red-cockaded woodpecker.

### West Gulf Coastal Plain

The West Gulf Coastal Plain occupies portions of western and central Louisiana and contains a diverse mixture of pine forests, mixed pine-hardwood systems, stream corridors, and remnant longleaf pine landscapes. Historically shaped by frequent fire regimes, the region supports important biodiversity resources and contains some of the state's most significant working forest landscapes. Forests within the region contribute substantially to Louisiana's timber economy while also supporting habitat connectivity, watershed protection, recreation, and landscape-scale ecological resilience.

More detailed descriptions of natural community types, species assemblages, and conservation priorities within each ecological region are documented in the 2025 Louisiana State Wildlife Action Plan (LDWF 2025), which serves as a foundational reference for habitat and species conservation in the state.

## 2.3.2 Wildlife Habitat and Biodiversity Resources

Louisiana's forests provide habitat for a diverse array of plant and animal species and support some of the most ecologically significant wildlife landscapes in the southeastern United States.

According to the USGS Gap Analysis Project, terrestrial vertebrate species richness across Louisiana's forested landscapes ranges from 16 to 247 species per grid cell, with the highest concentrations occurring in the bottomland hardwood and forested wetland systems of south-central Louisiana and along major river corridors (see Vertebrate Density Map). The 2025 Louisiana State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) identifies 428 fish and wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), 552 plant SGCN, and 61 natural communities statewide, a significant portion of which are directly dependent on forested habitats. Conservation managed areas in Louisiana encompass approximately 3.5 million acres across all ecoregions of the state, underscoring the critical role that privately owned working forests play in supporting biodiversity beyond the boundaries of publicly protected lands.

Table 1 on page 10 identifies key forest-dependent species and natural communities of conservation significance in Louisiana, drawn from the 2025 SWAP and federal listings:



Table 1- Forest Dependent Species and Communities of Conservation Concern

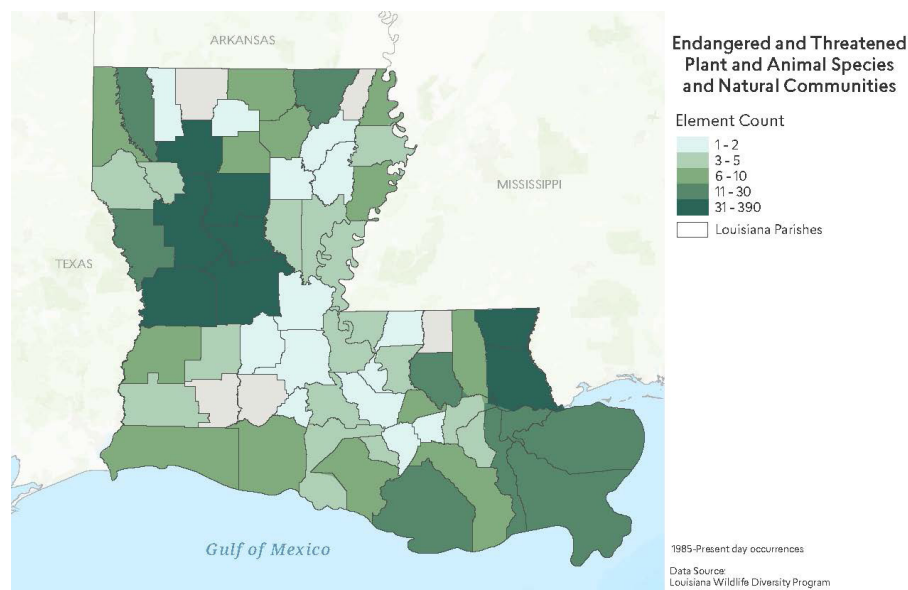
| Selected Forest-Dependent Species and Natural Communities of Conservation Concern in Louisiana                                                    |                   |                   |                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Species / Natural Community                                                                                                                       | Federal Status    | State SGCN        | Primary Forest Habitat                                                     |
| Red-cockaded Woodpecker ( <i>Dryobates borealis</i> )                                                                                             | Endangered        | Yes               | Longleaf/loblolly pine, open canopy with active fire management            |
| Louisiana Pinesnake ( <i>Pituophis ruthveni</i> )                                                                                                 | Threatened        | Yes (S1)          | Longleaf pine uplands; sandy, well-drained soils (see Preferred Soils Map) |
| Gopher Tortoise ( <i>Gopherus polyphemus</i> )                                                                                                    | Threatened        | Yes               | Longleaf pine and pine-oak savannas; open sandy uplands                    |
| Dusky Gopher Frog ( <i>Lithobates sevosus</i> )                                                                                                   | Endangered        | Yes (S1)          | Longleaf pine uplands with ephemeral pond breeding habitat                 |
| Pearl River Map Turtle ( <i>Graptemys pearlensis</i> )                                                                                            | Threatened (2024) | Yes               | Forested river systems; Pearl River watershed                              |
| Ringed Map Turtle ( <i>Graptemys oculifera</i> )                                                                                                  | Threatened        | Yes               | Forested river systems; Pearl and Black River watersheds                   |
| Prothonotary Warbler ( <i>Protonotaria citrea</i> )                                                                                               | —                 | Yes               | Baldcypress-tupelo swamp and bottomland hardwood forest                    |
| Rusty Blackbird ( <i>Euphagus carolinus</i> )                                                                                                     | —                 | Yes               | Bottomland hardwood and swamp forests; wintering habitat                   |
| Kentucky Warbler ( <i>Geothlypis formosa</i> )                                                                                                    | —                 | Yes               | Bottomland hardwood and moist upland forest                                |
| Louisiana Black Bear ( <i>Ursus americanus luteolus</i> )                                                                                         | Delisted 2016     | —                 | Bottomland hardwood forest; river corridors                                |
| Pondberry ( <i>Lindera melissifolia</i> )                                                                                                         | Endangered        | Yes               | Bottomland hardwood and floodplain forest                                  |
| Baldcypress-Tupelo Swamp Forest                                                                                                                   | —                 | Natural Community | Forested swamp; alluvial river corridors                                   |
| Bottomland Hardwood Forest                                                                                                                        | —                 | Natural Community | Floodplain forest; Mississippi and Atchafalaya basins                      |
| Western Upland Longleaf Pine Savanna & Woodland                                                                                                   | —                 | Natural Community | Upland longleaf pine; West Gulf Coastal Plain                              |
| Eastern Upland Longleaf Pine Savanna & Woodland                                                                                                   | —                 | Natural Community | Upland longleaf pine; East Gulf Coastal Plain/ Florida Parishes            |
| Sources: 2025 Louisiana SWAP (LDWF); USFWS ESA listings. S-ranks reflect Louisiana-specific state conservation status. S1 = critically imperiled. |                   |                   |                                                                            |

Longleaf pine ecosystems within western and central Louisiana are particularly important for species dependent on open-canopy pine savanna habitats and frequent fire regimes. The 2025 SWAP identifies multiple obligate or near-obligate SGCN associated with these systems, including the federally threatened Louisiana pine snake (*Pituophis ruthveni*), which carries a state rank of S1 (critically imperiled) and is restricted to well-drained sandy soils within longleaf pine uplands across a limited range in western Louisiana (see Louisiana Pine Snake Preferred Soils Map), and the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (*Dryobates borealis*), which requires large, connected pine landscapes with open understories maintained through active management and prescribed fire. Of the original longleaf pine range in Louisiana, only a fraction of the historic extent remains on the landscape today in intact savanna or woodland condition, making protection and restoration of remaining longleaf systems one of the most urgent conservation priorities identified in the SWAP.

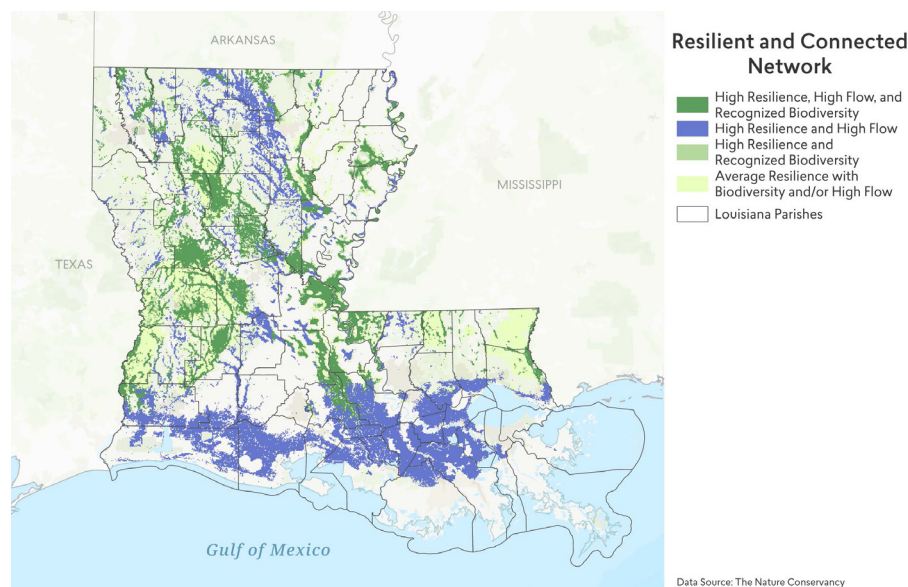
Bottomland hardwood forests and forested wetlands associated with the Mississippi River Alluvial Plain, Red River system, Atchafalaya Basin, and other major

river corridors provide important habitat for migratory birds, amphibians, black bears, and numerous wetland-dependent species. The 2025 SWAP notes that Bottomland Hardwood Forest historically occupied an estimated 6 to 8 million acres in Louisiana; while substantial acreage remains, much of what persists has been hydrologically altered, and pristine old-growth examples are rare. The Atchafalaya Basin contains the largest remaining block of floodplain forest and swamp in the United States, with an estimated 595,000 acres of combined baldcypress-tupelo swamp forest and bottomland hardwood forest. The Louisiana black bear, which is the state mammal, was successfully delisted from federally threatened status in 2016 following the voluntary restoration of more than 485,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest by private landowners, a conservation success story that demonstrates the importance of privately owned working forests to species recovery. These forested landscapes also function as regionally significant wildlife movement corridors and ecological linkages across fragmented agricultural and developed areas.

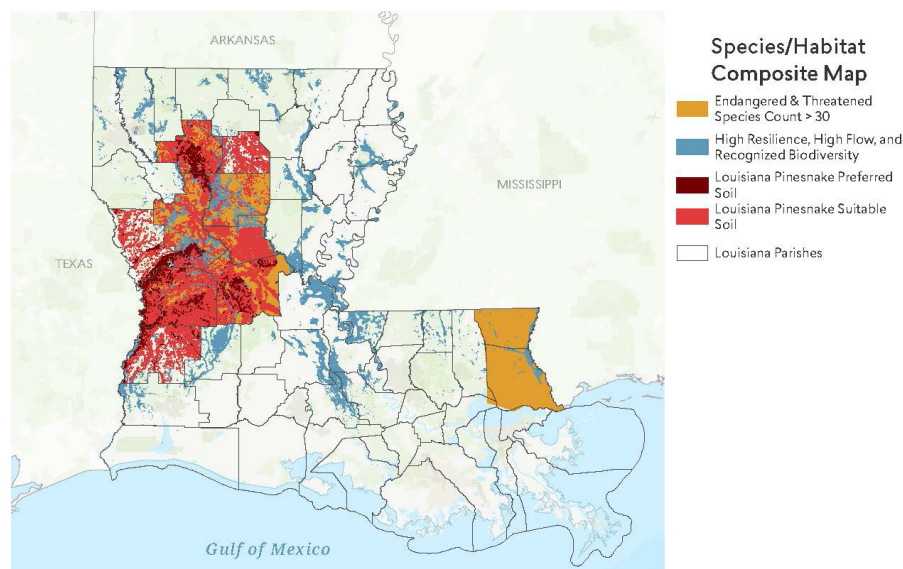




Map 4- Species Richness by Parish



Map 5- Resilient and Connected Network

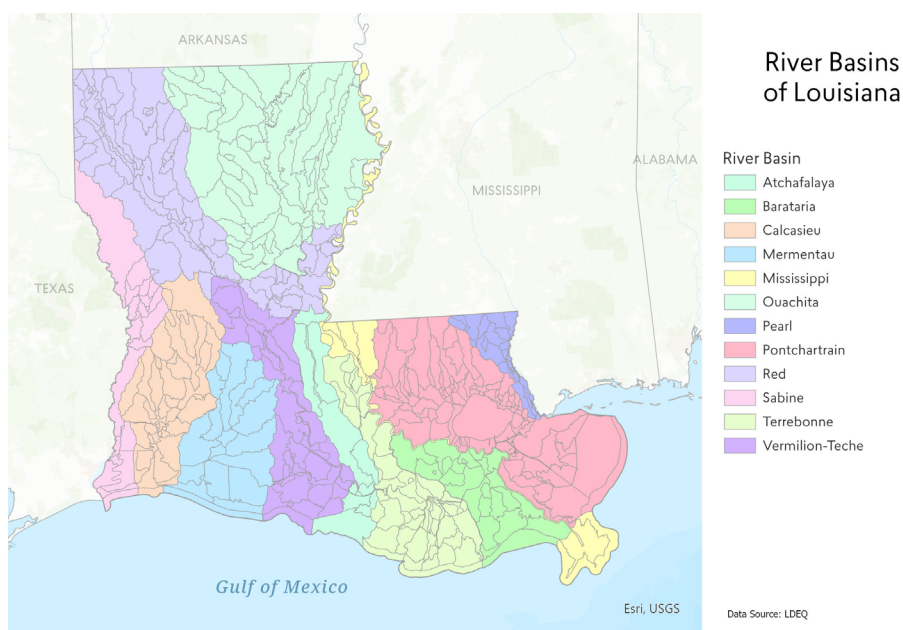


Map 6- Species, Habitat and Connected Network Overlay

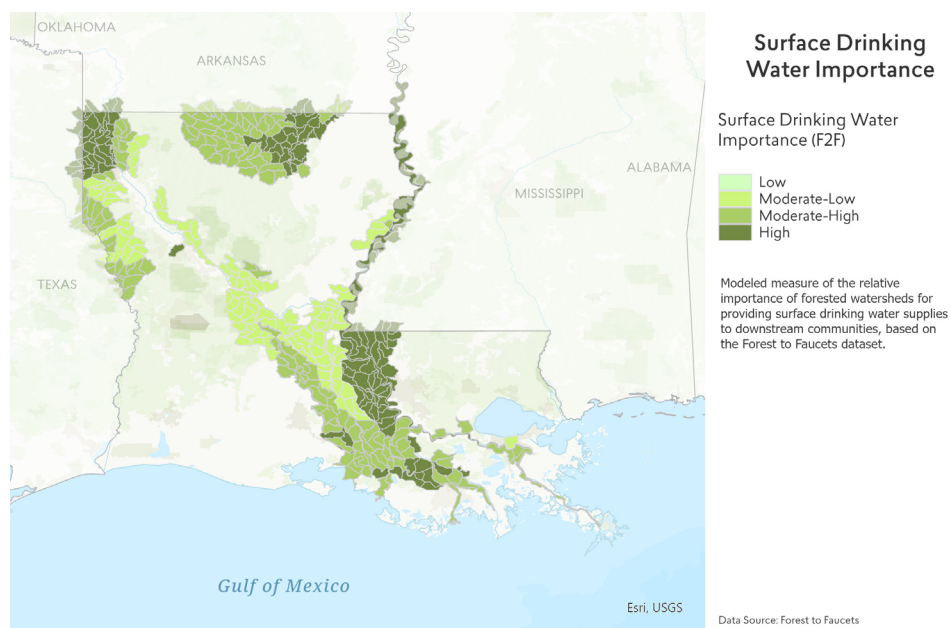
Spatial analyses conducted for this AON incorporated terrestrial vertebrate richness from the USGS Gap Analysis Project, threatened and endangered species occurrences from the Louisiana Wildlife Diversity Program (1985–present), resilient and connected landscape data from The Nature Conservancy, and Louisiana pine snake soil habitat data from LDWF. As illustrated in the Species/Habitat Composite Map (Map 6), the highest concentrations of overlapping conservation values (areas where parishes with more than 30 threatened and endangered species element occurrences coincide with high-resilience, high-flow, and recognized biodiversity landscapes and long-leaf pine soil habitat) are concentrated primarily across western and central Louisiana. These analyses highlight the importance of protecting large, connected working forest landscapes that support wildlife habitat, maintain ecological function, and enhance long-term habitat connectivity across Louisiana’s diverse forest ecosystems.

### 2.3.3 Watershed and Hydrologic Resources

Louisiana's forests are closely interconnected with the state's extensive hydrologic systems and play a critical role in maintaining water quality, regulating hydrologic function, supporting aquatic habitat, and enhancing flood resilience across the state. Forested landscapes occur throughout each of Louisiana's major river basins and watershed systems, including the Mississippi, Red, Ouachita, Atchafalaya, Pearl, Pontchartrain, Sabine, Calcasieu, Mermentau, Vermilion-Teche, Terrebonne, and Barataria basins (see map). These river systems, floodplains, wetlands, and associated forested landscapes collectively support ecological processes and water resources that are fundamental to Louisiana's environment, economy, and communities.



Map 7- River Basins of Louisiana



Map 8- Surface Drinking Water Importance (F2F)

Forested watersheds provide important water quality benefits by naturally filtering pollutants, reducing erosion and sedimentation, stabilizing streambanks, moderating nutrient runoff, and improving downstream water conditions. Riparian forests and bottomland hardwood systems are particularly important because they function as transitional buffers between upland landscapes and aquatic systems, helping to intercept nonpoint source pollution while also maintaining stream shading, channel stability, and aquatic habitat conditions. Forested floodplains and riparian corridors throughout Louisiana also serve as important ecological linkages that support fish and wildlife movement, wetland connectivity, and overall watershed health. Forested landscapes throughout northern and central Louisiana, particularly within upland pine systems and riparian corridors, represent some of the state's most significant contributors to natural water filtration and nonpoint source pollution reduction.

Forests also play a significant role in regulating water quantity and hydrologic processes across Louisiana's diverse landscapes. Forested floodplains, wetlands, and riparian systems help absorb and slow stormwater runoff, reduce erosion, enhance infiltration, and store floodwaters during major precipitation events. Louisiana contains an estimated 5.2 million acres of forested wetlands, including bottomland hardwood forests, cypress-tupelo swamps, and other forested floodplain systems that contribute significantly to water quality protection, flood resilience, wildlife habitat, carbon storage, and coastal ecosystem function. Bottomland hardwood forests associated with the Mississippi River Alluvial Plain, Red River Valley, Atchafalaya Basin, and other major floodplain systems provide particularly important flood attenuation and water storage functions. Forested wetlands and coastal transition forests in southern Louisiana additionally contribute to storm protection, hydrologic buffering, and coastal resilience within low-lying and highly vulnerable landscapes.

Spatial analyses conducted for this AON incorporated *Forests to Faucets* datasets evaluating the relative importance of forested watersheds for producing clean water and supporting surface drinking water supplies. These analyses identified

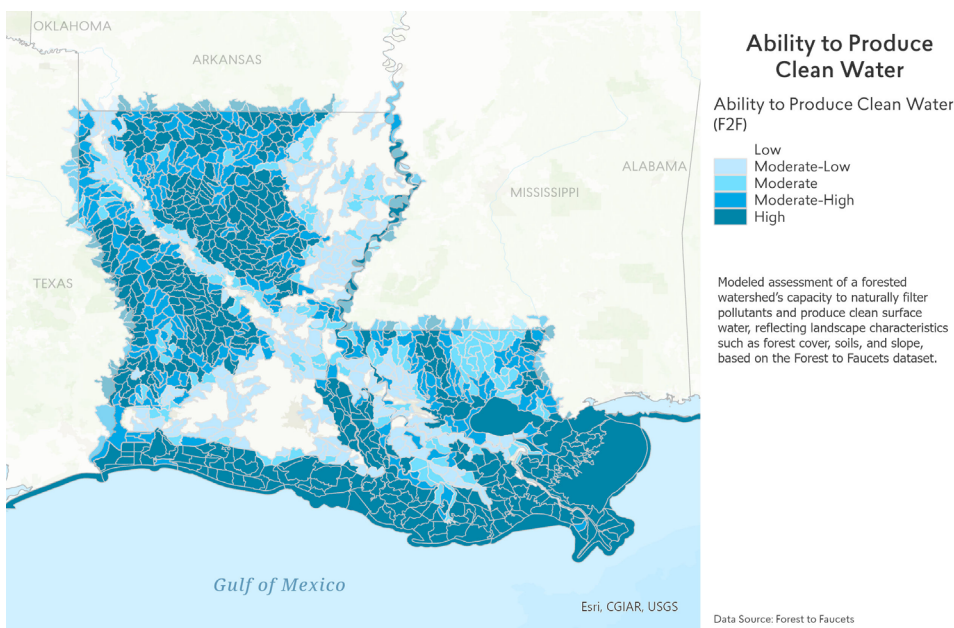


extensive areas of Louisiana where forested landscapes contribute significantly to downstream water quality protection and drinking water resources. Forested watersheds within northern Louisiana, portions of the Florida Parishes, and several major river corridors demonstrated particularly high modeled importance for surface drinking water and watershed protection functions.

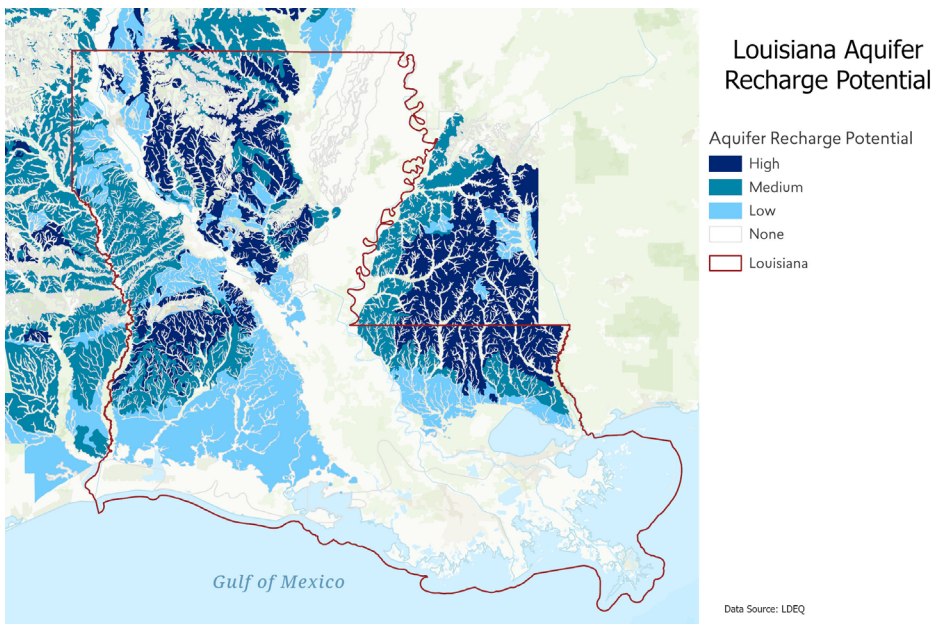
In addition to surface water systems, Louisiana's forests are also closely tied to groundwater recharge and aquifer protection. Louisiana contains several major aquifer systems, including the Sparta, Carrizo-Wilcox, Chicot, Alluvial, and Southern Hills aquifers, which provide water supplies for public consumption, agriculture, and industry throughout the state. Approximately 61% of Louisiana residents depend on groundwater resources,

including approximately 49% served through public water systems and 12% relying on private, domestic wells. Groundwater systems currently provide public water supplies for roughly 2.4 million Louisiana residents, while agricultural irrigation and industrial uses account for substantial additional groundwater demand. More than 61% of groundwater withdrawals in Louisiana are associated with agricultural uses, particularly irrigation for rice production in southwestern Louisiana.

Forested landscapes contribute to groundwater recharge by promoting infiltration, reducing runoff, protecting soils, and maintaining watershed stability within recharge areas and associated hydrologic systems. As water availability challenges, aquifer depletion, and water quality concerns continue to emerge in other regions of the United States, the long-term protection of Louisiana's forested watersheds, recharge areas, riparian corridors, and floodplain systems may become increasingly important for sustaining the state's water resources and long-term resilience.



Map 9- Ability to Produce Clean Water (F2F)



Map 10- Louisiana Aquifer Recharge Potential

### 2.3.4 Recreation

Louisiana's forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and coastal landscapes support a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities that contribute substantially to the state's economy, quality of life, and cultural identity. Forested landscapes across Louisiana provide important settings for hunting, fishing, boating, paddling, camping, hiking, bird watching, wildlife viewing, and other nature-based recreation activities. Major public recreation assets associated with forested landscapes include Kisatchie National Forest, the Atchafalaya Basin, state parks, wildlife management areas, national wildlife refuges, scenic waterways, and numerous public lakes and river corridors distributed throughout the state. Louisiana's extensive network of public recreation lands and facilities can be accessed through the [Louisiana State Parks and Recreation Inventory Map](#).

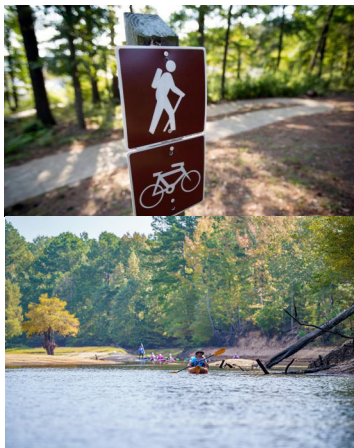
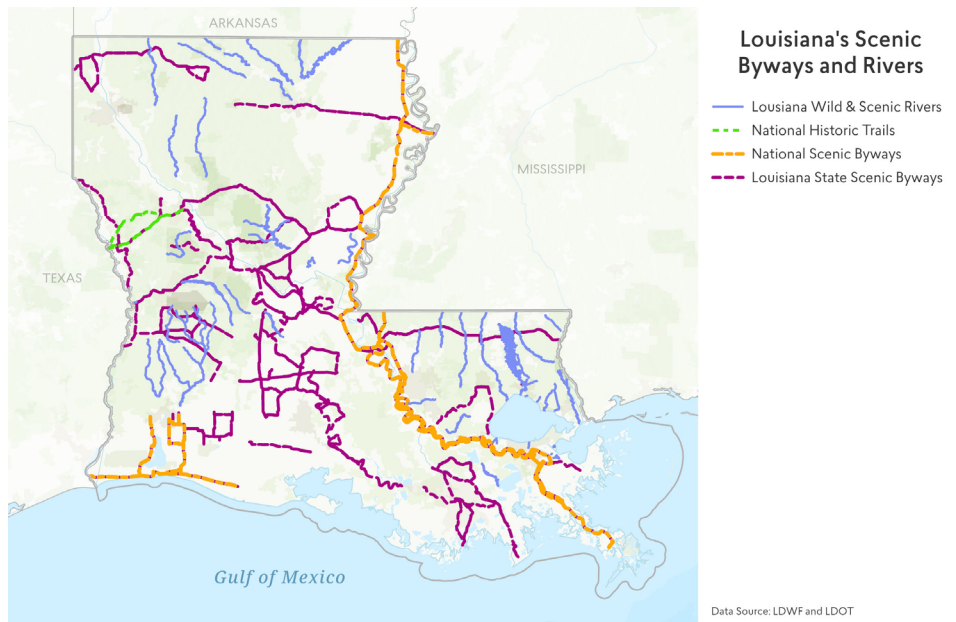


Figure 10- Hiking, biking and canoeing are popular activities at Louisiana State Parks (LA State Parks)

Wildlife-related recreation contributes substantially to rural economies through guide services, hunting leases on private land, tourism spending, sporting goods sales, hospitality industries, and related businesses. Louisiana's forest lands, both public and private, support recreation-based economic activity while also providing important ecological benefits related to habitat conservation, water quality protection, flood resilience, and biodiversity conservation.



Figure 11- Fishing in Kisatchie National Forest (USFS)



Map 11- Scenic Byways and Rivers

### 2.3.5 Scenic Resources

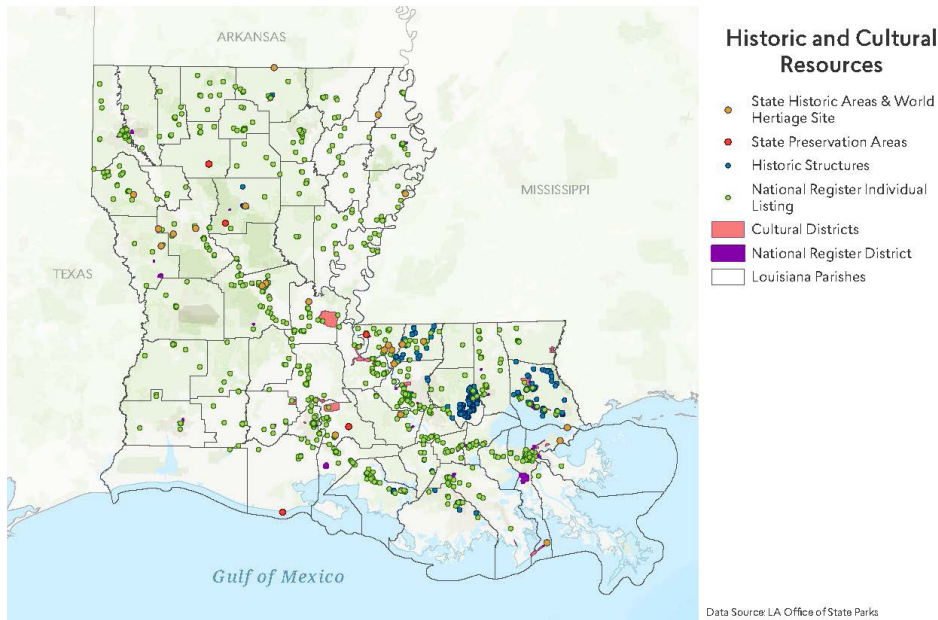
Louisiana's forests, wetlands, rivers, and coastal landscapes contribute substantially to the scenic character and visual identity of the state and form the backdrop for many of Louisiana's most recognized natural and cultural landscapes. Forested river corridors, swamp landscapes, coastal transition zones, and upland pine systems contribute to the scenic quality of major public recreation areas and heritage landscapes including Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, Cane River National Heritage Area, and Kisatchie National Forest. These landscapes support tourism, outdoor recreation, and cultural heritage while helping maintain the distinctive visual character of many rural and natural areas throughout the state.

Louisiana also maintains an extensive network of designated scenic byways, scenic waterways, paddling trails, bicycle routes, and recreation corridors that highlight the state's forested landscapes and associated waterways. The Louisiana Scenic Byways program includes routes such as the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road, Louisiana Great River Road, Tunica Trace Scenic Byway, Toledo Bend Forest Scenic Byway, and Longleaf Trail Scenic Byway, all of which showcase the state's diverse natural landscapes and historic communities. Louisiana's Scenic Rivers Program additionally protects more than 3,000 miles of designated rivers, bayous, and streams, many of which flow through forested landscapes that provide important ecological, recreational, and scenic value. Forested waterways and connected natural landscapes also support an expanding network of paddle trails, wildlife viewing areas, and nature-based tourism destinations throughout the state. Intact forest landscapes remain important to maintaining the scenic quality, ecological character, and tourism value of many of Louisiana's designated scenic and heritage resources.



### 2.3.6 Cultural and Historic Resources

Louisiana's cultural and historical landscape is a diverse tapestry woven from Native American, French, Spanish, and African influences, profoundly shaped by its natural environment. Covering nearly half the state, forests are central to this heritage and history- driving the economy, forming unique rural community identities, and serving as the backdrop for some of Louisiana's most cherished cultural resources.



Map 12- Historic and Cultural Resources



Figure 12- The Coushatta Tribe utilizes needles of longleaf pine to weave traditional baskets (USFS)

Forests hold deep cultural and historical significance for the people and communities of Louisiana and have been an integral part of traditions and livelihoods for centuries. Preserving the state's vast forests helps protect that diverse, cultural heritage and maintain connections to the past. The Poverty Point World Heritage Site, which is over 3,400 years old, stands as a testament to the earliest sophisticated societies in North America, who leveraged the biodiversity of the surrounding bottomland hardwood forests for trade and sustenance long before European contact. This foundation evolved

during Louisiana's Colonial period, as French, Spanish, and African cultures blended in settlements like Natchitoches, the oldest permanent town in the Louisiana Purchase. It was in this area of Natchitoches, which is recognized today as the Cane River National Heritage Area, where European settlers and native tribes exchanged vital knowledge of forest management, such as the use of prescribed fire to maintain longleaf pine savannas.

Louisiana's forests also shaped the development of historic timber communities and distinctive cultural traditions tied to working forest landscapes. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century timber boom, extensive logging operations and sawmills transformed large portions of Louisiana's virgin pine forests and established communities such as Leesville and Bogalusa, which remain closely tied to the forest industry today. Forested wetlands and swamp systems similarly supported the development of the unique "swamper" culture within Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, where log-rafters lived in floating camps while harvesting cypress from the nation's largest river swamp. Today, Louisiana's forest legacy continues through family

timberlands, tribal cultural traditions such as Coushatta pine needle basketry, public forest landscapes including Kisatchie National Forest, and rural communities whose identities remain closely tied to the state's forests and working lands.

Louisiana's many cultural resources are inseparable from the forests that provide sustenance, industry, and spiritual significance- supporting not just the economy, but the traditional, cultural, and historical landscape of the state.

### 2.3.7 Coastal Resiliency

Louisiana's forests play an important role in supporting coastal resilience and protecting communities, infrastructure, and ecological systems within one of the most dynamic and vulnerable coastal landscapes in the United States. Forested wetlands, bottomland hardwood systems, cypress-tupelo swamps, maritime forests, and coastal transition forests all contribute to hydrologic stability, storm protection, erosion reduction, and long-term ecosystem resilience throughout southern Louisiana. These forested systems are closely interconnected with the state's coastal marshes, river systems, estuaries, and floodplains and serve as critical components of broader watershed and coastal protection functions.

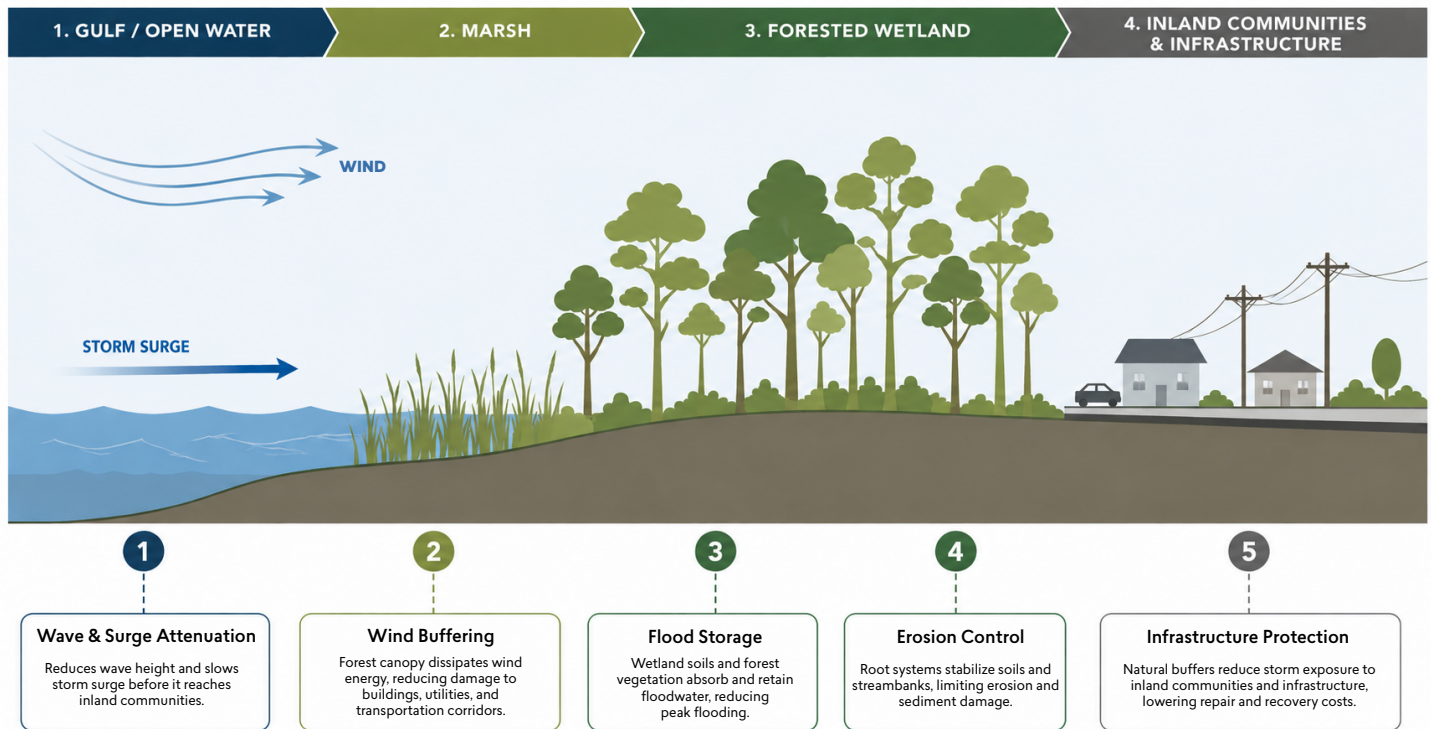


Figure 13- Inland Benefit of Forested Wetlands in Storms and Hurricanes

Forested wetlands and coastal forest systems help buffer storm surge, reduce wave energy, stabilize soils, retain sediment, and slow erosion within coastal, near-coastal and low-lying landscapes. Bottomland hardwood forests and cypress-tupelo swamp systems associated with the Atchafalaya Basin, Mississippi River Delta, Chenier Plain, and other coastal watersheds provide important floodwater storage and hydrologic buffering capacity during major storm events and periods of high precipitation. Riparian forests and floodplain systems additionally help moderate runoff, improve water quality, and maintain hydrologic connectivity between upland and coastal systems. These functions are increasingly important as Louisiana continues to experience coastal land loss, subsidence, stronger storm events, saltwater intrusion, and changing hydrologic conditions.

Louisiana's coastal and near-coastal forests also serve as important ecological transition zones and migration corridors for wildlife and natural communities responding to sea level rise and shifting environmental conditions. As coastal marshes and wetland systems retreat

inland, adjacent forested landscapes may become increasingly important for supporting habitat migration, maintaining ecological connectivity, and facilitating long-term landscape adaptation. Large connected forested landscapes within coastal transition zones help sustain watershed integrity, provide refugia for wildlife species, and support the long-term resilience of both coastal and inland ecosystems.

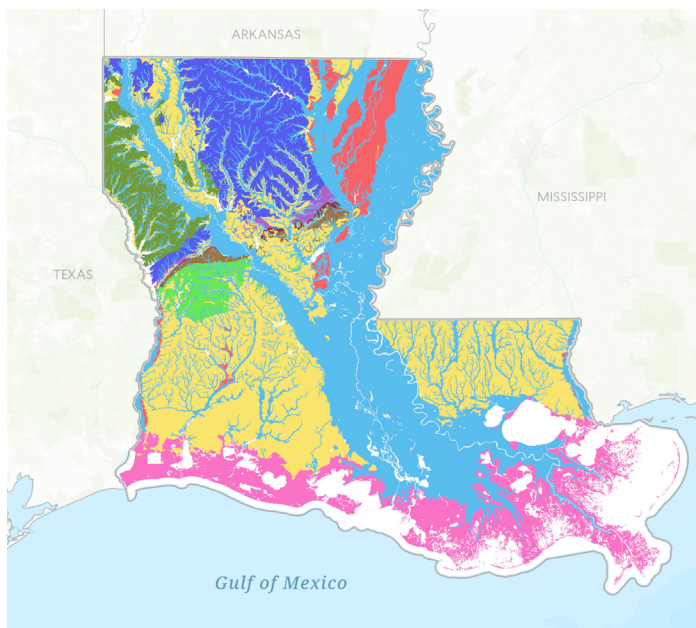
In addition to their hydrologic and ecological functions, forested wetlands and coastal forests contribute substantially to climate resilience through carbon storage and sequestration. Bottomland hardwood forests, swamp forests, and other wetland-associated forest systems store significant amounts of carbon within both vegetation and organic soils while also supporting broader ecosystem services. Increasingly, forest conservation, floodplain protection, and restoration of natural hydrologic systems are being recognized as important nature-based strategies for enhancing community resilience and reducing long-term vulnerability within Louisiana's changing coastal landscape.



## 2.4 Forest Related Resources

### 2.4.1 Geology and Topography

Louisiana's landscape is shaped by extensive river deposition, coastal processes, and long-term sedimentation, characterized by a low, gentle gradient that descends from rolling northern hills to near-level coastal plains. The state's highest point, Driskill Mountain, reaches only 535 feet, while southern regions like New Orleans sit below sea level. This topography was primarily shaped during the Quaternary period by the Mississippi and Red Rivers, which deposited vast quantities of sand, silt, and clay to form fertile alluvial plains and massive deltaic lobes.



Map 13- Geologic Map of Louisiana

Distinctive geologic features further define the terrain beyond the flat river valleys. In the south, salt domes—vertical pillars of ancient salt squeezed upward by the weight of overlying sediments—protrude through coastal marshes to form “islands” like Avery Island, which rises 163 feet above the surrounding wetlands. Along the coast, relict beach ridges known as cheniers create narrow strips of higher ground that support live oak forests. In the north and east, wind-blown silt deposits known as loess have eroded over millennia into steep-sloped bluffs and deep ravines, providing some of the state's most rugged and unique relief. Together, these diverse geologic and topographic conditions support the wide range of forest types, wetland systems, and ecological communities found across Louisiana.

### 2.4.2 Soils

Louisiana's soil profile is highly diverse, categorized primarily by parent material and landscape position. The alluvial soils found in the Mississippi and Red River floodplains are among the most fertile in the state, often consisting of heavy clays known as Vertisols, which

shrink and swell with moisture. These nutrient-rich, moist soils support productive bottomland hardwood forests, including species like baldcypress and water tupelo. In contrast, the coastal marshes are dominated by organic soils like muck and peat, which are poorly drained and support grasses, sedges, and fringing live oak forests on higher ridges.

The upland regions of the north and west feature older, more weathered soils such as Ultisols and Alfisols. The Ruston soil series, the state soil, is a well-drained, acidic upland soil with low natural fertility. These sandy, leached conditions are ideal for longleaf and shortleaf pine forests, which thrive in well-drained, nutrient-poor environments where frequent fire historically maintained open stands. Meanwhile, the silty loess soils flanking the river valleys create specialized habitats for mesic hardwood and mixed pine-hardwood communities, including species more commonly associated with eastern hardwood forests such as tulip poplar. These diverse soil conditions strongly influence forest composition, productivity, hydrology, fire regimes, and habitat distribution across Louisiana.

### 2.4.3 Minerals

Louisiana's subsurface is among the most mineralogically rich in the nation, shaped by millions of years of delta sedimentation, salt tectonics, and organic accumulation. The state's thick sequences of organic sedimentary deposits generated the hydrocarbons, faults, folds, and interfingered strata that made oil and gas Louisiana's largest industrial enterprise. Beyond hydrocarbons, Louisiana is the nation's leading producer of salt and also produces common clay, construction and industrial sand and gravel, lignite, crushed stone, gypsum, lime, and natural gemstones. Natural gas production has surged through Haynesville Shale development in the northwest, reaching record output in March 2023 at 14.5 billion cubic feet per day and accounting for approximately 14% of all U.S. dry natural gas production. Louisiana ranks 6th nationally in total natural gas production and 10th in overall mineral production. Extraction and processing of these resources have played a major role in the development of transportation corridors, industrial infrastructure, river ports, and rural communities throughout Louisiana.

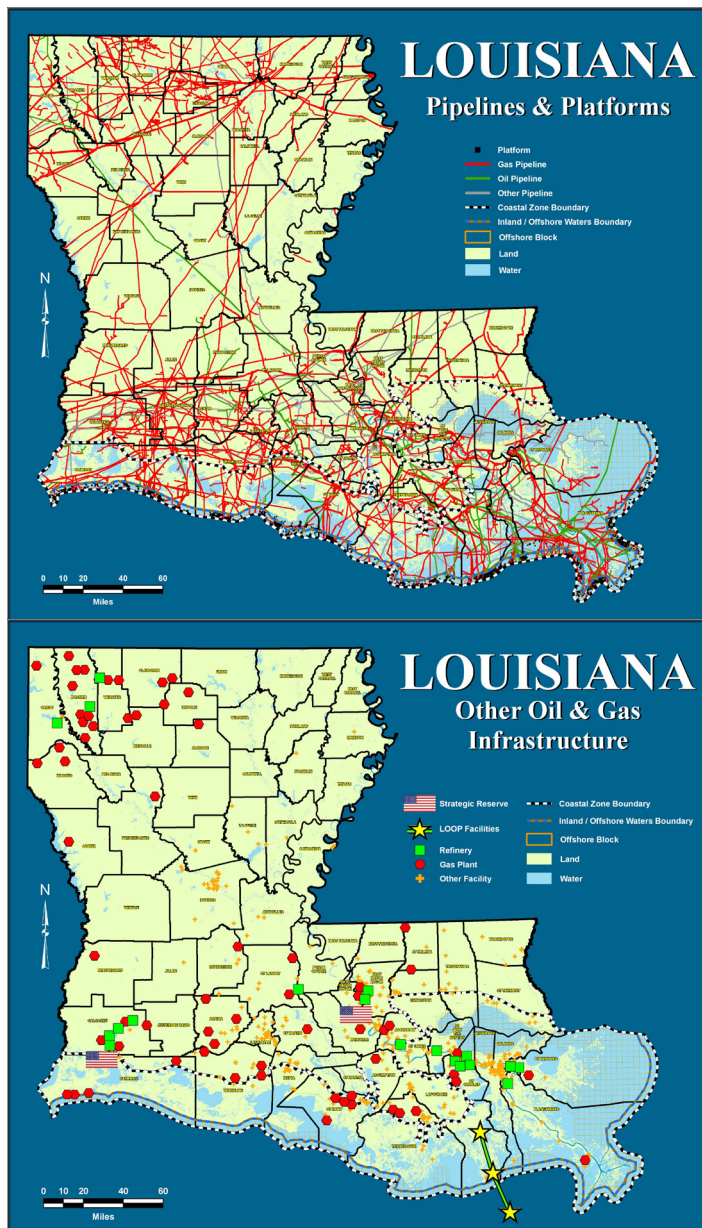


Figure 14- A Snapshot of Louisiana's Oil and Gas Infrastructure (LDNR 2008)

The intersection of mineral wealth and forest ownership in Louisiana is shaped by a distinctive legal framework governing surface and subsurface rights. Unlike most other states, Louisiana's Mineral Code treats mineral rights as a separate legal interest, often called a "mineral servitude", that can be owned, leased, or transferred independently of the surface estate- though it reverts to the surface owner if not used or actively leased for a period of 10 years, a provision known as "prescription of nonuse." This split-estate structure is common across Louisiana's forested landscape, meaning many timber landowners manage surface resources while a separate party holds subsurface mineral rights. Despite this, mineral income and timber income have historically coexisted as complementary revenue streams, and royalty payments from oil and gas leases can provide an economic buffer that helps keep working forestland intact and reduces pressure to convert timberland to other uses.

For easement-based conservation programs like the FLP, the status of mineral rights on any given parcel requires careful evaluation. A separately owned mineral estate may limit the ability to prevent surface-disturbing extraction activities and must be explicitly addressed in easement terms to ensure the long-term integrity of conservation objectives. Additionally, commodity price spikes, such as those accompanying the Haynesville Shale boom post-2008, can rapidly escalate land values in forested regions, potentially driving sales to non-forestry buyers at prices that conservation programs struggle to match.

Carbon sequestration represents an emerging dimension of Louisiana's resource landscape. Louisiana's geology, including extensive saline aquifers and depleted hydrocarbon reservoirs, has made the state a target for industrial carbon capture and storage infrastructure. The legal framework governing subsurface pore space ownership on private lands remains an evolving area of Louisiana law with direct implications for surface and timber landowners. Above-ground voluntary forest carbon markets represent a growing income opportunity for Louisiana timberland owners, particularly those managing bottomland hardwood, longleaf pine, and other high-carbon forest systems, and may provide supplemental revenue that reduces conversion pressure on working timberlands.

#### 2.4.4 Agriculture

Agriculture and forestry have historically served as two of Louisiana's most important land-based industries and together shape much of the state's rural landscape and land use patterns. Louisiana's fertile alluvial soils, long growing season, abundant rainfall, and extensive river systems support a diverse agricultural economy that includes rice, sugarcane, soybeans, corn, cotton, crawfish aquaculture, and livestock production. Agricultural lands are concentrated primarily within the Mississippi River Alluvial Plain, Red River Valley, southwestern prairie regions, and other productive floodplain and terrace systems throughout the state.

Louisiana's forests and agricultural lands are closely interconnected through shared watersheds, soils, transportation systems, and rural economies. In many regions, working forests occur adjacent to agricultural lands and provide important ecological functions including erosion control, water filtration, flood attenuation, wildlife habitat, and riparian buffering along streams and drainage systems. Forested corridors and bottomland hardwood systems are particularly important within heavily agricultural portions of the state where they help maintain habitat connectivity and watershed health across fragmented landscapes. Historically, conversion between forest and agricultural land uses significantly shaped Louisiana's landscape, particularly within portions of the Mississippi River Alluvial Plain where extensive bottomland hardwood forests were cleared for agriculture during the twentieth



century. In recent decades, however, portions of the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley have also become the focus of large-scale bottomland hardwood reforestation and restoration efforts through partnerships involving private landowners, federal conservation programs, state agencies, and non-governmental organizations. These efforts have helped restore wildlife habitat, improve watershed function, reduce erosion and flooding impacts, and reconnect portions of the historic forested floodplain landscape.



Figure 15- Agricultural lands adjacent to bottomland hardwood forest, Avoyelles Parish (Barber and Mann, Inc)

### 2.4.5 Climate

Louisiana's climate is humid subtropical and characterized by long, hot summers, mild winters, abundant rainfall, and frequent tropical influences from the Gulf of Mexico. Average annual precipitation generally ranges from approximately 50 to more than 65 inches state-

wide, supporting high levels of forest productivity and extensive wetland systems. Seasonal flooding, tropical storms, hurricanes, and periodic drought conditions also strongly influence Louisiana's forest ecosystems, hydrology, and landscape processes. Climate conditions vary across the state, with northern Louisiana generally experiencing slightly cooler temperatures and greater seasonal variation than the more humid and storm-influenced coastal regions of southern Louisiana.

Climate plays a major role in shaping Louisiana's forest composition, hydrology, disturbance regimes, and ecological diversity. High rainfall and warm growing conditions support productive pine forests, bottomland hardwood systems, cypress-tupelo swamps, and coastal forested wetlands across much of the state. Periodic fire historically maintained longleaf pine ecosystems in upland regions, while flooding and sediment deposition shaped the development of bottomland hardwood forests and wetland systems throughout Louisiana's river basins and coastal landscapes. Louisiana's forests are also increasingly influenced by changing climate conditions, including stronger storm events, changing precipitation patterns, prolonged droughts, saltwater intrusion, sea level rise, and shifting disturbance regimes. These changes have important implications for forest health, wildfire risk, species distribution, hydrology, and long-term landscape resilience across both coastal and inland forest systems.

## Section 3: Critical Issues and Forest Conversion Threats

The following trends and issues covered in this section informed the spatial analysis used to identify areas of elevated conversion risk, as described in Section 5 and Appendix C.

### 3.1 Population Shifts and Trends

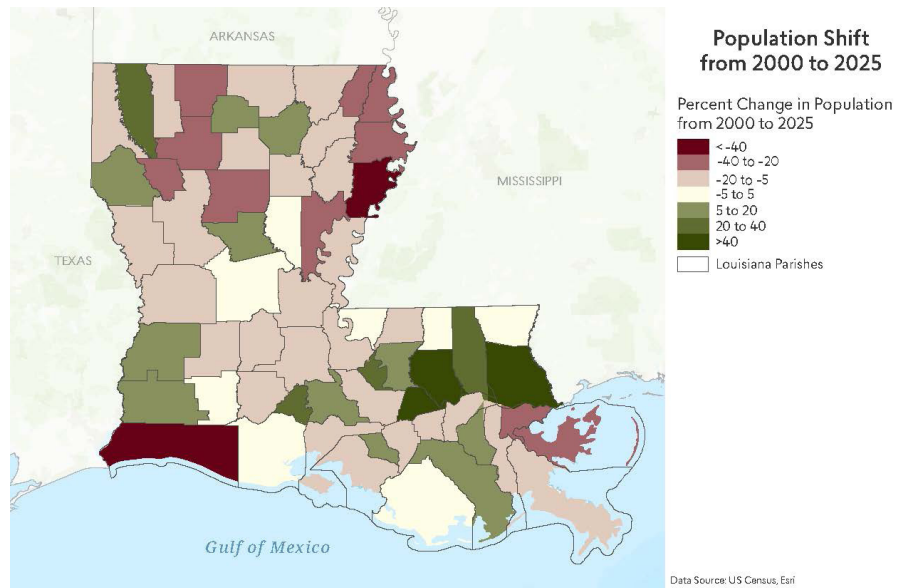
Louisiana's population patterns continue to shift unevenly across the state, with growth concentrated primarily within suburban and exurban areas surrounding major metropolitan regions while many rural parishes continue to experience long-term population decline. According to recent U.S. Census Bureau estimates, Louisiana's population was approximately 4.6 million residents in 2024, with an average population density of roughly 108 persons per square mile and a median household income of approximately \$60,000. Although statewide population change has remained relatively modest in recent years, development pressure and res-

idential expansion have become increasingly concentrated within portions of southern Louisiana, particularly along the Interstate 10 and Interstate 12 corridors. Parishes experiencing some of the most substantial recent population growth include Ascension, Livingston, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Lafayette, and West Baton Rouge, while many rural parishes in northern, central, and coastal Louisiana continue to experience population decline or stagnation.

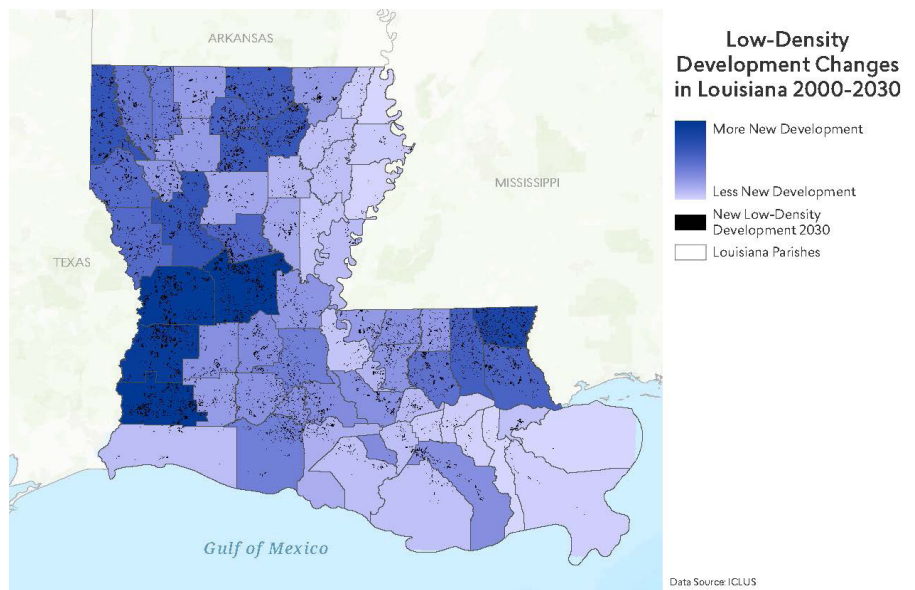
Much of Louisiana's recent population growth and new low-density development has become concentrated within suburban and exurban corridors surrounding the state's major metropolitan areas, particularly throughout portions of southern Louisiana and along expanding transportation corridors. Development pressure associated with the Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Lafayette metropolitan areas has expanded into formerly rural and forested landscapes, particularly within the Florida

Parishes and portions of southwest Louisiana. Livingston Parish has experienced especially rapid growth over the past two decades as residential development expands outward from the Baton Rouge metropolitan area, while Tangipahoa and St. Tammany parishes continue to experience increasing suburbanization associated with the Northshore region. Similar trends are emerging north of Lake Charles and within portions of Acadiana, where new residential and commercial growth is extending into historically rural timber and agricultural landscapes.

At the same time, many rural parishes across northern and central Louisiana continue to experience population losses associated with economic transition, aging populations, declining industrial employment, and outmigration. These contrasting population trends are reshaping land use patterns across the state and increasingly placing development pressure on previously undeveloped forest and agricultural lands near expanding transportation corridors and metropolitan areas. The resulting conversion and fragmentation of working forest landscapes has become an increasingly important consideration for long-term forest conservation, land management, and growth planning throughout Louisiana.



Map 14- Population Shift by Parish (2000-2025)



Map 15- Low Density Development Changes by Parish

## 3.2 Economic Pressures

Despite timber remaining one of Louisiana's most valuable agricultural commodities, recent shifts within the forest products industry have created increasing economic pressure on many of the state's working forest landscapes. Louisiana has historically relied heavily on pulp and paper production infrastructure, particularly within northern and central portions of the state where pulpwood markets have long supported thinning operations and active forest management. In recent years, however, permanent mill closures and broader structural changes within the paper industry have substantially reduced regional demand for pulpwood. Most notably, the 2025 closure of International Paper's Red River Mill in Campti removed approximately 1.6 million tons of annual pulpwood demand from northwest Louisiana and resulted in the loss of hundreds of direct jobs and associated regional economic activity. This followed earlier closures and industrial restructuring elsewhere

in the state, including the closure of Georgia-Pacific's Port Hudson facility in 2019.

These changes have significantly altered timber market conditions across portions of Louisiana. In some regions, remaining mills are located more than 100 miles from harvest areas, causing transportation costs to substantially reduce or exceed the market value of smaller timber products. As a result, pine and hardwood pulpwood prices have declined sharply in recent years, in some cases reaching their lowest levels in more than two decades. While larger sawtimber markets have generally remained more stable, many landowners depend upon periodic thinning operations and pulpwood revenue to offset management costs and maintain actively managed forests. Where markets become economically marginal, landowners may delay management activities, reduce investments in long-term forest stewardship, or face increasing pressure to sell or convert forestland to other uses.

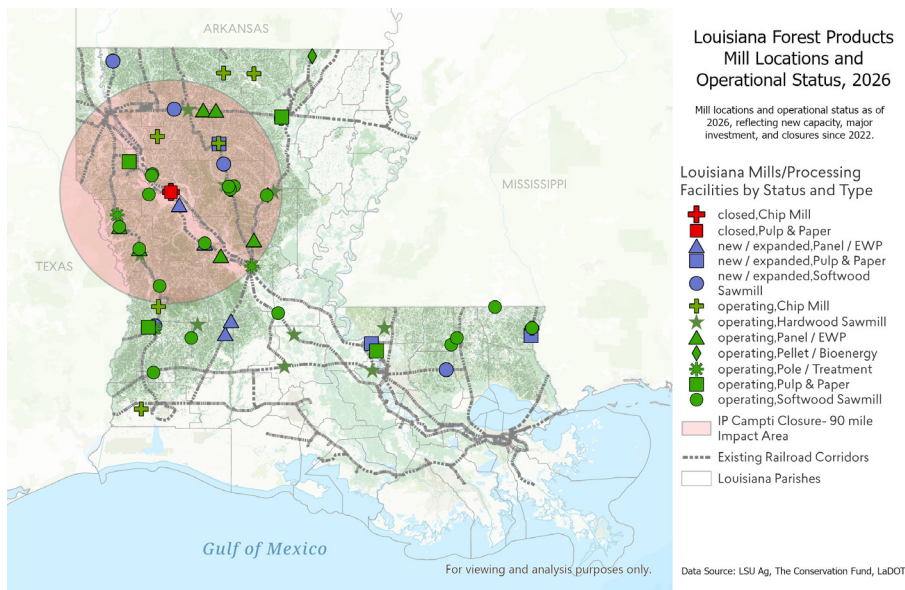


Spatial analyses conducted for this AON identified several areas of concentrated economic decline- where recent forestry-related economic losses overlap with historically important timber-producing regions. These areas, concentrated primarily within portions of northern, western, and central Louisiana, may be particularly vulnerable to reduced management activity, market instability, parcelization, and long-term forest conversion pressure following the loss of regional processing infrastructure and declining pulpwood demand.

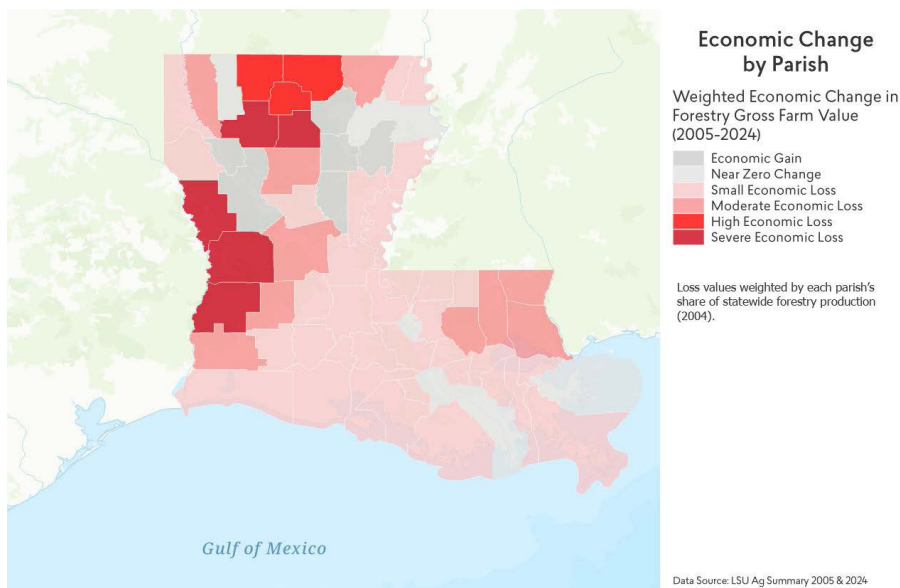
Broader industry-wide challenges are further contributing to economic pressure across Louisiana's forest sector. Logging capacity and workforce availability continue to decline throughout the South, with recent industry surveys indicating that more than 70 percent of logging business owners are over the age of 50 and nearly one-third expect to leave the industry within five years. At the same time, many logging operations report equipment and trucking shortages associated with workforce con-

straints and rising operational costs. These conditions are occurring alongside a regional oversupply of timber, with southern forests currently growing substantially more wood annually than is being harvested. Together, these economic and operational pressures can reduce the long-term financial viability of active forest management, particularly on smaller ownerships and within areas already experiencing parcelization and development pressure.

As forest management becomes less economically volatile, working forests may become increasingly vulnerable to fragmentation, deferred management, and conversion to non-forest uses. In rapidly growing portions of the state, declining timber market returns can increase pressure to sell forestland for residential, commercial, or agricultural development, particularly where rising land values create strong incentives for conversion. Maintaining economically viable forest products infrastructure, active management capacity, and stable timber markets remains closely tied to the long-term retention and sustainability of Louisiana's working forest landscapes.



Map 16- Operational Status of Louisiana Mills and Processing Facilities (2026)



Map 17- Economic Change Over Time by Parish

### 3.3 Forest Conversion, Fragmentation and Parcelization

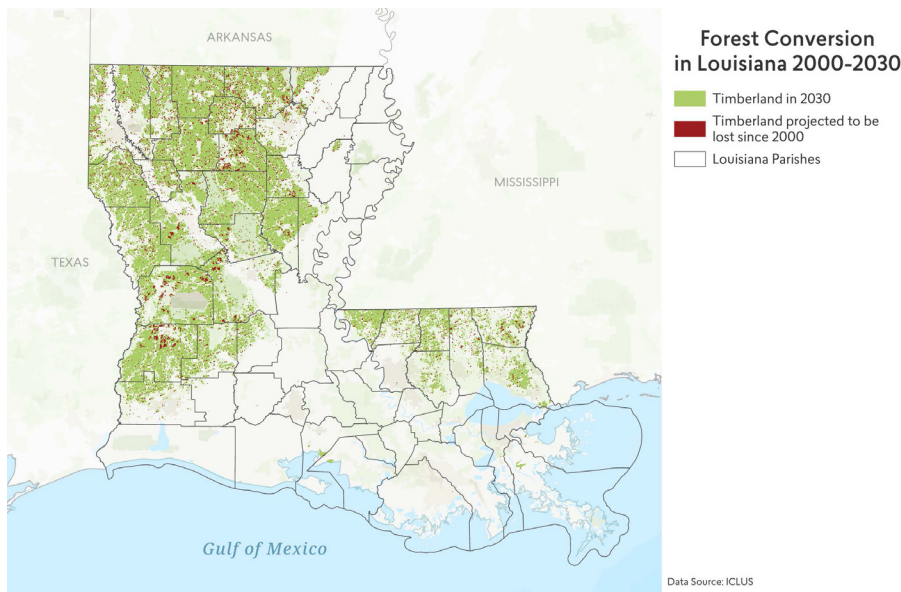
Although Louisiana continues to retain approximately 15 million acres of forest land, many of the state's working forest landscapes are increasingly affected by conversion, fragmentation, and parcelization pressures. These pressures are most evident within privately owned forestlands surrounding expanding metropolitan areas, transportation corridors, and rapidly growing suburban and exurban regions. Approximately 90% of Louisiana's forests are privately owned, making long-term forest retention closely tied to private landownership patterns, land values, development pressure, and the economic viability of maintaining large, contiguous working forest tracts. National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) data further indicate that family forest ownerships across the South are increasingly influenced by aging ownership demographics, inheritance-related subdivision, and ownership transition. The average age of family forest owners nationally is approximately 62–65 years old, and many ownerships have held forestland for more than two decades, suggesting that substantial acreage across the region may change ownership in coming years through inheritance, estate transfer, or land sales.

Forest conversion in Louisiana occurs through a combination of residential development, commercial and industrial expansion, transportation and utility infrastructure, energy development, and conversion to other land uses. While some conversion pressures are concentrated near major metropolitan areas and interstate corridors, low-density residential development has increasingly expanded into historically rural timber and agricultural landscapes across portions of the Florida Parishes, southwest Louisiana, and other areas experiencing suburban and exurban growth. Spatial analyses conducted for this AON, including the US EPA's Integrated Climate and Land Use Scenarios (ICLUS) development projections and *National Forests to Faucets Assessment* land use change datasets, identified elevated conversion pressure across portions of southern Louisiana, expanding rural development corridors, and several heavily forested landscapes in northern and western Louisiana.

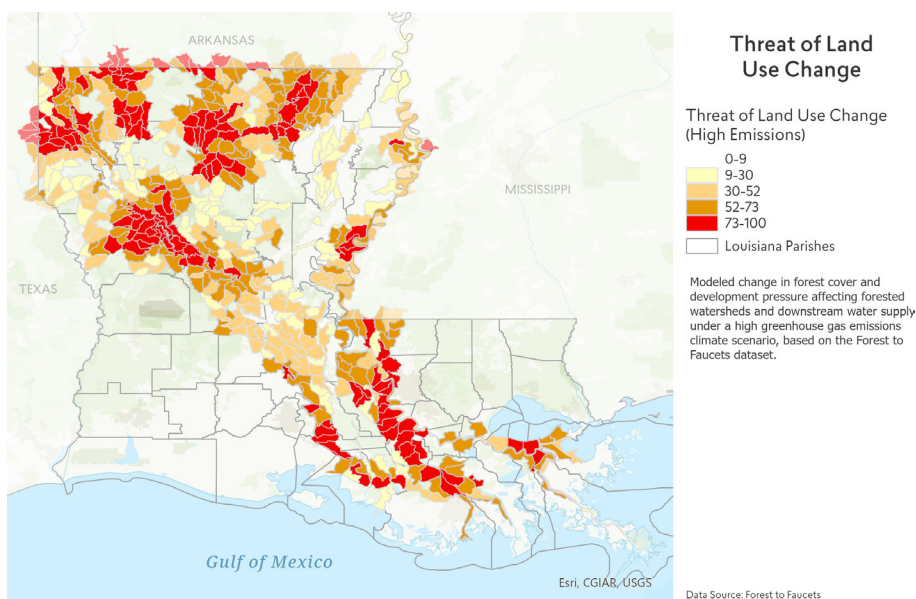
In many areas, fragmentation presents as significant a challenge as outright forest loss. The expansion of roads, utility corridors, dispersed residential development, and smaller parcel subdivisions can reduce the size and connectivity of forest blocks even where overall forest cover remains relatively intact. Fragmentation can limit the ability to conduct prescribed fire, increase edge effects and invasive species pressure, reduce habitat connectivity, complicate timber management operations, and diminish long-term ecological resilience across working forest landscapes. These impacts are particularly important within longleaf pine systems, bottomland hardwood corridors, and other forest communities that depend on large, connected landscapes and active management regimes.

Parcelization of privately owned timberlands also continues to alter land management patterns throughout Louisiana. As larger ownership tracts are subdivided into smaller parcels through inheritance, estate settlement, or development, forest management often becomes less economically viable and more difficult to coordinate across the landscape. NWOS data indicate that smaller parcel sizes are generally associated with lower levels of active forest management and reduced participation in long-term management planning. Nationally, most family forest ownerships control relatively small parcels, while larger tracts account for a disproportionate share of actively managed forestland and timber production. Smaller ownership tracts in Louisiana may face increased pressure for residential development or conversion to non-forest uses and are often more vulnerable to incompatible adjacent land uses and infrastructure expansion. These trends are especially significant in areas where development pressure overlaps with high-value forest resources, wildlife habitat, watershed functions, and landscape connectivity priorities identified through this AON.

Despite these pressures, large, connected forest landscapes remain across substantial portions of Louisiana and continue to support working forests, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, recreation, and rural economies. Conserving these intact and connected forest systems before they become increasingly fragmented or converted remains a major long-term objective of the FLP in Louisiana.

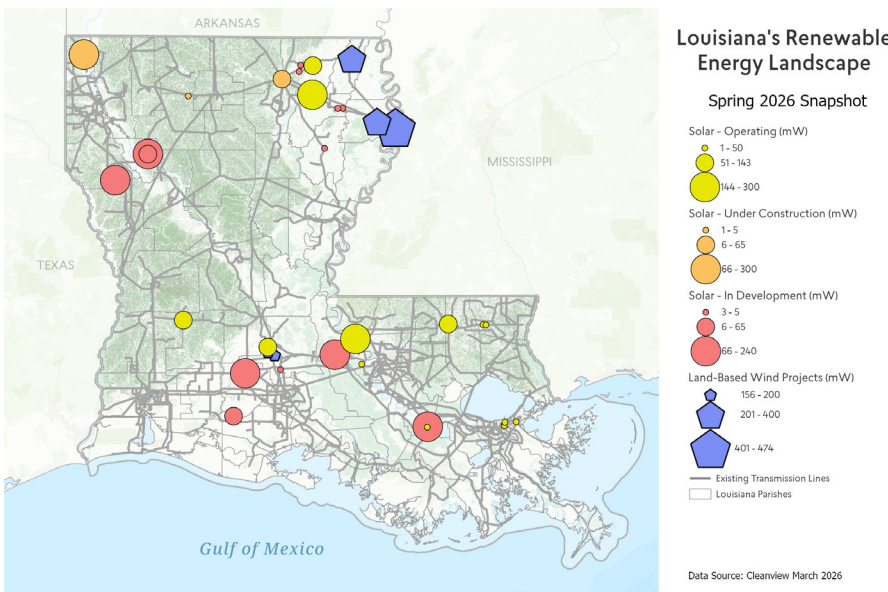


Map 18- Forest Conversion (2000-2030)



Map 19- Threat of Forested Land Use Change (F2F)





Map 20- Renewable Energy Landscape in Louisiana

### 3.4 Emergence of Renewables

Anticipated growth in renewable energy infrastructure has direct implications for Louisiana's forested landscape. U.S. climate policies and energy markets now provide especially strong incentives for expanding solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity. As a result, conversion of agricultural and forested lands to utility-scale solar facilities has accelerated over the past decade. Solar photovoltaics now dominate the renewables portfolio and represent the majority of added electricity capacity in the U.S. at 56% in 2023 according to a solar industry update from the Energy Information Administration (EIA). As of 2024, Louisiana has a small solar footprint, with only 1,243 megawatts (MW) of installed solar capacity across 15 facilities. However, the state is on the precipice of massive solar growth with 4,068 MW of facilities approved for interconnection and under construction or pending construction, and another 42 proposed solar projects in the state's grid interconnection queue- totaling 8,685 MW of capacity (Blanco Center, 2025). It is anticipated that utility-scale solar in Louisiana will expand to an estimated 12.1 GW of new installed capacity by 2035. Solar farms require favorable topography, ample sunshine, low land costs, and access to infrastructure like roads and grid connections, creating a natural alignment between land use for solar and previously forested lands. Although Louisiana's state tax credits for solar projects have expired, there is continued demand driven by federal tax credits and emerging commercial and industrial users like data centers and producers of green hydrogen.

Compared to the total acreage of Louisiana's forested lands, the land-use acreage requirement for solar farms is relatively small in scale- requiring an estimated 7 acres per MW. However, the preference to locate solar facilities near demand centers and existing transmission infrastructure comes at the expense of forest-based ecosystem services in the areas closest to

population centers. This highlights the important trade-offs between protecting remote and intact forest communities and providing for scarce ecosystem services (e.g., recreation, aesthetics, water quality, and wildlife habitat) in developed areas.

Spatial analyses conducted for this AON indicate that many proposed and developing renewable energy projects are concentrated within rural portions of northern, western, and southeastern Louisiana where large tracts of relatively low-cost land, existing transmission infrastructure, and proximity to expanding industrial demand create favorable conditions for utility-scale development. While renewable energy development represents an important component of broader energy transition goals, large-

scale conversion of forested and agricultural landscapes may contribute to fragmentation, loss of working lands, and reductions in ecosystem services if not carefully planned and sited. As demand for renewable energy infrastructure continues to expand, balancing energy development with long-term conservation of Louisiana's working forests, wildlife habitat, watershed resources, and rural landscapes will become an increasingly important land-use consideration across the state.

### 3.5 Wildfire and Climate Resiliency

Climate change threatens widespread alteration of natural resource systems with significant implications for both ecological resilience and human communities. Increasing risks associated with wildfire, extreme heat, prolonged drought, severe storms, flooding, and sea-level rise are expected to have substantial impacts on Louisiana's landscapes. These climate-related hazards are often interconnected and may create compounding effects across forest ecosystems and working landscapes throughout the state. Louisiana's forests are particularly vulnerable to increasing wildfire risk, stronger storm events, changing hydrologic conditions, and more variable temperature and precipitation patterns.

Wildfire risk has become an increasingly important concern across portions of Louisiana, particularly within fire-dependent pine ecosystems and rapidly developing wildland-urban interface areas. Although Louisiana historically experienced frequent low-intensity fire within longleaf pine systems, decades of fire suppression, expanding development, invasive species, storm debris accumulation, and changing climatic conditions have increased hazardous fuel loads in many regions. Spatial analyses conducted for this AON identified elevated wildfire likelihood across portions of western Louisiana, the Florida Parishes, and several heavily forested landscapes within central and northern Louisiana.

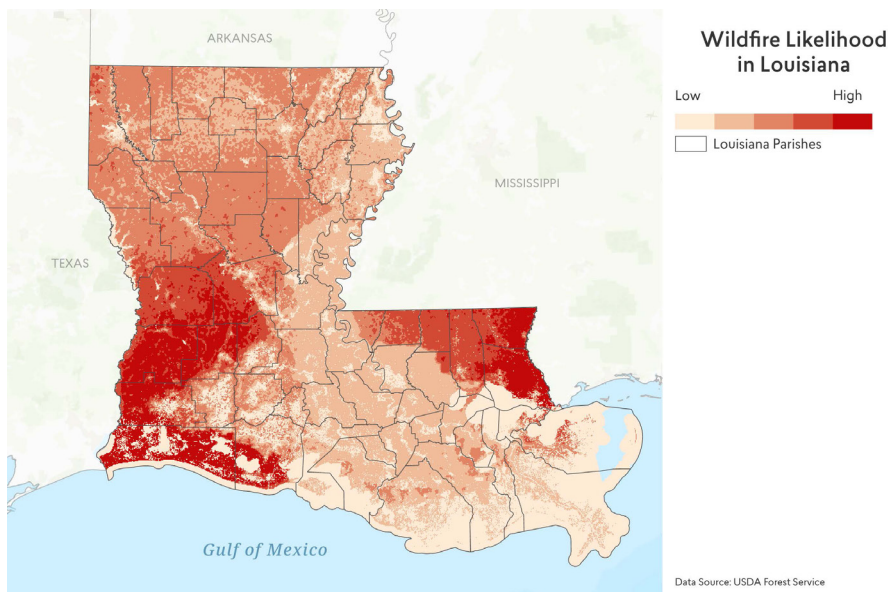
Increasing temperatures, periodic drought conditions, and more variable precipitation patterns may further elevate wildfire risk and complicate prescribed fire operations that are essential for maintaining many of Louisiana's fire-adapted forest systems.

Louisiana's forests are also increasingly vulnerable to stronger storm events, changing precipitation patterns, flooding, and prolonged heat stress associated with changing climate conditions. Hurricanes and tropical storms can cause extensive timber loss, forest fragmentation, saltwater intrusion, and long-term ecological disturbance across both coastal and inland forests. Over the past two decades, major storm events such as Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Laura, Delta, and Ida resulted in widespread forest damage across millions of acres and created substantial economic losses for landowners and forest industries throughout the state. Changing temperature and precipitation patterns may also influence forest productivity, species composition, pest and

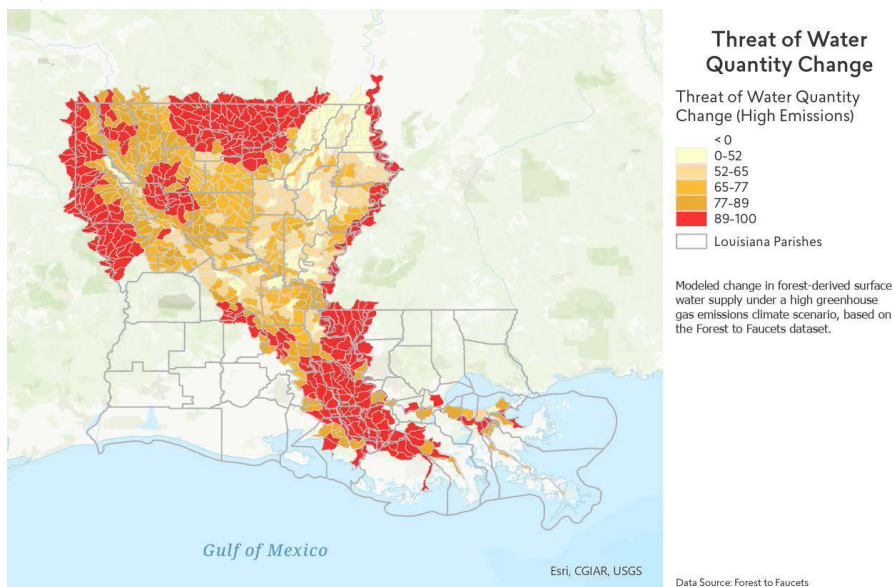
disease dynamics, and long-term hydrologic conditions within Louisiana's forests and watersheds.

Climate-related changes to hydrology and water availability may create additional long-term stressors for forest ecosystems across portions of Louisiana. Forests play a critical role in regulating water quality, groundwater recharge, flood storage, and surface water supply throughout the state, yet changing precipitation patterns and increasing evapotranspiration may alter these hydrologic functions over time. Spatial analyses utilizing the *National Forests to Faucets Assessment* dataset identified elevated projected threats to future surface water quantity across portions of northern Louisiana, central Louisiana, and several major river corridors under high-emissions climate scenarios.

Together, these climate-related pressures may increase ecological stress, reduce forest resilience, and compound existing threats associated with fragmentation, development pressure, and land conversion across Louisiana's working forest landscapes.



Map 21- Wildfire Likelihood in Louisiana



Map 22- Threat of Water Quantity Change (Forest to Faucets Data)

### 3.6 Forest Management Capacity and Stewardship Challenges

Maintaining the long-term ecological and economic benefits of Louisiana's forests depends not only on retaining forest land, but also on the continued ability to actively manage working forest landscapes. Across much of the state, changing ownership patterns, parcelization, rising management costs, and expanding development pressure have made long-term stewardship increasingly difficult. These challenges are often most pronounced among smaller private landowners and fragmented ownerships where access to forestry contractors, prescribed fire capacity, and technical assistance may be limited.

Prescribed fire remains one of the most important forest management tools in Louisiana, particularly within longleaf pine ecosystems and other fire-adapted forest communities. Frequent low-intensity fire historically maintained these systems by reducing fuel loads, improving wildlife habitat, and supporting forest health. However, expanding development, increasing fragmentation, and limited prescribed burn capacity have reduced opportunities to safely implement prescribed burning in many areas. Up to 700,000



or more acres of forest, range, and agricultural lands are prescribed burned annually in Louisiana, but with over 5.8 million acres of pine-dominated forests in the state, prescribed fire demand substantially exceeds what LDAF and contract prescribed burners can currently provide. As forest landscapes become more fragmented, coordinated burning across multiple ownerships becomes increasingly difficult, contributing to fuel accumulation and elevated wildfire risk. Expanding prescribed fire capacity across Louisiana's private forestlands is recognized as one of the most important near-term priorities for forest health, wildfire risk reduction, and longleaf pine ecosystem restoration.



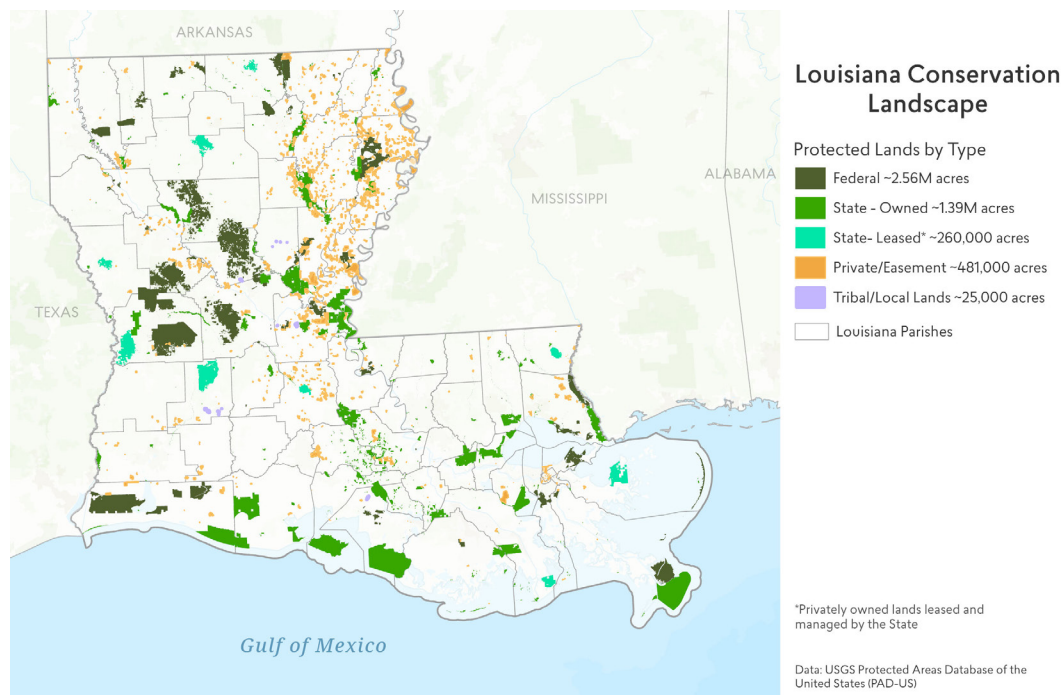
Figure 16- Prescribed Fire on Pine Savanna (USFWS)

native vegetation and altering forest structure and fire behavior. Laurel wilt disease has additionally affected sassafras and other native species in parts of Louisiana. Following major storm events, damaged timber and debris accumulation can increase both economic losses and long-term management costs for landowners.

Implementation of forestry best management practices (BMPs) remains important to protecting water quality, maintaining soil productivity, and sustaining healthy forest ecosystems. Louisiana maintains established forestry BMP programs and outreach initiatives, but implementation capacity can vary depending on ownership size, management objectives, and access to technical assistance. In FY 2024, LDAF assisted 1,880 landowners with educational or technical assistance and completed new or revised Forest Stewardship Plans covering 5,295 acres statewide, of which 4,372 acres fell within federal investment priority areas. Continued outreach and technical assistance to private landowners -- particularly the large number of smaller, non-industrial family forest owners who collectively control a significant portion of Louisiana's forestland -- remains a priority for sustaining active management across the state's working forest landscape.

## Section 4: Existing Conservation Framework in Louisiana

Louisiana supports one of the most ecologically diverse landscapes in North America, encompassing bottomland hardwood forests, longleaf pine uplands, cypress-tupelo swamps, coastal marshes, and barrier islands. Protecting these landscapes requires coordinated action across a complex patchwork of federal agencies, state departments, local governments, land trusts, and private landowners. Together, these entities have established a substantial - though unevenly distributed and in some cases tenure-insecure - network of conserved and managed lands across the state. This section provides an overview of that existing conservation framework, including publicly owned and managed lands, private conservation easements, the Forest Legacy Program, and the array of federal and state programs that support ongoing conservation investment.



Map 23- Conservation Landscape in Louisiana by Owner Type

## 4.1 Federal and State Forestlands

Federal lands represent the most permanently protected component of Louisiana's conservation framework. As of 2022, the federal government owned approximately 1.35 million acres, or 4.7% of Louisiana's total land area. These lands are managed by multiple agencies, including the USDA Forest Service (Kisatchie National Forest), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (National Wildlife Refuges), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service, and the Department of Defense. Together they provide a base of permanently protected habitat distributed across the state's major ecoregions.

At the state level, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) maintains more than 1.6 million acres of land and waterways as Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), refuges, and conservation areas. Additional state lands are managed by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the Office of State Parks, and various parish and local governments.

It is important to note that the acreage managed by LDWF significantly overstates the amount of land under durable, long-term protection. A meaningful portion of the WMA system is composed of lands leased from private timber companies, industrial landowners, and parish school boards rather than state-owned lands. These lease arrangements provide public recreational access and wildlife management authority but offer no guarantee of permanence. Several WMAs have already been lost when lease agreements expired or landowners declined to renew. The Jackson-Bienville WMA, once encompassing more than 25,000 acres of managed forest, was removed from the system in 2016 after a lease agreement could not be reached with the private owner. Similarly, Ben's Creek WMA in Washington Parish was removed from the State's WMA system when its lease ended, closing approximately 13,000 acres to public access. Currently leased WMAs with private timber or investment ownership -- including Biloxi, Thistlethwaite, West Bay, Clear Creek, and Sabine WMAs -- represent hundreds of thousands of acres that remain at risk of conversion or loss of public access should ownership change or lease terms shift. For the purposes of mapping and analysis in this assessment, these leased WMAs are distinguished from state-owned lands and are not treated as permanently conserved.

## 4.2 Protected Private Forestlands

Private conservation easements and land acquisitions represent a growing component of Louisiana's conservation framework, protecting working landscapes, forested wetlands, and ecologically significant areas on privately held property. Conservation easements are voluntary, legally binding agreements through which landowners restrict development and incompatible land uses on their property while retaining ownership. Unlike public lands, easement-protected properties remain in private hands and may continue to support timber management, agriculture, and other compatible

uses consistent with their conservation purpose. Fee acquisitions, by contrast, involve outright purchase of land by a conservation organization, transferring ownership entirely. Both mechanisms contribute to the state's protected lands network, though easements represent the predominant tool given their lower cost and compatibility with working forest management objectives. In practice, many conservation easements in Louisiana are structured to permit continued commercial timber harvesting and active forest management, allowing landowners to maintain timber revenue and participate in forestry assistance programs while the property's conservation values are permanently protected.

Based on data from the USGS Protected Areas Database of the United States (PAD-US), approximately 481,000 acres of private lands in Louisiana are currently protected through conservation easements and fee acquisitions. Of this total, conservation easements account for approximately 411,780 acres, while fee-owned conservation lands contribute an additional approximately 31,700 acres. It should be noted that PAD-US private easement data is generally incomplete, and total protected private acreage in Louisiana is likely higher than what current datasets capture.

Easements held by non-governmental conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, the Land Trust for Louisiana, the Mississippi River Trust, or Wetlands America Trust/Ducks Unlimited account for a relatively small portion of total easement acreage compared to those associated with federal conservation programs. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service programs - including the Wetlands Reserve Program and its successor the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Wetland Reserve Easement component - have collectively enrolled substantial acreage across Louisiana's major floodplain systems, particularly within the Mississippi River Alluvial Plain. While these programs primarily target wetland restoration rather than upland forest protection, many enrolled areas contain or support forested wetland systems including bottomland hardwood and cypress-tupelo communities that contribute to the state's broader conservation landscape.



Figure 17- Privately held forested conservation easement in Grant Parish (Barber and Mann, Inc)





The acres under permanent conservation easements on private lands in Louisiana increased substantially beginning in the early 1990s, with the majority of recorded easements established between 1993 and 2021. Activity increased notably during the mid-1990s and again in the early 2010s, reflecting periods of increased federal investment in wetland and working lands conservation programs and growing land trust capacity across the Gulf South. Continued expansion of Louisiana's private lands conservation network through both federal program investment and land trust activity represents one of the most scalable opportunities for increasing protected acreage on working forest landscapes across the state.

### 4.3 Louisiana's Existing Forest Legacy Projects

Louisiana has successfully completed two FLP projects, both in the Florida Parishes region. The first Louisiana Forest Legacy Project was the 2013 purchase of two inholdings in the Louisiana State University's School Forest called Lee Memorial Forest in Washington Parish. This 182 acre fee simple acquisition enabled the linking of two non-contiguous compartments in the school forest allowing LSU to expand its research and teaching forest to 1400 acres. Adding forested acres and closing inholdings has improved management capacity (such as prescribed fire) and increased available acres for teaching future natural resource managers.

The second FLP project involved the acquisition of a conservation easement on a private tract of restored native longleaf pine Tangipahoa Parish called Old Spanish Trail Preserve. Completed in 2023, this 550 acre conservation easement protects a working forest along Scenic Highway 22 in the heart of one of the fastest growing parishes in Louisiana. This easement expanded the protected forest corridor north of Joyce Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in the Gulf coastal plain, a recognized global hotspot for biodiversity and endemism and has ensured this working forest will be conserved in perpetuity.

### 4.4 Additional Forest Conservation Programs in Louisiana

#### 4.4.1 Federal Conservation Programs:

##### USDA Forest Service:

1. **Forest Stewardship Program (FSP):** *Administered in partnership with LDAF:* The Forest Stewardship Program provides a means for state, federal, and private agencies to better coordinate their services to private, non-industrial forest landowners for total resource management. The program recognizes and rewards landowners who are managing their forestlands in ways that contribute to timber, clean air and

water, soil protection, healthy fish and wildlife populations, and other multiple-use benefits. The goal is to assist private forest landowners in more actively managing their forest and related resources, keeping these lands productive and healthy for present and future owners.

2. **Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership:** *Co-administered with USDA NRCS:* The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership enables NRCS and the Forest Service to collaborate with states, agricultural producers, forest landowners, tribes, and public land managers to invest in conservation and restoration at a landscape scale. Working across public-private boundaries helps reduce wildfire threats, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species. Past Louisiana projects have focused on Longleaf Pine ecosystem restoration, hazardous fuel treatments, firebreak installation, reforestation, and riparian habitat restoration.

##### USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):

3. **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** EQIP is NRCS's flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands. It provides financial and technical assistance to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, increased soil health, reduced erosion, improved or created wildlife habitat, and mitigation against weather volatility. In Louisiana, EQIP initiatives include the Longleaf Pine Initiative, Working Lands for Wildlife, and the Gopher Tortoise initiative, among others.
4. **Longleaf Pine Initiative (LLPI):** *(EQIP Initiative):* Through the Longleaf Pine Initiative, NRCS works with producers on private lands in nine states, including Louisiana, to improve the sustainability of longleaf pine forests. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help landowners establish new trees, implement prescribed burning, and improve forest stands. Many at-risk wildlife species such as the gopher tortoise, Louisiana pine snake, and red-cockaded woodpecker depend on longleaf pine forests for habitat. LLPI targets efforts in priority counties with favorable growing conditions and conservation value for connecting existing stands.



5. **Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW):** (*EQIP Initiative*) Delivered in partnership with the USFWS: Working Lands for Wildlife uses a win-win approach to target conservation efforts that improve agricultural and forest productivity while enhancing wildlife habitat on working landscapes. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance for voluntary improvements to working lands, while the USFWS provides participants with regulatory predictability under the Endangered Species Act. In Louisiana, WLFW targets species including the gopher tortoise, Louisiana pine snake, and red-cockaded woodpecker in longleaf pine ecosystems.
6. **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):** CSP is the largest conservation program in the United States, with 70 million acres of productive agricultural and forest land enrolled. It assists agricultural and forest producers in maintaining and improving existing conservation systems while adopting additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance — the higher the performance, the higher the payment. The program can support forest landowners in managing forested areas in ways that benefit wildlife habitat, water quality, and other resource concerns.
7. **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP):** ACEP helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands or protect working farms and ranches through conservation easements. The Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) component helps private and tribal landowners protect, restore, and enhance wetlands previously degraded due to agricultural uses, which is particularly relevant to forested wetlands in Louisiana. ACEP also offers the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP), a voluntary partnership program to carry out high-priority wetland protection and restoration. Eligible land under the Agricultural Land Easements component includes nonindustrial private forest land, in addition to cropland, rangeland, grassland, and pastureland.
8. **Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP):** The Healthy Forests Reserve Program helps landowners restore, enhance, and protect forestland resources on private and tribal lands through easements and financial assistance. Through HFRP, landowners promote the recovery of endangered or threatened species, improve plant and animal biodiversity, and enhance carbon sequestration. HFRP provides landowners with 10-year restoration agreements and 30-year or permanent easements for specific conservation actions. Land enrolled must restore, enhance,

or measurably increase the recovery of threatened or endangered species, improve biological diversity, or increase carbon storage.

9. **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):** RCPP promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with conservation partners to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. In Louisiana, a current RCPP project is the Open Pine Landscape Restoration initiative — led in partnership with the American Bird Conservancy and the State of Arkansas — which focuses on improving forest health for wildlife resources in the West Gulf Coastal Plain. The project aims to restore over 60,000 acres of open pine landscape across private and public lands.

#### USDA Farm Service Agency:

10. **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):** The Conservation Reserve Program helps producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species — including approved grasses and trees — to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. USDA also offers the Forest Management Incentive (FMI) to CRP enrollees to improve forest health through practices such as brush management and prescribed burning.
11. **Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP):** EFRP is a cost-share program that provides financial and technical assistance to owners of nonindustrial private forestland to restore forest lands damaged by qualifying natural disaster events. In 2024, all 64 Louisiana parishes were approved for EFRP assistance in response to severe drought and related insect infestation. Financial assistance reimburses up to 75% of the lesser of actual costs or allowable costs after restoration activities are completed.

#### US Department of the Interior:

12. **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) — State and Local Assistance Program:** Administered in Louisiana by the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of State Parks, Division of Outdoor Recreation: The Land and Water Conservation Fund program promotes broad-scope outdoor recreation, ranging from land acquisition to development of park facilities. The federally funded program provides 50% matching funds assistance through grants to state governments and local municipalities. The LWCF is administered at the federal level by the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service. At the state level in Louisiana, the Office of State Parks, Division of Outdoor Recreation, is tasked with administration of the



program. Among its state grant programs, LWCF funds the Forest Legacy Program — administered by the USDA Forest Service in cooperation with state partners — providing matching grants of up to 75% to states to permanently protect forested properties through conservation easements or outright purchase. Eligible projects also include acquisition of land for state and local parks, development of outdoor recreation facilities, and protection of critical natural resource lands, making the fund a foundational source of support for both recreational access and forest conservation in Louisiana.

#### US Department of Defense:

**13. Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI):** The REPI Program is a Department of Defense initiative that funds cost-sharing partnerships between military installations and state agencies, local governments, and conservation organizations to protect lands adjacent to military installations from incompatible development. REPI addresses encroachment risks that can restrict military training and testing operations. In Louisiana, REPI projects have focused on buffering Fort Johnson in Vernon Parish and Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans. REPI projects represent an opportunity for expanded conservation investment in areas with both military and ecological value.

#### 4.4.2 State Conservation Programs:

##### **14. Louisiana Forest Productivity Program (FPP):**

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF): The Forest Productivity Program provides financial assistance to eligible landowners for establishing and improving timber crops. Incentive payments help offset the cost of implementing specific forestry practices, including site preparation, tree planting, and stand improvement. FPP assistance is available to landowners in all Louisiana parishes who own a minimum of 10 contiguous acres suitable for growing commercially valuable timber species. Each participating landowner is required to maintain forestry usage for a period of 10 years.

**15. Louisiana Outdoors Forever (LOF):** *Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF):* Louisiana Outdoors Forever is a state funding program that supports land conservation of important natural areas, including fish and wildlife habitat; water quality projects related to land conservation or land management; working lands, farms, and forested lands; and recreational properties related to important natural areas. For the 2026 funding cycle, approximately \$1.08 million is available. Projects are selected through a two-phase application process overseen by a Project Selection Board and Technical Advisory Board.

## Section 5: Identification of Forest Legacy Areas

### 5.1 Analytical Framework for Identifying Priority Forest Landscapes

Proposed Forest Legacy Areas were identified through a statewide screening and prioritization process that evaluated both forest resource value and conversion threat across Louisiana's forested landscapes. Using parish-level spatial data, conversion threat was assessed through indicators representing economic pressure on working forests, projected land-use change, population growth, and wildfire likelihood. Forest resource value was assessed through indicators representing landscape connectivity, surface drinking water importance, and threatened and endangered species richness. These two composite indices were then integrated through a combined prioritization framework — identifying landscapes where important forest resources overlap with elevated conversion pressure as priority areas for FLA designation.

The spatial analysis was refined through stakeholder engagement and public input, including a facilitated planning workshop held in January 2026. Feedback from state and federal agency representatives, conservation organizations, private and industrial forest landowners, and members of the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee confirmed the general configuration of the proposed FLAs and informed several boundary refinements — most notably the expansion of the Florida Parishes FLA to include additional parishes experiencing high development pressure. Stakeholder input also resulted in the designation of Priority Zones within each FLA, corresponding to parishes exhibiting both high conversion threat and high forest resource value.

A full description of the analytical methodology, indicator datasets, scoring approach, and prioritization framework is provided in **Appendix C**.



## 5.2 Eligibility Criteria for Forest Legacy Program

The following eligibility criteria were developed in consultation with the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee to identify important forest landscapes in Louisiana as FLAs that meet the intent of the FLP. These criteria are based on the federal program's statutory purpose to protect environmentally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses.

The eligibility criteria reflect both the results of the spatial analysis described in preceding sections and input received through stakeholder engagement. These criteria were applied to identify and delineate proposed FLAs.

To be eligible for designation as a Louisiana FLA, forest land must meet the following criteria:

1. *Be forested and capable of supporting sustainable forest uses;*
2. *Be threatened by present or future conversion to non-forest uses, including development pressure or fragmentation into smaller, non-contiguous tracts;*

3. *Contain one or more of the following important resource values:*

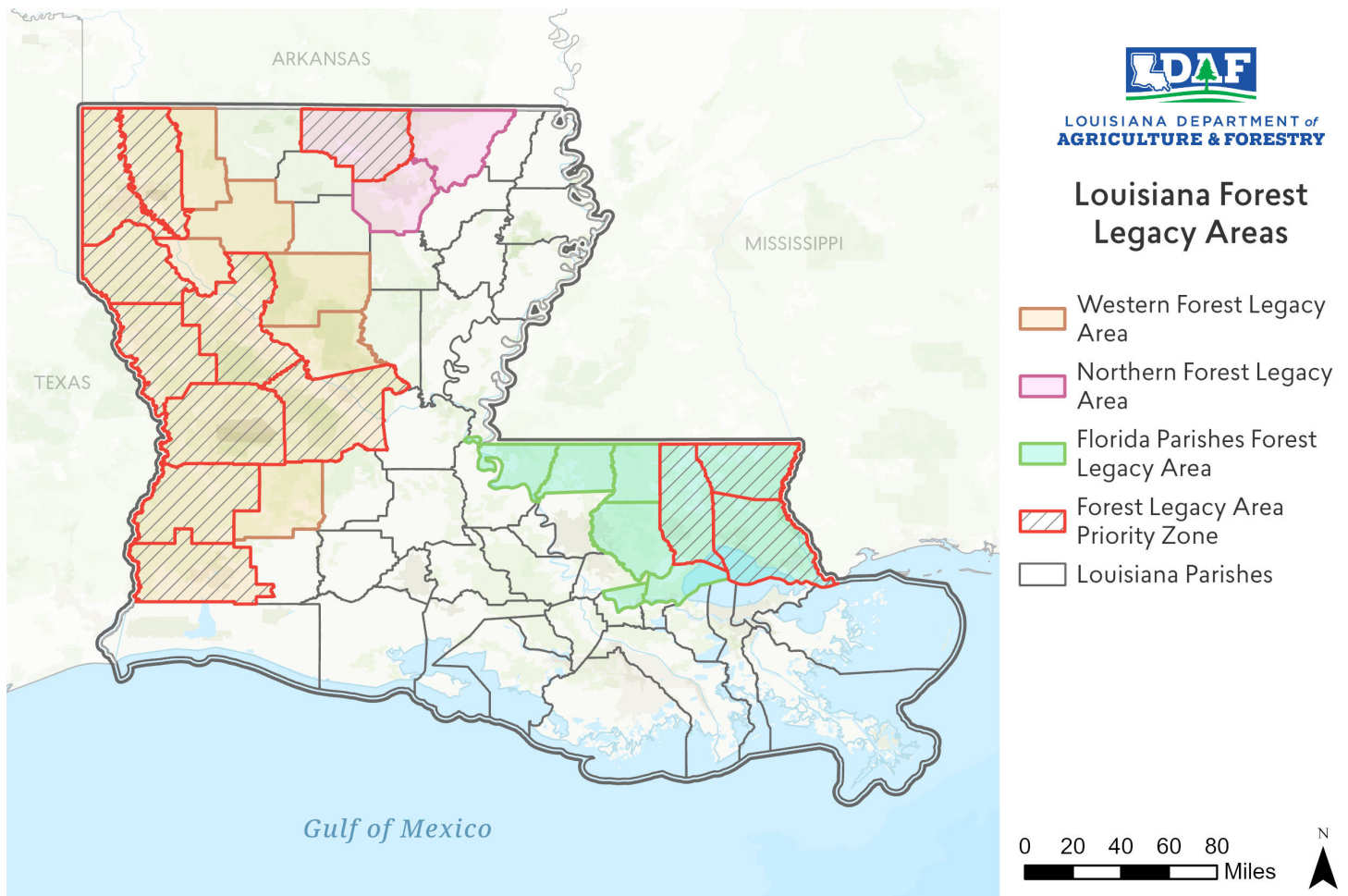
- *Public recreation resources*
- *Habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered plant or animal species;*
- *Historical or Cultural Resources*
- *Designated Scenic Resources*
- *Large blocks of contiguous forest land*
- *Rivers, streams, wetlands and riparian areas important to the State*
- *Contribute to coastal resiliency*

4. *Provide continuation of traditional forest uses, including timber management, watershed protection, and recreation;*

5. *Contribute to broader landscape-scale conservation objectives within the State*

Using the eligibility criteria described above, priority landscapes were identified and refined to delineate proposed Forest Legacy Areas as described in the following section 5.3.





Map 24- Louisiana Forest Legacy Areas (2026)

## 5.3 Louisiana Forest Legacy Areas

Louisiana's FLAs were identified through a statewide prioritization analysis that evaluated the intersection of forest resource values and threats to forestland conversion. Spatial datasets representing key environmental values, including ecological connectivity, biodiversity, watershed importance, and forest productivity, were combined to produce a composite resource value score. This analysis was then overlaid with indicators of development and economic pressure, land-use change, and other factors contributing to forest conversion risk. Landscapes classified as *High Threat* with *Medium* or *High Resource Value* were identified as proposed FLAs because they represent forests with significant conservation importance that are also at meaningful risk of fragmentation or loss. Preliminary results of this spatial analysis were presented to a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from state agencies, conservation non-governmental organizations, universities, landowners, and the forest products industry during a

public planning workshop in January 2026. Stakeholder input was used to refine the proposed FLA boundaries to ensure that they accurately reflect on-the-ground conditions, incorporate important ecological resources and working forest landscapes, and account for threats or conservation opportunities not fully captured in the spatial datasets alone. The total area within the boundaries of the three FLAs is approximately 13.8 million acres.

The Priority Zones defined within each FLA include parishes that scored as both *High Threat* and *High Resource Value* in the spatial analysis. Although future FLP projects submitted within the broader FLA may qualify for the program, the State will give higher priority to projects proposed within the designated Priority Zones. The Priority Zones encompass approximately 8.6 million acres.

### 5.3.1 Western Louisiana Forest Legacy Area

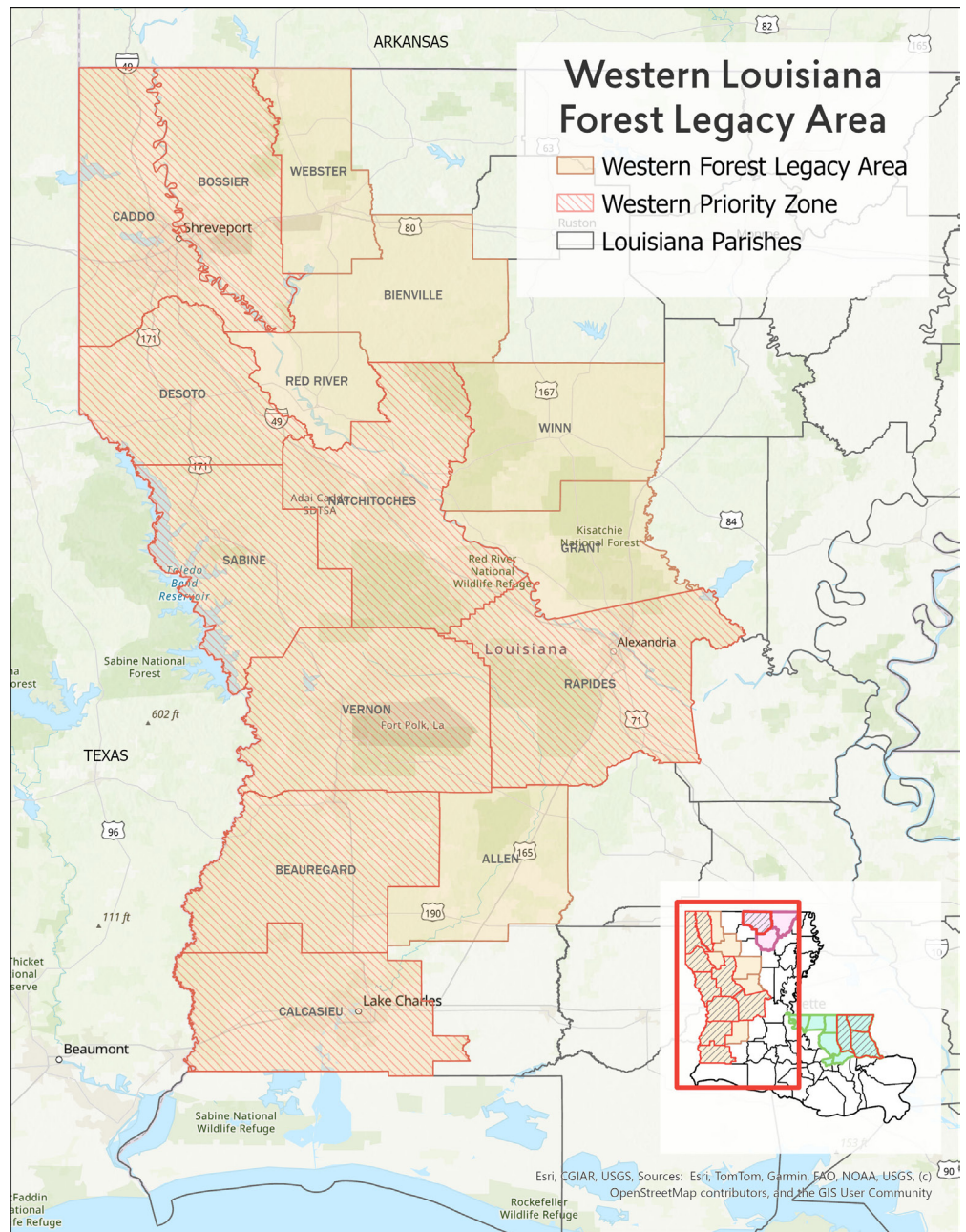
#### A. Boundary Description

The proposed Western Louisiana Forest Legacy Area encompasses a large, contiguous block of forested landscapes extending across west-central and north-western Louisiana along the Texas border. The proposed FLA includes all or portions of Allen, Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Calcasieu, Claiborne, DeSoto, Grant, Natchitoches, Rapides, Red River, Sabine, Vernon, Webster, and Winn Parishes. The boundary generally follows large, connected working forest landscapes associated with the West Gulf Coastal Plain and Upper West Gulf Coastal Plain ecoregions and includes extensive privately owned timberlands, riparian corridors, and remnant longleaf pine systems. The Western FLA boundary encompasses approximately 9.1 million acres, with a priority zone of approximately 6.4 million acres.

#### B. Landscape Context

The Western Louisiana FLA contains some of the largest remaining contiguous working forest landscapes in the state and represents the core of Louisiana's commercial timber-producing region. Forests within the area are dominated by pine and mixed pine-hardwood systems associated with the West Gulf Coastal Plain, including intensively managed loblolly pine forests, remnant longleaf pine landscapes, bottomland hardwood corridors, and extensive upland pine systems. Large portions of the area remain rural and heavily forested, with forest ownership patterns dominated by private industrial timberlands, TIMOs, REITs, and family forest ownerships.

The region also contains important watershed systems associated with the Sabine, Calcasieu, Red, and lower Ouachita River basins and includes extensive headwater streams, riparian forests, and aquifer recharge areas important to regional water supply and watershed protection. Kisatchie National Forest and several Wildlife Management Areas contribute to broader landscape connectivity and long-term conservation opportunities across the region.



Map 25- Western Louisiana Forest Legacy Area (2026)

#### C. Key Forest Resource Values and Threats

The Western Louisiana FLA supports significant ecological, hydrologic, and economic forest resource values. Longleaf pine restoration landscapes within the region provide critical habitat for the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and federally threatened Louisiana pine snake, both of which depend upon large, connected pine ecosystems maintained through active forest management and prescribed fire. Forested corridors and bottomland hardwood systems additionally support black bear dispersal habitat, migratory bird habitat, and broader wildlife connectivity across the western portion of the state.



The region contains extensive working forests to support Louisiana's forest economy, including sawtimber, pulpwood, plywood, veneer, and biomass production. However, these landscapes are increasingly affected by economic instability within the forest products sector, particularly following recent pulp and paper mill closures and declining pulpwood markets. Portions of the region identified through the statewide analysis as "Economic Impact Areas" overlap substantially with the proposed FLA boundary. Declining timber market access, increased hauling distances, parcelization, and reduced forest management capacity may increase long-term vulnerability to fragmentation and conversion.

Although much of the region's remains relatively intact, portions of southwest Louisiana are also experiencing increasing development pressure associated with outward growth from Texas metropolitan areas and population shifts inland from vulnerable coastal regions. Expansion of transportation infrastructure, utility corridors, renewable energy development, emerging industrial and low-density rural residential growth may further fragment forest landscapes over time if not carefully managed.

#### *D. Priority Conservation Outcomes for the Western Louisiana FLA*

While the Western Louisiana FLA advances all program-level objectives identified in Section 1.2, several priorities are of particular importance to this landscape. The protection and restoration of longleaf pine ecosystems stands out as a defining conservation objective for this region, given the presence of critical habitat for the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and federally threatened Louisiana pine snake across large, connected pine landscapes that support active management and prescribed fire. Maintaining the economic viability of working forests is equally central here—this region is the heart of Louisiana's commercial timber economy, and protecting large, contiguous forest tracts directly supports continued timber production, sustainable forest management, and the rural communities and forest products infrastructure that depend on it. Watershed and water supply protection is also a high priority, as the region contains extensive headwater systems and aquifer recharge areas within the Sabine, Calcasieu, and Red River basins that serve as important sources of clean water for communities across western Louisiana. Finally, maintaining and restoring landscape-scale connectivity, both within the FLA and in relation to adjacent public lands including Kisatchie National Forest, is essential for supporting wildlife movement, prescribed fire capacity, and long-term ecological resilience across this large forest landscape.

#### *E. Forest Legacy Objectives for Western FLA*

1. Identify and protect environmentally important forest lands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses.
2. Reduce forest fragmentation caused by development.
3. Provide buffer areas and connectivity to already protected areas.
4. Protect rare, threatened, or endangered species of plants and animals; protect and enhance critical wildlife corridors.
5. Provide environmental benefits through the restoration and protection of riparian zones, native forest plants and animals, and remnant forest types.
6. Enhance forest diversity.
7. Protect river systems, wetlands, and their associated upland habitats.
8. Provide for watershed and water supply protection.
9. Provide employment opportunities and economic stability through maintenance of traditional forest uses.
10. Promote Forest Stewardship and Best Management Practices for forestry.
11. Increase the opportunity for public recreation.
12. Provide for educational and research opportunities.

#### *F. Western FLA Priority Zone*

The Western Priority Zone includes portions of Caddo, DeSoto, Sabine, Vernon, Rapides, Beauregard, and Calcasieu Parishes where large, connected working forests overlap with elevated conversion and fragmentation pressure identified through the statewide prioritization analysis. These landscapes contain some of Louisiana's most significant remaining pine and pine-hardwood forest systems, including active longleaf pine restoration areas, important red-cockaded woodpecker and Louisiana pine snake habitat, and regionally significant watershed and aquifer recharge functions.

The Priority Zone also reflects areas experiencing increasing economic and development pressure associated with shifting timber markets, expanding transportation and utility infrastructure, outward growth from Texas metropolitan areas, and long-term inland population movement from vulnerable coastal regions. Protecting these forests before increasing fragmentation occurs is considered especially important for maintaining landscape-scale habitat connectivity, prescribed fire capacity, sustainable forestry operations, and long-term ecological resilience across western Louisiana.

### 5.3.2 Northern Louisiana Forest Legacy Area

#### A. Boundary Description

The proposed Northern Louisiana Forest Legacy Area includes forested landscapes within Morehouse, Ouachita, and Union Parishes in northeastern Louisiana. The boundary encompasses portions of the Upper East Gulf Coastal Plain and Mississippi River Alluvial Plain transitional region and includes forested landscapes associated with the Ouachita River system, Bayou Bartholomew watershed, and adjacent upland pine-hardwood systems. The approximate area of this FLA is 1.5 million acres.

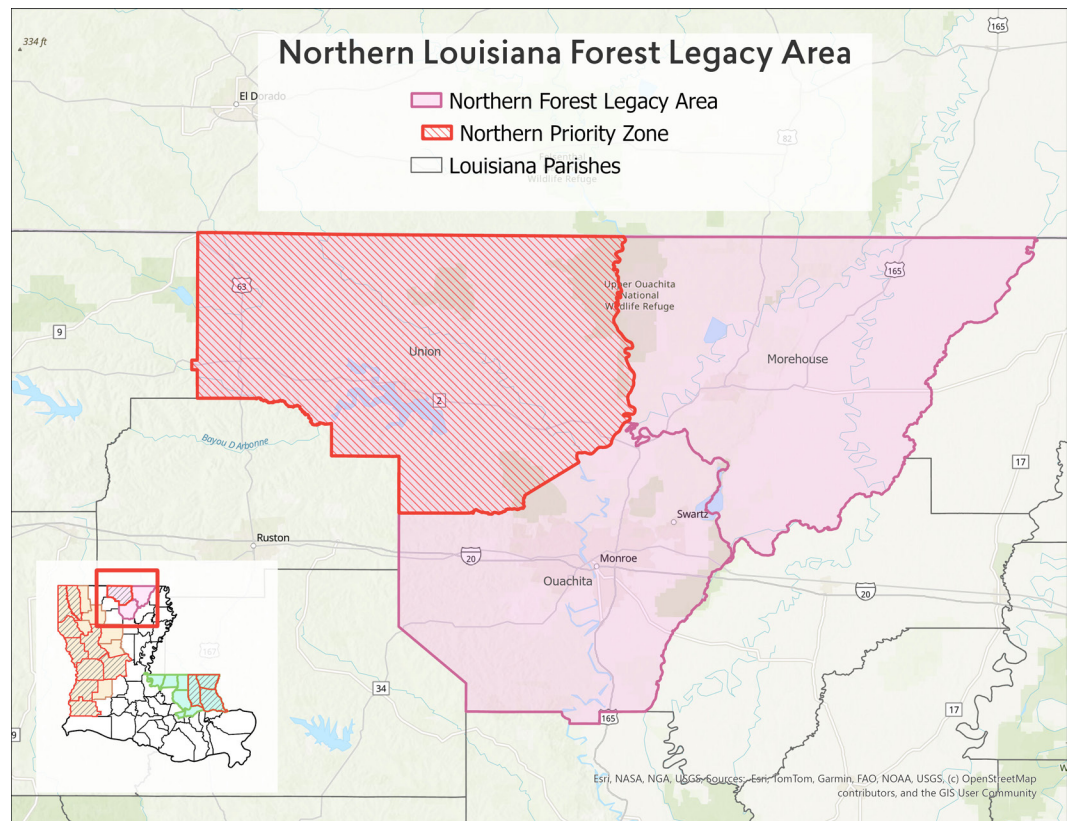
#### B. Landscape Context

The Northern Louisiana FLA represents an important ecological transition zone between upland pine-hardwood systems and the bottomland hardwood forests of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. Forests within the region include mixed pine-hardwood uplands, riparian forests, bottomland hardwood systems, and agricultural-forest mosaics associated with northeastern Louisiana's river corridors and floodplains.

Compared to western Louisiana, forests within this region are generally more fragmented by agriculture, transportation infrastructure, and rural development. However, remaining forest blocks continue to provide important habitat connectivity, watershed protection functions, and ecological diversity within a heavily altered landscape matrix. Forested riparian systems associated with the Ouachita River and Bayou Bartholomew are particularly important for maintaining wildlife movement corridors and water quality throughout the region.

#### C. Key Forest Resource Values and Threats

The Northern Louisiana FLA contains important bottomland hardwood forests, riparian corridors, and mixed upland forest systems that support migratory birds, wetland-dependent wildlife, and broader ecological connectivity across northeastern Louisiana. Forested floodplains and riparian systems within the region contribute significantly to watershed protection, flood attenuation, water quality, and carbon storage functions. Bayou Bartholomew, one of the longest bayous in North America and recognized for its exceptional aquatic biodiversity and associated forested wetlands support



Map 26- Northern Louisiana Forest Legacy Area (2026)

regionally significant aquatic and riparian habitat systems, while upland pine-hardwood forests contribute to biodiversity and landscape resilience across the Upper East Gulf Coastal Plain.

The area also provides important connectivity between remaining forest blocks within a region otherwise heavily influenced by agriculture and land conversion. Because forest blocks within northeastern Louisiana are often smaller and more isolated than those found elsewhere in the state, maintaining connectivity between remaining forested landscapes is particularly important for long-term ecological resilience and habitat conservation.

Major threats within the region include continued fragmentation from agricultural conversion, rural development, transportation and utility infrastructure expansion, and parcelization of remaining forest ownerships. These pressures, combined with the already fragmented character of the landscape, make the protection of remaining intact and connected forest blocks especially urgent.





#### *D. Priority Conservation Outcomes for the Northern Louisiana FLA*

While the Northern Louisiana FLA advances all program-level objectives identified in Section 1.2, several priorities are of particular importance to this landscape. Protecting and restoring riparian corridors and river systems is the defining conservation objective for this region, where forested floodplains along the Ouachita River and Bayou Bartholomew represent the most ecologically significant remaining forest resources in an otherwise heavily agricultural and fragmented landscape. Maintaining and enhancing landscape connectivity is equally critical here. Unlike western Louisiana where large intact forest blocks still dominate, northeastern Louisiana's forests are already fragmented, and each conserved parcel plays an outsized role in sustaining movement corridors for wildlife and maintaining ecological linkages across the broader landscape. Reducing fragmentation and protecting remaining large forest blocks from parcelization and agricultural conversion is therefore a high priority throughout the FLA. Watershed and water quality protection is also especially important in this region, given the ecological sensitivity of Bayou Bartholomew and the Ouachita system and their significance for downstream water quality and aquatic biodiversity.

#### *E. Forest Legacy Objectives for the Northern Louisiana FLA*

1. Identify and protect environmentally important forest lands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses.
2. Reduce forest fragmentation caused by development.
3. Provide buffer areas and connectivity to already protected areas.
4. Protect rare, threatened, or endangered species of plants and animals; protect and enhance critical wildlife corridors.
5. Provide environmental benefits through the restoration and protection of riparian zones, native forest plants and animals, and remnant forest types.
6. Enhance forest diversity.
7. Protect river systems, wetlands, and their associated upland habitats.
8. Provide for watershed and water supply protection.
9. Provide employment opportunities and economic stability through maintenance of traditional forest uses.
10. Promote Forest Stewardship and Best Management Practices for forestry.
11. Provide for educational and research opportunities.

#### *F. Northern FLA Priority Zone*

The Northern Priority Zone is centered primarily within Union Parish and portions of adjacent forested landscapes where high ecological value overlaps with increasing fragmentation pressure within northeastern Louisiana's mixed agricultural and forested landscape. The area contains important bottomland hardwood and riparian forest systems associated with Bayou Bartholomew and the upper Ouachita watershed, as well as connected upland pine-hardwood forests that provide wildlife habitat and watershed protection functions within a region where remaining forest blocks are increasingly isolated.

The Priority Zone reflects the importance of maintaining landscape connectivity and protecting remaining working forests within an area heavily influenced by agricultural conversion, rural parcelization, and infrastructure expansion. Conservation within this zone is intended to help retain large forest blocks, sustain riparian corridor function, and prevent further fragmentation of strategically important habitat systems in northeastern Louisiana.

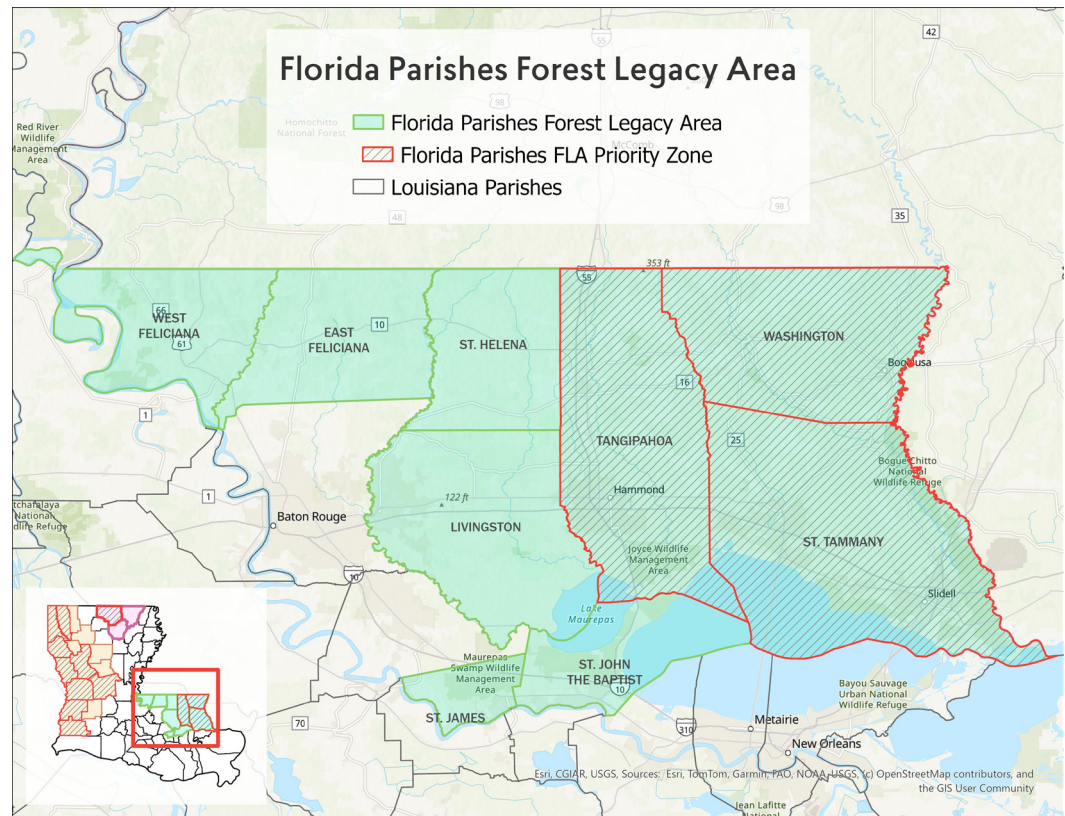
### 5.3.3 Florida Parishes Forest Legacy Area

#### A. Boundary Description

The proposed Florida Parishes Forest Legacy Area includes forested landscapes north of Lake Pontchartrain within East Feliciana, Livingston, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington, and West Feliciana Parishes, as well as portions of St. James and St. John the Baptist Parishes located north and east of the Mississippi River. The proposed boundary encompasses upland longleaf pine and mixed pine-hardwood systems associated with the East Gulf Coastal Plain ecoregion and several major river and watershed systems draining into the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Although St. James and St. John the Baptist Parishes did not meet the combined resource and threat threshold used in the initial statewide screening, their inclusion in this FLA reflects stakeholder recognition that the remaining forested areas in the northern portions of these parishes, particularly the near-coastal forests adjacent to Lake Maurepas, provide critical storm surge buffering, support inland habitat migration in response to coastal land loss and sea level rise, and help maintain the last remaining wildlife corridors and riparian connections between the upland Florida Parishes forest systems and the coastal wetland landscapes to the south. The Florida Parishes FLA is approximately 3.2 million acres in total area.

#### B. Landscape Context

The Florida Parishes region contains some of Louisiana's most rapidly changing forest landscapes and represents an important transition between the heavily urbanized New Orleans-Baton Rouge corridor and the more rural forested uplands of southeastern Louisiana. Forests within the region include longleaf pine systems, mixed pine-hardwood uplands, riparian forests, and forested headwaters associated with the Amite, Tickfaw, Tangipahoa, and Pearl River systems. The region supports important drinking water resources, flood mitigation functions, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities while also experiencing some of the highest levels of suburban and exurban development pressure in the state. Population growth associated with the Northshore region and expansion outward from Baton Rouge has increasingly pushed residential and commercial development into historically rural and forested



Map 27- Florida Parishes Forest Legacy Area (2026)

landscapes, and extensive suburban sprawl across St. James and St. John the Baptist Parishes has made the forested lands that remain in those parishes more ecologically valuable than ever as buffers, corridors, and coastal transition zones.

#### C. Key Forest Resource Values and Threats

The Florida Parishes FLA supports high levels of biodiversity, watershed value, and ecological connectivity within southeastern Louisiana. Longleaf pine systems and associated upland forests provide important habitat for migratory birds, pollinators, and other species associated with fire-maintained ecosystems. Forested headwaters and riparian systems within the region contribute significantly to drinking water quality, flood attenuation, and watershed protection for downstream communities surrounding Lake Pontchartrain.

Forested landscapes within the region also play an increasingly important role in climate resilience and storm protection. Intact forest systems help moderate runoff, reduce erosion, maintain water quality, and provide hydrologic buffering during major precipitation events. Near-coastal forests adjacent to Lake Maurepas and the Pontchartrain Basin provide particularly important storm surge attenuation and serve as ecological transition zones for habitats and species responding to ongoing coastal land loss, subsidence, and sea level rise. As coastal marshes and wetlands retreat inland, the forested uplands of the Florida Parishes and low-



er river parishes become increasingly important for supporting habitat migration corridors, maintaining connectivity between coastal and inland ecosystems, and providing refugia for wildlife species displaced from shrinking coastal systems.

The region faces some of the highest conversion and fragmentation pressure identified through the statewide assessment. Rapid suburbanization, transportation corridor expansion, low-density residential development, and parcelization continue to reduce forest connectivity across portions of St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Livingston, and surrounding parishes. Increasing land values and expanding development pressure associated with the Interstate 12 corridor have accelerated fragmentation of previously contiguous working forests and rural landscapes throughout much of the region.

#### *D. Priority Conservation Outcomes for the Florida Parishes FLA*

While the Florida Parishes FLA advances all program-level objectives identified in Section 1.2, several priorities are of particular importance to this landscape. Reducing fragmentation and protecting remaining connected forest blocks is the most urgent conservation objective for this region, given the intensity of suburban and exurban development pressure across the Interstate 12 corridor and the Northshore - arguably the most rapid and persistent source of forest conversion pressure in Louisiana. Watershed and drinking water protection is equally critical here, as the forested headwaters and riparian systems of the Amite, Tickfaw, Tangipahoa, Pearl, and Bogue Chitto Rivers are the primary source of water quality protection for the Lake Pontchartrain Basin and communities throughout southeastern Louisiana.

Coastal resilience is a distinguishing priority for this FLA compared to the other two FLAs - the near-coastal forests adjacent to Lake Maurepas and the Pontchartrain Basin provide storm surge protection, support inland migration of coastal habitats, and serve as ecological buffers for communities and natural systems increasingly exposed to stronger storms, land loss, and sea level rise. Finally, maintaining scenic, recreational, and cultural resources tied to the region's remaining forested landscapes - including scenic river corridors, paddling trails, wildlife viewing areas, and historic rural heritage landscapes - is important to quality of life and nature-based tourism across one of Louisiana's most densely populated regions.

#### *E. Forest Legacy Objectives for the Florida Parishes*

1. Identify and protect environmentally important forest lands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses.
2. Reduce forest fragmentation caused by development.
3. Provide buffer areas and connectivity to already protected areas.
4. Protect rare, threatened, or endangered species of plants and animals; protect and enhance critical wildlife corridors.
5. Provide environmental benefits through the restoration and protection of riparian zones, native forest plants and animals, and remnant forest types.
6. Enhance forest diversity.
7. Protect river systems, wetlands, and their associated upland habitats.
8. Provide for watershed and water supply protection.
9. Maintain important, recognized scenic resources of the state.
10. Increase the opportunity for public recreation.
11. Provide employment opportunities and economic stability through maintenance of traditional forest uses.
12. Promote Forest Stewardship and Best Management Practices for forestry.

#### *F. Florida Parishes FLA Priority Zone*

The Florida Parishes Priority Zone includes Washington, Tangipahoa, and St. Tammany Parishes, where rapidly expanding suburban and exurban development overlaps with some of the most important remaining connected forest landscapes in southeastern Louisiana. These parishes contain extensive longleaf pine and mixed pine-hardwood systems, high-value watershed resources associated with the Pearl, Tangipahoa, and Bogue Chitto river systems, and important wildlife habitat and ecological connectivity within the East Gulf Coastal Plain ecoregion.

This area was identified as a Priority Zone due to the intensity of ongoing fragmentation associated with residential subdivision, transportation corridor expansion, and outward growth from the New Orleans and Baton Rouge metropolitan regions. Forest conservation within this zone is considered especially important for maintaining drinking water protection, flood resilience, wildlife movement corridors, and remaining large forest blocks within one of Louisiana's fastest-growing regions.





## Section 6- Forest Legacy Acquisition Process in Louisiana

### 6.1 Tract Identification

The FLP in Louisiana seeks to acquire conservation easements on private forested lands and to fund purchases of forested lands for public ownership that are threatened with conversion to non-forest uses in designated FLAs. To accomplish this goal, LDAF as the lead agency for the FLP in Louisiana, will post this AON and maps of the Louisiana FLAs on its website. LDAF also intends to invite proposals through an annual Request for Applications (RFA) for FLP posted on its website. Additionally, the LDAF will promote the FLP at landowner meetings, conferences, through conservation partners and land trusts, to other natural resource agencies, and other appropriate avenues to encourage proposals of potential FLP projects in the designated Louisiana FLAs. Agencies, non-profit land trusts and other organizations, forest landowners, and local governments are invited to assist LDAF in promoting the program to landowners and join in identifying potential tracts for FLP.

Landowners, local and state governments, universities, non-government organizations and other eligible entities and their representatives interested in participating in the FLP may contact the LDAF FLP Coordinator throughout the year to learn more about the FLP and to ascertain if their property may be a good fit for FLP.

#### 6.1.1 Prioritization Process for Submitted Applications:

LDAF will closely follow the USDA Forest Service's *Forest Legacy Program National Core Criteria* to evaluate and rank FLP proposals and to update its annual call for applications. The USDA Forest Service National Review Panelists who evaluate all state FLP proposals utilize this *Core Criteria* and score each project based on its alignment with the *Importance*, *Threatened*, and *Strategic* criteria. A total of 80 points is possible. A copy of the current FLP National Core Criteria is in Appendix F. The panel also assigned one point to each of the five requested Readiness items (details below).

Note that FLP is a nationally competitive federal grant program and there is no guarantee that submitted applications will be nominated by the LDAF to the USDA Forest Service for a grant, or that nominations will be funded. More details on the prioritization of applications received by the annual state deadline follows.

#### 6.1.2 Overview of the FLP Project State and Federal Review Process Steps:

The following table outlines the nine-step process by which Forest Legacy Program projects are identified, nominated, reviewed, and funded in Louisiana. Steps 1–3 involve state-level screening and prioritization;

Steps 4–6 involve nomination development and federal review; Steps 7–9 involve national ranking and grant award. Note that the review process may change from year to year based on availability of federal funds or other factors.

Table 2- Louisiana Forest Legacy Application and Review Process

| Step | Action                         | Lead Actor               | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Timing               |
|------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1    | Federal request letter         | USDA Forest Service      | USDA Forest Service sends project request letter with updated federal processes and scoring guidance to LDAF Forest Legacy Coordinator and State Forester.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Annual cycle begins  |
| 2    | State call for applications    | LDAF                     | LDAF issues a Request for Applications on its website. Landowners and other eligible entities submit complete applications with all required attachments by the annual state deadline.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Per state deadline   |
| 3    | State review & prioritization  | LDAF + SFSCC             | LDAF FLP Coordinator reviews eligible applications against the National Core Criteria and submits recommendations to the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (SFSCC). The SFSCC recommends the strongest applications to advance to national competition in priority order.<br><i>Note: Nomination to USDA Forest Service does not guarantee funding — FLP is a competitive grant program.</i> | Post-deadline        |
| 4    | Nomination development         | LDAF + applicant         | For approved tracts, LDAF FLP Coordinator works with applicant(s) to develop a Project Brief. Parties gather letters of support, document the 25% non-federal match, complete required due diligence, and submit the proposal in the federal Forest Legacy Information System (FLIS) before the federal deadline.                                                                                          | Pre-federal deadline |
| 5    | Regional peer review           | USDA FS + region         | Projects are pre-reviewed regionally by the USDA Forest Service and other state FLP Coordinators (peer review). Feedback is provided to LDAF to help improve proposals before the final federal deadline.                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Pre-final deadline   |
| 6    | National nomination submitted  | Louisiana State Forester | Final proposals are nominated by the Louisiana State Forester to the USDA Forest Service National FLP Review Panel by the annual federal deadline.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Early fall, annually |
| 7    | National Review Panel decision | National Review Panel    | The National Review Panel evaluates and ranks all projects against the National Core Criteria — Importance, Threat, Strategic Value — and determines Readiness. The ranked Project List is submitted to the Office of Management and Budget for inclusion in the President's Budget.<br><i>See Appendix F for an overview of the USDA Forest Service National Scoring Criteria.</i>                        | November, annually   |
| 8    | Final appropriation budget     | Congress + USDA FS       | Once Congress passes the annual appropriation budget, a list of funded projects is released to the Forest Service. The Forest Service                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Post-appropriation   |

\* Full national scoring criteria (Importance, Threat, Strategic Value, and Readiness) and point ranges are described in Appendix F





## 6.2 Application and Evaluation Process

A sample Louisiana FLP application is in **Appendix G** and includes a list of requested attachments. Note that the LDAF may revise its FLP application and deadline from year to year. For the most current version of the FLP application, visit the LDAF Forest Legacy Program page on the LDAF website.

### 6.2.1 Tract and Participant Eligibility Requirements:

The following are tract and participant requirements for LDAF to consider a FLP application.

- 1) **Must be located in Louisiana FLA:** Tract(s) must be wholly or partially within a Louisiana FLA (see FLA maps and list of parishes in Chapter 5.3). Multiple tracts with different ownerships may be eligible if they are in the same geographic vicinity can be assimilated into a project that may be a one year or planned in phases over multiple years.
- 2) **Complete FLP application:** A complete application with required attachments must be submitted to the LDAF FLP Coordinator by the annual LDAF deadline. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered but may be completed and submitted in subsequent years. See Appendix G for the application. FLP applications must include:
  - a) Name, address, and phone number of applicant landowner;
  - b) All other owners of record for this tract, and their addresses;
  - c) Name, address, and phone number of authorized agent representing landowner(s), if applicable;
  - d) Property location (e.g., location map, latitude/longitude);
  - e) Map showing property boundaries (if only a portion of the property is being offered, that portion identified on a map showing it in the context of the entire tract);
  - f) A reasonable estimate of tract acreage and total number of acres of forests and cleared/open land (to be verified by the State before submitting for funding consideration);
  - g) For a conservation easement project, a statement or list of the proposed rights the landowner wishes to reserve;
  - h) List of the significant scenic, water, recreational, wildlife, timber, historic/cultural, and other resource values contained on the property;
  - i) List of existing permanent improvements on the tract, including houses, barns, reservoirs, man-made ponds, dams, wells, roads, and other structures, and total number of acres occupied by improvements;
  - j) Identification of all known dumps or waste disposal sites on the property;
  - k) List any known (recorded or unrecorded) encumbrances or liens existing on the property including, but not limited to, contracts, leases, access easements, severed mineral interests, and outstanding rights/agreements;
  - l) Signed statement from the landowner giving the USDA Forest Service and LDAF permission to enter the property for review and appraisal purposes. If there is more than one landowner, all landowners or a legally empowered representative must sign the statement.
- 3) **75% Forested:** Tract(s) must have a minimum of 75 percent forestland or a plan to re-forest. The non-forested areas must be in compatible land uses (pasture, cultivated farmland, grassland, shrub-land, open water, non-forested wetlands).
- 4) **Clear title:** The landowner(s) must hold title to the property and agree in writing to allow it to be nominated for a FLP project.
- 5) **Willing seller:** The landowner must consent in writing to sell or donate the interest in the land in perpetuity.
- 6) **No prior conservation easements:** Tracts encumbered with prior conservation easements are not eligible.
- 7) **For fee simple acquisitions, the future owner must be an eligible government agency:** For fee acquisitions, the future owner must be a state or local subdivision of government in Louisiana such as a state agency, a parish or municipality, a public university or college, or other government agency willing and eligible to own and manage forest land in the state of Louisiana. Federal agencies, non-government organizations such as land trusts, and private landowners are not eligible to own land purchased in fee with FLP funds under the current *Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines* but may participate in FLP as partners.
- 8) **Consistent with the FLP:** Because the goal of the FLP is to prevent conversion of forest land in Louisiana to non-forest use, the tract must be managed after acquisition consistent with the purposes of FLP.

### 6.2.2 LDAF Evaluation of FLP Applications:

To closely align with the USDA Forest Service criteria for evaluating FLP nominations, LDAF will review and evaluate eligible applications against the most current published USDA Forest Service *National Core Criteria (Importance, Threatened, Strategic)* and will use the national scoring guidance as a guide to evaluating eligible Louisiana applications. The following are the attributes under each core criterion and the scores associated with each as excerpted from the *Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines* (May 2017). Note: A tract(s) need not have all the attributes listed to receive maximum points for each category. The list below is not an exhaustive list of possible attributes nor is it in order of



priority. See the LDAF sample application in Appendix G for more details and a description of the core criteria and attributes under each criterion.

Applications from willing sellers for fee and conservation easement projects will be considered. Each application will also be measured against the particular objectives described for the FLA in which it is situated (see the descriptions of FLAs in Section 5.3). Priority will be given to tracts that adjoin already conserved properties, promote significant leverage from other funding sources, are located along or buffer river or wetland systems, and provide multiple resource benefits.

The **total points available is 80** for the three criterion described below.

### 1. Criterion: *Importance*

- **Description:** This criterion focuses on the attributes of the property and the environmental, social, and economic public benefits gained from the protection and management of the property and its resources, now and into the future. This criterion reflects ecological assets as well as the economic and social values conserved by the project and its level of significance.
- **Attributes:**
  - Economic Benefits from Timber and Potential Forest Productivity
  - Economic Benefits from Non-timber Products and Recreation
  - Public Access
  - Wildlife Habitat: Threatened or Endangered Species
  - Wildlife Habitat: Fish, Wildlife, Plants, and Unique Forest Communities
  - Water Supply, Aquatic Habitat, and Watershed Protection
  - Cultural/Historic
  - Tribal
  - Scenic
- **Scoring for Importance:** 1 to 30 points possible
  - *High Importance* (21-30 points) – The project contains a majority of the attributes, and those attributes are high-impact and high-quality, or one or more attributes are exceptionally important.
  - *Medium* (11-20 points) – The project contains multiple attributes which are high-impact or high-quality.
  - *Low* (0-10 points) – The project contains only a few attributes, or it contains all of them, but they are of limited or marginal impact and quality.

### 2. Criterion: *Threatened*

- **Description:** This criterion estimates the likelihood for conversion. More points will be given to projects that demonstrate multiple conditions; however, a project need not have all the conditions listed to receive maximum points for this category.
- **Attributes:**
  - Lack of Protection
  - Land and Landowner Circumstances
  - Adjacent Land Use
  - Ability to Develop
- **Scoring for Threatened:** 0 to 20 points possible
  - *Likely* (11-20 points) – Multiple conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses likely.
  - *Possible* (1-10 points) – A few conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses possible.
  - *Unlikely* (0 points) – Current conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses unlikely

### 3. Criterion: *Strategic*

- **Description:** This criterion reflects the project's relevance or relationship to conservation efforts on a broader perspective considering scale, location, and relative contribution to landscape scale conservation goals.
- **Attributes:**
  - Conservation Initiative, Strategy, or Plan
  - Complement Protected Lands
  - Other Landscape Scale Goals and Public Benefits
- **Scoring for Strategic:** 0 to 30 points possible
  - *High* (21-30 points) – The property makes an exceptional strategic contribution to multiple attributes.
  - *Medium* (11-20 points) – The property makes a substantial strategic contribution to one or more of the attributes.
  - *Low* (0-10 points) – The property makes a modest strategic contribution to one or more of the attributes.

### 4. *Readiness:*

- **Description:** Proposed projects must be sufficiently “ready” to be completed within two years of a grant award. LDAF will evaluate a project's *Readiness* by reviewing the due diligence items submitted with the application. Note that not all due diligence items listed may be available or needed prior to submitting an application to LDAF or when LDAF works with the landowner to prepare a nomination



to the USDA Forest Service. Some items may be completed or updated if a grant is awarded. Readiness helps LDAF to provide more details about the property and determine if real property interest can be acquired.

- **Readiness items** in bold below submitted with a nomination to the USDA Forest Service and accepted will receive one point each. Due diligence items needed to complete a FLP project may include:
  - **Draft Conservation Easement language or Deed Language (Fee acquisition)**
  - **Cost share commitment**
  - **Signed option or purchase agreement**
  - **Title Search**
  - **Minerals Determination** (if subsurface minerals are severed)
  - Legal Description
  - Multi-Resource Management Plan
  - Appraisal- in compliance with the Uniform Standards for Federal Land Acquisition, aka “Yellowbook”. (For the proposal phase, a comparative market analysis is acceptable).

- Appraisal Review
- Baseline Documentation Report (for conservation easements only)
- Survey (if deemed necessary)
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (optional, if needed)
- Amicable Acknowledgement Agreement (usually after a grant is awarded)

During the evaluation of submitted applications, LDAF representatives may arrange a visit to the property at a time convenient for the landowner or representative to learn more about the property and take photos and GPS points. The LDAF will also evaluate the compatibility of existing structures and other improvements, public utilities, public roads, third-party interests (including mortgages, mineral reservations, liens, rights-of-ways, timber agreements, access easements, ecosystem services agreements) to assess the compatibility of those third party interests with the FLP purposes.

After evaluation of the eligible applications, the LDAF FLP Coordinator will develop a recommendation to the FSCC on potential FLP projects to nominate to the National Review Panel as described above.

## Section 7: Monitoring and Management Requirements

### 7.1 Program Management:

The FLP will be managed by the LDAF through its Forest Management Division and overseen by the State Forester. A staff FLP Coordinator will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the program including communication and promotion, receipt and review of applications, program management, accomplishment reporting and record keeping and monitoring of funded conservation easement and fee tracts as required by the USDA Forest Service. Where appropriate, LDAF may use contractors and/or program partners to assist in the administration of the FLP, in monitoring funded projects and developing nominations, and in acquiring due diligence on funded FLP projects.

### 7.2 Procurement:

Procurement of goods and services will follow Louisiana guidelines and federal procurement requirements.

### 7.3 Monitoring and Enforcement Policy:

The following is an overview of the monitoring policies and procedures for conservation easements held by the LDAF and its partners. LDAF may establish more detailed instructions for monitoring and enforcement of conservation easement including forms and procedures. Below is intended to serve as an outline of LDAF's process.

#### 7.3.1 Purpose of Annual Monitoring:

Property held by the LDAF under the FLP can be acquired by donated or purchased conservation easement or a fee simple purchase or donation. Because the FLP conservation easement restricts certain rights of the landowner, the LDAF is obliged to annually monitor the land encumbered with the conservation easement to ensure the FLP provisions in the deed continue to be upheld. The purpose of annual monitoring is to assess the property for any changes that have taken place, particularly any that are not in agreement with the restrictions in conservation easement or the stated conservation purposes.



### 7.3.2 Monitoring schedule:

All conservation easements held by the LDAF should be monitored annually on or before the anniversary date of the filing of the conservation easement. Monitoring should be conducted by the FLP Coordinator, and may be delegated to other LDAF staff, contractors, or partners following LDAF's monitoring protocols. Annual conservation easement monitoring may follow an alternating schedule of utilizing a Landowner Questionnaire (LOQ), remote monitoring using aerial imagery, and a Field Monitoring Report (FMR).

The first one to five years should include an in person site inspection and FMR. At the discretion of LDAF, a LOQ may be used in alternate years if there are no changes to the property, or ownership and no concerns are identified in FMR. Remote monitoring using aerial imagery may be combined with the LOQ and FMR to detect changes to the property. Remote monitoring may also be used in place of the FMR on alternating years.

Given the following conditions, annual conservation easement monitoring is conducted as described below, regardless of the year:

1. In the first year after a new easement or easement amendment is recorded, an in person site inspection and FMR should be conducted in the year immediately following recordation.
2. A site visit should be scheduled for years when LDAF FLP staff determines a response to a LOQ warrants a site visit. In this case, a full FMR is conducted.
3. Easement property has changed ownership since the previous monitoring. A LOQ is sent to the new landowner and an FMR is conducted.
4. A permitted subdivision of the easement Property is exercised, and the parcel is conveyed to a new owner. An LOQ is sent to the new landowner and an FMR is conducted.

The most recent LOQ and FMR should be retained in LDAF's physical files. Electronic copies of all LOQs and FMRs, along with signed follow-up letters and any other associated documentation are retained in LDAF's digital files in perpetuity.

### 7.3.3 Monitoring procedures:

5. **Review documents:** The assigned monitor should review all pertinent materials and become familiar with the property before the annual monitoring visit.

#### Items to be reviewed prior to monitoring:

- Easement Baseline Document Report and any updates

- Past annual monitoring reports that document significant changes
- Multi-Resource Management Plan (which should be updated at least every 10 years)
- Property Survey (if available)
- Conservation Easement Deed (include amendments)
- Pertinent Correspondence

6. **Contact landowner to schedule site visit:** The landowner/representative should be contacted before visiting the property (read the easement for special instructions such as length of notice before the visit). Explain that the purpose of the site visit is for annual easement monitoring and access to the entire property is needed. Properties that are gated may require keys or codes to open locks. The landowner or donor may wish to be present, which can be helpful. Document the date the landowner was contacted in the monitoring report and if the landowner was present.
7. **Conduct the site visit:** The site visit may include aerial photographs, on the ground photos (with georeferenced points) and completion of a written or digital form (developed by LDAF). A written monitoring report that includes the name of the monitor, date of inspection, landowner and location, presence or absence of landowner during the inspection, and the description of the condition of the property and any concerns or violations. Any follow up recommendations should be included and note whether an update to the BDR or MRMP is warranted.
8. **Written Monitoring Report:** A final report should be completed and stored in LDAF's files and submitted to the USDA Forest Service.
9. **Follow up:** For any items noted of concern or violations, the FLP Coordinator should follow up as directed below. Note: if a natural or man-made disturbance on the property occurs, or the property is under new ownership or new owners are added, an in person visit should be scheduled.

### 7.3.4 Conservation Easement Violations and Enforcement:

The main purpose for monitoring visit is compliance with the conservation easement. If something has taken place contrary to the requirements of the easement, then a violation has taken place. The following are procedures for use of the Landowner Questionnaire and Field Monitoring Report:





Upon the property inspection, or reviewing the LOQ or FMR, LDAF staff will determine (one of the following):

1. The landowner is in compliance with easement terms the LDAF staff checks the appropriate line, signs and dates the LOQ or FMR, and makes any necessary notes in the “Comments” section.
2. If it appears the landowner may not be in compliance with easement terms, the LDAF FLP Coordinator determines the need for and type of follow-up, and documents them in the “Comments” section. LDAF staff signs and dates the LOQ or FMR.
3. If it is determined the landowner is not in compliance with easement terms, another visit is necessary to verify non-compliance. LDAF staff arranges for a follow-up site visit with the landowner. On the FMR the staff makes note of the nature of the suspected violation, date of planned site visit, LDAF staff that will be conducting the follow up, and other pertinent information in the “Comments” section.

If it is determined there is a violation of easement terms, LDAF staff, in consultation with the State Forester or his/her representative and the landowner will determine a plan to remedy the situation in accordance with the *National Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines*, and the provisions in the conservation easement and follow up in writing with the easement landowner.

### 7.3.5 Remedy for Conservation Easement Violations:

If a violation is determined to have occurred, LDAF will follow the procedures for violations and remedies for corrective action outlined in the conservation easement. All LDAF conservation easement terms should include details on providing written notice of violations and corrective action. Corrective action involves restoring the property to its condition prior to the violation, or to a condition agreeable to the LDAF in accordance with a written plan approved by LDAF. The deed should also include provisions for resolution of disputes, injunctive relief, emergency enforcement and costs of enforcement.

The monitoring visit is solely to note any possible violations and changes within or to the property. Violations will be dealt with after the monitoring visit is completed and the LDAF FLP Coordinator will determine the next step(s) in dealing with any violations in compliance with the conservation easement deed language and FLP Implementation Guidelines. The landowner should have the opportunity to correct the breach within 30 days of notice of violation or in a reasonable time period agreed upon by the LDAF. If the breach is not corrected, enforcement action may be taken, including but not limited to, legal means.

### 7.3.6 Fee Simple Monitoring (Self-certifying statement)

Fee simple purchases acquired under the FLP are not subject to annual monitoring requirements. Instead, for all FLP fee simple and cost-share tracts, the LDAF must monitor the condition of each tract every 5 years by submitting a self-certifying statement to the USDA Forest Service. The self-certifying statement must identify and document the condition of each fee tract, including changes in title; land conversions to non-forest uses; or uses inconsistent with the purposes of the FLP. If there are deviations from FLP purposes, the statement must describe the actions taken or to be taken to address documented deviations. For any major deviations or violations (activities or uses that are expected to cause substantial negative impact on the property), LDAF should notify the USDA Forest Service to discuss and develop a plan of action.

### 7.3.7 Recordkeeping Policy:

The LDAF FLP will follow the Recordkeeping Policy specified in the current federal *Forest Legacy Implementation Guidelines*. The following is excerpted and adapted for LDAF from the federal guidance.

(section 7.3.7 continues on page 44)



**Table 3- Mandatory and Recommended FLP Documentation for Forest Legacy Acquisition Grants (to be maintained by FLP State Lead)**

| Documents                                                                                        | Conservation Easement | Fee Purchase | Donated Cost Share | Donated Non-Cost Share |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Current landowner info                                                                        | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓                  | ✓                      |
| 2. Original & updates to Baseline Documentation Report                                           | ✓                     |              | ✓ *                | ✓ *                    |
| 3. Recorded acquired interest in land, CE or fee deed                                            | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓                  | ✓                      |
| 4. Title insurance policy                                                                        | ✓                     | ✓            |                    |                        |
| 5. Minerals determination                                                                        | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓ *                | ✓ *                    |
| 6a. Final Yellowbook Appraisal with appraisal instructions and technical appraisal review report | ✓                     | ✓            |                    |                        |
| 6b. For donated tracts, a documented value analysis                                              |                       |              | ✓                  | ✓                      |
| 7. Certification of appraiser and review appraiser qualifications                                | ✓                     | ✓            |                    |                        |
| 8. Current approved Multi-Resource Management Plan and updates at least every 10 years           | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓                  | ✓                      |
| 9. Copy of settlement/closing statement and check or EFT statement                               | ✓                     | ✓            |                    |                        |
| 10. Monitoring Records                                                                           | ✓                     |              |                    |                        |
| 11. Amicable agreement acknowledgment                                                            | ✓                     | ✓            |                    |                        |
| 12. Documentation establishing value of cost-share tracts                                        | ✓                     |              | ✓                  |                        |
| 13. Landowners' willingness to use property as cost share                                        |                       |              | ✓                  |                        |
| 14. Grant documents required by the State                                                        | ✓                     | ✓            |                    |                        |
| 15. Amendments to conservation easements                                                         | ✓                     |              | ✓                  | ✓                      |
| ** 16. Copies of leases, covenants, or other restrictions                                        | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓                  | ✓                      |
| ** 17. Environmental site inspection report                                                      | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓                  | ✓                      |
| ** 18. Documentation of location of transaction/negotiation summary and history                  | ✓                     | ✓            |                    |                        |

**Table 4- State Mandatory and Recommended Program Documentation for FLP Administrative Grants**

| Documents                                                                                                                                                             | Mandatory |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. State's "self-certifying statement" for all fee tracts acquired through the FLP, documenting condition and confirming they have not been converted to another use. | ✓         |
| 2. State FLP program review                                                                                                                                           | ✓         |
| 3. Quality Assurance Inspections and QAI follow up reports                                                                                                            | ✓         |
| 4. State Forest Action Plans, including Assessment of Need incorporated by reference                                                                                  | ✓         |
| 5. FLP-applicable State policies, including enforcement policy, monitoring policy, and recordkeeping policies                                                         | ✓         |
| 6. State policy on FLP, which may include, but is not limited to, FLP promotions and annual solicitation for new FLP projects, and outreach efforts.                  | **        |
| 7. Action plans from FLP program reviews and QAIs.                                                                                                                    | **        |
| 8. Documentation of State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee Meetings.                                                                                         | **        |

CE = Conservation Easement; EFT = Electronic Transfer of Funds \*\* Recommended

### Recordkeeping for Acquisition Grants:

All final documents including due diligence documents, closing statements, maps, surveys, project briefs, monitoring reports, self-certifying statements (for fee tracts), tract information shall be held in perpetuity by the LDAF or its designee in a safe location. Copies of required FLP documents shall be easily accessible for inspection by the USDA Forest Service during its Quality Assurance Inspection (QAI) or FLP Program Reviews. No later than three (3) months after closing a conservation easement of fee simple acquisition, a complete set of required documents shall be in its safe location in digital storage with backup and electronic copies of any outstanding documents forwarded to the USDA Forest Service.

Table 3 includes a list of documentation that the USDA Forest Service mandates or recommends that LDAF maintain.

### Recordkeeping for FLP Administrative Grants and Program Records:

LDAF receives matching grant funds for FLP program administration. All applications, FLP grants, accomplishment reports, monitoring reports, program reviews, QAI reports and follow up action plans, policies (enforcement, monitoring and recordkeeping), documentation of FSCC meetings related to FLP,

the FLP AON and tract information will be collected, recorded and maintained by the LDAF FLP Coordinator in digital storage with offsite back up such as cloud storage in accord with state and federal requirements. Physical copies are no longer required but are acceptable.

### Storage:

Documents should be stored electronically in accordance with state policy and in a manner that ensures data can be accessed using current technology. If physical documents are maintained, they should be stored in a safe location, with originals and copies in separate places. Originals should be protected from fire, flood, and other hazards in a fireproof filing cabinet.





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- D. Public and Stakeholder Input Process
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- F. Forest Legacy Program National Core Criteria
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## Appendix A: List of Figures, Maps & Tables

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# Appendix B: Bibliography and References





## Appendix B: Bibliography and References

### Forest Resource & Land Cover Data

- [USDA Forest Inventory and Analysis \(FIA\)](#) — Forest extent, forest type/composition, and stand-origin trend data (Sections 2.1–2.2)
- [Louisiana Forestry Association](#) — 14.9 million acres / 50% forest land figure (Section 2.1.1)
- [USDA Forest Service — State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet: Louisiana](#) — State forestry program context (Section 3.6, forest management capacity)

### Wildlife, Habitat & Ecoregions

- [USGS Gap Analysis Project \(GAP\)](#) — Terrestrial vertebrate species richness data (Section 2.3.2, Map 4)
- [2025 Louisiana State Wildlife Action Plan \(SWAP\)](#) — SGCN counts, natural communities, forest-dependent species (Table 1, Section 2.3.2)
- [USFWS ECOS — Threatened & Endangered Species Search](#) — Federal listing status for red-cockaded woodpecker, Louisiana pine snake, etc. (Table 1)
- [The Nature Conservancy — Terrestrial Ecoregions dataset](#) — Ecoregion boundaries, ECOMAP framework (Section 2.3.1, Map 3)

### Economic & Demographic Data

- [LSU AgCenter — Economic Contribution of the Forest Industry](#) — \$11 billion / 37,000 jobs / \$2.2 billion labor income figures (Section 2.2.1)
- [LSU AgCenter AgSummary](#) — Parish-level forestry economic impact indicators used in the Appendix C threat-index methodology
- [U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis — Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account](#) — \$10 billion / 60,000 jobs outdoor recreation figures (Section 2.2.3)
- [U.S. Census Bureau — data.census.gov](#) — Population, density, and household income figures (Section 3.1)
- [USDA National Woodland Owner Survey \(NWOS\)](#) — Family forest ownership demographics and parcelization trends (Section 3.3)

### Energy & Renewables

- [U.S. Energy Information Administration — Today in Energy](#) — Solar capacity growth statistics (Section 3.4)
- [Kathleen Babineaux Blanco Public Policy Center \(UL Lafayette\)](#) — Louisiana solar interconnection queue and capacity projections, “Blanco Center, 2025” (Section 3.4)
- [Blanco Center — The Impact of Utility-Scale Solar Power in Louisiana](#) — Full report on solar development economic impact and land use (Section 3.4)
- [USDA ERS — Utility-Scale Solar and Wind Development in Rural Areas: Land Cover Change \(2009–20\)](#) — National data on agricultural land conversion for solar/wind development (Section 3.4)

### Land Ownership & Parcel Data

- [PAD-US \(Protected Areas Database\)](#) — Private/public land ownership and protected acreage data (Map 1; Section 4.2)
- [Regrid — Parcel Data](#) — Parcel-level data source cited alongside PAD-US (Map 1)

**Watershed, Climate & Land-Use Threat Data**

- [USFS Forests to Faucets 2.0](#) — Surface drinking water importance/clean water indices (Section 2.3.3; Appendix C)
- [EPA Integrated Climate and Land Use Scenarios \(ICLUS\)](#) — Projected forest conversion and development-pressure data (Section 3.3; Appendix C)
- [CPRA 2023 Coastal Master Plan — Restoration Impacts on Surge and Risk: Coastal Forests](#) — Storm-surge attenuation modeling for coastal forests (Section 2.3.7, Coastal Resiliency)
- [USFWS/USGS — National Water Summary, Wetland Resources: Louisiana](#) — Wetland extent, cultural significance, and trends background (Sections 2.3.6–2.3.7)
- [Conservation, Protection and Utilization of Louisiana’s Coastal Wetland Forests \(2005\)](#) — Governor’s Science Working Group report on coastal wetland forest ecology and policy (Section 2.3.7)

**Recreation, Historic & Cultural Data**

- [Louisiana’s Traditional Cultures: An Overview \(Louisiana Folklife Program\)](#) — Regional cultural/folklife background for Section 2.3.6 (Cultural and Historic Resources)
- [Louisiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP 2020\)](#) — Statewide outdoor recreation demand/supply data (Section 2.3.4, Recreation)
- [Louisiana Scenic Rivers Program brochure \(LDWF\)](#) — Designated Natural & Scenic Rivers background (Section 2.3.5, Scenic Resources)
- [Louisiana’s Byways \(Explore Louisiana\)](#) — Scenic byway network reference (Section 2.3.5, Scenic Resources)
- [Louisiana Cultural Resources Map \(CRT / Division of Archaeology\)](#) — Statewide archaeological sites, cemeteries, and historic structures GIS (Section 2.3.6)
- [Virtual Louisiana \(GOHSEP geospatial app/map catalog\)](#) — General emergency-response and statewide GIS map/app catalog referenced for supplemental data

**Louisiana Program & Application Resources**

- [Louisiana Forest Action Plan \(FAP\), 2020](#) — Companion statewide plan referenced in Section 1.5
- [LDAF Forest Legacy Program page](#) — Current FLP application and program guidance (document footer; Appendix G)
- [Louisiana State Parks and Recreation Inventory Map](#) — Public recreation lands inventory, linked directly in Section 2.3.4
- [USDA Forest Service — Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines](#) — National Core Criteria and Implementation Guidelines (Sections 6–7; Appendix F)



## Appendix C: Methodology for Identification of FLAs





## Appendix C: Methodology for Identification of FLAs

### Methodology Overview

Proposed Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs) were identified through a statewide screening and prioritization process designed to evaluate both forest resource value and conversion threat across Louisiana's forested landscapes. The analysis utilized parish-level datasets representing ecological, hydrologic, economic, and development-related conditions associated with forest conservation priorities and long-term conversion risk. Forest resource value and conversion threat indicators were evaluated independently and later integrated through a combined prioritization framework to identify landscapes where important forest resources overlap with elevated conversion pressure.

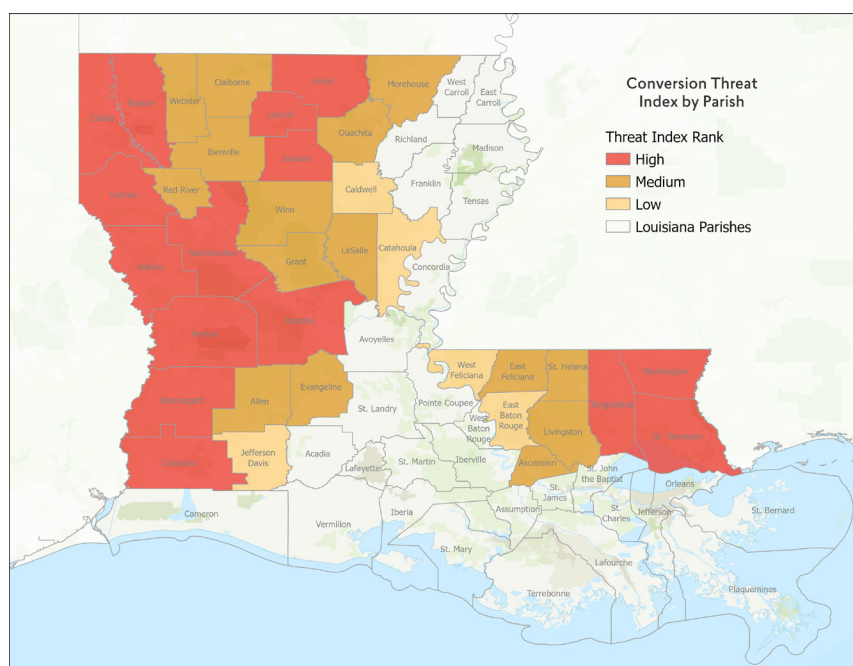
The resulting screening analysis was further refined through stakeholder review and public input to ensure that proposed FLA boundaries reflected both available spatial data and on-the-ground knowledge of Louisiana's forested landscapes. The methodology was intended to support statewide prioritization and eligibility screening rather than parcel-level ranking or site-specific project evaluation.

Parish boundaries were used as the primary unit of analysis for the statewide prioritization framework in order to provide a consistent and scalable method for comparing forest resource values and conversion threats across Louisiana. Many of the datasets utilized in the analysis, including demographic, economic, land use, and agricultural statistics, are commonly summarized and maintained at the parish level, allowing for more consistent integration of statewide indicators. The parish-based framework also provided a practical planning scale for evaluating broad regional trends and communicating results during stakeholder review and public input processes. The use of parish boundaries was not intended to imply that ecological systems or forest conditions conform to political boundaries. Rather, parish-level analysis served as an initial screening tool to identify areas where important forest resources and elevated conversion pressures generally overlap.

### Threat Indicators and Threat Index Assessment

Conversion threat was evaluated at the parish level using a screening-level, multi-indicator approach designed to identify areas experiencing elevated pressure for forest loss or land-use change. Indicators were selected to represent both direct and indirect drivers of forest conversion and were summarized consistently across parishes to support statewide comparison.

Economic pressure on working forests was represented using parish-level forestry economic impact and loss/gain indicators developed for this assessment using LSU AgCenter Annual *AgSummary* Reports from 2005 and 2024. Land-use change threat was represented using a combination of ICLUS projected forest conversion (2000–2030) and the *National Forests to Faucets Assessment* land-use change threat index. A conservative approach was used to ensure elevated risk identified by either dataset was captured while avoiding double-counting similar pressures.



Map 28-Composite Threat Rank by Parish

Population change based on ICLUS projections (2000–2025) was used as a proxy for development and growth-related conversion pressure. Wildfire burn probability was included as a landscape-level stressor that can exacerbate forest degradation and increase vulnerability to conversion in certain regions.

Each indicator was classified into relative low, medium, and high categories using ordinal scoring, and indicator scores were combined to produce a composite conversion threat ranking. The resulting threat classes were used in combination with forest resource value rankings to screen and prioritize areas for Forest Legacy Area consideration.

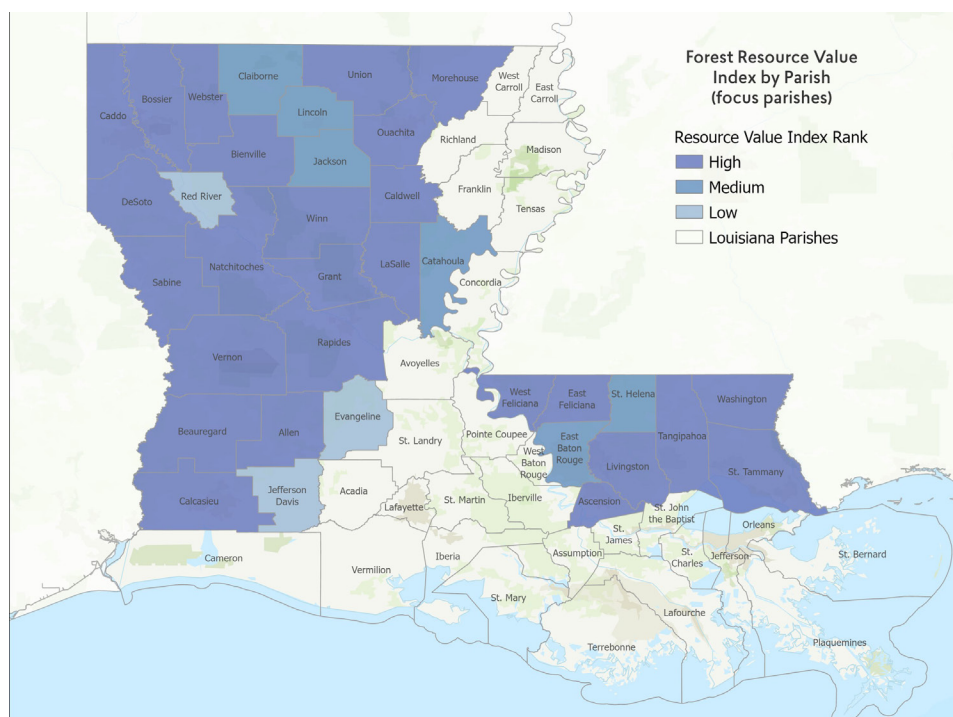


## Forest Resource Indicators and Forest Resource Value Assessment

Forest resource value was evaluated at the parish level using a screening-level set of indicators representing landscape connectivity, drinking water benefits, and biodiversity. Indicators were selected to reflect forest resources that provide important ecological and public benefits at a statewide scale.

Landscape connectivity was represented by the proportion of each parish included within The Nature Conservancy's Resilient and Connected Network, which identifies areas important for long-term ecological connectivity and climate resilience. Drinking water benefits were represented using USFS Forests to Faucets surface drinking water importance and clean water production indices, which were combined into a single water-resource value indicator. Biodiversity value was represented using parish-level threatened and endangered species richness compiled by the LDWF.

Each indicator was classified into relative categories and combined to identify parishes with higher forest resource value. These rankings were used in combination with conversion threat indicators to inform the identification and delineation of proposed FLAs.



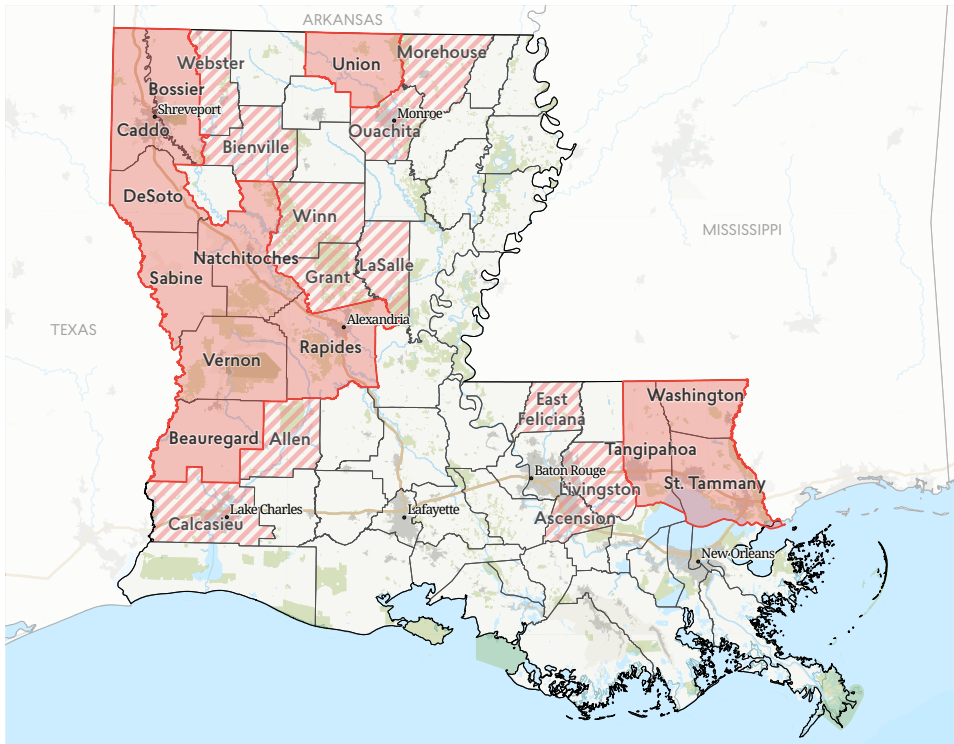
Map 29- Composite Forest Resource Value by Parish

## Prioritization Framework: Threat X Resource Value

FLA prioritization was informed through a combined evaluation of forest resource value and conversion threat. Forest resource value and conversion threat rankings were first developed independently at the parish level using selected indicators representing ecological, hydrologic, economic, and landscape pressures.

These rankings were then integrated using a two-axis screening framework to identify areas where forests both provide important public benefits and face elevated risk of conversion. Core priority areas were defined as parishes exhibiting high conversion threat in combination with high forest resource value. Secondary focus areas included parishes with high conversion threat and medium forest resource value, recognizing that areas of moderate resource value may play a critical role in landscape connectivity, watershed protection, and buffering higher-value forest cores.

This prioritization framework was used to guide the delineation of proposed FLA boundaries. It was intended as a screening and eligibility tool rather than a mechanism to rank individual parcels or parishes or to predict site-specific conservation outcomes.



Map 30 - Initial Prioritization Framework based on Spatial Analysis: Primary and Secondary Focus Areas

## Public Input and Refinement

At the onset of this AON update process, LDAF published requests for public input on FLP in Louisiana. In addition to presenting about the update and requesting public comment at the Louisiana Forestry Association’s annual meeting in August of 2025, LDAF published an online input form for public comment. More detailed information about the public input process can be found in Appendix D. In addition to soliciting public input prior to and through the AON update process, the initial draft FLA boundaries and the associated threat and resource prioritization framework were presented and reviewed during a stakeholder planning workshop held in January of 2026, hosted by LDAF. Participants included representatives from state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, private and industrial forest landowners, forestry organizations, and members of the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (SFSCC). The workshop included review of the spatial analysis methodology, mapped screening outputs, and proposed Forest Legacy Area boundaries through a facilitated small-group planning and discussion process. Stakeholder feedback was used to evaluate whether the screening outputs appropriately reflected on-the-ground forest conditions, development pressures, resource values, and conservation priorities across Louisiana.

Overall, stakeholder feedback strongly supported the general location and configuration of the proposed FLAs while identifying several areas where additional refinement was warranted based on local conditions, landscape connectivity, or pressures not fully captured within available datasets. Most notably, the Florida Parishes FLA was expanded to include Livingston, St. Helena, East Feliciana, and West Feliciana parishes, as well as portions of St. James and St. John the Baptist parishes located north of the Mississippi River. Although the revised boundary remains smaller than the original 2005 FLA, stakeholders identified these parishes as experiencing especially high development and conversion pressure while continuing to retain important forest resources and connectivity functions.

Stakeholder feedback also resulted in the identification of “Priority Zones” within each proposed Forest Legacy Area. These areas generally correspond to parishes exhibiting both high conversion threat and high forest resource value within the statewide prioritization framework. The inclusion of larger FLAs provides flexibility for future conservation projects across broader landscape systems, while the Priority Zones establish a framework for identifying areas of greatest strategic importance should multiple projects compete for limited program resources.





## Appendix D: Public and Stakeholder Input Process



## Appendix D: Public and Stakeholder Input Process

### Overview

Public and stakeholder engagement was an integral component of Louisiana's 2026 Forest Legacy Program (FLP) Assessment of Need (AON) update. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) sought input from a broad range of interests throughout the AON development process — including private and industrial forest landowners, conservation organizations, state and federal agency partners, forestry professionals, and the general public — to ensure that the updated AON reflected current on-the-ground conditions, conservation priorities, and land use pressures across Louisiana's forested landscapes. Input was gathered through two primary mechanisms: an open public comment process and a structured stakeholder planning workshop.

### Public Comment Process

At the onset of the AON update, LDAF published a request for public input on the Forest Legacy Program in Louisiana and the AON update process. To ensure broad awareness and participation, LDAF pursued multiple channels for outreach and comment solicitation:

- **Louisiana Forestry Association Annual Meeting (August 2025).** LDAF staff presented on the AON update process, the FLP's role in Louisiana's conservation framework, and opportunities for public engagement at the Louisiana Forestry Association's annual meeting. Attendees were encouraged to submit comments and share perspectives on forest conservation priorities and threats across the state.
- **Online Public Input Form.** LDAF published an online input form on its website to allow landowners, organizations, and members of the public across Louisiana to submit written comments on FLP priorities, forest resource values, and conversion threats at any time during the AON update process. The online form was designed to be accessible to a broad audience, including individual landowners, rural communities, forestry professionals, and conservation partners who may not have been able to participate in in-person engagement opportunities.

Public comments received through these channels were reviewed and considered during the development of the AON's threat and resource assessments, Forest Legacy Area boundary delineation, and priority conservation objectives.

### Stakeholder Planning Workshop (January 2026)

Following completion of the initial statewide spatial analysis and preliminary FLA boundary delineation, LDAF hosted a stakeholder planning workshop in January 2026 to present and review the analytical methodology and draft FLA boundaries with a diverse group of participants. The workshop was structured to provide a forum for expert review of the spatial screening outputs and to incorporate on-the-ground knowledge and local expertise into the FLA delineation process.

**Workshop participants** included representatives from:

- Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF)
- USDA Forest Service
- State and federal conservation agencies
- Conservation non-governmental organizations
- Private and industrial forest landowners
- Forestry industry organizations
- Universities and research institutions
- Members of the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (SFSCC)



**Workshop format:** The workshop included a presentation of the spatial analysis methodology, mapped screening outputs showing composite threat and resource value rankings by parish, and the preliminary proposed Forest Legacy Area boundaries. Participants then engaged in a facilitated small-group planning and discussion process designed to evaluate whether the screening outputs appropriately reflected on-the-ground forest conditions, development pressures, resource values, and conservation priorities in their regions of the state.

## Outcomes and Boundary Refinements

Stakeholder feedback from the January 2026 workshop strongly supported the general location and configuration of the three proposed FLAs. Participants confirmed that the spatial analysis had appropriately captured major areas of forest resource value and conversion threat across Louisiana. However, several areas of refinement were identified based on local conditions, landscape connectivity considerations, and pressures not fully captured within the available datasets.

The most significant boundary refinement resulting from stakeholder input was the expansion of the Florida Parishes FLA to include Livingston, St. Helena, East Feliciana, and West Feliciana Parishes, as well as portions of St. James and St. John the Baptist Parishes located north of the Mississippi River. Although these parishes did not meet the combined resource and threat threshold used in the initial statewide screening, stakeholders identified them as experiencing especially high development and conversion pressure while retaining important forest resources, connectivity functions, and near-coastal forested landscapes providing storm surge buffering and habitat migration corridors. The revised Florida Parishes FLA boundary remains smaller than the original 2005 FLA boundary but more accurately reflects current conservation priorities and landscape conditions in southeastern Louisiana.

Stakeholder input also resulted in the identification of Priority Zones within each proposed FLA. Priority Zones correspond to parishes exhibiting both high conversion threat and high forest resource value in the statewide prioritization framework, and represent areas of greatest strategic importance for FLP project consideration when multiple projects compete for limited program resources. The inclusion of broader FLA boundaries provides flexibility for future conservation projects across larger landscape systems, while Priority Zones provide a transparent framework for project prioritization.

## Role of the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee

The State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (SFSCC) played a formal advisory role in the AON update process. SFSCC members participated in the January 2026 stakeholder workshop and provided input on the eligibility criteria for FLA designation, the prioritization framework, and the proposed FLA boundaries. The SFSCC's recommendations helped ensure that the updated AON reflects the priorities and perspectives of Louisiana's broad forest conservation and management community.

### We want to hear from you.



- Feedback on geographic focus areas and regional trends.
- Are there any emerging trends or threats that are impacting Louisiana's working forests?
- Are there any studies or data that we should consider in our AON update?

**Use this QR code to access a short form for feedback and input. This form will be open through January 31, 2026.**

Additionally, you can email your input to Sarah Howard at [Showard@conservationfund.org](mailto:Showard@conservationfund.org)

*Figure 18- Louisiana Forestry Association Annual Meeting (August 2025) Presentation Slide requesting input and feedback*





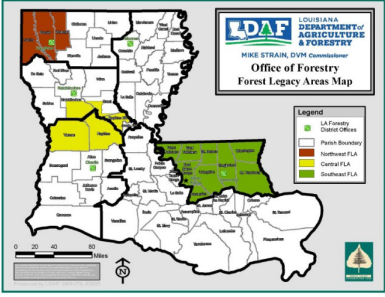
**Public Input Requested for Louisiana's Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need**

Louisiana's Department of Agriculture and Forestry has begun the process to update the State's Assessment of Need, which is the foundational document for operating the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) in Louisiana. The goal of the FLP is to protect threatened forest lands from conversion to non-forest use through purchases for public lands or conservation easements on private lands. LDAF is requesting stakeholder/public input to help guide the update and improve the Forest Legacy program's future operation in Louisiana. Stakeholder comment period will be open until January 31, 2026.

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

**Existing Louisiana Forest Legacy Areas**

You can learn more about Louisiana's Forest Legacy Program here: <https://www.ladaf.gov/land/forestry/forest-legacy-program>



[Next](#)

Never give out your password. [Report abuse](#)

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**Public Input Requested for Louisiana's Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need**

\* Required

**Stakeholder Information and Input**

**1**  
Your Name (Optional)  
Enter your answer

**2**  
Your Organization (Optional)  
Enter your answer

**3**  
Which of these best describes your role as a forestry stakeholder? \*

☐ Landowner (private, corporate, non-profit, other)  
☐ Forest Products or Industry Group  
☐ Conservation or Recreation NGO  
☐ University or Academic Research  
☐ State Agency  
☐ Tribe  
☐ Community/Economic Development/Local Planning Organization  
☐ Consultant  
☐ Other

**4**  
Please share your insights on current trends or threats impacting Louisiana's working forest lands (e.g., development pressure, land use changes, climate impacts, populations shifts). Additionally, we welcome feedback on specific geographic areas or regional trends that should be considered when evaluating potential changes to the existing Forest Legacy Areas. Please recommend any data, studies, or references that we should consider relative to changes in Louisiana's forest cover.  
Enter your answer

**5**  
If you would like to receive updates about the Louisiana Forest Legacy Assessment of Need update process, please enter your email below.  
Please enter an email

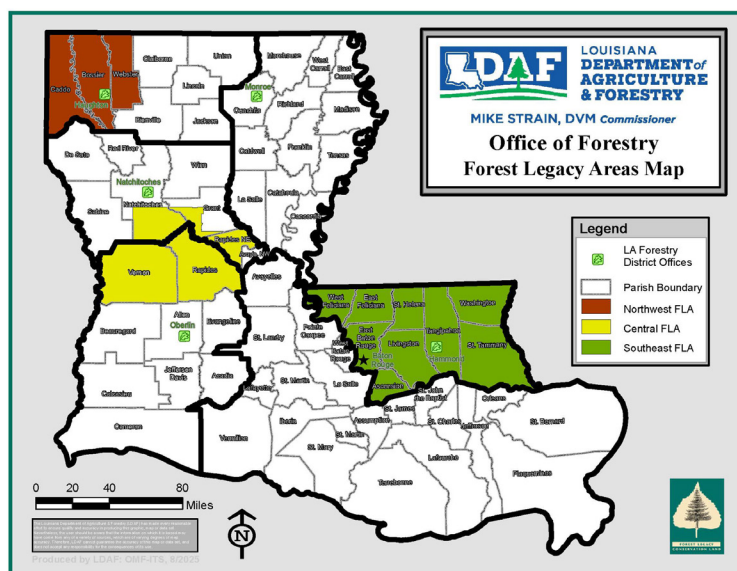
**6**  
If you would like to be contacted about the Louisiana Forest Legacy Assessment of Need update process, please enter your phone number below.  
The value must be a number

[Back](#) [Submit](#)

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Figure 19- Screenshots of online survey for public feedback on Louisiana Forest Legacy

## Input Needed on Louisiana's Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need



Current Louisiana Forest Legacy Areas

**REQUEST FOR INPUT:** Louisiana's Department of Agriculture and Forestry has begun the process to update the State's Assessment of Need, which is the foundational document for operating the Forest Legacy Program in Louisiana. The goal of the FLP is to protect threatened forest lands from conversion to non-forest use through purchases for public lands or conservation easements on private lands. LDAF is requesting stakeholder/public input to help guide the update and improve the Forest Legacy program's future operation in Louisiana. Stakeholder comment period will be open until January 31, 2026. Use the QR code to access a form for your comments and input. Thank you for your help!

Additionally, comments or questions can be sent to Sarah Howard at [SHoward@conservationfund.org](mailto:SHoward@conservationfund.org)

Public Input Requested for  
Louisiana's Forest Legacy Program  
Assessment of Need



Figure 20- Flyer distributed at FLA Annual Meeting (August 2025)

*DRAFT AON-PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD PLACEHOLDER TEXT (to be updated at close of public comment period)*



## Appendix E: Louisiana State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee Members





## Appendix E: Louisiana State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee Members

|                                       |                                                       |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Aucoin, Dennis R.                     | Appt by Gov; Rep Interest in Oper Timberlands         |
| Bosworth, Tyler M.                    | Ex-O; Sec, LDWF or Desig                              |
| Hudson, Michael K.                    | Appt by Gov; Rep Pulp and Paper Mills                 |
| McAllister, Toni McManus              | Appt by Gov; Owner/Exec Mgr Timberland                |
| Ramsey, George E.                     | Appt by Gov; Rep Interest in Reforestation            |
| Rutherford, Douglas A. "Allen", Ph.D. | Ex-O; Dir, LSU Renew Nat Res                          |
| Young, Cade J.                        | Appt by Gov; Rep Interests in Manuf or Treating Poles |



## Appendix F: Forest Legacy Program National Core Criteria



## Appendix F: Forest Legacy Program National Core Criteria

In order to develop a national list of ranked projects, the US Forest Service Forest Legacy Program National Review Panelists will independently consider the *Forest Legacy Program Core Criteria* below and score each project based on its alignment with the **Importance**, **Threatened**, and **Strategic** criteria. The project scores developed from this review will be considered by the National Review Panel in addition to the project's **Readiness**, and other considerations. The following is excerpted from the most current FLP scoring guidance. Note that the national scoring guidance may change from year to year and the most current guidance should be consulted prior to submitting an application.

**Importance** – This criterion focuses on the attributes of the property and the environmental, social, and economic public benefits gained from the protection and management of the property and its resources, now and into the future. This criterion reflects ecological assets as well as the economic and social values conserved by the project and its level of significance. Significance of attributes is demonstrated by the quality, scope, and impact of the attributes, which may be illustrated through (but is not limited to) the following examples:

- Support of Federal Laws (such as Endangered Species Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, or Clean Water Act);
- Contributions to Federal Initiatives or Federal Designations (such as Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Scenic Byways, National Recreation Trails, and National Historic Sites). Note: Discussion about how the project fits within a landscape conservation initiative should be included under the “Strategic” category and not in this section.

**Scoring for Importance** consists of evaluating a project for the attributes below and identifying a point score. More points will be given to projects that demonstrate multiple public benefits of significance.

- *High Importance (21-30 points)* – The project contains a majority of the attributes, and those attributes are high-impact and high-quality, or one or more attributes are exceptionally important.
- *Medium (11-20 points)* – The project contains multiple attributes which are high-impact or high-quality.
- *Low (0-10 points)* – The project contains only a few attributes, or it contains all of them, but they are of limited or marginal impact and quality.

*A project does not need to have all the attributes listed to receive maximum points for this category nor is it an exhaustive list of possible attributes.* More points will be given to projects that exemplify a particular attribute or combination of attributes. The measure is the significance of the attributes discussed, not simply that there is an entry for each attribute.

**Attributes to Consider:** The descriptions listed below represent the ideal project for each attribute. *These attributes are not listed in priority order – applicants may provide this information in the relative order of importance for the proposed project.*

- Economic Benefits from Timber and Potential Forest Productivity – This category includes three independent components: (1) Landowner demonstrates sustainable forest management in accordance with a management plan. Additional points should be given to land that is third party certified (such as Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council, and American Tree Farm System). (2) Forestry activities contribute to the resource-based economy for a community or region. (3) The property contains characteristics (such as highly productive soils) to sustain a productive forest over time.





- Economic Benefits from Non-timber Products and Recreation – Provides non-timber revenue to the local or regional economy through non-timber forest products (maple syrup, pine straw, ginseng collection, etc.); recreation and tourism (local or regional benefits related to lodging, rentals, bikes, boats, outdoor gear, guided tours for fishing, hunting, or birdwatching, etc.); hunting leases; and/or ranching.
- Public Access – Protection of the property will secure existing access, expand access, or establish new access by the public for recreation (including waterfront access); however, restrictions on specific use and location of recreational activities may be allowed. More consideration should be given to projects that expand or provide certainty of public access as a result of the proposed project. Note: Public Access is access provided on a non-discriminatory basis at reasonable times and places but may be limited to protect cultural and natural resources or public health and safety. Access provided to only specific individuals or groups by landowner permission does not count as public access for this purpose.
- Wildlife Habitat: Threatened or Endangered Species – The property has documented threatened or endangered plants and animals or designated habitat. Documented occurrence and use of the project area should be given more consideration in point allocation than if it is habitat without documented occurrence or use. Federally listed species should be given more consideration than state-only listed species when evaluating the significance of this attribute.
- Wildlife Habitat: Fish, Wildlife, Plants, and Unique Forest Communities – The property contains unique forest communities and/or important fish or wildlife habitat as documented by a formal assessment or wildlife conservation plan or strategy developed by a government or a non- governmental organization. Contributions to international initiatives to support and sustain migratory species can be considered here if the property will make a significant contribution, e.g. the target species has been documented to regularly use the property during seasonal migration.
- Water Supply, Aquatic Habitat, and Watershed Protection – (1) The property has a direct relationship with protecting the water supply or watershed, such as providing a buffer to public drinking water supply, containing an aquifer recharge area, or protecting an ecologically important aquatic or marine area, and/or (2) the property contains important riparian area, wetlands, shorelines, river systems, or sensitive watershed lands. When allocating points consider the importance of the resource, the scope and scale of the property, magnitude and intensity of the benefits that will result from protection of the property. Merely being located within an aquifer recharge area or in a water supply area should not be given the same consideration as a property that makes a significant conservation contribution to water, riparian, and aquatic resources and habitats.
- Cultural/Historic – The property contains features of cultural and/or historical significance that are documented by a governmental or a non- governmental organization. A Federal designation should receive greater consideration.
- Tribal – The property provides meaningful benefits to Tribal and other indigenous communities, contains features or resources of cultural significance, and/or utilizes management techniques significant to Tribes (traditional ecological knowledge). Greater consideration should be given to projects that have been developed with active involvement and partnership with a Tribe, or where a Tribal organization has documented the importance of the property for cultural practices, resources, and benefits.
- Scenic – The property is located within a viewshed of a government designated scenic feature or area (such as a trail, river, or highway). Federal designation should be given more consideration than state-only designations when evaluating the significance of this attribute.



**Threatened** – This criterion estimates the likelihood for conversion. More points will be given to projects that demonstrate multiple conditions; however, a project need not have all the conditions listed to receive maximum points for this category.

During the evaluation of a threat, a landowner interested in conserving their land should not be penalized in allocating points because they are not marketing their lands, have not subdivided their land, or sought approval for a subdivision plan. Also, a property with an approved subdivision plan should not, without question, receive a high score in the Threatened section. The attributes outlined below must be considered to determine if the conditions exist to make conversion of a property likely and points should be allocated accordingly.

If the property has been acquired by a third party at the request of and/or with the support of the State, threatened will be evaluated based on the situation prior to the third-party acquisition.

Conversion to non-forest uses can include residential or industrial development, agricultural expansion, installation of wind or solar technology, or other uses that substantially remove or fragment forest cover. This criterion considers the degree of threat and how much of a given parcel would be impacted by the conversion to non-forest uses. Note: Discussion about which project attributes will be threatened if the project is converted should be included under the “Importance” category and not in this section.

**Scoring for Threatened** consists of evaluating a project for the attributes below and identifying a point score.

- *Likely (11-20 points)* – Multiple conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses likely.
- *Possible (1-10 points)* – A few conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses possible.
- *Unlikely (0 points)* – Current conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses unlikely.

**Attributes to Consider:** The descriptions listed below represent the ideal project for each attribute. *These attributes are **not** listed in priority order – applicants may provide this information in the relative order of importance for the proposed project.*

- **Lack of Protection** – The lack of temporary or permanent protections (e.g., current zoning, temporary or permanent easements, moratoriums, and encumbrances that limit subdivision or conversion) that currently exists on the property and the likelihood of the threat of conversion.
- **Land and Landowners Circumstances** – Land and landowner circumstances such as property held in an estate, age of landowner, interest of ownership and stewardship of property by heirs of current landowners is uncertain, property is for sale or has a sale pending, landowner anticipates owning the property for a short duration, landowner has received purchase offers, land has an approved subdivision plan, landowner has sold subdivisions of the property, etc.
- **Adjacent Land Use** – Adjacent land use characteristics such as existing land status, rate of development, growth, and conversion, rate of population growth (percent change), rate of change in ownership, etc.
- **Ability to Develop** – Physical attributes of the property that will facilitate conversion, such as access, buildable ground, zoning, slope, water/sewer, electricity, etc.



**Strategic** – This criterion reflects the project’s relevance or relationship to conservation efforts on a broader perspective considering scale, location, and relative contribution to landscape scale conservation goals.

**Scoring for Strategic** consists of evaluating a project for the attributes below and identifying a point score.

- *High (21-30 points)*–The property makes an exceptional strategic contribution to multiple attributes.
- *Medium (11-20 points)*– The property makes a substantial strategic contribution to one or more of the attributes.
- *Low (0-10 points)*–The property makes a modest strategic contribution to one or more of the attributes.

The submitted project map should support this category and it is important to make sure the text and map are consistent. See Recommendations and Best Practices for the Project Brief Map.

**Attributes to Consider:** The descriptions listed below represent the ideal project for each attribute. *These attributes are **not** listed in priority order– applicants may provide this information in the relative order of importance for the proposed project.*

- Conservation Initiative, Strategy, or Plan – How the project contributes to either an existing or new conservation initiative, strategy, or plan. Describe the relative contribution of the property to achieving the conservation goals of the plan, strategy, or initiative considering scale, location, and project attributes. Conservation plans that have been formally designated by a governmental, tribal, or non-governmental entity should be given more consideration. Contributions to a new strategy or a strategy under development may also be discussed. This can be useful if a project would contribute to, or catalyze, a new conservation initiative, strategy, or plan. For new initiatives, specific goals should be defined and potential contributions of how the project advances those goals should be highlighted.
- Complement Protected Lands – How the project is strategically linked to or enhances already protected lands, including past FLP projects, public lands (Federal, State, or local), or private lands conserved through permanent easements. Provide specifics on how the proposed tracts connect to and maintain landscape-scale benefits, e.g. ecological resilience, wildlife migration, watershed function, and scenic viewshed integrity.
- Other Landscape Scale Goals and Public Benefits – How the project strategically contributes to the advancement of larger scale conservation goals and public benefits.

Examples could include but are not limited to:

- Forest health and resilience;
- Proximity to critical wood products infrastructure;
- Reduced community impacts from wildfire, floods, invasive species;
- Expanded public access; and
- Protection of critical water supplies.

Provide specifics on the project’s contributions to the larger scale goals and benefits.





**Project Readiness:** The State must provide documentation demonstrating completion of each of the below.

- **Draft conservation easement/deed language**, or other comparable documentation, specific to the proposed project that demonstrates landowner and State agreement on easement or fee provisions including the requirements in the *Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines* (see *Section 14 – Conservation Easement Language* or *Section 15 – Fee Simple Purchase Deed Language* for specific examples).
- **Cost share commitment** has been obtained from specified source(s) and documented through funding commitment letters, bargain sale agreement with landowner, etc. Note on Letter of Commitment: Signed letter that indicates the signatory's commitment of resources to the proposed project should federal funds be awarded.
- **A signed option or purchase agreement** is held by the State or at the request of the State **OR** at the request of the State, fee title has been pre-acquired by a third party.
- **Title search** has been completed and reviewed, including identifying any temporary or permanent protections and reviewing whether existing encumbrances impact project eligibility.
- **Minerals rights have been evaluated** through a title search and/or other research **AND** if rights are severed, then a minerals assessment and determination of remoteness has been completed.



## Appendix G: Louisiana Forest Legacy Application



## Appendix G: Louisiana Forest Legacy Application

The following pages contain a sample application for Forest Legacy projects in Louisiana. Note that LDAF may revise its FLP application and deadline from year to year. For the most current version of the FLP application, visit the LDAF Forest Legacy Program page on the LDAF website.

<https://www.ldaf.la.gov/land/forestry/forestry-legacy-program>





## Louisiana Forest Legacy Program Application

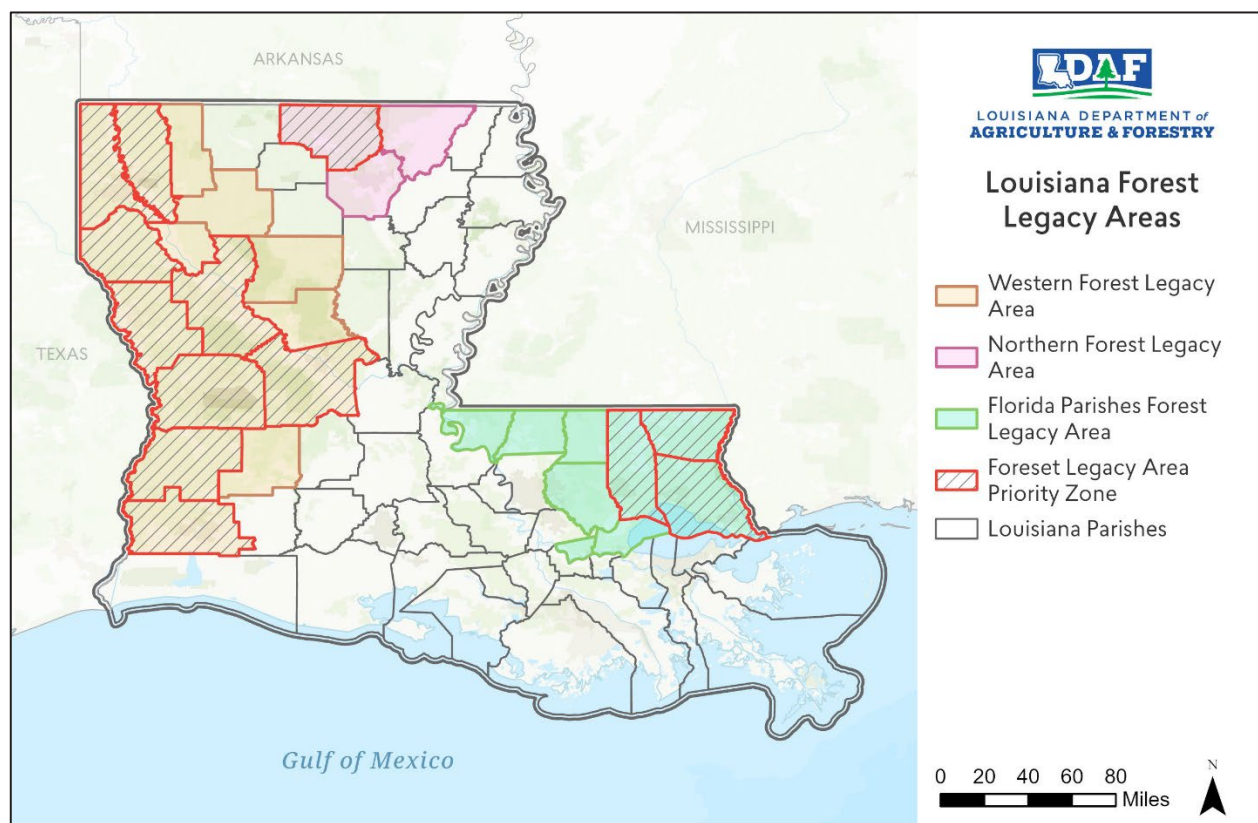
**Application Deadline:** \_\_\_\_\_

***See the last page for application address and LDAF contact information.***

### ABOUT THE FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

The purpose of the Louisiana Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is to identify and protect environmentally important forest areas threatened by conversion to non-forest uses and to promote forestland protection and other conservation opportunities. The U.S. Forest Service provides up to 75% of the funds through a nationally competitive grant program to the state, and the program is managed locally by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF). The FLP collaborates with private landowners to acquire perpetual conservation easements that permanently limit property interests and uses to protect forest values. FLP also purchases and accepts donations of forestland in full fee. The FLP only works with willing sellers or donors.

### Louisiana Forest Legacy Areas (FLAs)



**Western FLA** - Allen, Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Calcasieu, Claiborne, DeSoto, Grant, Natchitoches, Rapides, Red River, Sabine, Vernon, Webster, and Winn Parishes

**Northern FLA** - Morehouse, Ouachita, and Union Parishes

**Florida Parishes FLA**— East Feliciana, Livingston, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington, and West Feliciana Parishes and portions of St. James and St. John the Baptist Parishes north and east of the Mississippi River



Prior to completing this application, you are strongly encouraged to review the current *Louisiana Forest Legacy Assessment of Need within the Louisiana Forest Action Plan* for eligibility requirements and program guidance. Only properties located in one of the designated Louisiana FLAs will be considered and must meet the national and state criteria and must have a **completed application submitted by the deadline**. All easements and interests in land acquired through the program are conveyed in perpetuity and must contain such covenants and language to insure perpetuity of FLP easements. **Participation in is strictly voluntary. For applications to be considered for the next federal fiscal year, the deadline for application is \_\_\_\_\_.**

***All materials submitted with this application become the property of the State of Louisiana and are non-returnable. Disclosure of this information is voluntary. However, failure to provide all of the requested information will substantially decrease the ability of designated persons to carefully review and rank your application and property for participation in the program.***

*LDAF provides equal employment opportunity and services to all individuals regardless of disability, race, age, religion, color, gender, creed, national origin, or political affiliation.*

## INSTRUCTIONS TO FLP APPLICANT

1. Download this Microsoft Word™ document; answer all questions completely and save it to submit with attachments. Please submit the application as a Word™ document in 11-point font, single spaced.
2. Answer all questions in all sections completely.
3. Attach all applicable supporting documents, photos, maps, deeds, etc. to this application.
4. **Submit this completed application and all attachments to the LDAF no later than 5 p.m. the deadline day, via mail, hand delivery or digitally. No faxes will be accepted**
5. **For assistance, and address to submit your application and attachments:**  
Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry  
Attn: **Forest Legacy Coordinator**  
LDAF Forestry Program Director, Forest Health & Stewardship  
225-925-4500  
5825 Florida Blvd. Suite 6000  
Baton Rouge, LA 70806  
[forestry@ldaf.state.la.us](mailto:forestry@ldaf.state.la.us)
6. **Checklist of Attachments: Attach one (1) clean copy the following items to this application for each contiguous parcel nominated:**
  - a. Application: Completed application.
  - b. Owners: Name(s), address(es), phone number and email of all owners of record for this tract(s) and the exact listing(s) of ownership name.
  - c. Location: Central latitude and longitude, parish, and map indicating location of property in the parish or parishes where located.
  - d. Copy of plat or survey map (*if available*) showing property boundary and boundary of nominated parcel(s). (You may email a GIS shape file as well).
  - e. Aerial photo with boundaries of nominated parcel(s) marked (*if available*).



- f. Deed(s): Copy of all deed(s) showing current ownership. If a title opinion is available, please submit it.
- g. Improvements: List of existing permanent improvements on the tract, including houses, barns, lakes, ponds, dams, wells, roads and other structures and the total number of acres occupied by improvements.
- h. Map identifying any dams, dumps, or waste disposal sites on the property (if any).
- i. Forest Stewardship Plan: (Multi Resource Management Plan or Forest Management Plan) *if available*.
- j. Appraisal, market analysis or broker's price opinion, or documentation of the market value of the property (*if available*).
- k. A list of people, organizations, elected officials, or agencies that support the protection of the property. (If the property is submitted for FLP consideration they will be asked for a letter of support).

### SECTION I. APPLICANT INFORMATION

1. **LANDOWNER'S LEGAL FULL NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **FULL MAILING ADDRESS (STREET OR P.O. BOX, CITY, STATE, ZIP):**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. **DAYTIME PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_
4. **CELL PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_
5. **FAX NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_
6. **E-MAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_
7. **LIST ALL CO-OWNERS OF THE PROPERTY (AND THEIR ADDRESS, EMAIL, AND PHONE NUMBER OR ATTACH A LIST):**
8. **AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE (IF DIFFERENT THAN THE LANDOWNER):** *If applicable, please list name, full mailing address, phone, e-mail for persons authorized to represent you on this application.*



**SECTION II. PROPERTY INFORMATION****1. LOCATION OF PROPOSED TRACT OR MULTIPLE TRACTS:**

Parish(es): \_\_\_\_\_

Central GPS Point(s) (latitude and longitude): \_\_\_\_\_

Township: Range: Section(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Tax Parcel #s \_\_\_\_\_

**2. PROPERTY SIZE:**

Total property acres of nominated tract(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Total forested acres of nominated tract(s): \_\_\_\_\_

How much of the total acres above are you nominating to the Forest Legacy Program in this application? \_\_\_\_\_

**3. CONSERVATION EASEMENT OR SALE? ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BEING CONSIDERED FOR: (mark one or both)**☐ A conservation easement, or☐ Selling all or a portion of the property.☐ Unsure**4. IS ANY OF THIS ACREAGE ENROLLED IN THE AMERICAN TREE FARM SYSTEM, SFI, A THIRD-PARTY FOREST CERTIFICATION OR OTHER FOREST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM? If so, please list the program(s) and acres covered.****5. DO YOU HAVE A WRITTEN FOREST STEWARDSHIP OR MANAGEMENT PLAN? If so, please attach a copy of it.**☐ Yes☐ No**6. HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING WITH A FORESTER, LAND MANAGER OR BIOLOGIST WHO COULD PROVIDE TECHNICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PROPERTY? If so, may we contact him/her? Please provide the full name and a daytime phone number and e-mail.**

**SECTION III. LANDOWNER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:**

1. **DESCRIBE YOUR LONG-TERM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE NOMINATED PROPERTY.** *Please share with us why the property is important to you and any unique aspects. What would you like to see happen to this property in the future?*
2. **LANDOWNER SELF EVALUATION:** *Prioritize in order the following reasons why your property should be enrolled in the Forest Legacy Program (1-most important to 10-least important).*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Prevent conversion/development/fragmentation of an important forest resource
- \_\_\_\_\_ Protection of scenic resources
- \_\_\_\_\_ Protect/enhance a watershed or important drinking water supply
- \_\_\_\_\_ Protect/enhance an important riparian/hydrologic area
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide linkage between public properties, protected areas and greenways
- \_\_\_\_\_ Protect/enhance/restore fish and/or wildlife habitat
- \_\_\_\_\_ Protect/enhance/restore habitat of rare, threatened, and/or endangered species, plant and/or animals
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide for the continuation of traditional forest uses (timber supply, recreation)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Climate resilience/flood or storm hazard protection
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide historical/cultural uniqueness or protection
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION IV. HOW YOUR PROPERTY FITS INTO THE NATIONAL FLP CORE CRITERIA**

Nominated properties must compete nationally for FLP funds. They will be scored using three (3) national core criteria (**Importance, Threatened and Strategic**) AND must demonstrate they are “**Ready**” to be part of the Forest Legacy Program. Please describe how your property relates to the national core criteria by answering each question below.

1. **WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR PROPERTY AS IT RELATES TO ANY ECONOMIC, CONSERVATION, ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL OR ECONOMIC PUBLIC BENEFITS THAT WOULD BE GAINED BY PROTECTING AND MANAGING IT?**

**Importance Score: 0 – 30 points** \_\_\_\_\_

***Helpful hints** – Describe in detail any attributes that are applicable to your property. More points will be given to projects that demonstrate multiple public benefits with national significance. Use the attribute prompts below to help you provide information on the importance of your property. Include any links, references, plans or other details to explain your answers. Please address all attributes applicable to your property in a narrative below each question. Not all attributes may apply to your property:*

**1.1 Economic Benefits from Timber and Potential Forest Productivity** – This criterion includes three independent components:

- (1) Landowner demonstrates sustainable forest management in accordance with a management plan. Additional points are given to land that is third party certified (e.g. Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council, American Tree Farm System, etc.).
- (2) Forestry activities contribute to the resource-based economy for a community or region. Please explain how.
- (3) The property contains characteristics (such as highly productive soils) to sustain a productive forest over time. Include the site index of soils on your property.

**1.2 Economic Benefits from Non-timber Products and Recreation**– Does your property provide non-timber revenue to the local or regional economy through non-timber forest products (e.g., pine straw, native plant collection, etc.); recreation and tourism (local or regional benefits related to lodging, rentals, bikes, boats, outdoor gear, guided tours for fishing, hunting, or birdwatching, etc.); hunting leases; and/or ranching?

**1.3 Public Access** – Does protection of the property maintain or establish new/expanded access by the public for recreation (including waterfront access)? Explain.

*Note: Restrictions on specific use and location of recreational activities may be allowed. More consideration will be given to projects that expand or provide certainty of public access as a result of the proposed project.*





**1.4 Wildlife Habitat: Threatened or Endangered Species Habitat** – Does your property have documented threatened or endangered plants and animals or designated habitat? Documented occurrence and use of the project is given more consideration than if it is habitat without documented occurrence or use. Federally listed species are given more consideration than state-only listed species. Please list species.

**1.5 Wildlife Habitat: Fish, Wildlife, Plants, and Unique Forest Communities** – Does the property contain unique forest communities and/or important fish or wildlife habitat documented by a formal assessment or wildlife conservation plan or strategy developed by a government or a non-governmental organization? Please provide species, community types and reference plans or assessments. Note: The importance of habitat to an international initiative to support and sustain migratory species can be considered if conserving the property will make a significant contribution.

**1.6 Water Supply, Aquatic Habitat, and Watershed Protection** – Does the property:

(1) Have a direct relationship with protecting the water supply or watershed, such as providing a buffer to public drinking water supply, containing an aquifer recharge area, or protecting an ecologically important aquatic or marine area? and/or (2) Contain an important riparian area, wetlands, shorelines, river systems, or sensitive watershed lands?

*Note: Consider the importance of the resource, the scope and scale of the property, magnitude and intensity of the benefits that will result from protection of the property. Merely being located within an aquifer recharge area or in a water supply area will not be given the same consideration as a property that makes a significant conservation contribution to water, riparian, and aquatic resources and habitats.*

**1.7 Cultural/ Historic** – Does the property contain features of cultural and/or historical significance that are documented by a governmental, or a non- governmental organization? Explain.

*Note: Federal designation will receive greater consideration.*

**1.8 Tribal** – Does the property provide meaningful benefits to Tribal or other indigenous communities, contain features or resources of cultural significance, and/or utilize management techniques significant to Tribes (traditional ecological knowledge)? Explain.

*Note: Greater consideration is given to projects that have been developed with active involvement and partnership with a Tribe, or where a Tribal organization has documented the importance for cultural practices, resources, and benefits.*

**1.9 Scenic** – Is the property in a viewshed of a government designated scenic feature or area (such as a trail, river, byway, or highway)? Explain.

*Note: Federal designation will be given more consideration than state-only designations.*

**1.10 Forest Resilience, Adaptation to Climate Change\*** – Will protection result in benefits related to increased resilience or adaptation of forests to climate change, or carbon sequestration?



*Note: Many of the elements in **Importance** relate to resilience and adaptation. For example, forest productivity, health, rare or unique plant communities where species range is discussed, and water resources. Landscape scale conservation and its impacts on forest health and resilience/adaptation are also discussed in **Strategic**. Carbon sequestration and management are important impacts of the FLP program and of land conservation. The potential long term carbon management contributions may be best viewed as optimizing carbon sequestration among the host of values and services from conserved forest rather than a focus on maximization of carbon within a limited span of time. Sustainable carbon management results from effective conservation and management of ecosystems; maintaining, restoring and enhancing health and productivity.*

**2. EXPLAIN HOW YOUR PROPERTY IS THREATENED BY CONVERSION TO OTHER, NON-FOREST USES. *Helpful Hints: This criterion estimates the likelihood for conversion. Please address the following:***

**Threatened Score: 0 – 20 points** \_\_\_\_\_

**2.1 Lack of Protection** – Describe the lack of temporary or permanent protections (e.g., current zoning, temporary or permanent easements, moratoriums, and encumbrances that limit subdivision or conversion) that currently exists on the property and the likelihood of the threat of conversion to non-forest use (residential, commercial or industrial development, agricultural, energy or mining, solar, etc.).

**2.2 Land and Landowners Circumstances** – Describe the land and landowner circumstances (e.g., property held in an estate, age of landowner, interest of ownership and stewardship of property by heirs of current landowners is uncertain, property is for sale or sale pending, landowner anticipates owning the property for a short duration, landowner has received purchase offers, land has an approved subdivision plan, landowner has sold subdivisions of the property, etc.).

**2.3 Adjacent Land Use** – Describe adjacent land use characteristics such as existing land status, rate of development (e.g., statistics on recent and projected growth in the parish and region), growth, and conversion in the immediate area, rate of population growth (percent change in the parish) and projections, rate of change in ownership, etc. These attributes are great to illustrate on a map too.

**2.4 Ability to Develop** – Describe physical attributes that will facilitate conversion, such as access, buildable ground, zoning, slope, water/sewer, electricity, permits, etc. Other types of conversion include agricultural expansion, wind or solar farms, or other uses that substantially remove or fragment forest cover.



**3. HOW IS THE PROPERTY STRATEGICALLY LINKED TO OTHER PROTECTED AREAS NEARBY?** *Helpful Hints: This criterion reflects the project's relevance or relationship to conservation efforts on a broader perspective considering scale, location, and relative contribution to landscape scale conservation goals. Discuss the following three attributes:*

**Strategic Score: 0 – 30 points** \_\_\_\_\_

**3.1 Conservation Initiative, Strategy, or Plan** – How does the project contribute to an existing or new conservation initiative, strategy, or plan? Describe the relative contribution of protecting the property to achieving the conservation goals of the plan, strategy, or initiative considering scale, location, and proposed project attributes. Conservation plans that have been formally designated by a governmental, tribal, or non-governmental entity should be given more consideration. Contributions to a new strategy or a strategy under development may also be discussed. This can be useful if a project would contribute to, or catalyze, a new conservation initiative, strategy, or plan. For new initiatives specific goals should be defined, and potential contributions of how the project advances those goals should be highlighted.

**3.2 Complement Protected Lands** – How is the project is strategically linked to or enhances already protected lands including past Forest Legacy Program projects in Louisiana, already protected Federal, State, local public lands or non-governmental organization lands (refuges, parks, national or state forests, military lands, private lands conserved through permanent easements, wildlife management areas, parkways, municipal parks, greenspaces), or other Federal land protection programs (REPI, NRCS, NAWCA, NOAA, etc.)? Provide specifics on how the proposed tracts connect to and maintain landscape-scale benefits such as ecological resilience, wildlife migration, watershed function and scenic viewshed integrity.

**3.3 Other Landscape Scale Goals and Public Benefits** – How does the project strategically contribute to the advancement of larger scale conservation goals and public benefits? Examples could include but are not limited to forest health and resilience, proximity to critical wood products infrastructure, reduced community impacts from wildfire, floods, invasive species, expanded public access, expanded public access, and protection of critical water supplies. Provide specifics on the project's contributions to the larger scale goals and benefits.



**4. IS THE PROPERTY “READY” TO BE A PART OF THE FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM? Helpful Hint: Please indicate the items that are available and attach them to this application. These are not required to complete the application but will be needed if LDAF elects to submit your property for funding through FLP.**

**4.1 Do you have a recent appraisal of the property, a broker’s price opinion, or some other supporting documentation of the value of the property such as a comparative market analysis? If so, please attach.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

**4.2 Do you have a recent title search or title commitment? If so, please attach.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

**4.3 Do you have a written forest stewardship plan or property management plan? If so, please attach.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

**4.4 Do you have a survey of the property? If so, please attach.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

**4.5 Do you have a legal description of the property? If so, please attach.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

**4.6 Do you own the surface rights?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Not sure

**4.7 Do you own the subsurface mineral rights?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Not sure

#### SECTION V. OTHER COMMENTS

**ADD ANY OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT YOUR FOREST LEGACY APPLICATION OR THE UNIQUENESS OF YOUR PROPERTY.**





## SECTION VI. Confidential Financial Information and Ownership Information

***The following financial, deed and lien information shall remain confidential until such time as:***

- 1) the application has been approved and all transactions are concluded, or***
- 2) all title holders give written permission to release the information.***

### 1. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

*The following estimates are for preliminary use only. Any final offer for conservation easement or fee simple purchase cannot exceed fair market value, as determined by an appraisal meeting the 2016 Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisition (known as Yellowbook Standards).*

- a. **What is the estimated total value of this property?** \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- b. **How was this value determined:** (e.g., appraisal, market analysis, landowner's personal estimate, broker's price opinion, please provide a copy with this application if available: \_\_\_\_\_)
- c. **Are you willing to donate part or all of the appraised value?** (Applies to either conservation easement or fee simple title). Note: FLP grants require a minimum 25% non-federal match.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No      \_\_\_\_\_ Not sure  
 If yes, what percent value would you be willing to donate? \_\_\_\_%
- d. **State the value of any other contribution you or a partner may make to help make this project successful, either in donated value of in-kind services or financial.** For example: Cash or in kind donations such as land value or conservation easement value of grant or match tracts, management plan, legal and title work, appraisal, survey, minerals remoteness letter, survey, or the value any potential partners may make (please list partners and contribution). Note: Donations may constitute a charitable contribution for income tax purposes, depending on applicable Internal Revenue Service guidelines and regulations.

### 2. LIENS AND ENCUMBRANCES

*Please attach a copy of all deeds for your property, any title searches, and list any and all liens and encumbrances on the property. Examples: Mortgages, conservation easements, utility easements, public rights of way, water flow or water use restrictions, septic systems or water easements, deeded ingress/egress, deed restrictions or covenants, mineral extraction rights (gas, oil, coal, sand and gravel, stone, etc.), tax liens, dump sites, underground fuel tanks, other environmental hazards, active enrollment in government programs (such as USDA conservation programs), selling of carbon credits, etc.*



## SECTION VII. PRELIMINARY IDENTIFICATION OF RIGHTS TO BE RETAINED AND SOLD (CONSERVATION EASEMENTS ONLY)

**CAREFULLY AND FULLY COMPLETE IF YOU WANT TO BE CONSIDERED FOR A CONSERVATION EASEMENT. IF YOU ARE OFFERING YOUR PROPERTY FOR FEE TITLE ACQUISITION, SKIP THIS SECTION VII. The information you provide will directly affect the desirability of your property for the Forest Legacy Program.** If you are considering a conservation easement, indicate which uses, rights or interests you may wish to **keep (K)** and which uses or interests you may wish to **sell (S)** as part of the conservation easement. If you are unsure, mark **U** and if not applicable, mark **NA**. Note: Checking **sell** or **keep** does not commit you to anything at this time, it merely assists LDAF when inspecting, prioritizing and evaluating your parcel.

**K = Keep, S = Sell, U = Unsure, NA = Not applicable to your property**

- ☐ Commercial, residential or industrial development
- ☐ The right to manage and harvest timber under an approved forest stewardship plan
- ☐ The right to subdivide the property
- ☐ The right to hunt, fish or trap (commercial)
- ☐ The right to hunt, fish or trap (non-commercial/private only)
- ☐ Mining for sand/gravel (or other minerals)\*
- ☐ Right to limit or control public access to your property
- ☐ The right to graze open areas (acres \_\_\_\_\_)
- ☐ The right to farm open areas for profit (acres \_\_\_\_\_)
- ☐ The right to build or rebuild roads (other than forest management/protection roads)
- ☐ Ownership of existing buildings and other improvements.
- ☐ Other recreational activities such as camping, hiking, cycling, horseback riding.
- ☐ Motorized access
- ☐ Expansion of existing improvements (buildings)
- ☐ Others? Please specify below in Comment box.

\* Retention of unrestricted mineral or oil/gas rights will exclude that portion or all of your property from consideration in the Louisiana FLP.

**Other Comments:**



## SECTION VIII. LANDOWNER TESTIMONY AND PERMISSION

***Please read, sign and date before submitting this application.***

*The information in this application is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I, as the landowner or landowner's authorized representative (proof of authorization must accompany the application), agree to allow any needed inspection, appraisal and survey of the property being offered for consideration under the Louisiana Forest Legacy Program. I agree to allow members of the LDAF, the Louisiana Forest Legacy Coordinator or their designee to inspect my property at any reasonable time for the purposes of this application. I understand I shall be notified in advance of all inspection visits.*

*I also understand that the resource values identified by me in this application for protection will be used by the LDAF to rank the proposal. Therefore, future protection and management of these resources are implied in the application and will be required in the easement (if applicable) and subsequent management plans. Substantial modifications of the intent set forth in this application by me or my representative will necessitate a review of the project and may jeopardize its selection and possible funding. I also understand that this property (i.e., conservation easement or fee simple title) will not be purchased if negotiations do not reach an amicable agreement, or if the property does not meet the needs or qualifications of the Louisiana Forest Legacy Program or if funding is unavailable. I understand that conservation easements or fee simple title will only be purchased from willing sellers.*

*I have read the application and understand that all Forest Legacy projects will be reviewed by the LDAF for their suitability to the Louisiana Forest Legacy Program. Furthermore, the Forest Legacy Program agreement is voluntary and subject to the availability of funds and the willingness of the State of Louisiana to accept the easement as negotiated.*

**Print name of each title holder**

**Signature**

**Date**

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***Mail or Email completed application to:***

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry

Attn: **Forest Legacy Coordinator**

5825 Florida Blvd. Suite 6000

Baton Rouge, LA 70806

[www.ldaf.la.gov/forestry](http://www.ldaf.la.gov/forestry)

[forestry@ldaf.state.la.us](mailto:forestry@ldaf.state.la.us)

225-925-4500