

FOREST VIABILITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In **Phase I**, landowners will be identified to participate in this program based on responses to an application. Approved landowner participants will then work with a technical team of consultants comprised of environmental, economic, and marketing consultants with special knowledge of forest-based business to develop a focused Forest Viability Enhancement Plan. A participant's Forest Viability Enhancement Plan will suggest ways for the forest landowner to increase the economic return from the forest-based business through ecologically sustainable methods such as more efficient production of specialty products, niche marketing, direct marketing, value-added initiatives, eco-tourism, and improved management practices. Completed Forest Viability Enhancement Plans will be submitted to DCR for approval.

In return for the development of a Forest Viability Enhancement Plan, a participating landowner must commit to a Phase I, 7-year agreement with the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The agreement will require that the entire property from which the forest-based business is derived (excluding existing developed envelopes or other uses designated in the approved Forest Viability Enhancement Plan) be managed under a Forest Stewardship Plan by long-term forest management principles. These agreements will be intended to ensure the continued flow of ecosystem services and public benefits from these forests including: clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, scenic landscapes, forest products, recreational opportunities, carbon sequestration, and a continued agricultural tradition to the Commonwealth. In addition, these properties and the forest products produced therein will add benefit to the local economy.

In **Phase II**, landowners with an DCR approved Forest Viability Enhancement Plan will then be considered for funding to implement specific portions of the Plan. Implementation contracts will be executed directly between DCR and the selected landowner. In addition to implementation funding for mutually agreed upon items identified in the Plan, the implementation contract will require the landowner to convey, at no cost to the landowner and prior to release of the implementation award funds, to the Department of Conservation and Recreation a 20-year covenant, with the benefit of G.L. c. 184, s.32, on the entire property from which the forest-based business is derived (excluding existing developed envelopes or other uses designated in the approved Forest Viability Enhancement Plan).. Implementation awards are not to exceed \$20,000 per Plan or \$250 per acre, whichever is less.

Criteria for Selection: Phase I and Phase II evaluation criteria for the Forest Viability Enhancement Program shall include the following:

- Degree of threat to the continuation of long-term forest management due to factors such as financial stability, urban encroachment, or management changes that may negatively impact continuing forestry activity.
- Degree to which the project would accomplish environmental objectives, such as: the protection of ecological integrity of the forest, water resources or floodplains; preservation of open space; aesthetic amenities; or fostering development of biomass energy sources.
- Number of acres placed in the program
- Number of years and type of forestry and business experience of the applicant and/or co-applicants
- Likelihood of success
- The suitability and productivity of the forest to provide for the proposed activity
- Appropriateness of the project to act as a model for others

Landowner Eligibility: Eligible landowners include non-industrial, private landowners currently engaged in a forest-based business that own forestland managed under a Forest Stewardship Plan or who are willing to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan within 1 year of being selected to participate in Phase I

of the program. Landowners that are not currently engaged in a forest-based business may be eligible if they can demonstrate a proficient knowledge and experience of their proposed forest-based business.

Forest landowners may apply to the Forest Viability Enhancement Program under any one or a combination of the **three business categories** below:

Traditional Forest Products: Development of a Forest Viability Enhancement Plan to achieve greater economic return through the marketing, processing, and sale of traditional forest products such as saw logs, cordwood, and pulp.

Non-Traditional Forest Products: Development of a Forest Viability Enhancement Plan to grow, produce, or make non-traditional forest products including: medicinal and nutraceutical plants (ginseng, witch-hazel, and slippery elm bark) food products (maple syrup, mushrooms, and nuts) decorative and handicraft products (wreaths, greens, landscaping plants, basket splints, birch bark or other wood/vine products) or rustic furniture

Recreation and Wildlife: Development of a Forest Viability Enhancement Plan to achieve economic return based on recreational and wildlife activities including: cross-country ski/hiking trails, wildlife viewing, and environmental education.

Only landowners with a DCR approved Forest Viability Enhancement Plan will be eligible for implementation funding.

Instructions for Submission of Responses: The Forest Viability Enhancement Program application shall request the following information from respondents for phase I:

- A description of the current activities carried out on the property from which the forest-based business is derived including: current business practices and products, timber sales, improvement work, recreational trails, wildlife habitat improvements and educational programs;
- A description indicating the plans for keeping the property from which the forest-based business is derived in active forest management;
- Evidence of a current forest management plan which meets the minimum requirements of the Forest Stewardship Program plan ;
- On separate pages: 1) A map of the landowner's entire property on a United States Geological Survey (USGS) Topographic Map showing the outline of the property. 2) A site map of the portion of the property from which the forest-based business is derived. ;
- Permission for the Review Team to conduct a field inspection of the land from which the forest-based business is derived.

Funding for Plan Implementation Phase II:

Upon DCR approval of a landowner's Forest Viability Enhancement Plan, the landowner may submit a request for implementation funding. An implementation funding request should include:

- a.) A prioritized list of specific items from the Forest Viability Enhancement Plan recommendations that the landowner would like to implement;
- b.) The cost of each item proposed; and
- c.) A specific date by which each proposed item would be implemented.

It is DCR's responsibility to pay the landowner for implementing the Forest Viability Enhancement Plan.