USDA Forest Service Land Acquisition Proposal

# Agency: U.S. Forest Service Fiscal Year 2023

**Project/Unit:** National Forest or Grassland/Wilderness/W&S River Etc.

Priority: WO will fill

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Proposed for FY 2022 | | |
| **Interest** | **Acres** | **Cost** |
| Fee | Fee acres proposed | Costs proposed |
| Easement | Easement acres proposed | Easement costs proposed |
| Other |  |  |
| Acquired to Date | | |
| Protected | Acres acquired over life of project | Acquisition costs over life of project |
| In Process | | |
| In Process | Acres currently being acquired | $$ for acres currently being acquired |
|  | Remaining |  |
| Remaining | Acres remaining for acquisition | Cost for remaining acquisition |

# State(s) and

State(s) and Congressional District(s)

**Congressional** Example AZ-1, NM-2, MT-at large

# District:

**Location:**

Please provide a general description of the location of tracts. If possible, provide context so that reader can understand location relative to nearby towns, population centers or important features, such as highways or other roads.

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# Type of Project:

State the type of project: single acquisition; phased acquisition (identify which phase); or on-going project. All types of projects must disclose if there is an appraisal and purchase option between the FS and landowner or conservation partner.

For all proposed tracts, please:

* + - -List each tract by priority order
    - -Include the name of each tract, the acreage, cost, Forest Service unit and Congressional District
    - -Indicate if the stated cost is based on an UASFLA (Yellowbook) appraisal or an estimate
    - -Indicate if there is a signed purchase option between the FS and landowner or partner; or if a partner has an option with the landowner
    - **For projects over $4 million, please state if the project can be phased over multiple years and if so, which tracts would be acquired in which year and what the proposed dollar is for each year.**

**Scoring Criteria** For each criterion that requires a written narrative, information should include how the tract(s) proposed for acquisition reflect Congressional Direction, Administration priorities, and the Forest Service Chief’s Priorities as described in the FY2023 Core Criteria and Guidance document.

**1.) Recreation / Recreational Access:** Up to 20 points for recreational value plus up to 5 additional points based on the Social Vulnerability Index Score where the project is located. Please include the Social Vulnerability Index score for the county where the project is located. If it is a 4 or 5 based on the Social Vulnerability Index spreadsheet at [For Criteria 1 Recreation Social Vulnerability Index Scores by County](For%20Criteria%201%20Recreation_Social%20Vulnerability%20Index%20Scores%20by%20County) , add the appropriate point score (4 or 5) to the recreational value score. If the project has tracts located in more than one county, please provide the score for each tract; total the scores for all tracts and divide by the number of tracts. If that average score is from 4 to 5, please add that to the recreational value score.

This criterion evaluates the degree to which the acquisition creates or enhances opportunities for recreation, and access to recreation on National Forests and Grasslands.

* More points will be awarded to acquisitions that provide significantly new or improved recreational opportunities in support of Congressional, Administration, and Forest Service goals and objectives. Please describe the recreational opportunities provided, who the users will be, and the degree of added capacity for increased visitor use.
* Would this acquisition address recreational access needs included in the Region’s response to Sec. 4106 of the Dingell Act identifying areas available for recreation that had no (or significantly restricted) public access? These areas can be found in the Forest Service report at [John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act | US Forest Service (usda.gov)](https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/lands-and-realty-management/dingell-cmra) These projects will be strongly considered.

**2.) Watershed Protection / Climate Resilience** - up to 15 points. (See additional factors to consider in the FY2023 Core Criteria Guidance document. Not every factor needs to be addressed individually, but if some apply to the specific nominated parcel, would be helpful to describe how.)

Resilience refers to a system’s ability to return to its former condition after a disturbance (like climate change). The Forest Service’s Watershed Condition Framework provides a nationally consistent, science-based approach to evaluate watershed conditions and apply integrated improvement and restoration techniques based on local characteristics. This criterion can be quantified in terms of degree of importance a specific tract will contribute to larger stated watershed protection and restoration goals. Acquisitions can protect high functioning watersheds, or, provide needed opportunities to restore impaired watersheds. Support for acquisitions should be described in terms of how a particular tract fits in with Forest Service watershed management goals once the tract is acquired, and not the condition of the parcel while in private, State, or other ownership.

* Award points based on the degree to which acquisitions contribute to climate resilience and watershed improvement, protection, or restoration. More points could be given to parcels complementing or integrated with other Agency watershed restoration projects.
* Understanding that connecting and restoring watersheds and protecting diverse habitats equate to protections against climate change, what other data or information supports this acquisition as one that is important to meet Forest Service goals with respect to building resilient ecosystems that can more readily adapt and mitigate conditions brought on by climate change?
* More points will be awarded to tracts that support Administration and Forest Service objectives regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation, ecological restoration and resiliency, and support for local economies.

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# 3.) Threatened and Endangered Species (Forced Ranking):

Please list each tract and indicate the presence or absence of species with special designation or vital ecosystem function in a table format as in the sample below. Please indicate the status of each species by putting (E) after the name for Endangered, (T) after the name for Threatened, (P) after the name for Proposed, please consult the 2023 National Scoring Guidance for information. Maximum points for this criterion are 15. If tract(s) score more than 15, do not award additional points beyond the 15-point maximum.

**Sample Table:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Tract | 4 points (Endangered/  Critical Habitat for Endangered) | 3 points (Threatened/  Critical Habitat for Threatened) | 2 points (Proposed/  Critical Habitat for Proposed) | 1 point (RFSS, SCC or candidate species) | 1 point (Supports direct Vital Ecosystem Function for Federally Listed Species) | Total Points |
| Tract 1 | Species 1 (E) | Species 1 (T) | Species 1 (P) |  | 1 |  |
| Tract 2 | Species 2 (E) | Species 2 (T) | Species 2 (P) |  |  |  |
| Total | 8 | 6 | 2 |  | 1 | Would be 17, but maximum score is 15, so project gets 15 points. |

# 4.) Tract Location (Forced Ranking):

* 15 points: Inside Congressionally or Presidentially Designated Area.
* 10 points: Area with special designation by NFS Plan.
* 5 points: Inside NFS boundaries.
* 5 points: Tracts have no special designation but are vital to the integrity of an area with a special designation. Tract
* 0 Points. Outside NFS boundaries-excludes National Historic and Scenic Trails

If there are multiple tracts, add up points for each tract to determine total number of points, and divide that total by the number of tracts to create an average point score for the project

# 5.) Connecting Communities/Partner Support (Up to 15 points):

This criterion evaluates a project based on the degree of public support for the acquisition. The focus is on partnerships and community support and involvement. Does the acquisition help the Forest Service work in partnership with the local community (particularly underserved communities such as Tribal areas), and provide a benefit? Example: acquisitions that support gateway community planning, locally used trail systems, youth education. How is the acquisition part of an effort by the Forest Service to add value to the community? Who are the partners and supporters? Why is this support important? If the proposal is forwarded to the National Panel, proponents are strongly encouraged to submit letters of support to supplement the nomination, particularly support from locally elected officials, Tribes, members of Congress, adjoining landowners, and community members. Are there current support letters from local groups and elected officials? Provide updated copies of the support letters with the proposal, as they will not be accepted after the submission deadline.

* More points will be awarded to projects that clearly demonstrate that the acquisition provides an economic benefit for the local community or helps deliver a needed service to the community.

# 6.) Regional Ranking (Up to 15 points):

In this section please explain the rationale for how Regional Ranking points were awarded. Regions may choose to award points based on specific Regional goals and circumstances not captured by other criteria in the application. Points should be awarded based on importance to Land and Water Conservation Fund purposes and Congressional, Administration, and/or Forest Service goals not captured by the other criteria listed here that speak to the significance of the proposed project. Points should not be used to bring lower-ranking project scores up to match the scores of higher-ranked projects.

# 7.) Operation and Maintenance (not scored):

How does the acquisition improve the ability of the acquiring unit to perform its work and deliver benefits to the public with greater efficiency and lower costs? Or does the acquisition incur costs? Is the cost outweighed by a longer-term benefit? Please try to describe how the acquisition makes a net positive contribution to operation and maintenance measured in terms of verifiable cost savings or other quantifiable efficiencies.

# Urgency of Acquisition (15 Points, National Panel Score)

# Please provide narrative information on the urgency of the acquisition and its readiness, based on the FY2023 Core Criteria and Guidance.

# Threats to the Integrity of the Land (forced ranking, up to 15 points)

Many forests have significantly fragmented ownership within the forest boundary which is difficult for forest management. See criteria and guidance for scoring of checkerboard lands and units with less than 2/3 publicly owned land.

1. **Even Geographic distribution (Up to 10 points, National Panel score)**

No narrative required. Panel will consider geographic distribution of projects once all projects are ranked.

# Additional Information: Optional

This sheet can be used to include any additional information for any of the criteria.