



**CAL FIRE-California Climate Investments
California Forest Legacy Program
Project Scoring Guidance
October 2018**



Introduction:

This document provides guidance to the review panel on how to score individual California Forest Legacy Program (FLP) projects.

Scoring 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. Significance of attributes is demonstrated by the quality and scope of the attributes. More points will be given to projects that exemplify a particular attribute or combination of attributes.

Projects are scored on the following criteria:

Importance-	30 points max
Threatened-	20 points max
Strategic-	30 points max
Readiness-	6 points max
Project Location -	7 points max
Matching Funds-	7 points max
Total	100 points

Criteria:

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. This criterion reflects the ecological assets as well as the economic and social values conserved by the project and its level of significance.

A project that solidly represents a majority of the attributes outlined is viewed as significant because of its strong alignment with the purposes and value to the Forest Legacy Program. A project need not have all the attributes listed to receive maximum points for this category, but projects that contain more attributes will receive a higher score. A project brief that discusses the majority or all the attributes, but demonstrates only limited importance for each attribute, will not receive maximum or perhaps even medium ranking.

- *High importance* (21-30 points) - The project contains a majority of the attributes and those attributes are very significant and of high-quality.
- *Medium* (11-20 points) - The project contains a majority of attributes, several of which are very significant and of high-quality.
- *Low* (0-10 points) - The project contains only a few attributes or it could contain all of them, but does so in a limited, marginal, or tertiary way.

**Please note: Discussion about how the project fits within a landscape conservation initiative can also be included under the "strategic" category.

Attributes to consider: The descriptions listed below represent the ideal project for each attribute. *Note that the attributes are not listed in priority order.*

- A. *Economic Benefits from Timber and Potential Forest Productivity* - This category includes two 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.
- B. The property contains characteristics (such as highly productive soils) to sustain a productive forest.
- C. *Economic Benefits from Non-Timber Products* - Provides non-timber revenue to the local or regional economy through activities such as hunting leases, ranching, non-timber forest products, guided tours (fishing, hunting, birdwatching, etc.), and recreation and tourism (lodging, rentals, bikes, boats, outdoor gear, etc.).
- D. *Threatened or Endangered Species Habitat* - The site has documented threatened or endangered plants and animals or designated habitat. Documented occurrence and use of the property will be given more consideration in point allocation than if it is habitat without documented occurrence or use. Federal or State listed species occurrences should provide more consideration when evaluating the significance of this attribute.
- E. *Fish, Wildlife, Plants, and Unique Forest Communities* - The site 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. The importance of habitat to an international initiative to support and sustain migratory species can be viewed as important if conserving the property will make a significant contribution. The mere occasional use of the property or a modest contribution to an international initiative does not raise the property to a high level of importance.
- F. *Water Supply, Aquatic Habitat, and Watershed Protection* - (1) 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, salmonid habitat or sensitive watershed lands. When allocating points consider the importance of the resource, the scope and scale of the property, and the 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.
- G. *Public Access* - Protection of the property will maintain or establish access by the public for recreation; however, restrictions on specific use and location of recreational activities may exist.
- H. *Scenic* - The site is located within a viewshed of a government designated scenic feature or area (such as a trail, river, or highway). Federal and State designation will be given more consideration when evaluating the significance of this attribute.

- I. *Historic/Cultural/Tribal* - The site contains features of historical, cultural, and/or tribal significance, formally documented by a government or a non-governmental organization.

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 will not be penalized because they are not marketing their land, have not subdivided their land, or sought approval for a subdivision plan. Also, a property with an approved subdivision plan will 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 will be allocated accordingly.

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

- *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; or
- *Unlikely* (0 points) - Current conditions exist that make conversion to non-forest uses unlikely.

**Please note: Discussion about what project attributes will be threatened if the project is converted can also be included under the "importance" category.

Attributes to consider: The descriptions listed below represent the ideal project for each attribute. *Note that the attributes are not listed in priority order.*

- A. *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.
- B. *Land and Landowners Circumstances* - Land and landowner circumstances such as property held in an estate, aging landowner, future property by heirs is uncertain, property is for sale or has a sale pending, landowner anticipates owning property for a short duration, landowner has received purchase offers, land has an approved subdivision plan, landowner has sold subdivisions of the property, etc.
- C. *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.
- D. *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. When evaluating strategic, four considerations should be made: 1) the scale of a conservation initiative, strategy, or plan; 2) the scale of the project's contribution to that initiative, strategy, or plan; 3) the placement of the parcel within the area of the initiative, strategy, or plan; and 4) how the project complements protected lands.

- *High* (21-30 points) - The property significantly advances a conservation initiative, strategy, or plan and complements protected lands.
- *Average* (11-20 points) - The property makes a modest contribution to a conservation initiative, strategy, or plan and is near already protected lands.
- *Low* (0-10 points) - The property is not part of a conservation initiative, strategy, or plan or near already protected lands, but will lead to locally-focused conservation effort.

**Please note: The submitted project map should support this category and it is important to make sure the application text and map are consistent.

Attributes to consider: The descriptions listed represent the ideal project for each attribute.

Note that the attributes are not listed in priority order.

- Conservation Initiative, Strategy, or Plan* - How the project fits within a larger conservation plan, strategy, or initiative as designated by either a government or non-governmental entity.
- Complement Protected Lands* - How the project is strategically linked to enhance already protected lands including past FLP projects, already protected Federal, State, or non-governmental organization lands, or other Federal land protection programs (NRCS, NOAA, etc.).
- Anchor point for future initiatives*- Does the land represent a potential for a future initiative for protection or is in a region that represents a unique landscape type?

Project Location

Additional scoring is available to California Forest Legacy Program projects that are proposed in locations where Forest Legacy projects are not well represented or established. These are areas of the state that may have high population pressure, rare forest types, exist in isolated regions, or have other values that are not usually considered for their conservation value.

The Forest Legacy program acknowledges that the program scoring criteria includes points for strategic value which benefits already established regional efforts. The program also seeks to encourage and support the creation of new landscape level conservation strategies by offering a scoring advantage to those projects that may serve as an anchor point for future conservation of forested landscapes. Projects can gain up to 7 additional points if they meet both criteria.

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| 3 points | Projects that exist in regions where Forest Legacy Program conservation efforts are not established or well represented, and where establishing projects that serve as anchor points for future conservation is important to the Forest Legacy Program. |
| 4 points | Projects that exist in the above regions, where a large-scale conservation effort is planned, of which the project in the application is a part. If a project meets this criterion, it will also be awarded the 3 points for the regional location from above for a total of 7 points. |

Matching Funds

The Forest Legacy Program seeks to encourage projects to increase the level of matching funding by offering a scoring criterion for increased matching funding. To receive these points, the matching funds must be secured and applications must include the award letters from other funding agencies/entities. Also, applications with landowner donations must include a signed letter from the landowner stating the amount of donation. A total of 7 points is available to projects that meet both criteria.

- 3 points Projects that include a match of at least 25% of the value of the easement. This can include secured funding from outside entities, and/or landowner donation.
- 4 points Projects that include a match of at least 50% of the value of the easement. This can include secured funding from outside entities, and/or landowner donation. If a project meets this criterion, it will also be awarded the 3 points for the 25% match, for a total of 7 points.

Project Readiness – This criterion is defined as the degree of due diligence completed. To demonstrate project readiness, completed items need to be specified (including completion date) in the application and credit will only be given to those items completed (one point for each completed item, with a maximum of 6 points. Projects with multiple tracts will need to have the majority of their tracts have the task completed before a point is given.):

- Documented support for the cost estimate, such as completed market analysis or preliminary appraisal.
- Cost Share commitment has been obtained from a specified source.
- A signed option or purchase and sales agreement is held by the State or at the request of the State **OR** At the request of the State, conservation easement or fee title is held by a third party.
- Title search is completed, including identifying any temporary or permanent protections.
- Minerals determination is completed.
- For conservation easement properties, a stewardship plan or multi-resource management plan is completed.