

ENHANCED FUELS MANAGEMENT **AMERICAN RECOVERY & REINVESTMENT ACT**

2009 Manual



Administered and funded cooperatively by:

**The Georgia Forestry Commission &
The USDA U.S. Forest Service**

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Enhanced Fuels Management Incentive Payment Program



The purpose of this incentive payment program is to create jobs, stimulate the economy, and help landowners promote a wildfire resilient landscape surrounding the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. This will be accomplished by implementing wildfire mitigation practices such as prescribed burning, pre-suppression firebreak installation & maintenance, establishment of fire tolerant species (Longleaf Pine), chemical fuel reduction treatments, mechanical fuel reduction treatments, creation of forest openings (safety zones), helicopter dipsite maintenance and new construction, agriculture conversions, wetland restoration, and preparedness functions. These management practices will allow for low cost options for suppressing future wildfires in the area and preclude related community disasters.

Technical assistance will be provided to landowners by GFC foresters or technicians who will take applications, evaluate the site, and then determine the steps the landowner should take to expect successful results (brief management plan). The forester will inspect the area once the practice is completed to determine if the management plan was successfully implemented, and authorize release of incentive payment.

Some general guidelines for this program are:

- Eligible Practices (as identified in the Greater Okefenokee Forest Management Options Manual):
 - Site preparation and establishment of Longleaf Pine
 - Chemical Fuel Reduction
 - Mechanical Fuel Reduction
 - Prescribe Burning
 - Pre-Suppression Firebreak Installation & Maintenance
 - Silvopasture Development
 - Agriculture Conversion
 - Creation of openings/safety zones
 - Helicopter Dipsite Maintenance & New Construction
 - Wetland Restoration (Cypress & Bottomland Hardwood Establishment)
- Applicant must own the property or have authority to carry out practice (such as Power of Attorney or a controlling interest in the ownership).
- Landowner must sign an application to officially apply for incentive payment and return to GFC project forester. Landowner must also fill out a Federal W-9 withholding form also.
- A Brief Plan will be developed by a GFC forester or technician.
- Program is open to private, industry, and other forest landowners who intend to engage in silviculture activities over the next ten years on lands enrolled under the EFM project.
- Eligible acreages are those found within one-mile of Okefenokee Swamp's Edge Break and the landowner must own a minimum of 10 continuous acres of forest land.
- Landowners must hire Georgia based contractors/vendors to complete practices to be eligible for reimbursement. This means that an officially recognized work address for a person or business must be within the State of Georgia. A company could be incorporated elsewhere but have an operational office located in Georgia and still qualify. Work completed by individual landowners or their own companies are not eligible for reimbursement.
- Practices installed before the landowner receives written approval and a brief management plan are not eligible for reimbursement.
- All practices must comply with Georgia's Best Management Practices for Forestry.
- Primary application period will be 08/10/2009 through 09/01/2009. If all first round applications are funded a continual application period will begin on 09/02/2009 and continue until all funds are awarded.
- Limited Resource Landowners and acreages in close proximity to Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas will receive priority during the primary application period. Landowners who wish to apply as limited resource candidates should fill out the form below, sign and notarize. This form should be turned in with the application to the project Forester.

EFM PRACTICES & GUIDELINES:

1. Site preparation practices are to facilitate the establishment of a fire tolerant species (Longleaf Pine Only). Containerized or Bare-root Longleaf Pine seedlings may be established. Tree row orientation should be designed to run parallel to swamp's edge break and parallel along forestry access roads. Landowners that establish an average tree per acre count of ≈ 519 trees per acre (at time of performance evaluation) will receive a higher incentive payment. Light site preparation includes chemical site preparation treatments only. To qualify for heavy site preparation reimbursement rate, landowner must conduct both mechanical and chemical site preparation practices to include root raking/spot pile, drum chopping or harrowing, bedding, and broadcast herbicide application. Post-planting herbaceous release treatments (if needed) are also eligible for reimbursement.
2. Chemical treatments may be used "in-stands" for understory management to lower the volatility of forest fuels, facilitate pine straw harvest operations, or as a mid-rotation release. Chemical applications should be made using ground equipment. Specific chemical and rate recommendations will be set forth in the Brief Management Plan and/or in consultation with an herbicide product representative, Certified Quality Vegetation Management Specialist, or Georgia Certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator. Chemical treatments will be considered successful by the GFC project Forester providing that at least 60 percent of the existing vegetation is suppressed or controlled (60% fuel load reduction). Landowner must allow time for dieback of vegetation before requesting a performance evaluation.
3. Mechanical treatments include industrial harrowing (ex. Rome, Fesco, or Terrariser, harrows with a width of at least 8' and at least 26" disks pulled with a skidder or crawler), drum chopping, woods mowing (pull-behind mowers), pre-commercial thinning (non-commercial thinning by combination of mechanical and manual methods to achieve a target tree per acre count of 400-600), light harrowing (ex. light and medium duty harrows with disks less than 26" pulled behind a farm tractor), and commercial thinning (must thin to a average basal area ≈ 60 ft²/acre, harvest two consecutive tree rows every 1,000 feet, and take out a tree row on each side/immediately adjacent to existing forest roads). Landowners who agree to thin to an average basal area ≈ 50 ft²/acre and take out tree rows as described above will be eligible for a higher incentive payment.
4. Prescribe burning may be used in fuel reduction objectives as well as site preparation/land-clearing. The GFC project Forester will provide general prescribe burn recommendations in the Brief Management Plan. However, the landowner or his/her private contractor will be responsible for developing a written prescribe burn plan and providing a copy to the GFC for file. The "prescribe burning" rate includes firebreaks.
5. Pre-suppression firebreak installation and maintenance practices have a 10-hour maximum per landowner per year. Contractors must use ≈ 90 horse-power crawler

tractor or skidder to install pre-suppression firebreaks. The “pre-suppression firebreak by contractor” reimbursement rate is for firebreaks only as a single practice.

6. Silvopasture Development requires thinning to a target basal area of ≈ 50 ft²/acre and establishment of Native Warm Season Grasses (NWSG) or approved pasture graze. Mechanical or chemical site preparation practices, prescribe burning, light harrowing, or woods mowing may be used in silvopasture development.
7. Agriculture conversion practices such as cultivating traditional row crops or blueberries breaks up continuity of forest fuels. Mechanical or chemical site preparation practices, prescribe burning, light harrowing, or woods mowing may be used to facilitate agriculture conversions. Landowner must consult with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service to determine crop suitability and coordinate with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service for permits (if applicable).
8. The creation of new openings or maintenance of existing openings may be accomplished using a combination of mechanical or chemical site preparation practices prescribe burning, light harrowing, or woods mowing. This practice has a 5 acre minimum. Openings may be left bare or planted with NWSG’s and/or forbs (traditional “food-plot” crops are not included). NWSG’s or forbs must be established to receive the NWSG/forb reimbursement rate (otherwise only individual practices that are implemented to create bare ground are reimbursable).
9. Helicopter dipsite maintenance and new construction must occur in a manner that meets or exceeds the Greater Okefenokee Association of Landowners (GOAL) dipsite maintenance guidelines (helicopter approach and departure clearances, safe road access, and safety zone clearances). New construction sites must also meet recommended excavation dimensions and comply with all applicable permits (consult with USDA NRCS). To review GOAL dipsite guidelines refer to the *Greater Okefenokee Forest Management Options: A Forest Planning Manual for Wildfire Mitigation* <http://www.gfc.state.ga.us/Recovery/EnhancedFuelsMgt/documents/GreaterOkefenokeeAreaManagementOptionsAForestPlanningManualforWildfireMitigation.pdf>.
10. Wetland Restoration practices include the closure or “filling-in” of drainage ditches and planting of cypress and/or native bottomland hardwood species such as gum, bay, or ash. This practice has a 5 acre minimum. Landowner must successfully establish 200 to 300 trees per acre.

GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION

Self-Determination Tool for Limited Resource Status

The purpose of this tool is to ensure that GFC programs are administered in a way that enables limited resource producers to maintain and develop economic viability in farm operations. This tool is only meant to help producers determine if they qualify as a Limited Resource Farmer, Rancher, or Forest Owner by providing the county value necessary to qualify.

A Limited Resource Producer has the following characteristics:

- (a) A person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than \$155,200 in each of the last two years, and
 - (b) Has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.
- An entity or joint operation can be a Limited Resource Producer if all individual members qualify as a Limited Resource Producer.

(Please complete the following information to determine eligibility)

County: _____

1.) In each of the last two years, is your direct or indirect **Gross Farm Sales** less than or equal to \$155,200 per year? _____ **Yes** _____ **No**

2.) In each of the last two years, was your **Total Household Income** less than \$ 21,200.00? _____ **Yes** _____ **No**

SIGNATURE (Landowner)

DATE

WITNESS

DATE

NOTARY

DATE

See website: <http://www.lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/tool.asp>
to determine eligibility for a given county of residence