



From: Sean Brogan, Forest Management Branch Head, North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS)
To: NCFS Staff; Consulting Foresters; NC Forestry Community and Landowners
Re: Forest Development Program's (FDP) New 5-Acre Minimum Threshold
Date: 3/30/2012

Effective July 1, 2012, the [Forest Development Program](#) (FDP) costshare program will have a five (5) acre minimum eligibility threshold. The following bullet points address issues related to this change:

- Up to this point, the effective minimum acreage threshold for FDP program participation has been one acre.
- Some members of Forest Industry, who are currently the only financial contributors to the FDP, questioned this low threshold. This was both in terms of program administration efficiency as well as doubts on the extent of commercial timber production occurring on tracts as small as one acre. Discussions occurred between 2010 and 2012, with a variety of thresholds considered. The other thresholds commonly discussed were 10 and 20 acres.
- A number of previous costshare programs have had minimum acreage thresholds of five or ten acres, so this new eligibility level is not unprecedented.
- **In order for a landowner to receive an FDP costshare payment, completed acreage for an approved FDP practice must measure out (in accordance with approved NCFS procedures) to be at least 4.5 acres or greater, since that is the lowest number that would round up to 5 acres.**
- If NCFS field staff, consulting foresters, landowners, etc. have doubts whether a specific tract contains at least 4.5 acres of work to be done, **the area in question could/should be pre-measured** by NCFS staff. NCFS Policy and Procedure #4221 ("Acreage Determination and Documentation") addresses the pre-measurement of certain tracts in Section 4221.6 ("Pre-Measurements"). This document is available through any NCFS office. The current version of this Policy and Procedure will be updated in the coming months to reflect that NCFS pre-measurements may be appropriate when dealing with tracts that may or may not meet NCFS costshare program minimum acreage thresholds. This will not be restricted to any particular forestry activity (ex. planting or herbicide work).
The NCFS Policy and Procedure relating to the Forest Development Program (#4910) will also be updated in the future to reflect this change in the minimum acreage threshold.
- If an FDP application is submitted where at least 4.5 acres of tree planting is accomplished, but less than 4.5 acres were site prepared, costshare may still be paid out on both the site prep and tree planting. In this instance, the fact that some of the area may not have needed site preparation will not negate the fact that at least 4.5 acres of tree planting was done.

- If a tract meets the required minimum acreage specifications and is approved for FDP costshare, but then “extenuating circumstances” alter the amount of work completed, it will be up to the NCFS “Assistant Regional Forester-Forest Management” to make a recommendation to NCFS Central Office Staff whether or not that costshare should be paid out. An example of this might be if at least 5 acres of site preparation and planting were approved for costshare, but ultimately less than 4.5 acres of tree planting occurred due to excessive wetness on the tract at the time the work was carried out.
- Another common scenario: a tract with at least 4.5 acres of work is approved for 5 acres of FDP costshare. Immediately adjacent to that tract, there is some sort of “divider” (ex. road, power line, stream), then there is another tract owned by the same landowner that has less than 4.5 acres of work that must be done. In that example, the smaller parcel may be signed up and potentially approved for FDP costshare if it is on the same FDP application as the “larger” tract on the other side of the “divide”. This could also apply to scenarios where cutover areas bordered fields needing planting, and at least one of them had 4.5 acres worth of work to carry out.
The reasoning behind allowing costshare approval in this scenario is that 1. It is not causing any administrative program inefficiencies (the paperwork was already being submitted and processed for the “larger” tract) and 2. The combination of the “smaller” and “large” tract acreages together often increase the likelihood that forestry work (ex. thinning, harvests) could likely be accomplished.
- All FDP application requests for tracts under this five acre threshold will be honored if they are received in the NCFS Central Raleigh Office of Linda Liles, FDP Program Administrator **prior** to July 1, 2012. FDP applications for less than this 5-acre minimum which are received on and after July 1, 2012 will **not** be funded.
- Questions on FDP issues may be directed to 1. [Local NCFS offices](#); 2. Linda Liles, FDP Program Administrator (919-857-4832) or 3. Sean Brogan (919-857-4818)