



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Information Collection: State Forest Law and Policy

AGENCY: Forest Service, Agriculture (USDA).

ACTION: Notice; request for comment.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Forest Service is seeking comments from all interested individuals and organizations on a new information collection request (ICR), State Forest Law and Policy (OMB 0596-NEW). This collection will obtain information regarding how States and U.S. Territories regulate and incentivize forest management on private and State lands.

DATES: Comments must be received in writing on or before **[INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]** to be assured of consideration. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

ADDRESSES: Comments concerning this notice should be addressed to Gregory Frey, Research Forester, USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station, 3041 East Cornwallis Rd., Durham, NC 27713. Comments also may be submitted by e-mail to gregory.e.frey@usda.gov. Please include “Comments re: “State Forest Law and Policy” in the subject line.

Comments submitted in response to this notice may be made available to the public through relevant websites and upon request. For this reason, please do not include in your comments information of a confidential nature, such as sensitive personal information or proprietary information. If you send an e-mail comment, your e-mail address will be automatically captured and included as part

of the comment that is placed in the public docket and made available on the internet. Please note that responses to this public comment request containing any routine notice about the confidentiality of the communication will be treated as public comments that may be made available to the public notwithstanding the inclusion of the routine notice.

The public may request an electronic copy of the draft supporting statement and/or any comments received be sent via return e-mail. Requests should be e-mailed to *gregory.e.frey@usda.gov*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gregory Frey, Research Forester, USDA Forest Service, by phone at 919-549-4025, or by e-mail at *gregory.e.frey@usda.gov*.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may call 711 to reach the Telecommunications Relay Service then provide the phone number of the person named as a point of contact for further information.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: State Forest Law and Policy

OMB Number: 0596-NEW

Expiration Date of Approval: N/A

Type of Request: New information collection

Abstract:

This new collection will address how States and U.S. Territories regulate and incentivize forest management on private and state lands. Congress has authorized the USDA Forest Service to collect and generate information including about how laws, public policies, regulations, and other factors influence and affect the use, ownership, and management of forest lands.

Legislation authorizing the development and dissemination of such science-based information includes the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, and the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Research Act of 1978. Further, the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 directs the Forest Service to coordinate and work cooperatively with state agencies, and such coordination and cooperation may be facilitated by having a greater understanding of the state-level policy context for forestry. Also, the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 directs agencies to evaluate how agency programs, policies, and regulations contribute to agency missions, and understanding state-level programs, policies, and regulations can provide information relevant to this goal. The information proposed to be collected under this approval contributes to USDA Forest Service mission and strategic goals, including to sustain our Nation's forests.

Information will be collected on various topics, organized as "Modules," which are planned to be re-collected on multi-year cycles.

Modules include:

- (1) State financial incentive payment programs for private forests
- (2) State regulation of forest management and timber harvests, including Forest Practices Acts, rules, and voluntary practices
- (3) Resilient forest management policies and practices

We will collect information from knowledgeable individuals at State or Territory forestry or natural resource agencies; State or Territory tax agencies; State or Territory Cooperative Extension services, or related organizations. These individuals will be identified through contacts and correspondence with State or Territory Foresters or their representatives.

This information is valuable for a number of purposes:

- (1) As a basic dataset for researchers to evaluate the impact of policies.
- (2) For forest users and managers to understand what is allowed in their State or Territory and opportunities to enhance productivity, economic returns, and provision of ecosystem services.
- (3) For policymakers to understand how policies and programs differ from State to State.
- (4) For the USDA Forest Service to generate a baseline of information and periodic monitoring updates for national and international reporting considerations.

Notably, some of this information is available by reading State statutory and administrative codes (laws and regulations). However, interpretation and implementation can be variable by State or laws and regulations can interact, which can lead people to misconstrue how forests are regulated, incentivized, and managed in practice. Knowledgeable in-state contacts can help verify researchers' interpretations or help identify and synthesize information from multiple sources in the state. Furthermore, considerations other than the law itself can impact how policies and programs work in practice. For example, a program might be authorized by a law but not funded through appropriations. Finally, various important aspects may not be easily discernible from the legislative, administrative, or other written record. For example, State agencies may have records of how many landowners or land acres enroll in a certain program but not otherwise publish this information. In any event, this information is maintained in highly variable formats from State to State, and our information request will help standardize in a single place. In situations where we are easily able to generate

preliminary information for each state, we will attempt to provide this information to respondents for verification in order to reduce the time burden, rather than ask them to provide new information.

Affected Public: State and Territory government officials.

Estimate of Burden Per Response: The time required to respond will be variable, depending on whether or not the State or Territory keeps information in a format that is easily translatable to the ICR. Time required could range from 0.5 to 8 hours per individual involved. We anticipate an average of 3 hours per individual.

Estimated Annual Number of Respondents: 150 (one to four individuals in each State or Territory)

Estimated Annual Number of Responses per Respondent: 1

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 450 hours

Comment is Invited:

Comment is invited on: (1) whether this collection of information is necessary for the stated purposes and the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical or scientific utility; (2) the accuracy of the Agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

All comments received in response to this notice, including names and addresses when provided, will be a matter of public record. Comments will be

summarized and included in the submission request for Office of Management
and Budget approval.

Valerie Hipkins,

Deputy Chief, Research and Development.

[FR Doc. 2026-07103 Filed: 4/10/2026 8:45 am; Publication Date: 4/13/2026]