SFI REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS - ROUND 1 FUNDING: CARBON STEWARDSHIP PAYMENT-FOR-PRACTICE

Deadline: February 27th, 2026

PURPOSE

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), as the prime recipient of a USDA Forest Service Forest Landowner Support grant, seeks to support a suite of climate beneficial activities in two vital forest economy regions of the United States- the Lake States and the Pacific Northwest. SFI is offering funding to large-scale forest landowners to implement climate-informed forest management practices that stabilize and increase forest productivity through actions such as the identification and enhancement of high carbon reserves, improving site productivity through forest management (e.g., silviculture and site preparation), planting climate-adapted species, and restoring fire-adapted forests.

GRANT CONTEXT

Forests play a critical role in mitigating climate change by both sequestering (absorbing) and storing carbon. Forest management actions can greatly influence the amount of carbon sequestered and stored in soils, trees, and other forms of vegetation. Carbon stewardship practices enhance the carbon benefits of forests while sustaining a diversity of ecosystem services.

The USDA Forest Service defines carbon stewardship as actions, informed by science, that provide for increased carbon uptake and storage or increased stabilization through land-use and vegetation management strategies. Thoughtful carbon stewardship seeks to optimize carbon within the context of ecosystem integrity and climate adaptation, not to maximize carbon at the expense of forest health or habitat.

Carbon stewardship practices, and their associated impacts, vary across site conditions. For example, carbon stewardship in a fire-adapted stand of ponderosa pine requires a different suite of activities than in an eastern oak-hickory woodland. It is also important to consider the timescale of carbon benefits associated with carbon stewardship. Depending on the practice, site condition, and forest type, carbon benefits may be realized immediately or over the course of decades. In some cases, a carbon stewardship practice may even lead to a near-term decrease in carbon stocks followed by a long-term increase at a much greater scale. Thinning a dense stand, for example, may result in an initial decrease in carbon stocks while enhancing resilience to wildfire, insects, and disease, thus stabilizing and increasing carbon over the long term. Effective carbon stewardship considers the suite of environmental, social, and economic benefits that a given forest provides.

FUNDING DETAILS

Up to **$300,000** per applicant is available. The funds are intended to cover costs to implement carbon stewardship practices, as described in **Appendix A**. Projects are expected to follow agreed upon timelines but must be completed by **June 2029** to qualify for associated payments for practice implementation. The maximum funding amount is not guaranteed and will depend on the strength of the proposal and full completion of proposed forest practice activities.

Awarded projects will be required to engage collaboratively with SFI for evaluation and monitoring of activity outcomes. This will require the submission of semi-annual reports to SFI in accordance with funding agreements. Reporting templates will be provided. All associated payments will be contingent on implementation and reporting compliance.

ELIGIBILITY

- Applicant's forestland must be located within the United States, in one or both of the following regions: Lake States (Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin) and Pacific Northwest (Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, northern California).
- Applicant must represent a large forest landowner actively engaged in managing or sustaining forests (i.e., responsibility for managing 50,000 acres or more).
- Proposed climate-informed forest management practices must target a minimum of 300 acres.
- Applicant must share required project information including pre-existing forest conditions of proposed treatment area, business-as-usual forest management plan applicable to proposed treatment area, and data that identifies where on-the-ground activities occur.
- **Unique Entity ID** (organizations must be registered in SAM.gov and have an active UEID at the time of the application).
- Applicant must not be current recipient of USDA Forest Landowner Support Inflation Reduction Act funding for any activities that could be considered the same or similar to scope of this RFP.

SELECTION CRITERIA

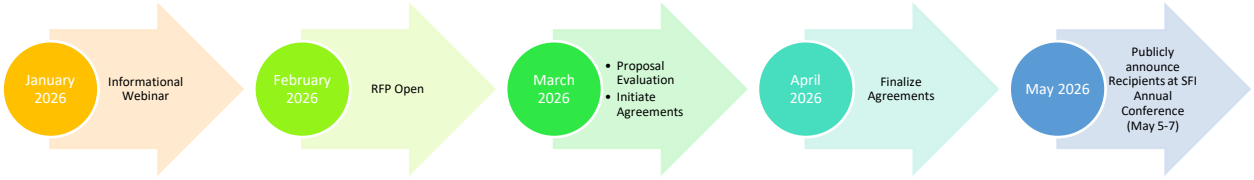
- Alignment with programmatic priorities as described in **Appendix A**.

- Technical merit, including:
    - demonstrated knowledge, experience, and expertise in application package,
    - feasibility of the proposed project, including estimated cost (per proposed practice) of project implementation, and
    - commitment to appropriate measurement, monitoring, and reporting of project activities and outcomes over project duration.

- Demonstration of measurable climate benefits. Projected carbon benefits will be quantified and assessed by the SFI Regional Technical Expert Team in partnership with grant recipients. Applicants will not be individually required to quantify carbon benefits, but those prepared to collaborate (e.g., with data, in-house capacity) to quantify carbon benefits will receive preferential consideration in the selection process.

- Willingness to share information beyond eligibility minimum requirement. Applicants will receive preferential consideration in the selection process for willingness to provide, through a cooperative agreement, additional project information to support a related carbon modeling component under SFI's prime recipient agreement with USDA. This additional project information for proposed treatment areas may include site-specific attributes, shape files, and merchandising or product market information.

RFP TIMELINE



APPLICATION INSTRUCTION

Apply at [SFI Climate Smart Forestry Initiative] RFP Page

see Practice Worksheet in **Appendix B**

see Details for Application Package in **Appendix C**

For technical questions, please contact:
Chase Cook
Senior Manager, Conservation Implementation
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For application submission questions, please contact:
Rachel Hamilton
Senior Manager, Conservation Programs
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APPENDIX A.

Table 1, included here for reference, provides additional detail of the SFI Climate Smart Forestry Initiative goals along with examples of proposed practices to support these goals. Applicant's proposal must specify carbon stewardship practices included in Table 1 and/or propose alternative practices that similarly support the SFI Climate Smart Forestry Initiative goals.

Table 1. SFI Climate Smart Forestry Initiative Goals and Proposed Practices

Goal	Practice	Approach Example	Carbon Stewardship Rationale	Evidence for Carbon Benefit
Prioritize management of locations that provide high carbon value across the landscape	1. Identifying and Enhancing High Carbon Reserves	Surveying and set aside planning (including buffers)	Secure areas of high carbon and enhance these carbon pools when appropriate	(Fassnacht et al. 2015, Yu et al. 2017)
		Enhancement of Carbon Reserves		
Enhance forest recovery following disturbance & enhance or maintain sequestration capacity through significant forest alterations	2. Improving natural regeneration diversity	Site Preparation in Northern Hardwood Forests	Utilize silvicultural techniques to balance carbon sequestration with timber harvest.	(Rogers et al. 2022, Walters et al. 2021)
	3. Enhancing forest complexity with climate-adapted species	Underplant climate-adapted species in pine plantations	Accelerate carbon sequestration by releasing regeneration or underplanting in plantations.	(Vander Yacht et al. 2022)
		Plant climate-adapted species in areas burned by severe wildfire	Accelerate post-wildfire regeneration with climate resilient species	(Davis et al. 2023
Reduce Carbon losses from natural disturbance, including wildfire	4. Restoring fire-adapted communities to reduce wildfire severity	Planning, Fuels Reductions & Prescribed Fire	Reduce the carbon loss associated with high severity wildfire	(Davis et al. 2024, Nave et al. 2022)

APPENDIX B. SAMPLE WORKSHEET

Select all planned practices and for each provide the associated forest type for the region, the area of applicability (acres), and the estimated cost per practice.

Practice	Detailed Approach	Forest Type Group	Acres	Cost per Acre	Total Practice Cost
1. Identifying and Enhancing High Carbon Reserves	Surveying and set aside planning (including buffers)	Northwest US: ○ Douglas-fir, ○ Fir/Spruce/Mountain hemlock, ○ Ponderosa pine, ○ Lodgepole pine, ○ Western oak, ○ Hemlock/Sitka spruce, ○ Pinyon/Juniper ○ Alder/Maple Great Lakes Region US: ○ Oak/Hickory ○ Maple/Beech/Birch ○ Spruce/Fir ○ Aspen/Birch ○ White/Red/Jack Pine ○ Elm/Ash/Cottonwood		$	
				$	
	Enhancement of Carbon Reserves			$	
				$	
2. Improving natural regeneration diversity	Site Preparation in Northern Hardwood Forests			$	
3. Enhancing forest complexity with climate-adapted species	Underplant climate-adapted species in pine plantations			$	
	Plant climate-adapted species in areas burned by severe wildfire			$	
4. Restoring fire-adapted communities to reduce wildfire severity	Planning, Fuels Reductions & Prescribed Fire			$	
				$	
TOTAL					

APPENDIX C. APPLICATION INFORMATION

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION:

Field	Response Type
Organization Name	Text
Address	Text
City	Text
State	Drop-down
Zip Code	Text
Unique Entity ID (organizations must be registered in SAM.gov and have an active UEID at the time of the application. If you only conduct certain types of transactions, such as reporting as a sub-awardee (i.e., receiving funding through this RFP), you may not need to complete the full registration process; however, you must still obtain a UEID through SAM.gov system)	Text
Does your organization qualify for federal funding? (Search Entity Information in Sam.gov for any active exclusions?)*	Yes/No

Which region(s) do you own or operate forestland in regard to this proposal:	Selection (select all that apply):
	• Lake States
	  ○ Wisconsin
	  ○ Michigan
	  ○ Minnesota
	• Pacific Northwest
	  ○ Washington
	  ○ Oregon
	  ○ Idaho
	  ○ Montana
	  ○ California

Are you a large forest landowner (50,000+ acres)?	Yes/No
Are you certified to the SFI Forest Management Standard?	Yes/No

What type of organization do you represent?	Selection (select all that apply): ○ State ○ County ○ Academic ○ REIT/TIMO ○ Industrial ○ Conservation NGO ○ Family Owned Private ○ Tribal ○ Other; You selected "Other", please describe: [text box]
Does your organization hold a beneficiary status as an underserved landowner?*	No Yes, please select: ○ Living in a High Poverty Area ○ Tribe or Alaska Native corporation/village ○ Beginning Forest Landowner ○ Veteran ○ Limited Resources Producer ○ Other: You selected "Other", please describe: [text box]

KEY PERSONNEL:

PROJECT MANAGER	
First Name*	Text
Last Name*	Text
Title	Text
Email*	Text
Phone	Text
Is the project manager also the billing contact?	Yes/No If No – contact information and address of billing contact
BILLING CONTACT	
First Name*	Text
Last Name*	Text
Title	Text
Email*	Text
Phone	Text

CARBON STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITY:

Please provide details about your intended activity and site description information for where the proposed activity will occur.

ACTIVITY & SITE DESCRIPTION

Each activity selected in this application is presented on its own dedicated page. You can navigate between pages to complete the corresponding site description(s) for each activity.

- **Each activity page** = one activity description + corresponding site description information for each applicable region.
- Use the **navigation controls** to move between activities and complete all required sections.

Which activities do you plan to conduct during this project?	Selection (all that apply) ○ Underplanting Climate-Adapted Species (Reforestation) ○ Plant Climate-adapted Species post wildfire (Reforestation) ○ Survey and Identify High Carbon Reserves (Avoided Deforestation) ○ Enhance High Carbon Reserves (Harvest) ○ Site Preparation (Harvest) ○ Fuels Reduction (Harvest) ○ Fire (Prescribed) ○ Other_____(text)
Please describe the intended activity and expected outcomes including [Maximum 500 words]: a) basic methodology/key steps b) intended impact of your activity c) how these practices are different from business-as-usual practices	Text (Maximum 500 Words)

Please describe your approach to monitoring/measurement (ground verification, remote sensing, etc.) for intended impact [Maximum 500 words].	Text (Maximum 500 Words)
Anticipated completion date of activity implementation?	Text
Acres of Practice (Total)	Number
Cost of Practice (Total $)	Number
Is this activity occurring in Lake States?	Yes/No
For Lake States: What is the forest type? Forest type refers to the species composition of a stand of trees. Please select the forest type group that best matches the forest stand that will be subject to the forest management activity. For more information on the tree species that fall into each of the groups below, please review Table 5B-11, pg. 5-166, in Ch. 5: Methods for Managed Forestry Systems.	Lake State Selection (Select all that apply): ○ Oak/Hickory ○ Maple/Beech/Birch ○ Spruce/Fir ○ Aspen/Birch ○ White/Red/Jack Pine ○ Elm/Ash/Cottonwood
For Lake States: What is the forest age class?	Lake State Selection (select one): ○ 0-20 years ○ 21-40 years ○ 41-60 years ○ 61-80 years ○ 81-100 years ○ 100+ years ○ Mixed Age Class or Unknown
For Lake States: What is the historic planting/reforestation of proposed area?	Lake State Selection (select one): ○ Planted ○ Natural Regeneration ○ Mixed Reforestation or Unknown

Is this activity occurring in Pacific Northwest?	Yes/No
For Pacific Northwest: What is the forest type? Forest type refers to the species composition of a stand of trees. Please select the forest type group that best matches the forest stand that will be subject to the forest management activity. For more information on the tree species that fall into each of the groups below, please review Table 5B-11, pg. 5-166, in Ch. 5: Methods for Managed Forestry Systems.	Pacific Northwest Selection (Choose all that apply): ○ Douglas-Fir ○ Fir/Spruce/Mountain Hemlock ○ Ponderosa Pine ○ Lodgepole Pine ○ Western Oak ○ Hemlock/Sitka Spruce ○ Pinyon/Juniper ○ Alder/Maple
For Pacific Northwest: What is the forest age class?	Pacific Northwest Selection (select one): ○ 0-20 years ○ 21-40 years ○ 41-60 years ○ 61-80 years ○ 81-100 years ○ 100+ years ○ Mixed Age Class or Unknown
For Pacific Northwest: What is the historic planting/reforestation of proposed area?	Pacific Northwest Selection (select one): ○ Planted ○ Natural Regeneration ○ Mixed Reforestation or Unknown

+Add Item

MAP

Please provide a property map that includes the locations of planned activities. This information will not be shared without prior consent. [Max file size: 2.5 MB per file. Multiple files allowed.]	Upload file type: .shp, .pdf, .jpg
If unable to provide map of proposed activity locations, what are the relevant counties and corresponding states?	Text

OUTCOMES, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION

SFI will be responsible for modeling efforts associated with this project, outcome modeling will not be the sub awardee's responsibility. Relevant data sharing associated with sub awardee's proposed activities; however, determine the scope and outcomes of our overall project's modeling efforts. The following questions are intended to gauge your willingness and ability to provide relevant information for modeling and reporting.

Regarding outcomes, please describe how applicant proposes to partner with SFI to develop data sharing, verification, and reporting. Please refer to *Data Sharing Supplement* for context and preferred scope.	Text
Regarding modeling, is applicant willing to contribute expertise, provide feedback on modeling strategy, or otherwise contribute to the modeling effort? (if applicant responds yes, please describe extent of willingness and/or expertise to contribute)	Yes/No, If Yes, Describe
Regarding modeling, is applicant willing to share inventory data and information about past, current, and planned management activities relevant for the proposed activity locations?	Yes/No
Regarding modeling, is applicant willing to share information about merchandizing or product market information relevant for the proposed activity locations?	Yes/No
Regarding expertise, does applicant currently have relevant forest analysis or forestry guidance (i.e., company guidance or forest management specific plans or guidance) that support or otherwise relate to the necessity/value/benefit of activities included in your RFP. If yes, please provide example (upload file) or describe	Yes/No, If Yes, Describe Add File [Max file size: 2.5 MB per file. Multiple files allowed.]

available information and if willing to share with SFI.

Regarding climate-smart forestry practices, is applicant currently undertaking (or recently completed) activities relevant to those listed in Appendix A? If yes, please describe how this funding could augment or extend related efforts.	Yes/No If Yes, Describe