

A photograph of two hikers with large backpacks ascending a rocky trail. The hiker in the foreground is wearing a blue jacket, and the one behind is in a red jacket. They are silhouetted against a bright sunset with a sunburst effect breaking through a rock overhang on the right. A pine tree is on the left, and a valley is visible in the background.

Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

Investing in Community Led Conservation



Forests Sustain Communities



Over half of the nation's forests are privately owned (~446 million acres)



70% of working forests are on private lands, supporting **3.9 million jobs** in the U.S.



Outdoor recreation contributed **\$696 billion dollars** to the national GDP in 2024



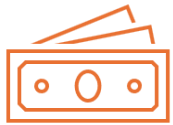
Privately owned forests filter **30% of our drinking water**



What are Community Forests?

- Local ownership and management
- Community involvement
- Managed for the benefits that matter most to the community
- Provides public access
- Permanently conserved
- At least 98 self-identifying community forests in the U.S. (Hajir et al, 2024)

Community Forests Provide...



Economic benefits

Wood products
Non-timber products (e.g. maple
syrup, ginseng)
Nature-based tourism



Recreational benefits

Hiking
Camping
Wildlife watching
Mountain-biking
Hunting and Fishing



Environmental benefits

Water supply and quality
Air quality
Resilience to natural disasters
(wildfires, flooding)
Wildlife habitat



Educational benefits

Demonstration sites for
landowners
Outdoor classrooms
Vocational training

The Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

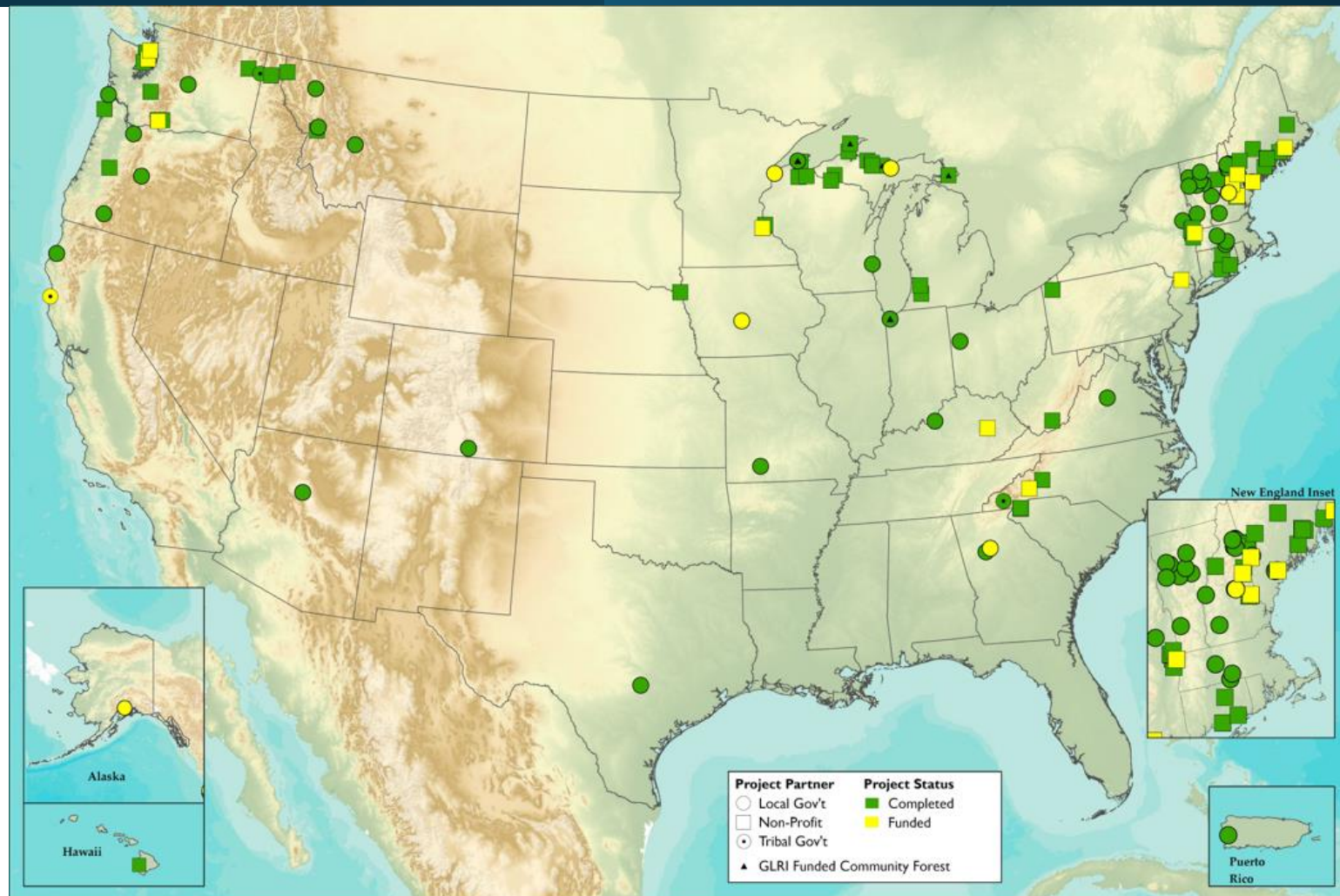
- Established through the 2008 Farm Bill (Public Law 110-234); first funding awards in 2012.
- Provides financial assistance through grant awards to eligible entities for acquiring and establishing community forests that provide community benefits.
- Focuses on local priorities and local management of forests.
- All community forests must provide public access.



Headwaters Cedar Community Forest, WI; Northwood Alliance

Accomplishments

- Since 2012, CFP has permanently conserved **over 40,000 acres** of private forestlands
- **126 community-driven projects** supported
- **30 states and territories** with community forests



Funded and completed CFP projects as of April 2025

Eligibility

Applicants

- Local governments (municipal, county, and other local gov)
- Qualified nonprofit organizations operating with a conservation purpose
 - *As described in Section 170(h)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code*
- Federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations

Land

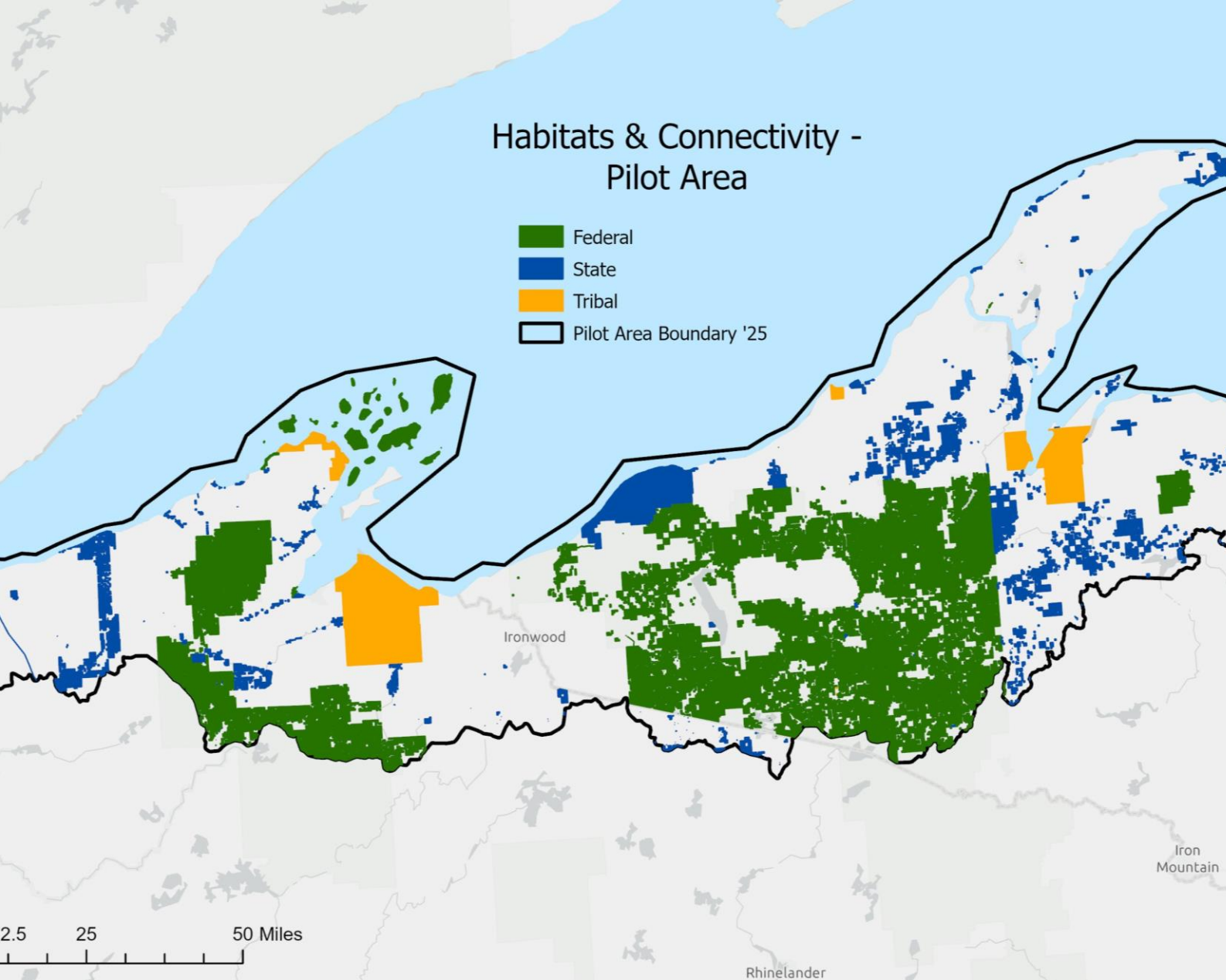
- Privately owned and threatened by conversion to non-forest uses
- Must be at least 75% forested
- At least 5 acres in size
- Not held in trust
- If acquired by an eligible entity, can provide community benefits and allow public access

FY26 Notice of Funding Opportunities

National Community Forest Program NOFO

- Available on Grants.gov under Funding Opportunity Number: **USDA-FS-2026-CFP**
- Applicants must submit applications directly to their State Forester or equivalent Tribal official by **Tuesday, October 13, 2026.**
 - <https://www.stateforesters.org/who-we-are/our-membership/>
- **\$4.95M** in available funding
- Maximum funding request of **\$600k**

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Community Forest NOFO



- Available on Grants.gov under Funding Opportunity Number: **USDA-FS-2026-GLRI-CFP**
- Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov by **December 8, 2026**
- **\$3.5M in available funding**
- Maximum funding request of **\$1M**
- Focus area: GLRI Terrestrial Habitat Connectivity Pilot area in Michigan and Wisconsin
- Contact: Liam.Krause@usda.gov



Funding Requirements

- 50% cost-sharing (1:1)
 - Cost-share must be from non-federal sources
- Funding is for fee simple land acquisitions and associated transactional costs (appraisals, land surveys, closing costs, management plan)

Other Funding Considerations

Demand Exceeds Capacity

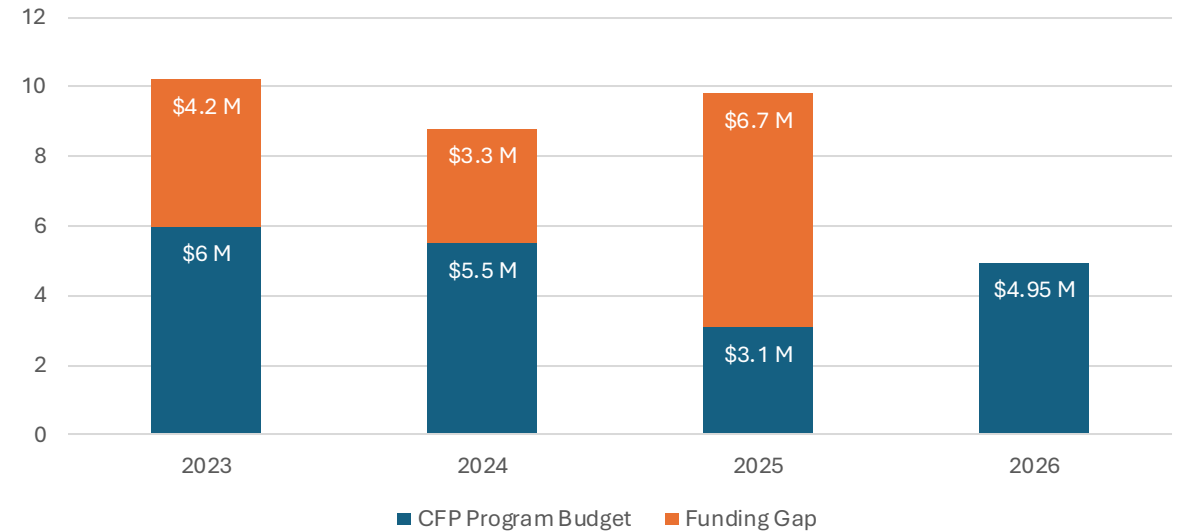
- Reduced or flat program budget
- Program is experiencing high demand

Cost-Share

- **Funded projects exceeding the required 50% cost-share**
 - Average cost-share provided between FY24-25 was 65%
- **78%** of projects funded in FY24-25 used State/local funds for cost-share
 - *Recreation and Conservation Office Grant (WA)*
 - *Michigan Environmental Trust Fund*
 - *Knowles Nelson Stewardship Funding (WI)*
 - *Clean Ohio*
 - *City/County funds*

- *South Carolina Conservation Bank*
- *Land and Community Heritage Investment Program(NH)*
- *Moose Plates (NH)*
- *Land for Maine's Future*

CFP Program Budget & Funding Gap
(Fiscal Year 2023 - 2026)





More Information

- [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for NOFO information
 - “Regular” CFP Funding Opportunity Number: **USDA-FS-2026-CFP**
 - GLRI-CFP Funding Opportunity Number: **USDA-FS-2026-GLRI-CFP**
- Email: SM.FS.CFP@usda.gov
- Trust for Public Land's Community Forest Training Program: <https://www.tpl.org/resource/community-forest-training-program>

CFP Contacts by Forest Service Region

Northern & Intermountain Regions (ID, MT, NV, UT, ND)

- Patrick Bridegam, patrick.a.bridegam@usda.gov

Rocky Mountain Region (CO, KS, NE, WY, SD)

- Laura Wagner, laura.wagner@usda.gov

Southwestern Region (AZ, NM)

- Kathy Moore, kathleen.moore@usda.gov

Pacific Southwest Region (CA, HI & Pacific Island Territories)

- Miki Fujikawa, miki.fujikawa@usda.gov

Pacific Northwest & Alaska Regions (OR, WA, AK)

- Candice Washington, candice.washington@usda.gov

Southern Region (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA)

- Mike Middlebrook, michael.middlebrook@usda.gov

Eastern Region

(CT, DC, DE, IA, IL, IN, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT, WI, WV)

- Liam Krause, liam.krause@usda.gov

International Institute of Tropical Forestry (PR, USVI)

- Magaly Figueroa, magaly.figueroa@usda.gov

An aerial photograph of a dense forest. The trees are in various stages of autumn, with colors ranging from deep green to bright yellow, orange, and red. Some trees are bare, showing their intricate branch structures. The overall scene is a vibrant mosaic of natural colors.

Thank you!

Mill Shoals Community Forest, SC; Naturaland Trust