

# NSW Forest Stewardship Pilot

Revised Guidelines

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# Forest Stewardship Pilot

## Overview

The Pilot will be delivered by Local Land Services and overseen by an independent Farm Forestry Expert Panel of forest scientists and natural resource management experts.

Local Land Services will provide expert technical staff to support delivery, including a dedicated Aboriginal Forest Management team.

The Panel provides independent advice on a range of issues such as pilot delivery, best-practice forest management, research and monitoring, Aboriginal forest management, fire management and climate change resilience.

The Panel will also make recommendations to NSW Government based on the findings of the Pilot to guide future investment and support for private forests.

The Local Land Services Director Statewide Programs will be the final approver (Decision Maker) for the Forest Stewardship Pilot grants.

The Guidelines are being revised as the Forest Stewardship Pilot has undergone changes since its inception. As it is a pilot project, LLS are continuing to evaluate the feasibility of the process and roll out improvements.

## What is forest stewardship?

Many landowners want their forests to be healthy and managed effectively but are unsure of the best approach. Forest stewardship is the long-term management of forests for multiple values and opportunities such as biodiversity, tourism and recreation, cultural values, wood and non-wood products, soil and water conservation, and carbon storage.

Stewardship practices can support multiple uses over the long-term and do not need to be expensive or complex to be beneficial. In fact, many landowners already practice good stewardship in many of their day-to-day land management activities.

Forest stewardship is known to achieve a range of outcomes and public benefits including to:

- protect and improve water and soil quality
- improve wildlife habitat and connectivity
- manage and protect threatened plants and animals
- protect and enhance Aboriginal values and practices
- support tourism and recreational activities
- enhance forest health and resilience
- diversify the productive value of land and farms
- offer carbon storage and renewable energy opportunities
- connect people to forests, nature and stewardship activities
- help mitigate risks of climate change and natural disasters.

## Purpose

Landholders interested in managing their forests for multiple outcomes can find it difficult to resource and find independent advice and support. The Pilot assists landholders to design their own

forest plan which is matched with incentives that meet their needs. These incentives can include advice, technical assistance, and funding for forest management activities.

The Pilot provides an opportunity to learn about what works and what doesn't from landholders' perspectives. The findings from the Pilot will be used to guide future investment and support for managing private forests in NSW.

## Objectives

- Promote forest stewardship by assisting landholders to design their own forest plan and provide incentives that meets their needs.
- Increase understanding of how providing incentives can impact forest stewardship and improve landholder capacity (knowledge, skills and motivation).
- Increase understanding of a forest stewardship program and provide recommendations and feedback to guide future investment and support for managing private forests in NSW.

## Assessment Process

The assessment process covers the following steps and must comply with the requirements of NSW Government legislative and policy framework as set out in NSW Grants Administration Guidelines.

### Step 1: Expressions of Interest

Landholders are invited to submit Expressions of Interest (EOI) to be part of the Forest Stewardship Pilot to [ffp@lls.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ffp@lls.nsw.gov.au) or Local Land Services, 117 Bull Street, Newcastle West 2302.

EOIs open on Tuesday, 4 October 2022 and close Tuesday, 15 November 2022 at 5pm.

Aboriginal forest owners and managers are encouraged to apply, including Local Aboriginal Land Councils, Aboriginal Corporations, Ranger Groups and joint managers.

We also encourage participation from landholders who are new to forest management and people experiencing challenges in managing their forests, including following significant events such as wildfire and flooding.

To participate, landholders will need to meet the following **eligibility criteria**:

- a forest area that is at least 10 hectares in size
- an existing Private Native Forestry Plan (PNF Plan) or is willing to obtain a PNF Plan for a period of up to 15 years
- clear and achievable forest management objectives
- ability and willingness to undertake forest management for environmental, cultural, social and/or productive outcomes
- willingness to consider partnerships, collaboration, or co-contributions.

Eligible landholders will have the opportunity to seek advice from Local Land Services and the Panel on their application during the assessment process.

### Step 2: Assessment of applications

Applications are assessed by the Panel and Local Land Services to ensure they meet the objectives of the Pilot, include clear forest management and monitoring actions, and have the potential to achieve effective stewardship outcomes.

Landholders will be assessed against the following **assessment criteria** before progressing to a more detailed on-ground assessment:

- To what extent does the application address biodiversity conservation at the local and bioregional scales?
- To what extent does the application address impacts on the environment at the local scale and bioregional scales?
- To what extent is the site, and landholder knowledge and capacity, suitable to manage potential risk?
- To what extent does the application address Aboriginal values, places and practices?
- To what extent does the application support research, innovation and industry development?

An **on-ground assessment** will determine the landholder needs and priorities across the following categories to determine advice and incentives requirements.

- Education and training
- Conservation
- Roads and infrastructure
- Stand management
- Pest and weed control
- Fire management
- Cultural heritage

Applications will be assessed and Local Land Services will decide on the successful applicants and provide notification of the outcomes of the assessment on the [Local Land Services](#) website and [NSW Government Grants and Funding](#) website.

Applicants will be notified of the assessment outcome by 30 June 2023.

### **Step 3: Finalise agreements**

Successful applicants will develop and sign a Forest Stewardship Agreement with Local Land Services. The Agreement will include an action-based schedule of work that is compatible with the landholder's objectives, resources and capability. The schedule will be matched with financial and other incentives (up to \$60,000) to support the planned actions.

The terms of the Agreement will need to be met over the life of the Pilot to receive incentives and payments. Landowners may also agree to longer-term forest management and monitoring activities.

### **Step 4: Monitoring, reporting and evaluation**

Landholders monitor their planned actions under the Agreement and include this information in activity reports back to Local Land Services. Monitoring will be tailored to landholders' capacity and objectives.

Landholders will be asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning and partway through the Pilot. The results will be used to help improve support programs for managing forests. Local Land Services want to better understand what works well (and what doesn't) when it comes to managing private forests.

Local Land Services will also provide opportunities to landholders to be involved in a range of monitoring surveys outside the scope of the Pilot.

## Step 5: Recommendations

The Panel will use the results from monitoring, surveys, and landholder feedback to develop recommendations to NSW Government to help inform future support for private forest landholders in NSW.

**If you have any questions about the pilot, EOI process or require further assistance please contact:**

E: [pnf.info@lls.nsw.gov.au](mailto:pnf.info@lls.nsw.gov.au)

P: 1300 795 299

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing March 2023. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.