



## MEMORANDUM

Date: September 12, 2024

To: State Foresters  
Forest Service Regional Foresters, Station Directors, IITF Director, and State & Private Forestry Leadership

Re: Five-Year Review Requirements for State Forest Action Plans

*The State and Private Forestry Board provides the following guidance as the State Forest Action Plans approach the five-year review mark from their original completion in June 2010.*

### FINAL SFAP Five-Year Review Requirements

Approved by the State, Private, and Tribal Forestry Board (May 6, 2024)

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The State, Private, and Tribal Forestry (SPTF) Board appreciates the significant work of state forestry agencies, the U.S. Forest Service, and partners in implementing the State Forest Action Plans (SFAPs). States are required to review the status of their SFAP every five years and to update the plans at least every ten years. 2025 is the five-year mark for most SFAPs. **There is no expectation or requirement that states will update their SFAP at the five-year mark, though it is an option.**

This memo provides direction on the:

1. SFAP five-year highlights report (required every 5 years)
2. SFAP five-year review (required every 5 years)
3. SFAP updates (required every 10 years; may be updated sooner).

**For all states, territories, and the District of Columbia who last updated their SFAP in 2020, the five-year SFAP highlights report and five-year review are due by January 30, 2026.**

#### **SFAP Highlights Report (National Priorities Report)**

The SFAP five-year highlights report, in the past referred to as the “National Priorities Section/Report,” is an important way to communicate SFAP accomplishments and successes and show how the SFAPs contribute to the three National Priorities for SPTF. For most states, SFAP highlights reports were completed in 2015 and 2020. For all states, territories, and the District of Columbia with 2020 SFAPs, the five-year SFAP highlights report is due January 30, 2026.

#### **Guidance for this report:**

- Select example SFAP implementation accomplishments and success stories to highlight for each national priority. The report can be organized by the three National Priorities, or the relevant National Priority(ies) can be referenced for each accomplishment highlighted.

**The National Priorities** were identified by Congress in the 2008 Farm Bill and codified in

section 2 (c) of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act:

- 1) Conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses.
  - 2) Protect forests from threats.
  - 3) Enhance public benefits from trees and forests.
- Showcase how the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Forest Action Plan implementation funding supports the goals and strategies in the SFAP, include example highlights for projects and/or activities funded by this BIL provision.
  - Formatting: This can be a separate report or included as an addendum to or section in the SFAP. There is flexibility for the length and format. This can be a text-only narrative or may also include photos, graphics, and numeric measures.

### **Five-Year Review of SFAPs**

For states, territories, and District of Columbia who last updated their SFAP in 2020, the following is **required** by January 30, 2026:

1. Review the status of the SFAP. *Changes* to the SFAP are not required at this five-year point.
2. Review Forest Legacy Program (FLP) information in the SFAP with the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (SFSCC) to assess whether amendments or updates are necessary. Provide the results of the FLP review in writing to the relevant U.S. Forest Service region. [Refer to the FLP Implementation Guidelines \(page 21\)](#). FLP has developed an Assessment of Need (AON) Review Checklist. The checklist is intended to assist States and Regions in evaluating the Forest Legacy Program information in a SFAP to ensure program requirements have been met. This checklist can be used by States during the required five-year review to help evaluate whether an update is warranted or to identify missing information.
3. Check in with the appropriate regional U.S. Forest Service staff to share what was learned from the review, e.g., in a virtual meeting.

The following elements are **recommended** for the SFAP five-year review:

- Identify accomplishments from the past five years for each SFAP strategy. This will inform what accomplishments you decide to include in the five-year SFAP highlights report.
- Identify any implementation challenges over the past five years.
- Identify any implementation priorities to focus on for the next five years.
- Identify data needs or new issues since the SFAP was completed (to inform future updates).
- Check in with or update partners on SFAP implementation. It may be helpful to ask partners to provide input on the above elements to inform the review process.

Emphasis is on the process of reviewing progress on the SFAP and touching base with partners and relevant U.S. Forest Service staff at the five-year point. **While the results of the FLP review must be provided in writing and checking in with regional U.S. Forest Service staff is required, an overall SFAP review report or other documentation is not required.** U.S. Forest Service approval is not required for the five-year review process.

## **Updates to SFAPs**

SFAP full revisions are required at least every ten years; however, minor changes and full revisions can be made by states at any time. The process for updates is outlined below:

- **Significant changes or full revisions:** If the SFAP is completely revised or significant changes are made, such as changes to priority areas, major boundary adjustments to or adding new Forest Legacy Areas, re-writes or additions of complete sections, and addition of new strategies, U.S. Forest Service review and approval based on the [Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies Requirements Checklist](#) and the AON Review Checklist (if appropriate) is required. The State Forester will complete the top of the requirements checklist and submit it to the appropriate U.S. Forest Service Regional Forester or International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF) Director along with the revised SFAP and description of changes made. Once the U.S. Forest Service Regional Forester or IITF Director reviews the SFAP to ensure it meets checklist requirements, they sign the checklist and forward for approval by the U.S. Forest Service Deputy Chief for SPTF.
- **Minor changes:** If minor changes are made to sections not including FLP components, such as small text edits that are grammatical in nature or to clarify existing strategies, then the State Forester will provide a copy of the updated SFAP to the appropriate U.S. Forest Service Regional Forester or IITF Director and NASF for posting on the [NASF Forest Action Plan webpage](#). A brief summary of the edits will help the US Forest Service and NASF navigate any minor changes that may have been made. No further action or approval is required.

If minor changes are made to FLP components, the changes must be coordinated with the SFSCC and approved by the appropriate U.S. Forest Service Regional Forester or IITF Director.

Refer to the [FLP Implementation Guidelines \(pages 21-22\) and the FLP AON Review Checklist for more detail](#) on what constitutes a significant and minor amendment to the FLP components of the SFAP.

**Flexibility and Timeline:** The SPTF Board understands the importance of flexibility for states to format and time SFAP updates to best suit state needs while also meeting federal requirements. States may choose to update their SFAPs more often than every ten years, and we recognize that will place states on different five-year review and update timelines in the future. Due dates for future five-year reviews and ten-year updates are based on when the most recent full revision was completed.

**For more information, please contact:**

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