

# California Forest Improvement Program User's Guide



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## The Purpose of this Guidebook

This guidebook is designed to explain the California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) and application procedures to forestland owners, Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs), and forestry consultants. All persons interested in participating in the program are strongly encouraged to read this guidebook in its entirety. Contact your local CAL FIRE Forestry Assistance Specialist (FAS) or private consulting RPF for assistance with the CFIP application process.

## Introduction to the Program

### Purpose of the Program

The purpose of the California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) is to encourage private and public investments in forestlands and resources within the state to ensure adequate future high quality timber supplies, related employment and other economic benefits, and to protect, maintain, and enhance the forest resource for the benefit of present and future generations.

### How the Program is Funded

The CFIP program receives funding from a variety of State and Federal sources.

Historically, the source of State funds for CFIP projects was California's Forest Resource Improvement Fund (FRIF), which receives its funding from timber sale revenue from the State's Demonstration Forests. More recently CFIP funding has been provided from other State sources, e.g., the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund.

Your CFIP grant agreement may be funded in part by various USDA Forest Service programs such as the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) or the Forest Health Management Program (FHMP) when such funds are available. The State receives these funds through grants that may expire in shorter time frames than the normal CFIP contract. It may be necessary to accomplish certain activities within the USDA grant period. The use of federal funds will be done on a contract-by-contract basis and will be discussed with the CAL FIRE FAS before approval of the CFIP grant agreement. In general, only those activities that can be accomplished during the grant period are funded with USDA funds. Ask your FAS for more information.

The varied funding sources may have different requirements or additional application procedures, so please always be sure to discuss your project with your FAS at the CAL FIRE unit in which your project resides, or the Regional FAS.

## What the Program Does

The CFIP can provide eligible landowners with technical and financial assistance for planning, reforestation and resource management investments that improve the quality and value of forestland. Under current State law, CFIP can help with rebuilding forest, soil, water, fish and wildlife resources to meet our future needs for a healthy environment and productive forest and woodlands.

For more details on the practices that are eligible for CFIP please read [Practices Eligible for CFIP](#).

CFIP is a reimbursement program, i.e., a “cost-share” program. For more details on rates read [CFIP Cost-Share Rates](#) and [CFIP Practice Cap Rates](#).

To receive reimbursement from CFIP, you must submit an CFIP Invoice Package to the CAL FIRE FAS to demonstrate that the expenses to be reimbursed have been paid out. For more details read [Preparing the CFIP Invoice Package](#).

The CFIP program is non-regulatory, and participation is voluntary. In some cases, land use zoning may require a land use addendum with a 10-year requirement for maintenance of funded work.

Landowners decide who to hire and may do some of the work themselves.

## CFIP Website

<https://www.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/grants/california-forest-improvement>

## Eligibility Restrictions

### Eligible Landowners

To be eligible for CFIP, landowners must own at least 20 acres of forestland but not more than 5,000 acres of forestland in California. The 20-acre minimum does not apply to forestland zoned timber production zone. As per PRC 4793(e), forestland means land at least 10 percent occupied by trees of any size that are native to California, including native oaks, or formerly having had that tree cover and not currently zoned for uses incompatible with forest resource management. To determine that at least 10 percent of the property is occupied by trees, average canopy cover of native species across the property shall be used to determine whether the property meets the definition. Developed areas such as structures, landscaping, and gardens shall not be excluded from the 20-acre minimum property size and shall be included in the calculation of average canopy cover.

Eligible landowners include private owners, government agencies, businesses, corporations, and non-federally owned Native American lands.

### Eligible Forestland

The intent of the California Forest Improvement Act of 1978 is to ensure that investments in timber stand improvement funded by CFIP will yield future marketable forest products and/or improved natural resources. Land must be zoned for uses compatible with forest resource management. Land in Agricultural Preserve (Williamson Act) or Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) qualifies. Properties with conservation easements or zoned for residential and/or commercial development may be eligible if the easements or zoning place no restriction on forest management practices.

If land is not zoned for timber production, the owner must maintain funded practices for at least ten years. A notice to this effect, referred to as a land use addendum will be filed with the County Recorder. If the land is sold this provision is binding on the new owner or the CFIP grant must be paid back with interest.

### Commercial Timber Operations

CFIP projects are non-commercial operations typically used to modify sub-merchantable trees or ones with no commercial value. Commercial timber operations require the approval of a timber harvest plan, non-industrial timber management plan, emergency notice or exemption by CAL FIRE. CFIP projects may be approved adjacent to commercial operations if they are outside the plan boundaries.

Projects proposed where timber has been harvested pursuant to the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973 (Act) may qualify for CFIP financing if:

- All conditions imposed by the Act have been satisfied and a completion and stocking report has been approved by CAL FIRE that covers the CFIP project area. Prior to the signing of a completion and stocking report, CFIP practices may begin outside the previous harvest area with FAS approval. When a completion and stocking report is not required by the Act, the FAS will conduct a site inspection to determine that commercial timber operations are complete.
- CFIP practices are not part of the minimal requirements of the Act and will not be used to meet those requirements.

## Requirement for a Forest Management Plan

The enabling legislation for the California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) requires that a Forest Management Plan be prepared and approved prior to a forest resource improvement project being started. An existing non-industrial timber management plan (NTMP), CFIP management plan, or NRCS management plan may be adequate. The FAS will review the current management plan to determine if it meets the requirements of the program. If a new or revised management plan is required, then the program can provide cost share funding for its completion by a private RPF. An Emergency Forest Management Plan (EFMP) may be utilized in instances where property is substantially damaged and an emergency notice has been filed, logged, and completed with a signed RM-71. The EFMP is intended only for immediate reforestation efforts to commence and be completed. After reforestation efforts are completed, the EFMP cannot be used for additional treatments in the future such as for thinning or release. In those cases, either a full or mini-management plan must be prepared.

## Minimum Acreage of Eligible Projects

Timber related practices including site preparation, planting, precommercial thinning, release, and follow-up work shall cover at least a contiguous 5-acre project area. Any combination of practices may be used in the contiguous 5-acre project area as appropriate to meet the landowner's objectives.

There is no minimum acreage limit for land conservation or habitat improvement projects.

# The Application Process

## Overview of the Application Process

Step 1: Contact a FAS. Preconsult with your local FAS to determine the status of funding, current application process, and whether your property and project are eligible for funding.

Step 2: Initial application. Contract the services of a consulting RPF to assist in writing the elements of the application package. For more information read [Preparing the CFIP Application Package](#).

Step 3: Field inspection. The FAS will schedule a field inspection to review your proposed project in the field.

Step 4: Final application filed and ranked. If the FAS determines that your project meets the requirements of the program, the FAS will provide recommendations for completion of the final application package. All application revisions must be completed before the project is filed. The final application package will be filed and ranked by the FAS using the applicable edition of the RM-10 CFIP Ranking Form. For more information see [Appendix C](#).

Step 5: Application package approved or denied funding. Each project will be assigned a priority rank. This priority ranking will be used for approving and funding projects and only the highest-ranking projects will be funded each funding period. Application packages that are not funded in their first funding window opportunity will be held for one year. Those applications will continue to be ranked and scored for the year being held. If, after a year, a project is still not competitive for a grant, the application will be returned to the landowner.

## Preparing the CFIP Application Package

THE NEWEST EDITION OF CFIP FORMS MUST BE USED. Projects submitted on old forms will be rejected upon submittal. Forms are available on the [CFIP website](#) and from your FAS.

A complete CFIP application package must contain one each of the following documents.

- RM-7A CFIP Agreement
- RM-8 CFIP Project Budget
- RM-6 CFIP Application
- Project Description (See [Instructions for Preparing the CFIP Project Description](#) section of this guide.)
- If the project includes RPF Supervision, provide a RM-12 CFIP RPF Checklist
- Property location map (See also [Preparing the Property Location Map](#) section of this guide.)
- Project map (See also [Preparing the Project Map](#) section of this guide.)
- STD 204 Payee Data Record (available from the FAS)
- A copy of the deed for every Assessor's parcel that is part of the project area.
- Copy of the trust, partnership, company ownership record, or notarized letters authorizing Grantee to enter into the CFIP grant agreement.
- For projects within the Coastal Zone additional documentation is required in the CFIP application package to demonstrate project feasibility. Consult your local FAS.

## Appeals

If a project is not approved by the FAS or Stewardship Forester, landowners may ask the Director of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to reconsider the decision. To make an appeal write the Director at the address below within 10 days of being notified that the application package was rejected and state the reasons why a review is in order.

Director, CFIP Appeal

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

P.O. Box 944246

Sacramento, California 94244-2460

A review will be conducted, and the landowner will be notified of the decision within 30 calendar days of receipt of the appeal.

# The Grant Agreement Implementation Process

## Overview of the Implementation Process

Once an application package is selected for funding the package will be assigned a State Grant Agreement Number and become a grant agreement. Your FAS will send you a notice with a copy of your approved grant agreement and a description of the next step for implementation of your project.

Step 1: Management Plan. Complete and submit the required Forest Management Plan to the FAS, unless an existing plan is in place. The FAS will review and approve the plan to ensure it meets the requirements of the CFIP. If the CFIP grant agreement is just for the preparation of a plan, skip to step 4.

Step 2: CEQA Review. The project must comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CFIP Programmatic Environmental Impact Report. The RPF shall complete and submit the RM-13 CFIP PEIR Environmental Checklist along with all requirements pertaining to the Checklist such as the California Natural Diversity Database results, biological surveys, and archaeological information. The RPF will submit these documents to the FAS. See also [Archaeological Addendum \(Arch Survey Report\)](#) section of this guide.

Step 3: Begin Project. Do not begin any on-ground practices until you have been notified by your FAS that all conditions in 1 and 2 above have been satisfied.

You must execute the project per the terms of the grant agreement. Any changes to the project require official grant agreement amendments to be in place prior to the change being implemented. Project modifications done without amending the grant agreement could result in adverse environmental impacts, failure to get reimbursed for project costs, and termination of your grant agreement.

Step 4: Invoice. Prepare a CFIP invoice package as described in the [Preparing the CFIP Invoice Package](#) section of this guide. Send the CFIP invoice package to the FAS. Final invoices are due no later than 45 days after the CFIP agreement expires.

Step 5: Field inspection. The FAS will schedule a field inspection to verify the work is complete as described in the approved CFIP grant agreement and approve or recommend revisions to the CFIP invoice package.

Step 6: Reimbursement. The FAS forwards the final CFIP invoice package to Sacramento for reimbursement. The Grantee can expect reimbursement in 120 days.

## Amending a CFIP Grant Agreement

You must execute the project per the terms of the grant agreement. Any changes to the project require official grant agreement amendments to be in place prior to the change being implemented. Project modifications done without amending the grant agreement could result in adverse environmental impacts, failure to get reimbursed for project costs, and termination of your grant agreement.

Always consult with your FAS before submitting an RM-11 CFIP Amendment form. The grant agreement may not be eligible for amendment due to timelines associated with either the funding source used to establish the grant agreement or the expiration date of the grant agreement itself. Requests for extension of the expiration date of a grant agreement must be received by the FAS not later than 60 days prior to the expiration of the grant agreement.

The RM-11 CFIP Amendment form is posted to the [CFIP website](#).

## Preparing the CFIP Invoice Package

CAL FIRE has a fiscal responsibility to review all actual costs for all treatments. In addition, CAL FIRE must track the actual costs of all treatments whether the treatment work was performed by a contractor or a subcontractor. Therefore, Invoices, where the treatment(s) were performed by either a contractor or/and a subcontractor(s), shall be included within the invoice packet for submission, review, and acceptance by CAL FIRE. Each practice type shall have a separate line item that includes documentation supporting each cost.

The Grantee should keep records of all paid contractor and subcontractor invoices. For practices approved for self-labor, keep a copy of all cash expenses, as well as contributions of personal labor and materials. When final invoicing for project work is complete, submit the RM-16 CFIP Invoice Cover Page and copies of all your expense records, including contractor and subcontractor costs, to the FAS. For larger projects, interim invoices can be submitted when at least five acres of a practice/project have been completed and approved by the FAS for invoicing. The State will reimburse by check. Payment generally takes 120 days from receipt of the invoice in Sacramento.

Always utilize the most recent edition of each form when preparing the package to avoid delays.

A complete CFIP invoice package must contain the following documents.

- A RM-16 CFIP Invoice Cover Page, posted to the [CFIP website](#).
- Expense records as discussed in paragraphs above.
- If the project area is not zoned TPZ, a notarized Land Use Addendum, is required, if not previously provided to the FAS.
- If interim invoicing, an updated completion map depicting the area of completed work.

## Taxes

Taxes: All financial assistance received from CAL FIRE is considered reportable income to the IRS and the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA). CAL FIRE will send the Grantee a 1099G at the end of each year in which income has been dispersed. Participant is advised to review all applicable tax exclusions with a tax professional, including but not limited to 26 U.S.C. section 126: *Certain cost-sharing payments*.

## CFIP Cost-Share Rates

CFIP provides reimbursement at either an 80% or 90% cost-share rate.

The 90% cost share rate will apply to the following:

- The applicant owns less than 500 acres of forestland in California.
- Ten percent or more of the total cost of the project will be devoted to forest land conservation measures and/or fish and wildlife habitat improvement practices. As defined in §1527(a):
  - Forest land conservation measures designed to protect, maintain, or enhance the forest resource system, including soil and watershed values, diversity of forest species, and protection of a forest stand from fire. These measures include erosion control, revegetation, road closure and stabilization of abandoned roadbeds, and improvement of drainage facilities for the purpose of reducing soil erosion and sedimentation, thinning, shaded fuel breaks, and other land treatments or forest resource improvement projects consistent with Section 4794.
  - Fish and wildlife habitat improvement work including but not limited to stream clearance, reestablishment of desirable vegetation along stream channels and elsewhere, measures to encourage habitat diversity, restoration of anadromous fisheries, and fencing to protect wet areas and other key wildlife habitat areas from livestock.
- The project or other actions of the landowner will increase recreational opportunities for the public.
- The project will be carried out primarily by persons living in the county or in counties adjacent to where the project will take place.
- All projects on substantially damaged timberland where wildfire, insects, disease, wind, flood, or other blight caused by an act of God occurs after January 1, 1976, and the damage reduced stocking below the requirements of the Forest Practice Act. Your RPF can help you determine if your project qualifies as substantially damaged. RPF's are licensed professionals who are familiar with all aspects of forest management and have a working knowledge of applicable State and local regulations.

## CFIP Cap Rates for Practices

The maximum reimbursement for each practice is “capped” at a rate set by the Program. These cap rates are established for Program consistency as well as to encourage landowners to develop cost-effective projects.

Cap rates for grant agreements approved after October 31, 2022, are published on the [CFIP website](#).

Several practices have multiple allowable cap rates (light, moderate, heavy) depending on site conditions. Participants are encouraged to select the single most appropriate cap rate for each practice and not mix cap rates within a given practice. Rates requested must be justified in the project description portion of the application package and approved by the FAS. For guidance in determining the appropriate cap rate for your site, please see [Practices Eligible for CFIP](#). Standard published rates or lesser amounts may be proposed, but rates may not exceed the heavy cap rate.

CFIP allows participants to choose between hiring a contractor or doing the work themselves. Self-labor and contractor labor may both be used on the same project, but not on the same practice. If both are used, the RM-8 CFIP Project Budget and the project description will specify either the contractor or self-labor cap rate for each proposed practice. Changing the labor type for a practice must be discussed with the CAL FIRE FAS before it occurs and may require amendment of the grant agreement. (See [Amending a CFIP Grant Agreement](#).)

If the actual cost of a project practice exceeds the listed maximum cap rate, the landowner must pay the difference, regardless of the cap rate chosen. If the actual cost of a project practice comes in under the cap rate, the actual cost and not the cap rate will be used as the eligible cost when calculating the total reimbursement payable by the State. I.e., the total eligible cost is either the cap rate or the actual cost, whichever is lower.

Landowners who choose to complete the work themselves, including use of their own equipment, must use the lower cap rates and hourly rates specified for self-labor. Self-labor may be performed by the landowner, their family members, and/or direct employees, and must be explained and justified in the project description. Self-labor is at the discretion of both the FAS and Stewardship Forester.

A landowner who owns a company that will be doing the work may use the contractor rate only if the company is licensed for tree service work.

When a landowner elects to perform the work themselves, they must track their hourly rates for their work only. These hourly rates must be recorded, and receipts or evidence of payment for other approved project expenses, must be provided to the FAS upon request when invoicing.

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For example: A landowner can perform pruning themselves and pay a contractor to plant trees. In this case, the landowner would use the self-labor cap rate for pruning and the contractor rate for tree planting. A landowner cannot elect to prune some trees and plant some trees themselves, while paying a contractor to do the rest. The project description in the CFIP grant agreement will specify where the contractor or self-labor rates apply. Any deviation from the CFIP agreement must be amended prior to completing the ground activities.

Allowable costs for erosion control or habitat improvement practices will be evaluated for cost-effectiveness based on rates allowed in the Natural Conservation Resources Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Cap rates for these practices shall be negotiated with the FAS.

Please note, RPFs developing a CCFMP plan on their own property will typically only be paid at the Mini Plan rate. At FAS discretion, RPFs may negotiate above the Mini Plan rate if negotiations are supported by cost estimates for paying employees who are working on plan development. CFIP Invoices for reimbursement must be supported by proof of payments to employees.

# Practices Eligible for CFIP

## Planning

The enabling legislation for CFIP requires that a Forest Management Plan be prepared and approved prior to a forest resource improvement project being started. (See [Requirement for a Forest Management Plan](#).)

An existing plan may qualify, or a new plan may be prepared by an RPF as part of the CFIP project. Types of plans eligible for CFIP funding include a California Cooperative Forest Management Plan, a CFIP Mini Management Plan, an Archaeological Addendum (Arch Survey report), other plan addendums, and an Emergency Forest Management Plan.

## California Cooperative Forest Management Plan (CCFMP)

The CCFMP was developed for use in California by CAL FIRE, the United States Forest Service (USFS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) using information from a national joint Forest Stewardship, American Tree Farm System (ATFS), NRCS Planning Process and the California Forest Improvement Act. This is a long-term forest management plan that addresses the landowner's whole property including all non-forest acres. The intent of this plan is to help the landowner develop personal land management objectives and feasible projects based on a professional analysis of the property's potential and available opportunities.

The CCFMP shall be based primarily on the participant's objectives. The plan shall provide sufficient historical and resource baseline data to formulate alternatives for forest improvement. It must compare alternatives and provide a recommended course of action to optimize forest health.

Various alternatives shall be proposed involving analysis of factors such as economics, watershed improvement, wildlife habitat, fire suppression, natural and man-made impacts to the property and surrounding ownerships, and other concerns.

Each plan will be unique. Plans for large acreage ownerships are expected to contain more information than small ownerships because of greater diversity in soil types, vegetation, wildlife habitat and participant objectives.

The template for the CCFMP is posted to the [CFIP website](#).

## CFIP Mini Management Plan (MMP) or Existing Plan Revision

CFIP can fund preparation of a new Mini Management Plan, as well as revision of an existing plan, such as a Stewardship Incentives Program (SIP), NRCS funded management plan, or Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP).

The Mini Plan format is available for use for all authorized CFIP forest improvement projects for landowners:

Costs of the MMP are to be based on complexity of the plan and size of the ownership. Cost may be negotiated lower but not more than the maximum MMP practice cap rate.

If the MMP is used on a property, and paid for with CFIP cost-share funding, any future updates or a conversion to a CCFMP template will be negotiated with the FAS. In most cases, the allowable rate will be the current CCFMP rate minus the previous MMP cost. If the plan is older than 10 years, full practice cost share funding may apply.

The template for the MMP is posted to the [CFIP website](#).

## Archaeological Addendum (Arch Survey Report)

CFIP projects must adhere to the April 3, 2020, edition of the “Cultural Resource Review Procedures for CAL FIRE Projects” guide when completing the CEQA REVIEW phase of project preparation. When applying this procedure to CFIP, where the RPF Supervision or Plan Addendum practices are utilized in a CFIP grant agreement, the Records Check and Native American Project and Information Gathering tasks shall be performed by the supervising RPF, not by the CAL FIRE Project Manager / CFIP FAS.

CFIP projects qualifying for the full rate for archaeology shall include a current records check, notification letters, survey of the proposed project area, and completion of an archaeological survey report. The project will be eligible for a lower rate, determined by the FAS, if an existing arch survey report is being used and updated. Cost share payment will be authorized once the FAS approves the archaeological survey report.

## Other Plan Addendums

The Department recognizes that some management plans or projects require additional funding for environmental review. Plan addendums will only be allowed if ground practices are proposed and CEQA review determines that additional information is required. Examples of plan addendums may include:

- Biological surveys
- Geologic reports

## An Emergency Forest Management Plan (EFMP)

For those properties that have been substantially damaged by the qualifying conditions of 14 CCR §1052.1(a)(1-3) in the California Forest Practice Rules, meet the definition of Substantially Damaged as per 14 CCR §1526.1 and are in immediate need of reforestation and have had an emergency notice, as per 14 CCR §1052 submitted and successfully operated on, the California Forest Improvement Program has developed the following Emergency Forest Management Plan (EFMP) to meet the intent of a management plan that will be automatically approved upon contract approval. This plan is intended only for immediate reforestation efforts to commence and be completed. After expiration of the CFIP grant agreement, the EFMP cannot be used again in the future.

For additional information, see the [CFIP website](#).

## RPF Supervision

Supervision of your project by an RPF is a requirement and is eligible for CFIP funding. Landowners who are new to forestry work or the CFIP program are particularly encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to collaborate with an experienced professional to ensure that their project is implemented efficiently and cost effectively. Due to workload and program demand, the local FAS is typically not available to provide supervision and a consulting RPF must be hired.

RPF supervision shall be calculated based on the total number of practice acres. Multiple practices on the same acreage only count once unless the practices take place in a separate time period (e.g., Mechanical release and Follow-up herbicide treatment). Projects with high RPF supervision costs will need to be negotiated with the FAS and will be subject to approval on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, any proposed combination must be explained and justified by the RPF in the project description.

Combinations of practices where RPF supervision calculations shall only account for practice acres once include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Hand thinning/release and pruning
- Release or site prep treatments and slash disposal using a masticator or other machinery where both the removal and slash piling or mastication/chipping occur simultaneously.
- Planting and seedling protection such as VEXAR® tubing.

The higher RPF Supervision rate applies to the first twenty acres of work. Work on the remaining acres is eligible for the lower rate.

RPF Supervision is the on-the-ground over-sight and direction an RPF provides the sub-contractor who is working on a forest improvement practice.

Site Supervision is the on-the-ground oversight and direction provided by an RPF's designee in absence of the RPF when such supervision is approved by the FAS. Site supervision should be explained and justified in the Project Description.

NOTE TO RPFs: RPFs are not eligible for reimbursement for supervising work performed on their own property. However, if another RPF is hired to do the work of supervision then reimbursement for that cost (not to exceed actual cost or cap rate) may be allowable.

# Planting

## Site Preparation, Mechanical and/or Herbicide

Site preparation is the treatment and/or removal of vegetation competing or potentially competing with planted trees. The distinction must be made that site preparation is used when trees are to be planted, either manually or naturally, after clearing activities. Methods include using heavy machinery such as bulldozers, mastication, cutting and removing vegetation with chainsaws, scalping the soil with hand tools, and/or chemical treatments of the competing vegetation prior to planting.

- Light site preparation includes practices that exceed typical hand grubbing and scalping in a 12" diameter circle around a planting spot, which is included in the tree planting practice. The light rate applies to level areas with light slash and competing vegetation, such as scalping off grass in forest openings, applying pre-emergent herbicide, manually reducing slash and competing vegetation with a chainsaw and/or weed eater. The slash and competing vegetation is typically grubbed out of a 3' x 3' area to expose bare soil.
- Moderate site preparation includes reducing slash and competing vegetation on moderate slopes where the proposed practices exceed the light cap rates. Examples may include mastication of light vegetation, brush raking level to moderate slopes, or herbicide application where competing vegetation is already taller than the seedlings.
- Heavy rates are appropriate for sites where site preparation will be the most labor intensive, such as those with heavy slash, dense competing vegetation, and/or on steep slopes where the moderate site preparation rate is inadequate. Examples may include mastication of heavy slash and vegetation or manually reducing slash and competing vegetation on steep slopes. Slash is either grubbed out of a 3' x 3' area to expose bare soil or is shredded to an extent so that hand planting tools can easily clear a planting site.

Note that site preparation mechanical cannot be used together on the same acreage with pre-commercial thinning or release mechanical.

## Substantially Damaged Site Preparation

The practice is limited to areas that are substantially damaged timberlands (14 CCR 895.1), where wildfire, insects, disease, wind flood, or other blight reduced the stocking below the minimum standards of the California Forest Practice Rules. The practice involves the treatment and/or removal of large quantities of dead unmerchantable trees and snags to eliminate dangerous conditions and prepare the site for reforestation. Additional follow-up practices may be used to brush rake, pile and burn, chip, or masticate remaining brush and slash. This differs from the heavy site preparation rate because the dead unmerchantable material poses a safety risk and the volume of material exceeds the treatment costs of the heavy rate. The practice must be explained and justified by an RPF and approved by a regional FAS.

## Trees and Planting

This practice includes the purchase of tree seedlings or seeds, the costs of transporting and storage of seedlings, and the planting costs. The Department no longer requires landowners to plant a minimum number of trees based solely on site index. However, the number of trees per acre shall not exceed 300 on any site, except where explained and justified by the RPF. Interplanting requires less trees to be planted however it requires more time and effort on the part of planting crews to select appropriate site selection for individual trees. For this reason, interplanting projects will receive the same level of cost share as full planting sites. Each proposed project description shall provide approximate spacing, method of planting, number of trees per acre, planting standards, seed zone(s), species, and timing. Forestry Assistance Specialists will evaluate the proposed planting density against site specific conditions and will negotiate the cap rate for projects on an individual basis, not to exceed the heavy rate.

Slope, access, and planting difficulty are the most appropriate metrics for evaluating the appropriate cost share level.

Access and planting difficulty factors are distance to site, road conditions, amount of slash, and amount of competing brush. Light includes good access to the unit by road and good site preparation. Moderate includes some challenging access or poor site preparation. Heavy includes both challenging access and poor site preparation. Hard or rocky soils can affect productivity of planting crews. If soils are identified as a limiting factor for productivity, the cost share level selected from the above matrix shall be increased to the next higher level, not to exceed the amount available in the heavy cost share category.

Use the following as a guide:

- For a slope  $\leq 30\%$ :
  - with easy access and planting difficulty, use the Light rate
  - with medium access and planting difficulty use the Light rate
  - with hard access and planting difficulty use the Moderate rate
- For a slope 31-50%:
  - with easy access and planting difficulty, use the Light rate
  - with medium access and planting difficulty use the Moderate rate
  - with hard access and planting difficulty use the Heavy rate
- For a slope  $> 50\%$ :

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- with easy access and planting difficulty, use the Moderate rate
- with medium access and planting difficulty use the Heavy rate
- with hard access and planting difficulty use the Heavy rate

§ 1545.7. Species Selection.

Commercial tree species shall be used for reforestation projects consisting of site preparation and planting practices except that up to 10% of the area may be planted with other species in the interest of maintaining species diversity and wildlife habitat. Non-commercial species may be used in projects consisting of forest land conservation measures and fish and wildlife habitat improvement practices.

## Tree Shelters

The cost of VEXAR® or tree shelters needed to protect seedlings from browse damage.

## Pre-Commercial Thinning

Precommercial thinning means reducing the number of stems of small commercial tree species to a predetermined spacing to improve growth and/or to reduce fuel loads.

- Light applies to thinning areas with level to moderate slopes less than 35%, good access, and tree density of less than 500 TPA. The stands are typically young stands less than 30 years old with young, non-merchantable trees, and light competing vegetation. The thinning is typically conducted by a handcrews with chainsaws.
- Moderate applies to thinning areas that exceed some of the factors for light thinning due to financial and logistical factors. A typical stand may be located on slopes greater than 35% and have trees density of 300-500 TPA. Another example, a site meets the light thinning factors but has trees greater than 500 TPA. These operations are typically conducted by a handcrews with chainsaws but may be completed by masticators on favorable slopes.
- Heavy rates are appropriate for sites where slopes are greater than 35% and tree density is greater than 500 TPA or competing vegetation is very dense and tall. Heavy rates may also be appropriate on slopes less than 35% where trees are greater than 500 TPA and there is heavy competing vegetation. These operations are typically conducted by a handcrews with chainsaws on steep slopes and by masticators on favorable slopes.

Note that pre-commercial thinning and release mechanical treatments cannot be used together on the same acreage.

## Release, Mechanical and/or Other

Mechanical release involves removal of non-commercial tree species, shrubs/brush or grasses that are competing with previously planted or existing commercial tree species.

- Light applies to release areas with level to moderate slopes less than 35%, good access, and tree density of less than 500 TPA. The stands are typically young stands less than 30 years old with young, non-merchantable trees, and light competing vegetation. The release is typically conducted by a handcrews with chainsaws.
- Moderate applies to release areas that exceed some of the factors for light release due to financial and logistical factors. A typical stand may be located on slopes greater than 35% and have trees density of 300-500 TPA. Another example, a site meets the light thinning factors but has trees greater than 500 TPA. These operations are typically conducted by a handcrews with chainsaws but may be completed by masticators on favorable slopes.
- Heavy rates are appropriate for sites where slopes are greater than 35% and tree density is greater than 500 TPA or competing vegetation is very dense and tall. Heavy rates may also be appropriate on slopes less than 35% where trees are greater than 500 TPA and there is heavy competing vegetation. These operations are typically conducted by a handcrews with chainsaws on steep slopes and by masticators on favorable slopes.

Note that pre-commercial thinning and release mechanical treatments cannot be used together on the same acreage.

# Pruning

Pruning is the cutting of lower branches from trees to:

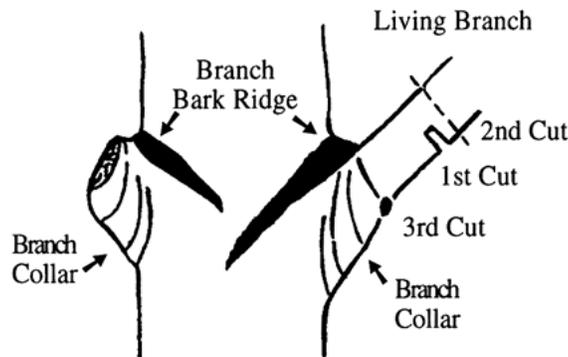
- Reduce vertical continuity of fuels
- Improve wood quality of future crop trees
- Increased ground exposure to sunlight to aid regeneration
- Improved aesthetics
- Provide greater resistance to insect and disease problems

Pruning may be funded in conjunction with thinning or release. The removal of flammable shrubs and ladder fuels is also recommended to reduce the likelihood that a ground fire burning through the stand would move up into the trees.

Pruning rates increase based on the minimum number of trees pruned per acre.

To be eligible for reimbursement, pruning cuts must be made using proper technique as described below.

Ideally, pruned branches should be less than two inches across at the base. Larger branches may need to be undercut to avoid ripping the bark below the ridge.



Branch bark ridge and branch collar

Trees close pruning wounds faster if cuts are made along an imaginary line connecting the outside of the branch bark ridge with the branch collar. Cuts made here protect the cambium area where tree growth can most rapidly close the pruning wound. "Flush" cuts made inside this line injure the trunk, providing avenues for the entry of pathogens causing tree diseases

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and decay. "Stub" cuts made outside the line will die back, attracting insects and again leaving openings for the entry of diseases and rots.

Image below is a properly executed pruning cut made close to the trunk but not disturbing the branch collar.



Image below is an improperly executed cut, made flush to the trunk, damaging the branch collar.

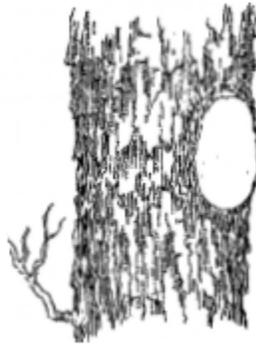


Image below is an improperly executed cut, made too far out on the branch, leaving a branch stub.



## Follow-Up, Herbicide or Mechanical or Handwork

Follow-up is work necessary to promote the survival of seed or seedlings or for protection to or enhancement of other completed practices (e.g., fuels reduction). Follow-up covers three types of project categories:

- The first pertains to any work performed within 36 months of a planting project to promote the survival of the seedlings. In most cases, insect, disease, rodent, weed, or brush control work will qualify for funding. Application of fertilizer or shade cards also falls in this category.
- The second category is work undertaken as a continuation of a prior project. This category typically includes work, such as controlling re-growth from Thinning or Release practices that occur within five years of the original project.
- The third category is slash disposal. This category can include mastication, chipping, or piling and burning of slash generated from Site Preparation, Thinning, Release, or Pruning practices and must be undertaken within 36 months of completion of the original practice. Slash generated by commercial operations is not eligible, even if that slash was exempt from the need for further treatment.

Lopping and scattering of slash to a height less than 30 inches from the ground is the minimum requirement for slash disposal on CFIP projects. The cost of lopping and scattering slash is covered by the cap rates allowed for the CFIP practice that generated the slash and are not eligible for Follow-up funding.

On the CFIP Cap Rate sheet light rates apply to easier projects on level ground, or inexpensive practices such as re-scalping. Heavy rates apply to more difficult projects on steeper slopes, and to more labor-intensive and/or expensive practices, such as chipping or use of a masticator. Follow-up practices are variable in nature and therefore final practices will be negotiated with the FAS.

## Land Conservation / Habitat Improvement

Forestland conservation practices include a variety of projects to improve habitat for fish or wildlife species, restore and enhance oak woodlands as well as erosion control projects to reduce sedimentation of streams.

A line-item budget must be submitted to document anticipated costs of conservation practices. The CFIP program does not establish cap rates for conservation practices but uses the rates of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) as a guide.

Examples of eligible practices include:

- Exclusion fencing to protect sensitive wildlife habitat such as wet meadow sites, riparian areas, and streams from livestock.
- Oak (*Quercus* species) woodland restoration
  - Planting native oak acorns
  - Tree shelters
  - Browse protection. At the discretion of the FAS additional methods to protect young oaks from browse by wildlife (not livestock) may also be eligible.
  - Removal of encroaching non-commercial trees. At the discretion of the FAS individual commercial trees of less than merchantable size or of merchantable size but poor health or form may also be removed).
- Watercourse enhancement. Projects involving work on stream channels or banks may require permits from the California Department of Fish and Game or other agencies. Agency permit fees are not eligible for CFIP reimbursement.
  - Planting streamside vegetation
  - Planting or reshaping eroding stream banks or gullies
  - Installing logs, rocks or other structures in streams to improve fish habitat
- Erosion control projects that are not identified within an NTMP or associated with the maintenance period of a THP/Harvest Document. For information on funding of forest road repair refer to [Appendix A](#) and contact your local FAS.

## Practices Not Eligible for CFIP Cost-Sharing

- Work required for compliance with the Forest Practice Act and Rules.
- Construction of new roads
- Construction or reconstruction of bridges.
- Fencing to protect stands from livestock.
- Planting of Christmas trees and greenery.
- Costs of land, water, irrigation, or purchase of tools or equipment.
- Projects designed solely to produce fuelwood.
- Fees associated with permit requirements are not eligible for cost-sharing. All permits required to complete approved forestland conservation projects must be obtained by the Grantee independent of the CFIP grant agreement. Additionally, some permits may be required prior to CFIP grant approval.

## Instructions for the RPF

### Preparing the CFIP Project Description

A CFIP Project Description explains the reforestation, timber stand improvement, forest health, fuels management, or conservation activity for which funding is requested. It should provide enough detail to allow the landowner, RPF, CAL FIRE FAS, and any forestry workers hired to implement the project to have a clear understanding of where, when and how the CFIP Project will be accomplished.

The CFIP applicant will propose work that can be completed within the contract period. Applicants with large properties or projects may apply for sequential contracts to complete additional work.

Due to contractual requirements, the following components are considered necessary for all project descriptions for CFIP.

1. Name of Grantee.
2. Name of Project Description author.
3. Project site location including all the following:
  - a. Street address, if one exists, otherwise Public Land Survey System (PLSS) location, or if in Land Grant, include the Land Grant name and a projected PLSS.
  - b. Assessor parcel number(s) for the project area
4. A description of the forest stand history, including past treatments under the Forest Practice Rules or any grant/cost-share programs. If available, include harvest document or grant agreement identification numbers of past treatments.
5. A description of the current forest stand conditions.
6. Specific practice descriptions to be conducted under CFIP. Each of the principal headings denoted below should have a separate statement addressing specific methods to be utilized and mitigation measures to be employed in accordance with CFIP Regulations and Environmental Checklist. Address CFIP Practices as follows:
  - a. If any CFIP planning practices are proposed (i.e., preparation of a CCFMP, MMP, Archaeological Survey Report, other plan addendum, EFMP), briefly describe the type of plan. Additionally, if a CCFMP or MMP will be prepared, state the template edition date that will be used. (Templates are available on the [CFIP website](#).)

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- b. RPF Supervision. Fill out the RM-12 CFIP RPF Checklist indicating the specific responsibilities the RPF accepts for each proposed practice.
- c. Site Preparation
  - i. Specify whether Site Preparation Herbicide, Mechanical, or Substantially Damaged.
  - ii. Method, target, procedures, and standards. Also include clearance distances, degree of vegetation treatment/removal, equipment, erosion control, hazard reduction, locations, restrictions, and timing.
  - iii. Additional treatments such as disking/ripping along contours, broadcast burning, burning of piles/windrows.
  - iv. Mitigation measures.
  - v. Justification for cap rate (light, moderate, heavy) selected.
- d. Trees & Planting:
  - i. Approximate spacing, method of planting, number of trees per acre, planting standards, seed zone(s), species, and timing.
  - ii. Mitigation measures.
  - iii. Justification for cap rate (light, moderate, heavy) selected.
- e. Tree Shelters:
  - i. Type, method of installation
- f. Pre-commercial Thinning:
  - i. Objective, method, and standards. Include diameter limit, disease prevention needs, spacing standards or basal area, slash treatment, timing, and method.
  - ii. Additional treatment(s) recommended.
  - iii. Mitigation measures.
  - iv. Justification for cap rate (light, moderate, heavy) selected.
- g. Release:
  - i. Specify whether Mechanical or Other.

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- ii. Objective, method, standards, and target. Also include disease prevention needs, equipment, numbers of trees prior/post treatment, pesticide prescription, slash treatment, spacing, timing, and treatment diameters.
  - iii. Slash treatment (lopping/pile and burn), include fuel loading and treatment objectives, standards, and timing.
  - iv. Additional treatment(s) recommended.
  - v. Mitigation measures.
  - vi. Justification for cap rate (light, moderate, heavy) selected.
- h. Pruning:
- i. Objective and method.
  - ii. Number of trees per acre to be prune.
  - iii. Height to which trees will be pruned - the minimum requirement is ten feet (as measured from the uphill side of the tree) or  $\frac{1}{2}$  the live crown ratio, whichever is the lesser.
  - iv. Slash treatment.
  - v. Mitigation measures.
- i. Follow-up:
- i. Specify whether Herbicide, Mechanical, or Handwork.
  - ii. Type, purpose, method, standards, and timing.
  - iii. For follow-up slash treatment, explain and justify the size of material to be treated, the percent of area to be treated, and the final depth of treated material.
  - iv. Mitigation measures.
  - v. Justification for cap rate (light, moderate, heavy) selected.
- j. Land Conservation – Erosion Control or Habitat Improvement Project:
- i. What improvements are intended and how they will be physically accomplished.

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- ii. Each element of work must be broken down with an estimated cost based on the rates allowed under EQIP.
- 7. Necessary Field Work: Layout project in the field with flagging or marked by readily identifiable existing physical feature, such as roads.
- 8. Estimate the approximate net acreage of each practice and explain how the acreage was determined.

## Preparing the Property Location Map

- Map will contain a north arrow.
- Map will contain a scale.
- Map will depict the travel route from the nearest community or the nearest county road. The community or county road will be legibly labeled on the map.
- If the property has a street address, the street address will be listed on the map.
- Map will depict the boundaries of:
  - The entire property if the project is development of a management plan OR
  - The project area if the project is for ground practices and not a management plan.

## Preparing the Project Map

*If the project map also meets the standards for the property location map, then a single map may be utilized.*

- Map will contain a north arrow.
- Map will be topographic; scale will be at least 1:24,000.
- Map will contain a legend listing the USGS Quadrangle Name.
- Map will contain a legend listing the range, township, and section #s (or other identifying method, such as assessor parcel number, if the area has not been surveyed).
- Map will depict the boundaries of the entire project area and of each CFIP practice, if more than one practice is proposed.
- Map will depict the location of all roads within and adjacent to the project area. The roads will be classified consistent with the Forest Practice Rules.
- Map will depict the location of all watercourses within and adjacent to the project area. The watercourses will be classified consistent with the Forest Practiced Rules.
- Map will depict the location of the Coastal Zone if the zone is within or adjacent to the property. (No part of the ground practices can be in the coastal zone. A management plan can be in the coastal zone.)

## Appendix A – Road Work

Funding of forest road repair and upgrading may be allowed at Stewardship Forester's discretion and only if it protects, maintains, or enhances fish and wildlife habitat and/or is in compliance with the funding source available at the time of application.

Please contact the local FAS for information regarding eligibility of specific road work projects.

## Appendix B – Advance Guidelines

### Introduction

The ability to advance payments for landowner grant agreements is dependent upon the requirements of various funding sources that are allocated to the Program. Therefore, please contact the local FAS for information regarding advance payments and case specific requirements for an approved CFIP contract.

### Eligible Practices

- RPF Supervision (must be associated with one or more of the on-the-ground practices identified below)
- Site Preparation
- Trees and Planting
- Tree Shelters
- Pre-commercial Thinning
- Pruning
- Release
- Follow-up/Slash Disposal
- Forest Land Conservation Measures: Includes erosion control and road rehabilitation
- Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Improvement Projects

### Non-Eligible Practices for Advancement Funding

- Self – Labor
- Preparation of a Forest Management Plan
- Preparation of archaeology or CEQA related documents

### Advancement Funding Limitations

- No single advance payment shall exceed 25% of the total cost-share amount (Total Award) or \$50,000, whichever is lessor. No more than a total of \$50,000 may be in advancement on any project at any one time.

## Required Documentation

**New Contracts:** Please start at “Advancement Supporting Documentation below.

**Existing Approved Contracts:** For existing contracts, advancements shall be requested through the Invoice Cover Page Form (RM-16). For an Advancement request, the Participant shall complete the RM-16 Invoice Cover Page and in the notes field, describe very briefly the advancement request. The Participant must include the required Advancement Supporting Documentation below.

(For CFIP grant agreements that have been approved and do not include the advancement language/provisions located within the revised RM-7A (CFIP Agreement) dated September 2022, the Participant shall include the advancement language/provisions on a separate sheet (please see Advancement Supporting Documentation below).

If the Advancement request is found to be incomplete in a material way or the proposed request is not eligible, the Participant/Grantee will be informed that the request is ineligible. Only when an Advancement request application package is complete will the Forestry Assistant Specialist (FAS) recommend approval and submit to the Stewardship Forester/Grants Management Unit for final approval.

## Advancement Supporting Documentation

The following supporting documentation is required to be included within the participants request for an advance:

1. **RM-8 CFIP Project Budget;** Identify the requested advance amount for each proposed practice (the requested advance amount is the Grantee reimbursement amount, not the total estimated cost amount). Additionally, identify the treatment acreage associated with the practice along with the Grantees cost-share amount. The advance amount must correspond to the acreage/rate that is identified within the CFIP Advance Project Description and the acreage/rate that is identified within the approved CFIP contract. The requested advance amount shall only be for the State’s share of the cost-sharing agreement awarded to the Grantee/Participants. The Grantee/Participants cost-sharing match shall also be identified on the form. A RM-16 CFIP Invoice Cover Page that includes both the advancement amount, and the Grantee/Participants cost-sharing match is required to liquidate the advancement to the Grantee/Participants.
2. For CFIP grant agreements that do not include the advancement language/provisions located within the revised RM-7A (CFIP Agreement) dated September 2022, the Participant shall include the advancement language/provisions on a separate sheet of paper and include with their supporting documentation. This is Item 25 (a through k) on the CFIP Agreement (RM-7A).

3. **CFIP Advance Description:** The participant shall complete a project description identifying how the funds shall be utilized over the six-month period. The project description must correspond to what is identified within the approved RM-8 CFIP Project Budget along with what is identified within the approved CFIP Agreement/Application Project Description. To ensure enforceability of the CFIP Grant Agreement, the project description shall provide detailed information regarding how the treatments associated with the advance request shall be accomplished. Information contained within the project description is not limited to, but shall contain the following items:
  - a. In-order for the Grant Manager/FAS to effectively monitor the advancement requirements, specifically the time constraints, the project description shall state that the Grantee/Participant or RPF of record shall notify the Grant Manager/FAS of the commencement of operations.
  - b. Identify the treatment along with the acres and cost per acre. Treatment area shall be clearly shown on the Advancement Treatment Area Map.
  - c. For each treatment associated with the Advancement, detailed information shall be included regarding how the treatments associated with the advance request shall be accomplished.
4. **Map of Advancement Treatment Area:** On titled USGS (if available) or equivalent topographic maps of a scale not less than 2" to the mile, the advance treatment area shall be clearly shown. A legend shall be included indicating the meaning of the symbols used, the scale, location (Township/Range/Section), and North arrow.
5. **Approval Letter for Environmental Clearance – Existing Approved Contracts:** The participant shall include a copy of the approved CAL FIRE FAS environmental clearance letter.
  - a. For new contracts, advances cannot be dispersed until the Environmental Clearance has occurred. Obtain FAS approval of the environmental clearance prior to requesting the advancement.
6. **Completed Land Use Addendum – Existing Approved Contracts:** The participant shall include the completed Land Use Addendum if required.
  - a. For new contracts, advances cannot be dispersed until the Land Use Addendum has been recorded.
7. **Contractor Verification – Existing Approved Contracts:** The participant shall include verification that a contractor has been secured to complete the treatments associated with the advance within the six-month time-period.
  - a. For new contracts, advances cannot be dispersed until the contractor verification has occurred.

## Advance Payment Request Modification

The participant may request an Advance Payment Request modification through the amendment process. Approval of the Advance Payment Request modification is at the discretion of the Forestry Assistant Specialist and subject to STATE approval. The CFIP Amendment Form shall be utilized to facilitate this modification request.

The notice of an advancement extension shall be provided to the Department at least 60 days, prior to the expiration date of the advancement. The notice shall include the circumstances that prevented a timely completion of the advancement. A request to extend the advancement expiration date shall not be granted if operations associated with the advancement have not commenced. A CFIP inspection may be required prior to approval of an extension to an advancement to verify that advancement operations have commenced.

RM-8 Budget Adjustment: It is acceptable to request an adjustment to the budget that includes the advancement. Two acceptable Budget Adjustments are as follows:

1. *Substantially Damaging Event*: If the area is substantially damaged by an event such as a fire, the Budget can be adjusted to reflect the event. In this scenario, all advancement supporting documentation would also have to be updated to reflect the event. In addition, an amendment must be completed for the approved CFIP contract. The expiration date of the advancement would remain the same unless the amendment also requested an extension.
2. *Under Budget*: In the event that a proposed treatment(s) associated with the advancement has been completed to the advancement project description specifications and the completed treatment(s) came under budget then the remaining funds associated with the treatment(s) can be reallocated to liquidate the advancement. In this instance, the participant would be allowed to reallocate the funds to an approved treatment (including the cost per acre) identified within the approved CFIP Contract rather than returning the funds in-order to obtain another advancement (entire advancement must be liquidated or returned before an additional advancement can be requested or additional invoices submitted that are not associated with an advancement). In this scenario, an amendment would have to be completed for the approved CFIP contract. The expiration date of the Advancement would remain the same unless the amendment also requested an extension.

Budget adjustments shall not be allowed for a decrease in the treatment acreage when the advancement amount associated with the treatment is unchanged. An increase in the advancement shall not be allowed. A Budget Adjustment is at the discretion of the Forestry Assistant Specialist and subject to STATE approval.

Advancement Expiration Extension Request: The Participant may only request an extension of the Advancement expiration date if operations associated with the Advancement have commenced or the acreage associated with the Advancement has been substantially damaged by an event such as a fire. Acceptable extension requests are as follows:

1. The Forestry Assistant Specialist (FAS) is unable to inspect/approve the final Advancement Agreement invoice due to an assignment associated with a State emergency or the FAS is not available to inspect the final invoice in a timely manner.
2. The acreage associated with the Advancement Agreement has been substantially damaged by fire and the scope of the project has significantly changed.
3. Verification from the nursery that delivery of the seedlings was delayed.

An Advancement expiration extension request shall not be granted for pile burning. An Advancement expiration extension request is at the discretion of the Forestry Assistant Specialist and subject to STATE approval.

## CFIP Advancement Invoicing

The Participant/Grantee shall submit an invoice that identifies the acreage that has been completed along with the total actual cost. Supporting documentation shall include proof of payment of all costs including State and landowner cost share through submittal of cancelled checks, contractor invoices reflecting "\$0" balance (must be signed by the contractor), or other proof of payment. A contractor invoice alone is not sufficient proof of payment. A map shall be included within the supporting documentation identifying the completed area associated with the completion report (map shall comply with the mapping requirements identified within "*CFIP Advancement Supporting Documentation*").

All work under a previous advance payment must be fully liquidated via an invoice (including supporting documentation) which fully documents expenses and landowner cost share amount, completed to the STATE's satisfaction before further invoices can be paid or another advance payment requested.

## Returning of Unspent Advancement Funds

The advance payment shall be spent on eligible costs within six months of advance payment receipt. Any advance payment received by a participant and not used for project eligible costs

shall be returned to CAL FIRE within 30 days of expiration of the contract date. Supporting documentation to be attached to the form shall include:

1. Letter stating that advancement funds are being returned to the STATE and brief explanation of advance expenditure.
  - a. If operations associated with the Advancement did not commence, the letter shall identify the circumstances that prevented commencement of operations. This justification letter shall be utilized to determine not only if future Advancements shall be allowed, but also, the termination of the CFIP Agreement.
2. Copy of the approved invoice utilized for granting the advancement.
3. Copy of the last approved invoice.
4. Check payable to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The Participant/Grantee shall submit the package to the FAS. The FAS will ensure all information is accurate and complete and then submit the package to the Stewardship Forester/Grants Management Unit for approval and processing. As a note, no reimbursements for an invoice shall be approved until the Advancement is liquidated, either through approved invoices or the returning of unspent advancement funds.

## Loss of Funding

The following are examples of actions that may result in a Grantee's/Participants loss of funding:

- Grantee/Participant withdraws from the Program (withdraw/terminates contract).
- Grantee/Participant fails to complete the funded project scope of work.
- Grantee/Participant fails to submit all documentation within the time periods specified in the Agreement.
- Grantee/Participant fails to comply with all CEQA requirements.
- Grantee/Participant fails to comply with all Archaeological requirements.
- Grantee/Participant changes the project scope or budget without concurrence of the State.
- Grantee/Participant fails to comply with the terms of the Agreement unless such failure was due to no fault of the grantee, hereunder discretion of the State.

## Appendix C – Competitive Ranking Criteria

The final application package will be filed and ranked by the FAS using the applicable edition of the RM-10 CFIP Ranking Form.

The current RM-10 CFIP Ranking Form is published on the [CFIP website](#).

Authority for competitive ranking of CFIP applications comes from 14 CCR § 1533. Ranking and Approval of Filed Applications:

The Director shall periodically rank all filed applications for cost sharing agreements according to the following priority rating table. The Director may then approve filed applications in order of priority, giving consideration to administrative constraints such as seasonal variations in applications and the availability of funds that might apply to different types of projects. The Director may give preference to proposed projects which consist only of forest land conservation practices and fish and wildlife habitat improvement practices to the extent necessary to comply with Public Resources Code 4794(c).

## Appendix D – Definitions & Acronyms

CFIP: California Forest Improvement Program. A CAL FIRE's cost-share incentive program, the subject of this guide. CFIP was created by the California Forest Improvement Act of 1978 under Sections 4790-4799.05 of the Public Resources Code (PRC). CAL FIRE has adopted official State guidelines for implementing the act under Articles 1-8, Chapter 9.5, Division 1.5, Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (eff. 8/79). When there is a question about the Program, the ultimate reference should be either from one of these two legal documents or from the CFIP Program Manager at the following email address: [CFIP@fire.ca.gov](mailto:CFIP@fire.ca.gov).

EQIP: Environmental Quality Incentives Program. A program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service.

FAS: Forestry Assistance Specialist. A CAL FIRE Forester who administers CFIP in a CAL FIRE Unit or Region.

NRCS: Natural Resource Conservation Service. A service within in the United States Department of Agriculture.

RPF: Registered Professional Forester. A forester licensed to practice in the state of California by the State of California Board of Forestry.

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture