

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, the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund (TRFRF) and recent Wildfire Resilience budget enhancements.

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 grant by grant 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 a 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 (LUA), shall be recorded with the local Office of the County Recorder at the time of the first invoice associated with ground operations. 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. Each individual practice must meet the minimum contiguous 5-acre requirement.

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. Note: A FAS cannot recommend an RPF. The California Board of Forestry maintains a list of Consulting RPF's at the following website: <https://bof.fire.ca.gov/projects-and-programs/professional-foresters-registration/rpf-crm-rosters>. A "Yes" in the "CFIP, Stewardship" column on this roster means that the Forester has indicated a willingness to take on CFIP clients.

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.

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).

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 of each of the following documents.

- RM-7A CFIP Agreement (See [Appendix A – Signature Authority](#) for more information.)
- 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.)
- A STD 204 Payee Data Record is required. (An optional STD 205 Payee Data Record Supplement may also be submitted. Both forms are available from the FAS or the Office of the State Controller.)
- A copy of the recorded deed for every Assessor's parcel that is part of the project area and any additional documentation necessary to establish signature authority for CFIP. (See [Appendix A – Signature Authority](#) for more information.)
- 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 to 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. Be sure to note the “Approval for the Director” signature date on the RM-7A in the agreement; this is the date the grant agreement was approved, costs incurred on or before this date will be not eligible for reimbursement under the CFIP grant agreement.

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. The RPF rate for the first 20 acres is, in part, increased to cover the costs of the CEQA analysis, CNDDB run and filling out the checklist. 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 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. See [Appendix C – Invoicing CFIP](#) for more information.

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.

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Step 6: Reimbursement. The FAS forwards the final CFIP invoice package to Sacramento for reimbursement. CAL FIRE aims to reimburse the Grantee within 45 days of receiving a complete and accurate invoice package.

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](#).

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 land conservation / habitat improvement practices.
- 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

Overview

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 are reviewed annually by Program and approved by the California Board of Forestry.

Cap rates to be used for new CFIP applications are published on the [CFIP website](#), under More Information. The cap rates for an existing CFIP grant will be the cap rates that were in effect on the date the grant was approved by CAL FIRE. These rates are stated in the grant agreement. Cap rates from prior years are not posted to the CFIP website but are available by request from your FAS.

CFIP’s standard published rates or lesser amounts may be proposed, but rates may not exceed the heavy cap rate.

Contractor Labor or Self Labor

CFIP allows participants to choose between hiring a contractor or doing the work themselves. See the cap rates sheet and [Expense Record Standards for RPF & Sub/Contractors](#) and [Expense Record Standards for Self-Labor](#) for more information.

Please note that 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.

Self-labor and contractor labor may both be used on the same project, but not on the same practice. 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. 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](#).)

Self-labor is at the discretion of both the FAS and Stewardship Forester.

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.

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).

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. This may be due to the high likelihood of rare, threatened, or endangered species on or near the project, geological concerns or other unforeseen issues not normally encountered in CFIP projects. Plan addendums will only be allowed if ground practices are proposed and CEQA review determines that additional information is required. Plan addendums shall include an additional written report.

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, or RPF's supervised designee, provides the sub-contractor who is working on a forest improvement practice.

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.

- 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 handcrew 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 handcrew 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 handcrew 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 handcrew 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 handcrew 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 handcrew 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 conifers to:

- Improve wood quality of future crop trees.
- Increased ground exposure to sunlight to aid regeneration.
- Provide greater resistance to insect and disease problems.

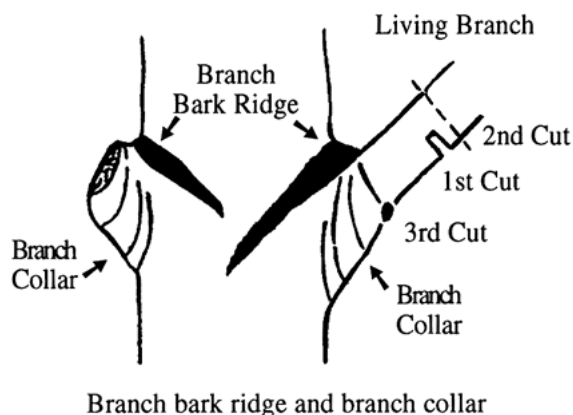
Pruning may be funded in conjunction with thinning or release. Pruning is designed to improve log quality on commercial conifer tree species.

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

- Light applies to stands where 50-99 conifer trees per acre will be pruned.
- Moderate applies where 100-149 conifer trees per acre will be pruned.
- Heavy applies where 150 conifer trees per acre, or more, will be pruned.

To be eligible for reimbursement, pruning cuts must be made using proper technique as described below, and each tree must be pruned to a height of at least 10 feet from the ground on the uphill side of the tree.

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.



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

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this line injure the trunk, providing avenues for the entry of pathogens causing tree diseases 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. Follow-up covers three types of project categories:

- The first pertains to any work performed 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, Pre-commercial Thinning, Release, or Pruning practices and must be undertaken within 18 months of completion of the original practice. Proposals to separate the piling and burning into two follow-up practices, or to pile and not burn, may be allowed at CAL FIRE Unit, CFIP FAS and Stewardship Forester discretion and must be disclosed in the project description. 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

This practice can include measures designed to protect, maintain, or enhance the forest resource system, including soil and watershed values and diversity of forest species.

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 are eligible only if they 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.
- CFIP does not fund projects that are also funded for the same or equivalent practice on the same acreage by any local, state, or federal program or grant. CFIP projects may be used in conjunction with other funding sources to complement each other. Simultaneous projects will be closely coordinated with other funding partners.

Instructions for the RPF

Preparing the CFIP Project Description

A CFIP Project Description explains the reforestation, timber stand improvement, forest health, 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](#).)
 - 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.
- ii. Objective, method, standards, and target. Also include disease prevention needs, equipment, numbers of trees prior/post treatment,

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pesticide prescription, slash treatment, spacing, timing, and treatment diameters.

- iii. Slash treatment (lopping/pile and burn), include 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).
- 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 / Habitat Improvement:

- i. What improvements are intended and how they will be physically accomplished.
- ii. Each element of work must be broken down with an estimated cost based on the rates allowed under EQIP.

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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 contain a scale; scale will be at least 1:24,000.
- Map will be topographic. At least two contour lines will have elevation labels. Contour interval will be stated on the map.
- 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.

Appendix A – Signature Authority

CFIP standards for signature authority documentation vary depending on the entity listed as owner on the deed(s) for the CFIP project area. This appendix addresses the most common ownership types associated with CFIP applications. If your ownership type is not addressed here, please consult with your FAS for additional guidance.

Please note that CFIP grants are awarded only to deeded owners; never to lease holders.

If one or more deeded owners is/are deceased, it is suggested that you update your property deed before applying for a CFIP grant.

Single Individual, Married Couple, Multiple People

If the owner(s) listed on the deed(s) is a single individual, married couple, or multiple family members, or multiple unrelated people, then all persons listed on the deed must sign the RM-7A CFIP Agreement form (only one person will be the Grantee, all other persons will be Participants), and no other support documentation is required to establish signature authority for CFIP.

Use the RM-7B CFIP Agreement – Continuation Sheet if additional space is needed for more people to sign.

If a deeded owner cannot sign the RM-7A, then they need to provide a notarized Power of Attorney letter that names the Grantee as the person who can sign on their behalf.

Trust

If the CFIP applicant is a Trust the application must include the portion of the Trust that names the trustee/s. Alternatively, a “Statement of Trust” often referred to as a “Declaration of Trust” may be accepted.

Limited Partnership

In California, the LP-1 form is the "Certificate of Limited Partnership" form, which is used to formally establish a Limited Partnership (LP) with the California Secretary of State. The LP-10, Restated Certificate of Limited Partnership, is another form related to LPs in California, and it reiterates information originally filed via the LP-1 and is required to be filed every two years. If the CFIP applicant is an LP, the CFIP application package must include either a copy of the Secretary of State approved LP-1 (if the LP is less than two years old) or a copy of the approved LP-10 dated within two years of date of receipt by the FAS.

Limited Liability Corporation

In California, the LLC-1 form is the "Articles of Organization" form, which is used to formally establish a Limited Liability Company (LLC) with the California Secretary of State. The LLC-12, Statement of Information, is another form related to LLCs in California, and it reiterates information originally filed via the LLC-1 and is required to be filed every two years. If the CFIP applicant is an LLC, the CFIP application package must include either a copy of the Secretary of State approved LLC-1 (if the LLC is less than two years old) or a copy of the approved LLC-12 dated within two years of date of receipt by the FAS.

Corporation

The Corporation must name an officer as a Representative. The corporation must provide documentation of the status of the person acting as Representative. This can be corporate paperwork or an official Board Action, or other similar official, documented proof.

Public Entities, Agencies, Non-Profits (run by Board of Directors)

The application must include documentation from the Board of Directors or governing body authorizing the person signing the documents to be the Representative. A resolution or letter from the Board of Directors naming the representative will be verified by CAL FIRE.

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 grant.

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
- Land Conservation / Habitat Improvement

Limitations

- The following practices are not eligible for advancement funding:
 - Preparation of a California Cooperative Forest Management Plan, CFIP Mini Management Plan, Emergency Forest Management Plan, or an Archaeological Addendum.
 - CFIP practices performed by self-labor.
- No advance payment shall exceed 25% of the Maximum Reimbursement listed on the RM-8 CFIP Project Budget, or \$50,000, whichever is lessor.
- Each advance must be fully liquidated before another advance can be requested and before further invoices can be paid.

Advance Payment Request – Required Documentation

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

1. **RM-16 CFIP Invoice Cover Page.**
2. **CFIP Advance Payment Request & Progress Report, Section 1 & Section 2.** A template for this report is available from the FAS. The most current version of the report must be utilized.
3. **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.
4. **Environmental Clearance Letter:** The Grantee shall include a copy of the approved CAL FIRE FAS environmental clearance letter.
5. **Contractor Verification:** The Grantee shall include verification that a contractor has been secured to complete the treatments associated with the advance within the six-month time-period.
6. **Recorded Land Use Addendum:** The Grantee shall include the completed Land Use Addendum if one was required.
7. **For CFIP grant agreements that do not include the advancement language/provisions,** the Grantee shall include the advancement language/provisions on a separate sheet of paper and include with their supporting documentation. This language is included in Item 25 (a through k) of the CFIP Agreement (RM-7A) dated 09/22 or newer.

If the Advancement request is found to be incomplete in a material way or the proposed request is not eligible, the Grantee will be informed that the request is ineligible.

Only when an Advancement request application package is complete will the FAS recommend approval and submit the package to the Stewardship Forester.

Utilizing & Reporting on the Advance

Advance payments must be deposited into an interest-bearing Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) insured bank account. The account must provide the ability to track interest and withdrawals. Any interest earned on advance payment funds must be accounted for and used to offset the project cost or returned to CAL FIRE. To better preserve your privacy, and to simplify the tracking of interest earned on the advance, the Grantee is strongly advised to deposit the advance funds into a separate account and not intermingle these funds with other personal/business accounts.

In-order for the FAS to effectively monitor the utilization of the advance, specifically the time constraints, the Grantee shall complete **CFIP Advance Payment Request & Progress Report, Section 3** and submit this report to the Forestry Assistance Specialist at the following intervals:

- Part A. To be completed four months after receiving advance funds.
- Part B. To be completed at six months if advance funds HAVE NOT been completely liquidated.
- Part C. To be completed once advance funds have been completely liquidated.

Advance Invoicing – Required Documentation

In addition to the documentation required for a standard CFIP invoice package (see [Appendix C – Invoicing CFIP](#)), invoices for grants with advance balances shall include:

- Documentation of interest earned.
- Proof of payment. See [Methods for Documenting Proof of Payment](#), below.

Advance Payment Request – Modification

The Grantee may request an Advance Payment Request modification through the amendment process utilizing the RM-11 CFIP Amendment form and checking box 1. C “Other”. A CFIP inspection may be required prior to approval of an Advance Payment Request modification to verify the information provided. Approval of the Advance Payment Request modification is at the discretion of the Forestry Assistant Specialist and subject to STATE approval.

The Grantee may request an Advance Payment Request modification of either a budget adjustment or an expiration extension.

Advance Budget Adjustment Request: It is acceptable to request an adjustment to the budget that was included on the Advance Payment Request and Progress Report Form, Section 2. 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 grant agreement. The expiration date of the advancement would remain the same unless the amendment also requested an extension.
2. *Under Budget:* If a proposed treatment(s) associated with the advancement has been completed to the 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 Grantee would be allowed to reallocate the funds to an approved treatment (including the cost per acre) identified within the grant agreement 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 grant agreement. 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 FAS and subject to STATE approval.

Advancement Expiration Extension 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 a description of the circumstances that prevented a timely completion of the advancement. The Grantee may only request an extension of the Advancement

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expiration date if operations associated with the Advance have commenced or the acreage associated with the Advance has been substantially damaged by an event such as a fire. 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. Acceptable extension requests are as follows:

1. The 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 FAS and subject to STATE approval.

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. 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. CFIP Advance Payment Request & Progress Report, Section 3. A template for this report is available from the FAS. The most current version of the report must be utilized.
3. Copy of the last approved invoice package.
4. Check payable to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The 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 loss of funding:

- Grantee/Participant withdraws from the Program (cancels/terminates grant agreement).
- 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 – Invoicing CFIP

Overview of Invoice Package Pieces

A complete CFIP invoice package must contain the following documents.

- A RM-16 CFIP Invoice Cover Page, as discussed in [RM-16 CFIP Invoice Cover Page](#), below.
- If the RM-16 includes groundwork practices, the invoice package shall include a completion map that clearly shows relevant portions of the project boundary and where each invoiced practice was completed.
- Expense records as discussed in [Expense Record Standards](#), below.
- For all CFIP projects requiring a Land Use Addendum (LUA), the LUA package shall be recorded with the local county office of the recorder at the time of the first invoice associated with ground operations. An invoice that requires a LUA is not complete and cannot be approved by the FAS unless it includes a copy of the LUA marked as either recorded or conformed by the local county office of the recorder.

Payee Timeline for Submitting Invoices

When project work is complete, submit the invoice package to the FAS. Interim invoices can be submitted when at least five acres of a practice/project have been completed and approved by the FAS for invoicing. A final invoice is due within 45 days.

A final CFIP Invoice with supporting documents shall be received by or postmarked no later than 45 calendar days after completion or expiration of the grant agreement. Invoices received after this date will not be processed by CAL FIRE. (Reference RM-7A CFIP Agreement, Page 2, Item 3.)

Important Dates for Invoicing

Be sure to note the “Approval for the Director” signature date on the RM-7A in the grant agreement; this is the date the grant agreement was approved, costs incurred on or before this date are not eligible for reimbursement under the CFIP grant agreement.

Also be sure to note the date that your FAS issued environmental clearance for your CFIP project. This is the date that the FAS documented the requirements for compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) have been completed and commencement of ground activities may begin. Ground activities that occur prior to this date are not eligible for reimbursement under the CFIP grant agreement.

RM-16 CFIP Invoice Cover Page

This form is posted to the [CFIP website](#). Always utilize the most recent edition of this form when preparing the invoice package; older editions will not be accepted.

See the Payee Instructions section RM-16 CFIP Invoice Cover Page for information on completing this form.

The Payee signature must be provided by the same person who signed the STD 204 Payee Data Record associated with the grant agreement. Other grant participants may not sign the RM-16 as the Payee unless a STD 205 Payee Data Record Supplement was also completed and approved by CAL FIRE.

Please note that the amounts reported by the Payee in the Total Actual Cost column must match the expense records attached to the invoice package. Do not reduce or increase the values in this column to match the Eligible Costs. Eligible costs by practice are addressed on the RM-9 CFIP Invoice Completion Report, which is a form completed by the FAS, and appended to the invoice package.

Expense Record Standards for RPF & Sub/Contractors

The Payee must submit RPF and contractor expense records (invoices) to support all costs listed in the Total Actual Cost column on the RM-16 CFIP Invoice Cover Page. If subcontractors are used, copies of the subcontractor invoices must also be submitted.

RPF, contractor/sub-contractor invoice(s) must contain line items for CFIP eligible expenses that clearly match the practice(s) included on the RM8 CFIP Project Budget in the grant agreement and correspond to costs listed on the RM-16 CFIP Invoice Cover Page included in the accompanying invoice package.

Example:

“40 acres of mastication, \$50,000.” This is not acceptable.

“40 acres of Site Preparation Mechanical \$50,000.” This is acceptable.

RPF, contractor/sub-contractor invoice(s) must state the dates (or date range) for when work was performed for each CFIP practice billed; date invoice was issued is not acceptable by itself.

Example:

“Invoice No. 012, Date 7/2/26”. This is not acceptable.

“Invoice No. 012, Date 7/2/26, Work Dates 6/1-30/26”. This is acceptable.

When interim invoicing, be careful that dates and work descriptions claimed on each invoice do not duplicate the expenses claimed on and reimbursed under an earlier invoice.

RPF, contractor/sub-contractor invoice(s) must separately list costs for each CFIP practice and must state the completed acreage associated with each practice. If an invoice lists CFIP practices with time-based costs (e.g. billed by hour) only, then the Payee must submit further written documentation stating the amount of completed acreage the listed time represents. This additional documentation must be provided by the party that issued the invoice to the Payee (i.e. the RPF can add a note addressing acreage for their own invoices, but not for invoices from contractors or subcontractors.)

Example:

If the contractor invoice states “Description: CFIP, QTY 1, Rate \$57,100.00, Amount \$57,100.00” this is not sufficient.

But if the contractor invoice also includes that statement “Pre-commercial Thinning 20 Acres \$24,295, Pruning 20 acres \$8,420, Follow-up Mechanical 20 acres \$24,295” then this is sufficient.

Expense Record Standards for Self-Labor

For practices approved for self-labor, grantees must keep a log documenting costs for equipment, labor, materials and supplies and any contracts. The log must be sufficiently detailed to support all costs listed in the Total Actual Cost column on the RM-16 CFIP Invoice Cover Page.

Rates per Hour will be calculated based on the methods described in the CFIP Cap Rates document that was posted [CFIP website](#) and in effect at the time the grant agreement was approved by CAL FIRE.

An Excell workbook template titled CFIP Cost Accounting Worksheet for Self-Labor is available from your FAS and is intended to assist you with tracking your costs in an approved format. Use of this template is not required, but if an alternative method of tracking self-labor costs is used, then the Payee is responsible for collecting data in a written format that meets the same minimum standard as those included on the CFIP Cost Accounting Worksheet for Self-Labor template and listed here:

- Equipment
 - Practice. The Practice must match the RM-8 CFIP Project Budget of approved grant agreement; do not use other descriptors (e.g. "Fuel Reduction" is not acceptable).
 - Date Worked. This is the actual date(s) the equipment was used. Do not include dates the equipment sat idle
 - Hours Worked
 - Equipment Used and Corresponding Rate Per Hour. The equipment description must be sufficiently clear for CFIP to verify that the appropriate Rate Per Hour for the equipment was logged. Refer to the CFIP Cap Rates sheet for a discussion of how rates for self-labor are determined. If Department of Transportation (DOT) costs are to be used, then the log will include the DOT Code for the equipment. If equipment was rented, rental receipts must be submitted with the invoice package.
 - Subtotal for each line item
- Labor
 - Practice. The Practice must match the RM-8 CFIP Project Budget of approved grant agreement; do not use other descriptors (e.g. "Fuel Reduction" is not acceptable).

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- Date Worked. This is the actual dates laborer(s) worked.
- Hours Worked
- Labor Rate Per Hour. Alternatively, expenses may be documented by submitting actual receipts for wages paid to direct employees.
- Subtotal for each line item
- Materials and Supplies
 - Practice. The Practice must match the RM-8 CFIP Project Budget of approved grant agreement; do not use other descriptors (e.g. "Fuel Reduction" is not acceptable).
 - Material Used
 - Date Purchased. Dates must match receipts. Receipts must be submitted with the invoice package.
 - Quantity
 - Rate
 - Subtotal for each line item
- Contracts
 - Practice. The Practice must match the RM-8 CFIP Project Budget of approved grant agreement; do not use other descriptors (e.g. "Fuel Reduction" is not acceptable).
 - Vendor
 - Kind of Work
 - Rate. Receipts for contractor or sub-contractor work must be submitted with the invoice package.
 - Subtotal for each line item
- Subtotals for each of the four categories above (Equipment, Labor, Materials, Contracts)
- Total for the log (i.e. sum of Equipment, Labor, Materials, Contracts subtotals)

Methods for Documenting Proof of Payment

Canceled Check

Canceled check is an official term used in banking. Canceled checks are typically available either in person at the check writer's bank, or online by logging into the check writer's account, but exact details vary by banking institution. An internet search like "how to obtain a canceled check from Chase Bank" will typically generate step by step instructions for the named banking institution. A canceled check will be an image that shows the front and back of the check (often with account numbers redacted for security) and image of the check back will show who deposited/cashed the check and on what date.

Steps for how a check becomes canceled:

- **Issuance.** A check is written and given to the receiving party (e.g. RPF, contractor, subcontractor, direct employee).
- **Deposit or cashing.** The receiving party deposits or cashes the check at their bank.
- **Processing.** The receiving party's bank sends the check to a clearinghouse or directly to the check writer's bank.
- **Verification.** The check writer's bank confirms sufficient funds and account validity.
- **Transfer of funds.** The money is debited from the check writer's account and credited to the receiving party's account.
- **Cancellation.** The bank marks the check as canceled, completing the transaction.

Zero Balance Invoice or "Paid" Invoice

An RPF, contractor, or subcontractor invoice reflecting receipt of payment and showing "\$0" balance is acceptable.

An invoice marked as "Paid" is acceptable if the "Paid" mark is part of the invoice itself (i.e. text added electronically after the fact will not be accepted), or the Paid mark is signed and dated by the billing party (i.e. an RPF may not mark a contractor's invoice as paid.)

Digital Receipt

Digital receipts are highly variable. Digital receipts will only be accepted if they state the name of the issuer, name of receiving party, amount of payment, and date of payment.

Appendix D – Definitions & Acronyms

CFIP: California Forest Improvement Program. 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.

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

Appendix E – Road Work

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 complies with the funding source available at the time of application.

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