FLORIDA
Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) Assistance and Prevention Program

Technical Guidelines

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Florida Forest Service

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Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) Assistance and Program Technical Guidelines

A. Introduction

The southern pine beetle, or SPB (*Dendroctonus frontalis*), is a native, periodically destructive insect pest of pines in the southeastern United States. Like other pine bark beetle attacks, SPB attacks are typically limited to pines that are dying or weakened due to environmental stress, competition, age, or other factors. Under susceptible stand and environmental conditions, however, SPB populations have the potential to build rapidly and kill large numbers of pines, and may overcome the defenses of healthy trees during periodic outbreaks. Between 1993-2002, there were nearly 7,000 SPB infestations in Florida resulting in over 36,000 acres with pine mortality.

The best way to minimize losses from the SPB is to prevent infestations by reducing stand susceptibility through active forest management. Management practices that can help prevent SPB infestations and outbreaks include:

- *Thinning overstocked stands*. Dense stands with high basal areas are particularly susceptible to SPB and promote tree-to-tree spread of infestations. Overstocked stands can be thinned back to basal areas of ≤ 80 ft^2 per acre to reduce SPB susceptibility.
- *Reducing understory competition*. Thick understory woody and/or dense herbaceous vegetation can place competition stress on pines, particularly during droughts. Competing vegetation can be controlled through use of prescribed fire, mechanical treatments, or herbicides.
- *Planting less-susceptible species on appropriate sites*. Loblolly, Spruce and Shortleaf pine are among the most susceptible species to SPB. Healthy, well-managed stands of longleaf and slash pine on appropriate growing sites are at relatively low risk of SPB infestations.
- *Harvesting diseased or stagnant stands*. Stands that have declined in vigor due to disease or prolonged stagnant growth under overstocked conditions can be harvested and regenerated to lower-susceptibility conditions.

B. Program Objective

The primary objective of the SPB Assistance and Prevention Program is to prevent SPB damage and outbreaks in Florida by helping non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners to reduce the susceptibility of their forests. Toward this end, the program offers NIPF landowners cost-share or incentive payments for conducting certain approved forest management practices that help prevent and reduce the occurrence of SPB infestations. This program is administered by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) Florida Forest Service (FFS) and is funded through grants from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service.

C. Eligibility and Program Requirements

1) Eligible Ownership Types:

For the purposes of this program, a **landowner** includes any **individual or entity** (e.g., partnership, corporation, company, trust, etc.) that legally holds ownership of the land indicated on the application. The landowner is defined as the name(s) and Taxpayer Identification Number entered on the Florida Substitute W-9 Form information. The Florida Substitute W-9 Form should be entered online at https://flvendor.myfloridacfo.com. The name(s) on the W-9 form should be the same name(s) entered on the program application, and should be the name(s) that appear on the deed or other document of title evidencing ownership of the land.

Only non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners who own at least 5 acres, but not more than 5000 acres, of land in Florida are eligible to apply for funding through this program. These NIPF landowners may include private individuals or entities, joint owners, non-profit organizations, or corporations that are not wood-using industries and do not have publicly-traded stock. Ineligible owners include lands controlled by federal, state, and local governments, wood-using industries or entities that derive more than 50% of their gross income from wood-using industries; corporations with publicly-traded stock, or public utility companies.

2) Location: This program is applicable only on properties located within the known range of the Southern Pine Beetle in Florida. This includes Florida Forest Service Field Operation Regions 1 and 2, and certain counties in Region 3:

Region 1 Counties: ***Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Wakulla, Walton,*** **and** ***Washington.***

Region 2 Counties: ***Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor,*** **and** ***Union.***

Region 3 Counties: ***Citrus, Flagler, Hernando, Lake, Orange, Pasco, St. Johns, Seminole, Sumter,*** **and** ***Volusia.***

3) Cost-Share Rates: NIPF landowners who meet all eligibility and program requirements may apply to receive partial reimbursement or incentive payments for successful completion of certain approved practices. Payment will be made at a standard, specified rate for each practice (see **Appendix 1**). Submission of written documentation (e.g., receipts, invoices) of costs incurred is required for all practices except the first pulpwood thinning practice. For first pulpwood , documentation (e.g., scale tickets, volume summaries) must be shown to the County Forester, and the volume of wood harvested must be recorded on the application form.

Occasionally, landowners may choose to conduct a practice (in whole or in part) using their own resources, labor, and/or equipment, and thus may not receive a receipt or invoice from a contractor. In such cases, landowners are required to generate their own invoice and submit it at the time of project completion. See the example in **Appendix 6,** which may be used as a template.

4) **Number of Applications per Year:** Only one application per landowner is allowed per state fiscal year (see item 1 above for definition of landowner). If an individual owns land (in full or in part) in the name of more than one legal landowning entity, that individual should submit an application on behalf of only one of those landowning entities per state fiscal year. If it is determined that an individual is represented as owner on more than one application per year, the Florida Forest Service reserves the right to approve only one of those applications.

5) **Maximum Annual Payment:** The maximum cost-share reimbursement per application (and therefore, per landowner) is $10,000 per state fiscal year.

6) **Application Period:** Applications will be accepted during a specified sign-up period for a given fiscal year (**Appendix 1**). Applications received at the FFS Forest Health Section office in Gainesville before the start date, or received (or postmarked) after the end date will not be considered, or will receive lowest priority ranking for any remaining available funds. All applications received during the sign-up period will be equally evaluated and ranked for funding approval using established criteria (see **Appendix 4**). All applications must have all appropriate fields filled out and must be signed by an FFS County Forester.

7) **Minimum Practice Acreage:** First pulpwood thinning practices must be conducted on a minimum of 5 contiguous acres. All other practices cost-shared through this program must be conducted on a minimum of 10 contiguous acres. The entire area treated must be within the state of Florida and owned in the name of the same landowning entity.

8) **Multiple Parcels:** Multiple non-adjacent parcels of land may be included on the same application, provided that 1) the acreage is all within the state of Florida, 2) the total acreage limit for a given practice is not exceeded (**Section D**), and 3) all the acreage is owned in the name of the same landowner or landowning entity. For example, if John C. Doe owns two separate 20 acre parcels of pine timber, both in the name of Doe Farms, he may apply for a first pulpwood thinning practice that includes the total 40 acres on the same application. However, if John C. Doe owns two separate 20 acre parcels, one in the name of Doe Farms and one in the name of JCD Trust, he cannot include both on the same application. Neither should he submit separate applications for these two parcels in the same fiscal year (see number 4 above).

9) **Existing Pine Stand:** Each practice in this program (with the exception of Seedling Establishment and pre-planting herbicide control) must be applied to an existing pine stand, which is defined (for the purposes of this program) as a forest stand (plantation or natural) in which pine species (*Pinus* spp.) constitute at least 70% of the stand's basal area or stem density.

10) **Prior practices:** Any practices performed prior to application approval are not eligible for cost-share reimbursement. Each landowner will be notified in writing when his/her application has been approved.

11) **CRP Landowners:** Acreages enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), or other programs that may prohibit receipt of federal cost-share funds from more than one source for the same acreage, are not eligible for treatment under this program.

12) **Stand Maintenance Requirement:** Pine stands established or treated with funds from this program must be maintained for at least five (5) years following completion of the treatment. In other words, a stand may not be harvested or intentionally destroyed within five years from the date of any SPB Prevention Program-funded treatment. The only exception to this requirement is for stands (or sections thereof) that must be harvested to salvage timber or suppress a spreading bark beetle infestation, disease infection, wildfire, or other natural disaster that destroys the stand. This provision also applies to pine seedling plantings that contained sufficient numbers of live seedlings at the time of the first year survival check (see below), but were destroyed between the survival check and the end of year 5 due to a pest infestation or natural disaster. In such cases the landowner must acquire an on-site confirmation and authorization from a FFS forester prior to harvest or stand conversion. Failure to abide by this requirement will result in the recapture of payments.

    Pine stands established through this program must have a minimum of 400 live seedlings per acre at the time of a first-year survival check conducted by the FFS County Forester in August-October following the winter planting season, or 6-10 months following a summer planting. If the plantation does not meet this minimum live density at the time of the survival check, the landowner must 1) replant or augment plant any acreage that does not comply with the minimum density requirement, or 2) repay the payments received to the state.

13) **Treatment Damage to Stands:** All treatments cost-shared in this program must be conducted in a manner that avoids or greatly minimizes injury or stress to the residual stand. If implementation of a treatment results in notable damage to the residual stand, the Florida Forest Service reserves the right to deduct areas with excessive (≥ 25% of the stand basal area or stem density) root injury, trunk injury, crown scorch (≥ 75% of canopy) or tree mortality from the final payment acreage. The Florida Forest Service also reserves the right to withhold payment for practices that are not conducted according to the requirements and standards specified in these Guidelines.

14) **Number of Practices:** On a given application, a landowner may request cost-share or incentive funds for one (1) or two (2) of the available practice options described in **Section D** below. Justification is required for certain combinations of practices on the same area; see **Section D** for details.

D. Management Practices Approved for Cost-Share Reimbursement

1) FIRST PULPWOOD THINNING

a) **Stand requirements:** This practice must be applied to an existing pine stand (see **Section C.9.**) of at least 5 acres, with an average basal area of at least 110 square feet per acre.

b) **Treatment requirements:** The treatment must be the first thinning the stand has received. After treatment, the average basal area of the stand must be at least 50 ft^2/acre but must not exceed 80 ft^2/acre. Clearcuts, patch-cuts, or any harvests other than first thinnings do not qualify. Patches cleared for necessary ramps or loading areas within the tract being thinned are not considered clearcuts and may be included in the thinned acreage. A maximum of 50 acres is eligible for payment under this program.

c) **Cost-share rate:** A flat per-acre rate (see **Appendix 1**) will be paid to the landowner for implementation of this practice, regardless of any profits gained from sale of the harvested timber. Documentation (e.g., scale tickets, volume summaries) showing tons of pulpwood removed from the stand must be retained and presented to the local FFS Forester for verification of volume harvested. This volume must be recorded on the application form when the final payment request is submitted.

2) PRESCRIBED BURNING

a) **Stand requirements:** This practice must be applied in an existing pine stand (see **Section C.9.**).
b) **Treatment requirements:** The burn must be conducted in accordance with State Chapter 590, F.S. and/or Florida Administrative Code 5I-2 and local laws, regulations, and burning restrictions. A burning authorization must be obtained from the Florida Forest Service for the day of the burn. The burn must be conducted between September 15 and May 15 with adequate equipment, personnel, and fire breaks/lines for conducting and containing the burn safely. The burn must not result in excessive crown scorch (see **Section C.13.**). A maximum of 200 acres is eligible for cost-sharing.
c) **Cost-share rate:** Payment for the successfully completed practice will be disbursed according to the per acre rate listed in **Appendix 1**. Original receipts/invoices of all costs incurred must be retained and submitted with payment request.

3) MECHANICAL UNDERBRUSH TREATMENT

a) **Stand requirements:** This practice must be applied to an existing pine stand (see **Section C.9.**) with an average basal area of at least 45 square feet per acre.
b) **Treatment requirements:** Competing woody underbrush and other understory vegetation must be reduced either with a Gyro-trac, Posi-trac, or equivalent mulching-head equipment, or with a bush-hog, Brown Tree Cutter, or other type of brush mowing equipment typically pulled with a farm tractor. Injury to roots and stems of residual pines must be avoided or minimized. A maximum of 50 acres is eligible for cost-sharing.
c) **Justification requirement:** If the landowner applies for a mechanical underbrush treatment, a justification must be included with the application, explaining why mechanical underbrush treatment (as opposed to prescribed burning) is necessary in order to meet management objectives. This justification may be included on an additional sheet of paper, submitted with the application form. Submitting a justification does not guarantee that a combination of practices will be allowed; each justification is subject to review by FFS management prior to approval.
d) **Cost-share rate:** Payment for the successfully completed practice will be disbursed according to the per acre rate listed in **Appendix 1**. Original receipts/invoices of all costs incurred must be retained and submitted with payment request.

4) SEEDLING ESTABLISHMENT

a) **General treatment requirements:** Landowners establishing a longleaf or slash pine plantation on appropriate sites (as confirmed by an FFS forester) may receive cost-share assistance for the cost of the seedlings (containerized or bare root), the planting operation (machine or hand planting), and herbicidal control of weeds. A maximum of 150 acres is eligible for cost-sharing. *Costs associated with mechanical site preparation are not eligible for cost share.*
   i) Planting density must be at least 550 trees per acre.

ii) Cost-share reimbursement of seedling costs will be limited to a maximum of 726 trees/acre. If the average trees/acre planted exceeds that density, the maximum cost-share reimbursement for seedling cost will be calculated based on 726 seedlings/acre times the number of acres planted.

iii) The landowner may choose to plant either in the fall/winter or in the summer.
   1) If a fall/winter planting is chosen, the seedlings must be planted between November 1st and March 1st.
   2) If a summer planting is chosen, the seedlings must be planted between June 1st and September 30th. Containerized seedlings must be used for a summer planting. The landowner must contact the County Forester within 5 days before the seedlings are delivered to confirm that soil moisture, seasonal rainfall trends, and extended forecast are favorable for a summer planting.

iv) The landowner must notify the County Forester when planting begins and is completed. If possible, the FFS County Forester will conduct a planting check during planting operations to confirm that the practice is being performed according to the specified standards. The FFS County Forester will conduct a planting check within three weeks after planting is complete. If at the time of inspection the practice does not conform to the specified planting standards, or there are fewer than 550 seedlings per acre, the FFS reserves the right to withhold payment for the practice.

v) The established stand must have a minimum of 400 live seedlings per acre at the time of a survival check conducted by the FFS County Forester in August-October following the winter planting season, or six to ten months after a summer planting has been completed. If this requirement is not met, the landowner must 1) replant or augment plant any acreage that does not comply with the minimum density requirement, or 2) repay the cost-shares associated with the non-compliant acreage to the state. Replanting or augment planting must be completed by March 1 of the year following the initial survival check.

b) **Planting Standards:** Seedlings must be planted in the proper manner to encourage good survival and growth. The majority of the seedlings planted must adhere to the following standards:
   i) Furrow or planting bar depth must be the appropriate depth.
   ii) The seedlings must be planted upright.
   iii) The roots must be vertical with no "U" or "J" rooting.
   iv) Seedlings must be packed tightly in the soil, so that they cannot be moved by pulling upward on three needles.
   v) Longleaf pine seedlings must be planted following the specifications established by the Long Leaf Alliance (**Appendix 2**).

c) **Species selection:** Some pine species, such as loblolly, spruce, and shortleaf pine, are known to be more susceptible to SPB outbreaks. The only species planted through this program will be longleaf and slash pine, which are both less-susceptible species.

d) **Herbicide control option:** In order to reduce competition and improve seedling growth and survival, landowners may choose to control competing vegetation, by applying an approved herbicide either before or after planting. This is not a requirement, but landowners must indicate their intention to conduct this practice on the application form when applying, in order to receive cost-share assistance for the herbicide control treatment costs after the practices are completed. The cost-share reimbursement is offered at a flat per-acre rate, and will not be multiplied if more than one treatment is applied.

i) The landowner should contact an herbicide applicator to determine the appropriate herbicide, application rate, and timing of application to use for the site. The County Foresters can provide a list of herbicide applicators in the area.
ii) Herbicide treatments carry the inherent risk of injuring or killing pine seedlings. It is the landowner's responsibility to ensure that the applicator has properly calibrated the application equipment and is using an appropriate formulation, rate, and timing; if needed, the landowner should contact the FFS Forester to confirm that these are correct.
iii) The applicator must apply the treatment in a manner consistent with all label requirements. Injury to the pine seedlings must be avoided or minimized. If excessive injury to the side seedlings occurs as a result of improper herbicide application, the FFS reserves the right to withhold payment for the practice or exclude areas of damaged seedlings from the reimbursement.

e) **Site preparation:** Although not eligible for cost-share under this program (other than pre-planting herbicide control), site preparation should be performed where it is deemed necessary by the FFS Forester for the purpose of eliminating root and shoot competition from woody or herbaceous vegetation or removing debris that would unduly interfere with the tree planting operation.

f) **Cost-share rate:** Payment for the successfully completed practice will be disbursed according to the per acre rates listed in **Appendix 1**. All receipts/invoices of costs incurred must be retained and submitted with payment request.

E. Application and Program Procedure

1) The **landowner** obtains all of the following forms from a Florida Forest Service office or the FFS website (https://www.FDACS.gov/SPBPrevention):
    1. A copy of the **SPB Assistance and Prevention Program Technical Guidelines** (this booklet).
    2. A **Program Application** form.
    3. Information submitted for the **Substitute Form W-9**. In order to process your application and pay you under this agreement, the State of Florida - Department of Financial Services has advised that a completed Substitute W-9 is required. An online version can be completed securely at: https://flvendor.myfloridacfo.com. At that website, follow the following procedure:
        - Click where it says, "Not Registered? Click Here to Register"
        - Enter your name and contact information, enter a password of your choice, and click "Register"
        - An email will be sent to you along with a User ID and instructions on how to enter the W-9 information.
        - Return again to the website at https://flvendor.myfloridacfo.com, and click where it says "Click Here to Sign On"
        - Enter your User ID from the email and the password that you chose, and click "Sign-On"

- Click where it says, "Form W-9 Main Menu", and follow the directions to enter your W-9 information. A second email with the italicized text below will be sent to you, confirming that you have successfully completed the form.

FINAL EMAIL landowner will receive:
Thank you for registering with the Florida Department of Financial Services (DFS). We received your completed Florida Substitute Form W-9. Information from this form was submitted to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) matching.

The results from the IRS Tin Matching show your IRS Name/TIN combination matches their records. Based on this match we have activated your Florida Substitute Form W-9. There are no further actions required at this time.

If you need to update your Florida Substitute Form W-9 for any of the following reasons, please return to the Florida Vendor Website:
**** You have a change in business designation (i.e., you incorporate your sole proprietorship).***
**** You change your address, telephone number or e-mail address.***
**** You are notified by the IRS that you are subject to backup withholding.***
**** You add a Doing Business As (DBA) Name.***

NOTE: If you change your TIN or sell or close your business, please contact the Vendor Management Section at (850) 413-5519 or FLW9@myfloridacfo.com. Please do not include Social Security Numbers in any emails sent to the Vendor Management Section.

- **IMPORTANT FOR PREVIOUS APPLICANTS**-It is very important to check https://flvendor.myfloridacfo.com to see if you still maintain a proper W-9. There is no guarantee that a W-9 remains within the system if you have previously applied.
- Print a copy of the Substitute Form W-9

In the event you need it, a brief tutorial on using the website can be found at https://flvendor.myfloridacfo.com/w9_training.pdf.

4. **Please be advised that unless you do not have internet access, the information MUST be submitted online at https://flvendor.myfloridacfo.com.** For questions regarding W-9 requirements or if you are unable to submit this information online, please contact the Vendor Management Section at (850) 413-5519 or via e-mail at FLW9@myfloridacfo.com
5. **Note: in order to process your application and ensure that all future correspondence and/or payment will be sent correctly, please be sure that the name and address in your Substitute W-9 form information (entered online at https://flvendor.myfloridacfo.com) match those on your application form.** At least one telephone number must be given on the application form.

2) The **landowner** contacts the **forester** or natural resource professional of his/her choice to receive practice recommendations and/or with completing the application form and a tract map. **See Appendix 3 for requirements for tract maps**. **Maps of poor quality or that do not conform to all required map standards outlined in Appendix 3 will not be accepted**. If sub-standard maps are received, the FFS County Forester or landowner will be notified and required to submit an acceptable map before the end of the sign-up period in order for the application to be considered for the program.

3) The **landowner** requests a tract visit from a **FFS forester**, who verifies that the stand conditions meet the specific requirements for the proposed treatment (see stand requirements in Sections **C**

and **D**), and that the treatment proposed is feasible. Both the **FFS forester** and the **landowner** sign the application form under the section labeled "Initial Project Approval." If the County Forester position for the area is currently vacant, contact the Forest Health Section at (352) 395-4691 to be directed to the appropriate local FFS personnel.

4) **Third party notification (optional):** The **landowner** may designate a third party (such as a consultant, family member, or authorized land manager) who will receive a copy of notifications about the status of the application (and contract, if approved). Such notifications may include (but are not limited to) information regarding:

   - Approval of application.
   - Changes to contract (extensions or other amendments).
   - Approaching contract deadlines.

   To authorize this, the **landowner** must provide a signed letter, providing the name and address of the third party and requesting that notifications regarding the status of the application/contract be sent to that party. This letter may be included with the original application, or sent separately. The **landowner** may change or cancel these third-party notifications at any time by contacting the **program coordinator** or **FFS Forester**.

5) The landowner **or** forester mails the signed application, tract map and Substitute Form W-9 copy to the **program coordinator** at the Forest Health Section:

   SPB Assistance and Prevention Program
   c/o Jeffrey Eickwort
   Florida Forest Service
   1911 SW 34th Street
   Gainesville, FL 32608

   Applications must be received at this address during the specified sign-up period for the given fiscal year (see **Appendix 1**).

   Scanned application packages can also be accepted via e-mail so long as they are complete and accurate.

   Scanned applications should be sent to the **program coordinator** (Jeffrey.Eickwort@FDACS.gov).

6) The **program coordinator** and program staff review the application materials and score the application for funding consideration using established rank criteria (see **Appendix 4**). At the end of the sign-up period (after all applications have been received and ranked), the program coordinator approves and signs all qualifying application forms, assigns a project completion date to each, and forwards them to the FFS Headquarters and the Division of Administration.

7) Once the application is approved by the Division of Administration and returned to the program coordinator as an executed contract, the **program coordinator** will mail copies of the approved contract/application, along with written notification of approval, to both the **landowner** and the

FFS forester. These should be kept on file by both the forester and the landowner until project completion. The landowner should not begin implementing the practice until this written notification of approval is received.

8) If the application is denied by either the program coordinator, FFS Headquarters or the Division of Administration, the **program coordinator** will notify the **landowner** and **FFS forester** in writing explaining the reason for denial.

9) After receiving written approval, the **landowner** is responsible for seeing that the approved practice is carried out according to all treatment and program requirements (see Sections **C** and **D** above). Practices must be completed by the completion date assigned by the program coordinator on the contract/application form. Upon completion of the practice, the **landowner** contacts the **FFS forester** to schedule a performance check.

10) The **FFS forester** revisits the property (bringing the application form) and verifies that the practice and target stocking level (if applicable) were achieved according to program requirements, and completes an Initial Stocking Form if in the case of a seedling establishment practice. The **landowner** shows the FFS forester documentation (original receipts and invoices) of all practice costs incurred, with total costs clearly indicated. If the First Pulpwood Thinning practice was conducted, the **landowner** must show the **FFS forester** the scale tickets (or other documentation) from the pulpwood sale to verify the volume of wood (in tons) harvested from the stand. Tons of pulpwood harvested must be recorded on the contract/application form.

11) If the practice has been satisfactorily completed, the **FFS forester** verifies that the remaining items on the contract/application form are filled out correctly (including total acres treated, tons of pulpwood harvested or total cost incurred, and final payment requested). The **landowner** and the **FFS forester** sign the form under the section labeled "Final Payment Approval." Either the landowner or forester mails the original contract/application, along with all receipts and invoices, to the program coordinator at the address in #5 above. This can also be submitted via e-mail to the address in #5 above. Scale tickets do not need to be forwarded, only viewed by the FFS forester for verification of volume. **Note:** If the forester determines that the practice has not been completed satisfactorily (e.g. excessive crown scorch or trunk wounding, improper residual stand stocking, etc., see practice requirements in **Section D**), the forester can request a site evaluation from the Forest Health Section to determine if partial or complete deduction of cost-shared acreage is warranted.

12) The program coordinator reviews documents and, if approved, forwards the necessary information to the Division of Administration for processing of payment. After processing, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will issue a check to the landowner. Payment will not exceed the maximum cost share limits established for each practice or $10,000 per state fiscal year.

F. Funding Availability and Priorities

The SPB Assistance and Prevention Program is supported by limited federal grant funding. All applications received during the sign-up period will be evaluated and ranked to determine which applications can be approved with the available grant funds. Applications that meet all of the eligibility and program requirements will be evaluated for funding based on established criteria outlined in

Appendix 4. A total point score will be assigned to each application based on these criteria. Applications will be prioritized for funding by ranking scores from highest to lowest. Tie scores will be ranked by random order. If a submitted application cannot be approved due to insufficient funds, the landowner will receive a letter from the project coordinator indicating 1) that the application has been placed on file, and will be funded according to the above ranking criteria once more funds become available, or 2) that the program has been discontinued indefinitely and if it is re-instituted, landowners will be required to re-apply.

G. Failure to Complete Approved Practices

If a landowner anticipates that he/she will not complete the approved practice prior to the completion date specified on the application form, but still intends to install the practice, he/she must notify the Forest Health Section **no later than 30 days before the original completion date and request an extension**. This request letter should include the landowner's name, contract number, and a well-justified reason the practice could not be completed on time. The program coordinator, in turn, will review extension requests and may grant a new completion date not to exceed 6 months past the original completion date. A landowner requesting an extension will either be sent 2 hardcopies of a contract amendment for signature, or will be informed that the extension could not be granted. If the amendment forms are sent to the landowner, they must be signed by the landowner and sent to the address indicated. The extension will not be approved until and unless the contract amendment forms are signed by both the landowner and the FDACS Director of Administration. If approved, a signed copy will be returned to the landowner. **NOTE: Extensions are not guaranteed** and in some years may not be available at all due to limited grant duration. In order to ensure payment, landowners should complete the practice by the original completion date assigned.

Landowners with incomplete practices who do not request an extension by 30 days prior to the original completion date on the application form forfeit claim to payment for those practices. Funds for those practices may be re-allocated for other applicants.

If, at any time before the expiration date, the landowner knows for certain that he/she does not intend to complete all approved practices on the application, he/she should notify the FFS forester. The FFS forester should write the word CANCELED across the top of his/her copy of the application form and send it to the program coordinator. Funds for cancelled practices may be re-allocated for other applicants.

H. Florida Forest Service Offices and More Information

To contact the FFS county forester or FFS office nearest you, consult the state government section of your phone book, or visit the web at http://www.FDACS.gov/CountyForester. For more information about the Southern Pine Beetle, visit the Forest Heath Section under "Forest Management" on the FFS web site listed above. Also, ask for the brochure "Manage Your Forest to Prevent Southern Pine Beetle" from your local FFS office.

Appendix 1.

A. SPB Assistance and Prevention Program Sign-Up Dates

The beginning and end of the sign-up period will be announced on the program website at https://www.FDACS.gov/SPBPrevention. Applications for the program must be **received** by the Florida FFS Forest Health Section office **in Gainesville** between the start and end times listed on the website. Applications **postmarked** by the end date will also be accepted. The address is:

SPB Assistance and Prevention Program
c/o Jeffrey Eickwort
Florida Forest Service
1911 SW 34th Street
Gainesville, FL 32608

Applications received in Gainesville before the start date or received (or postmarked) after the end date will not be considered or will receive lowest priority ranking for any remaining available funds. All applications received at any time during sign-up period will be equally evaluated and ranked for funding approval using established criteria (**Appendix 4**).

B. Practices and Cost-Share Payment Rates

Practice Category	Cost-share payment rate:
1. First pulpwood thinning	$50/acre
2. Prescribed burning	$15/acre
3. Mechanical underbrush treatment	$25/acre
4. Seedling establishment	
a. Containerized longleaf seedlings	$100/1000 seedlings
b. Bare root longleaf seedlings	$47.50/1000 seedlings
c. Containerized slash seedlings	$65/1000 seedlings
d. Bare root slash seedlings	$25/1000 seedlings
e. Planting (machine or hand)	$40/acre
f. Herbicide control	$25/acre

Appendix 2.

Keys to Successfully Planting Longleaf Pine

Container or bareroot? Containerized seedlings typically have a higher survival rate than bareroot (20% higher on average); are easier to hand plant; store better and for longer periods; and have a wider planting window. Bareroot seedlings have a lower cost per purchased seedling; tolerate deeper planting typical of traditional machine planting; and have a better root structure when properly planted.

There are several factors that come into play when making the containerized/bareroot decision. Do you want the seedlings planted in very straight rows with exact spacing? If so, you probably want your seedlings machine-planted. Bareroot seedlings are well suited for machine planting on intensively site prepared land. On most sites, machine planting bareroot will yield better depth control and better survival than hand-planting bareroot seedlings. Will you accept less than exact spacing and rows that are not quite as neat and straight? If so, hand planting containerized seedlings may be the best route for you.

Longleaf pine can be successfully planted using either bareroot or containerized seedlings if the proper care and techniques are applied. Repeated planting failures are generally the results of planting mistakes. Two common reasons for longleaf planting failures are: 1) Incorrect planting depth (generally too deep), and 2) Planting in established grasses (especially bermuda grass or bahiagrass).

When purchasing <u>bareroot</u> seedlings consider the following:

- Seedlings should have been undercut and laterally root-pruned at least once in nursery beds.
- Should have at least six primary lateral roots and a highly fibrous root system with numerous feeder roots.
- Seedlings should be 0.4-inch in root collar diameter or larger.
- Roots should be moist but not too wet. A dry root system means a dead seedling.
- Seedlings should have healthy foliage and no evidence of disease problems.

Seed Source Selection: It is best to plant seedlings grown from a local seed source. Most seed sources are from Coastal Plains seed production areas. In general, seed can be moved up to 100 miles north of the seed collection area.

Choosing a Tree Planting Contractor: This is one of the most important decisions you will make. Many planting failures can be traced to improper seedling handling and planting procedures by the planting crews. Make sure you pick the right contractor for the job. Choose one that has experience in successfully planting longleaf pine. Ask for references. Do not make your decision based upon per/acre cost of planting the seedlings. Paying $5-10.00 per acre more for a good, reputable contractor may mean the difference between a successful planting, or buying more seedlings and replanting the following year. Make sure your contractor and seedlings are compatible. If you line up a contractor whose only experience is planting containerized seedlings, don't buy bareroot. If you purchase bareroot, find a contractor who has been successful with bareroot. A vendor listing for tree planting contractors can be found at: https://ffs.fdacs.gov/fsvd/

Maintain Oversight of the Planting Operation: You or your representative should be on site with the planting crew to ensure that the operation meets your quality standards. You may want to hire a forestry consultant to manage or procure the contractor and planting job. Some foresters are knowledgeable about longleaf. Some are not. For assistance on this matter, contact your Florida Forest Service County Forester. The vendor listing link in the previous paragraph also lists many of the available consulting foresters.

Rules of Thumb for Best Results:

- Plant early in the season; trees planted before Christmas tend to have better survival and growth rates than late planted seedlings. In some parts of Florida, frequent precipitation may allow planting in the summer months.
- Do not plant in dry soils. Wait for adequate rain to wet at least the rooting zone (upper 6 inches of soil). You may plant as early as October provided the soil is moist. [**Note:** the SPB Assistance and Prevention Program requires seedlings be planted between Nov. 1st and March 1st for a summer planting, or between June 1st and September 30th for a summer planting.]
- High winds and low humidity associated high pressure-cold fronts may dry out exposed bareroot seedlings roots, potentially leading to high mortality rates if extra care is not taken.
- Plant seedlings soon after delivery. Try to have all bareroot planted within one week of lifting from the nursery. Don't waste your money buying leftover bareroot from other planting jobs. Containerized seedlings will store better, but the sooner they are planted the better.
- Always protect bareroot seedling bundles and boxes of container seedlings from freezing, excess heat, and exposure to the sun and wind.
- Bareroot seedling roots should be exposed to the sun and air for as little time as is absolutely necessary. **Never** wash or prune the roots of bareroot longleaf seedlings as these procedures will reduce survival.

Planting longleaf on sites with bermuda grass or bahiagrass. It is critical to kill bermuda grass or bahiagrass **prior** to planting. These grasses are much more difficult to control after planting and chemical control options are severely restricted. For best survival in pastures, broadcast spray grasses in August prior to planting with one of the following either A) 5-6 qt. of Accord®/acre, or B) 3 quarts Accord & 2 oz. Oust/acre, or C) 20-24 oz. Arsenal®/acre. Follow your chemical site preparation with a scalping site preparation. In bahiagrass, a scalping site preparation may be more effective than a chemical site preparation. On most agricultural sites, scalping the area may be more beneficial than any other single treatment. For information on herbicide applications, contact your county forester.

To Rip or Not to Rip: Many agricultural fields and pastures have a hard, restrictive soil layer referred to as a 'plow pan or hardpan'. In such cases, "ripping" or "subsoiling" will fracture the hardpan resulting in better planting conditions. Seedling root growth will also be greater resulting in better seedling growth. Ripping should be done several months prior to planting, as several rain events are necessary to settle the soil to eliminate air pockets. Rip with the contour of the land to avoid unnecessary erosion. Seedlings should be planted about 6" to the side of the rip. Do not plant directly in the rip because water will frequently use the rip as a channel, uncovering some seedlings and burying others. The taproot of the longleaf will find the rip and allow the seedlings to root deeper, thus minimizing the chance of wind-throw and increasing water availability to the tree.

Planting Hints: When planting pastures or undisturbed soils that will not erode, plant seedlings so that the root collar is directly at the soil surface. When planting cropland or other areas that have been heavily site-prepared, plant seedlings so that the root collar is about ¼ - ½" beneath the soil surface. Try to anticipate how much the soil will erode so that the root collar will end up at the soil surface. Planting too shallow will result in a seedling that dies quickly. Planting too deep will result in a seedling that dies slowly. Good compaction is needed to eliminate air pockets around seedling roots. Heavy-duty machines do a better job of packing than the typical hand planting crew.

Hand Planting Tools: Use the correct tool when hand-planting. Bareroot seedling roots are very large so planting shovels work best in opening a planting hole large enough to accommodate the root system. Many containerized seedlings have tools designed especially for their plug size. Using the correct tool will result in less root deformation, better survival, and better long-term growth.

Join the Longleaf Alliance and receive current information on the management of longleaf pine.

Longleaf Alliance
12130 Dixon Center Rd.
Andalusia, AL 36420
334-427-1029
e-mail: office@longleafalliance.org
www.longleafalliance.org

Appendix 3.

Map Preparation Guidelines for Florida Forest Service Programs

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) administers a variety of forestry assistance cost-share programs for the benefit of private landowners in the state. Examples of such programs include, but are not limited to, the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program (SPB), Cogon Grass Treatment Cost-Share Program and the Longleaf Pine Private Landowner Incentive Program. To apply for a program, applicants must submit an application and other supporting documentation, including a map or maps of the property and/or practice area.

Applications without maps or with maps that do not sufficiently meet the requirements stated on the application risk being disqualified or delayed during the application approval process. Such a delay can result in a lack of funding for the applicant. Maps of poor quality or that do not conform to all required map standards outlined will not be accepted. If sub-standard maps are received, the FFS County Forester or landowner will be notified and required to submit an acceptable map before the end of the sign-up period to be considered for the program.

To avoid these disqualifications and delays, FFS foresters are required to use a standardized map template that provides all the information required by the various programs. To facilitate this process this document has been developed to assist in the mapping component of the application and provide specific instructions, template, and tips and tricks during the mapping process. These mapping requirements apply to all maps for Florida Forest Service cost-share programs but do not apply to Forest Stewardship, FORCES, Landscape Scale, Tree Farm or general forest management plans. These instructions assume the use of ESRI ArcMap version 10.4.

Cost share application maps will consist of one or two maps as preferred by the forester. Maps prepared by non-FFS individuals (e.g., consulting foresters, landowners, etc.) must also conform to the guidelines stated below to ensure a smooth application process.

If a single map is used, it must include an aerial image of the property, property boundary, practice area boundary(ies), and a legend or labels that indicate the acreage and activity(ies) to be conducted. When using an aerial image, no fill patterns may be used for the property, stands, or practice area polygons. The symbology for the polygon outlines must be adjusted to plainly differentiate between the interior and exterior of each polygon. All stands and practice areas should be clearly labeled with an ID number and acreage, either on the map or in the legend.

If using a two-map format, they should consist of a Location / Overview map of the property and a Stand/Practice Area map. The Overview will use an aerial image to provide directions and access to the property, as well as providing an unobstructed aerial view of the property. The Practice Area map will show the stands and practice areas pertinent to the cost-share application, with NO AERIAL IMAGE. Fill patterns may be used to differentiate stands

and practice areas. All stands and practice areas should be clearly labeled with an ID number and acreage, either on the map or in the legend.

Required Mapping Elements

Sample maps are shown on the following pages with the required components numbered. Each component is discussed in more detail in a corresponding numbered paragraph. Although it is not necessary for a map to use the exact same format or "look" as the ones below, it **must contain all the following components**:

1. Scale - A map scale can be provided either as a graphic scale bar (as shown on the sample map) or as a ratio (e.g., 1:24,000). Most FFS programs do not require use of a specific scale provided that the scale is sufficient to show the property, practice area, and other important features clearly. The property boundary should make full use of the map view to the extent possible.

   Note: When a ratio scale is used (example 1:24,000), any resizing of the map by fax or reproduction will nullify the ratio. It is therefore recommended to use the graphic scale bar which will be resized along with the map and remain relatively accurate.

2. Title - Each map should have a title consisting of the landowner's name and tract name, if applicable.

3. Author - The identity of the map preparer must be included on the map. FFS foresters should be identified by name. Initials may be used if the map is from a private source. This is important if questions arise about the map or if edits or additional information are required.

4. North Arrow - Most maps are oriented north-up. However, it is sometimes necessary for the map image to be rotated to fit it on the page. Because of this possibility, it is very important that each map contains a text or graphic symbol to indicate the direction of north.

5. Dates – All maps must include the date they were created. If digital imagery is used, the map should also include the source and year of the imagery (if known). Active management or natural disturbance can dramatically change the appearance of the landscape. This will provide valuable historical information about the management that has taken place on the property over time.

6. Property boundary - The property boundary need **not** be survey accurate. Property lines based on parcel data, ground reconnaissance or other credible sources are sufficient.

7. Disclaimer - Given the probability of property line error, all Florida Forest Service produced maps are required to have an approved disclaimer included on it. A basic disclaimer is included as part of the map templates provided by the CFA Section. Disclaimers are recommended, but not required for maps produced by private sources.

8. County – Each map shall state the county in which the property is located. The county should be listed in the top right corner of the title bar along with the Lat/Lon and STR.

9. Acreage – Pertinent acreages should be included for property ownerships, stands, and / or practice areas shown on the map. Total property acreage shall be indicated in the title bar. Practice area and stand acreage should be listed in a Legend table and on the map. Acreages must match the acreage on the cost-share application form.

10. Access - Your map should show local roads used to gain access to the property and practice area. Add road labels and distances as needed.

    Note: A person unfamiliar with that area of the state should be able to use the map to locate the property.

11. Geographic Location – Maps should include the Section(s), Township, and Range (STR) and the latitude and longitude (in decimal degrees) of the property. These will provide additional location information and will also be required to obtain any prescribed burn authorizations that may be needed for the property.

12. Location Map – All FFS programs require a location map, either as an inset map (as shown) or as a separate map, to aid in identifying the property location. The scale of the location map should be as large (zoomed in) as possible while still showing nearby landmarks such as cities or major highway intersections. Someone unfamiliar with that area of the state should be able to navigate to the practice area using the two maps.

    Note: When using the two-map format, an inset map is not necessary on the Stand / Practice Area map. That area may be utilized for other purposes as needed.

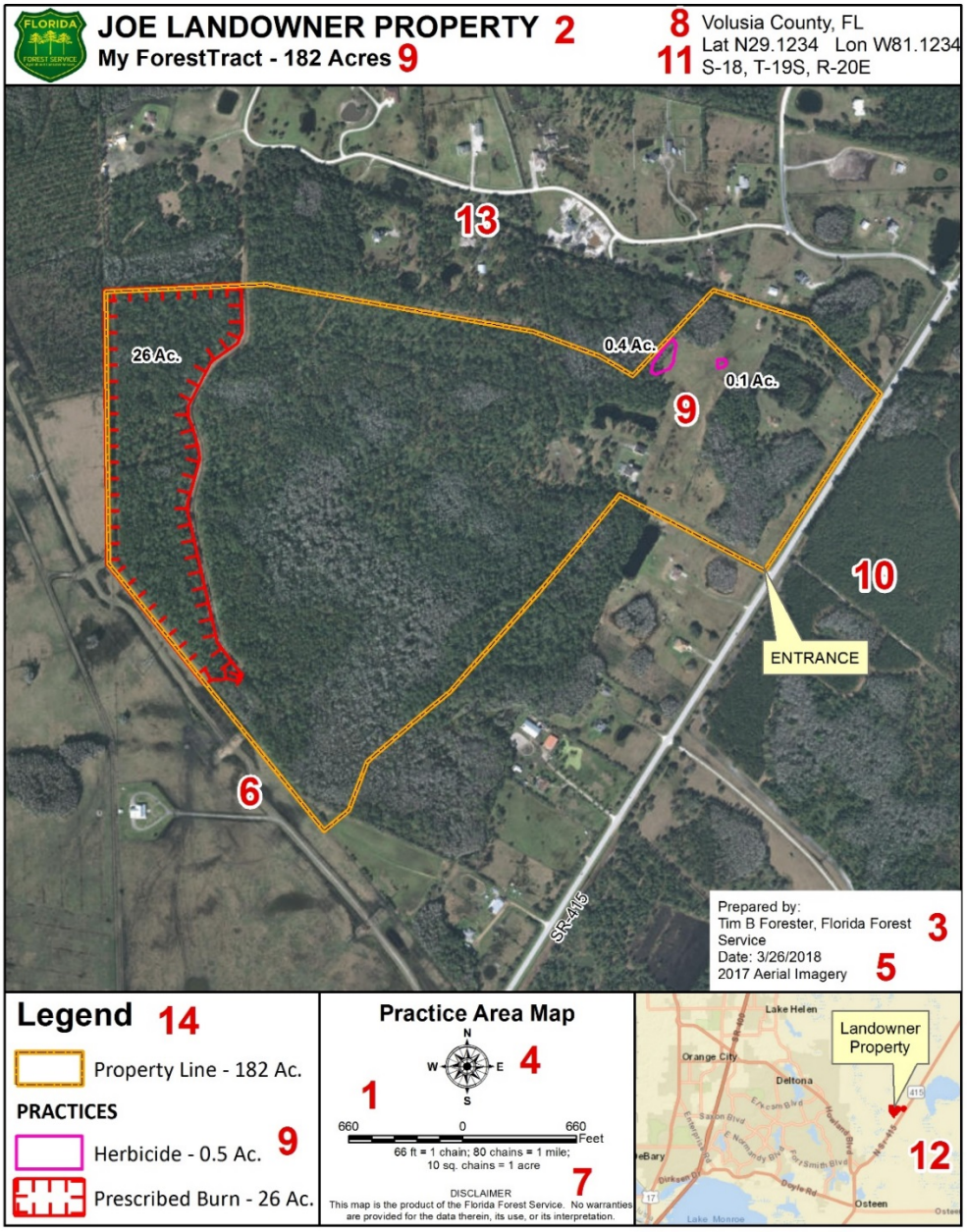
13. Aerial Imagery (Overview / Location Map only) – All FFS cost-share applications must include one map with an aerial image as a background. This image may be lightened or made semi-transparent to improve the visibility of other graphics and symbology but should still be clear enough to show the details of the landscape.

14. Legend- Clearly symbolize and label the stands or practice areas. Make sure stand and practice area acreages are clearly stated and correspond with the cost share application. If you create a map showing the stands, map all of them. The sum of all stands should equal the property acreage.

Sample Cost-share Application Maps

Sample Map #1: Single-map format

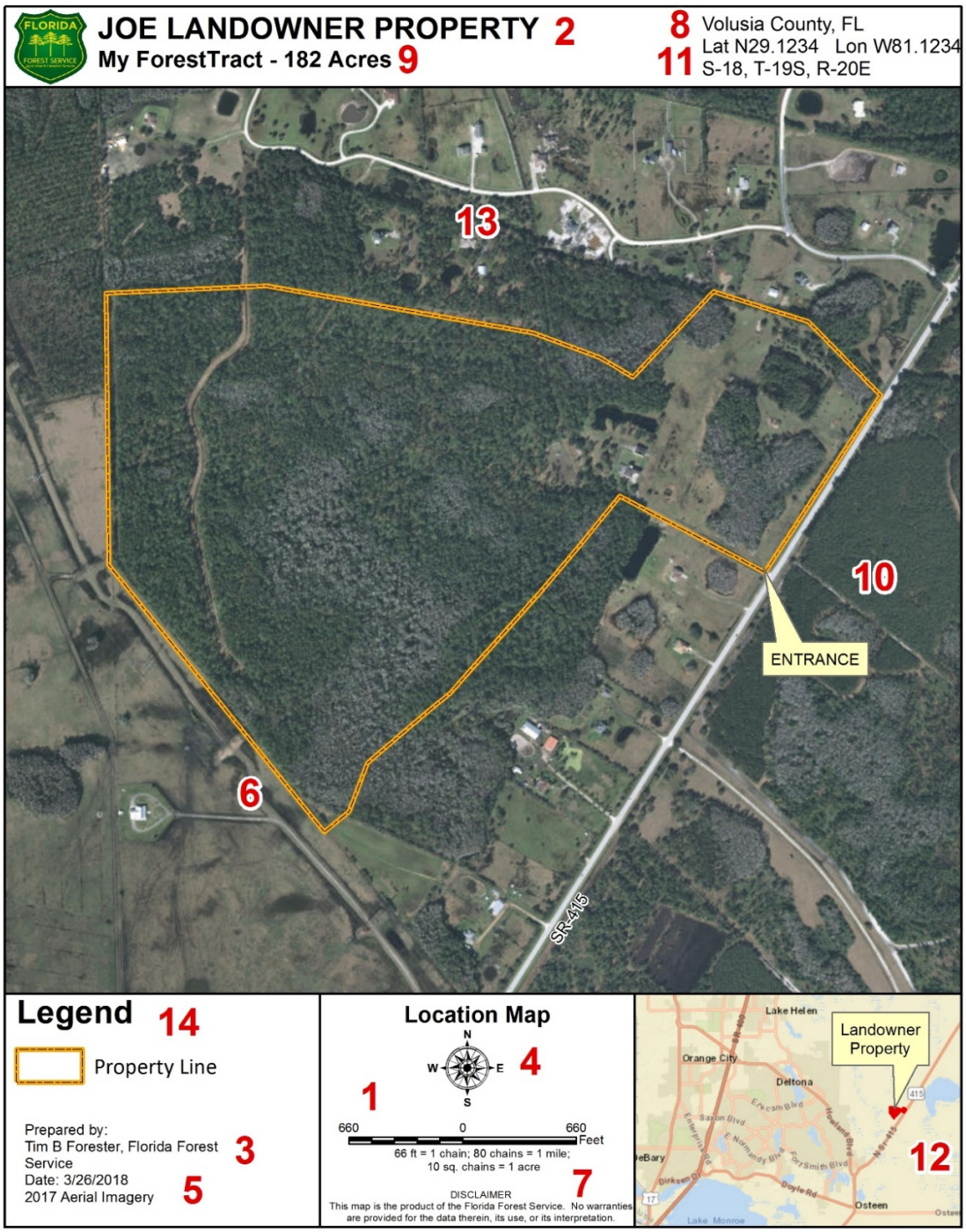
Below is an example of a properly prepared cost-share application map that combines the location (with aerial image), and practice areas on a single map. All the required components are present and labeled. The property boundary fills the map view. The inset map shows nearby towns and highways to easily locate the property. Practice areas are symbolized with acreages labeled on the map and total acreage in the Legend. In the Rx Burn area, note the hash marks point to the inside of the practice area. If a plain line was used, it may be difficult to tell which side of the road the burn is planned for.



(See pages 19-20 for descriptions of numbered map components.)

Sample Map #2: Two-map format (Location Map)

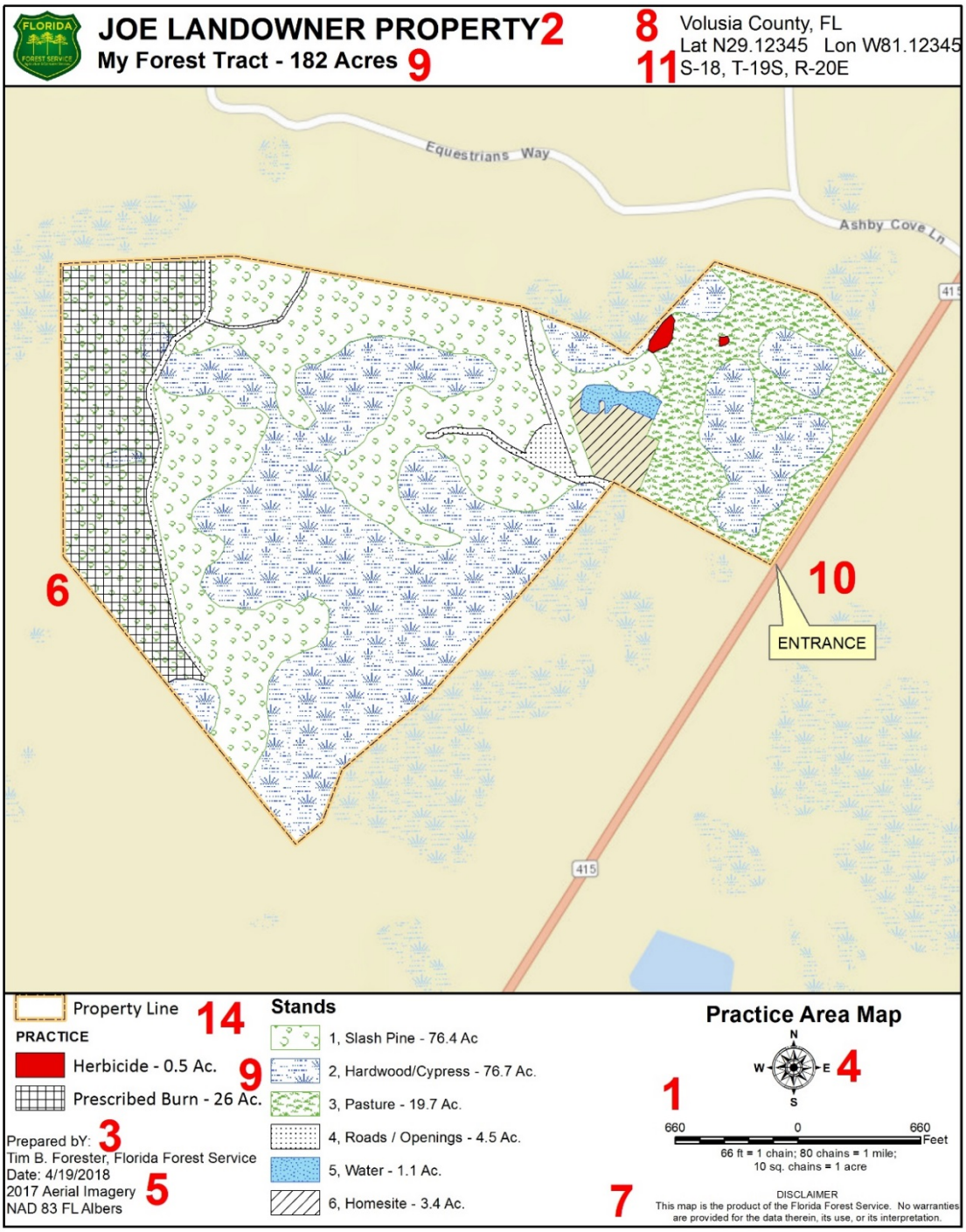
Below is an example of a properly prepared Property Location Map for a cost-share application. The intent of the map is to provide location for the property, and to provide an unobstructed aerial view of the property. All the required components are present and labeled. The property boundary fills the map view. The inset map shows nearby towns and highways to easily locate the property.



(See pages 19-20 for descriptions of numbered map components.)

Sample Map #3 (Stand/Practice Map)

This map is an example of a Stand Map that also show practice areas. It will sometimes be necessary to symbolize practice areas with both polygons and points. The scale of your map will determine how small a polygon can be before it is better represented as a point. Each location should be labeled with its size. It is critical that the total treatment acreage match the acreage stated on the application.



(See pages 19-20 for descriptions of numbered map components.)

Appendix 4.
Scoring Criteria for Funding Prioritization

1. **Type of Practice Requested.** Scores will be assigned to applications based on the type of practice requested. If two practices are requested, the score will be assigned based on the practice with the highest point total

First Pulpwood Thinning:	
Loblolly or shortleaf pine*:	30 points
Other pine species:	15 points
Seedling Establishment:	20 points
Prescribed Burning:	20 points
Mechanical Underbrush Treatment:	15 points

*stand must be ≥ 50% of these species by basal area or density

2. **Previous Funding Through the SPB Prevention Program.** A score will be assigned based on how recently a landowner has received funding through the program.

Not funded in the preceding 2 sign-up years:	20 points
Not funded the preceding sign-up year:	10 points
Funded the preceding sign-up year (or has an open contract):	0 points
Approved for a contract and granted an extension of the contract due date within the past two years, but contract expired or was canceled without completion of any practices:	**-10 points**

3. **Multi-resource management plan.** Applicants who have a current* and on-file multi-resource management plan (such as a Forest Stewardship Plan, Tree-Farm Certification, or consultant-prepared forest management plan) for the property on which the proposed practice(s) is (are) to be implemented will receive a higher score than those who do not have such a plan. Only plans or certifications in place before the start of the current sign-up period are applicable for extra points. A copy of the plan must be on file with the FFS County Forester to qualify for the highest score.

*current means the plan is no older than 10 years or there is scheduled activity based upon the plan for beyond the current year.

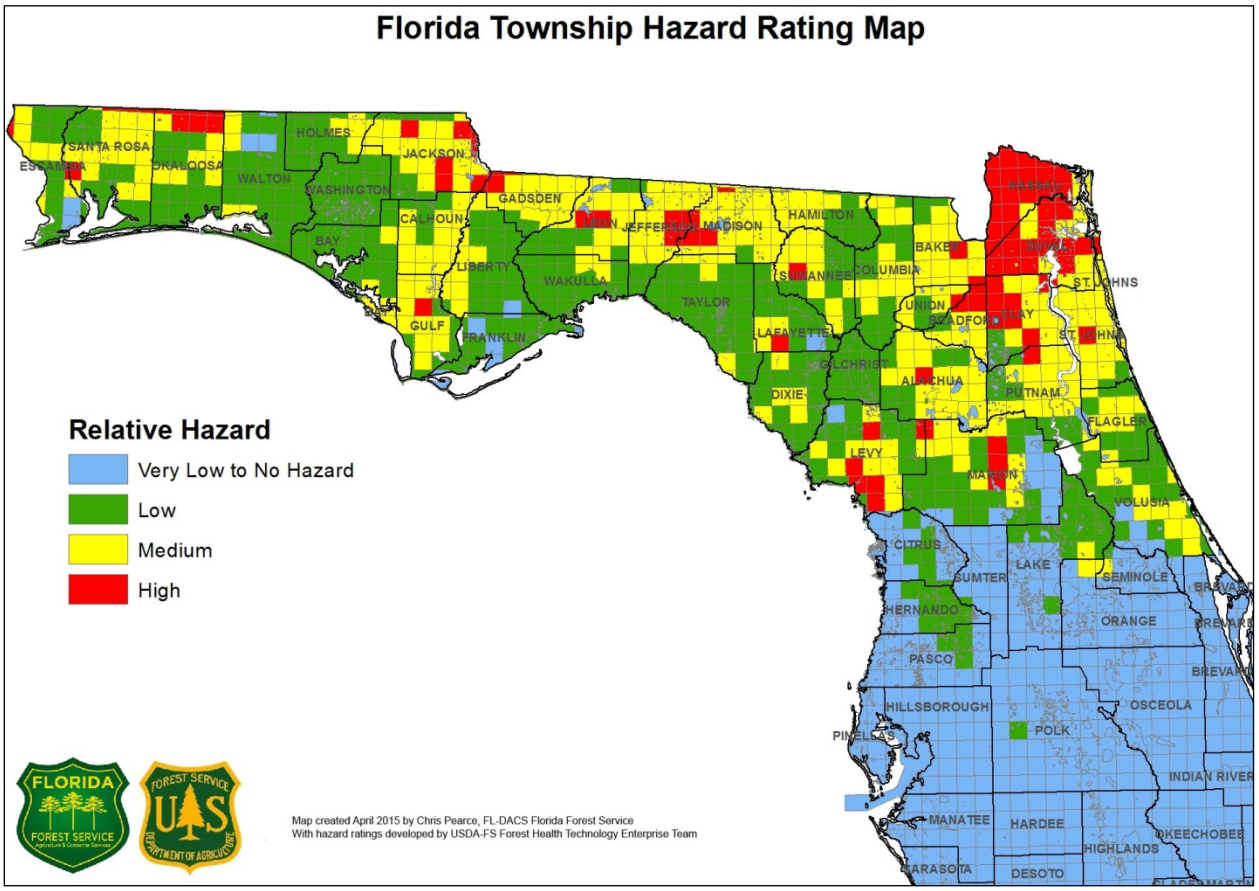
Current Tree Farm Certification or Forest Stewardship Plan:	15 points
Consultant-prepared management plan	10 points
No Certification or Plan:	0 points

4. **Township SPB Hazard Score.** All practice stands will be located on the SPB Florida Township Hazard Rating Map (see **Appendix 5**) and scored according to the relative hazard level of the township in which the proposed practice(s) is (are) to be implemented. If the application includes practices that are to occur in more than one township, the score will be based on the township with the highest hazard rating.

High Hazard:	15 points
Medium Hazard:	10 points
Low Hazard:	5 points
Very Low to No Hazard	0 points

5. **Point Based Cost Variable.** Applications with a total payment requested of less than $3,000 will be eligible for an increase in ranking score using the following formula: for every $200 increment below $3,000, an extra point will be rewarded (maximum of 14 points possible).

Appendix 5.



The Southern Pine Beetle Florida Township Hazard Rating Map is based on a model developed by the USDA Forest Service – Forest Health Technology Enterprise Team as part of a hazard mapping project for the southeastern United States. The model computes hazard scores based on input variables that estimate the density and basal area of the most susceptible host pine species (e.g., loblolly and shortleaf pine) and soil drainage characteristics. Each township score represents an average for the forested areas within the township. The hazard map is subject to change from year to year with changing forest conditions and improvements made to the hazard model. Hazard is an estimate of where SPB infestations may be likely to develop based on forest conditions; it does not mean that SPB infestations are predicted for a certain area in a given year.

Appendix 6.

Template invoice for documenting expenses when landowner conducts practice using own labor and/or equipment

Landowner Name: _____
Address: _____
_____
SPB Assistance and Prevention Program Contract Number: _____
Management practice(s) associated with this invoice: _____

Equipment Use

Date	Type of Equipment	Time		HR : MIN	Rate	Amount
		Start	End			

SUBTOTAL:$SUBTOTAL: $_____

Labor

Date	Name of Laborer	Time		HR: MIN	Rate	Amount
		Start	End			

SUBTOTAL: $_____

Fuel and Oil

Date	Type of fuel, oil, fluid, etc.	Gallons or quarts used	Rate	Amount

SUBTOTAL: $_____

Other Expenses

Date	Item	Units	Rate	Amount

SUBTOTAL: $_____

TOTAL EXPENSES: $_____

This invoice accurately represents the expenses I incurred during the implementation of the management practice(s) indicated above. I understand that invoices for additional work performed by contractors, the Florida Forest Service, or other entities should also be submitted, if applicable.

Landowner Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 7

Southern Pine Beetle
Assistance and Prevention Program Application

FDACS-11272

(Please see next 2 pages)

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Florida Forest Service

NICOLE "NIKKI" FRIED
COMMISSIONER

SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE ASSISTANCE AND PREVENTION PROGRAM APPLICATION

LANDOWNER INFORMATION: (please print)

Name: _____ Email (optional): _____
Last Name, First Name M.I. (or IRS name of entity)

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: (____) _____ Work Phone: (____) _____ FFS Forester Name: _____

☐SS# or ☐FEID# (check one): _____ (Required to by 26 U.S.C. 6109 to confirm that landowner's vendor information has been received by the Department of Financial Services; this number will be blacked out before this document is scanned, copied, or stored.)

PROPERTY LOCATION: County: _____ S-T-R: _____ - _____ - _____ Lat: _____ Long: _____

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Check 1 or 2:	Practice	Initial stand stocking	Final stocking target	Acres to be treated	No. of seedlings to purchase	Cost-share rate	Payment initially requested	Fill in this section after practice is completed: Total acres treated	Tons harvested or seedlings purchased	Total cost incurred	Final payment requested
☐	First pulpwood thin	ft^2/ac	ft^2/ac		N/A	$ /ac	$		tons	N/A	$
☐	Prescribed burn	N/A	N/A		N/A	$ /ac	$		N/A	$	$
☐	Mech. underbrush	ft^2/ac	N/A		N/A	$ /ac	$		N/A	$	$
☐	☐Longleaf seedlings ☐Slash seedlings cont.☐ bareroot☐	N/A				$ /1000	$			$	$
	Planting method: machine☐ hand☐				N/A	$ /ac	$		N/A	$	$
	☐Herbicide control		trees/ac		N/A	$ /ac	$		N/A	$	$

TOTALS (payment requested not to exceed $10,000): _____ ac $ _____ ac $ _____ $ _____

Predominant pine species: _____ Stand Age: _____yrs Planned time of treatment (month/yr): _____

Other Specifications: _____

***Attach to this application: a tract map** that meets ALL specifications and requirements listed in the SPB Assistance and Prevention Program Technical Guidelines booklet Appendix 3.

INITIAL PROJECT APPROVAL:
By signing this document I certify that I have read and agree to all program requirements and covenants listed on the back of this application.

Participating Landowner: **Signed:** _____ **Date:** _____

Check all that apply:
I have a ☐ current Forest Stewardship Plan, ☐ Tree Farm Certification or ☐ consultant-prepared Management Plan on file with a FFS County Forester.

Case Record Number: _____ **Tree Farm Certification:** _____

FFS Forester Approval: **Signed:** _____ **Date:** _____

SPB Program Coordinator Approval: **Signed:** _____ **Date:** _____

Division of Administration Approval: **Signed:** _____ **Date:** _____

All practices must be completed by this date: _____ **Extended Completion Date (if granted):** _____

FINAL PAYMENT APPROVAL:
I hereby submit to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services attached documentation of expenses I incurred during the SPB prevention practice on my property in accordance with program requirements and the completion summary in the table above.

Participating Landowner: **Signed:** _____ **Date:** _____

FFS Forester Approval: **Signed:** _____ **Date:** _____

*I certify that the practice has been completed according to program requirements, and that the information listed above is correct to the best of my knowledge.

SPB Program Coordinator Approval: **Signed:** _____ **Date:** _____

FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING USE ONLY

Account Number: _____ **Amount:** _____ **Approved for Payment:** _____ _____
Financial Officer Signature Date

SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE ASSISTANCE AND PREVENTION PROGRAM APPLICATION

Please read the Technical Guidelines booklet for a full list and description of all program requirements and procedures.

Summary of Eligibility and Program Requirements

1. Only non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners who own at least 5, but not more than 5000, acres of land in Florida are eligible. These may include private individuals or entities, joint owners, non-profit organizations, or corporations that are not wood-using industries and have no publicly traded stock.
2. This program is applicable only for properties located in the following Florida counties: Alachua, Baker, Bay, Bradford, Calhoun, Citrus, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Escambia, Flagler, Franklin, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Gulf, Hamilton, Hernando, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lake, Leon, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Marion, Nassau, Okaloosa, Orange, Pasco, Putnam, Santa Rosa, Seminole, St. Johns, Sumter, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, Volusia, Wakulla, Walton and Washington.
3. Eligible landowners may apply to receive incentive payments or partial reimbursement of actual costs associated with certain approved SPB prevention practices. Payment is made at a standard cost-share rate assigned for each practice and will not exceed $10,000 per state fiscal year (July 1–June 30).
4. Only one application per landowner is allowed per state fiscal year. If an individual owns land (in full or in part) in the name of more than one legal landowning entity, the application should be made on behalf of only one of those landowning entities per state fiscal year.
5. Practices cost-shared through this program must be conducted on a minimum of 10 contiguous acres (5 contiguous acres for First Pulpwood Thinning) in the state of Florida, all of which are owned in the name of the same landowning entity.
6. Each practice (with the exception of Pine Seedling Establishment) must be applied to an existing pine stand, defined for the purposes of this program as a forest stand (plantation or natural) in which pine species (*Pinus* spp.) constitute at least 70% of the stand's basal area or stem density.
7. Any practices performed before the landowner receives written application approval are not eligible for cost-share reimbursement.
8. Acreages enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), or other programs that may prohibit receipt of federal cost-share funds from more than one source for the same acreage, are not eligible for treatment under this program.
9. Stands established or treated through this program must not be harvested or intentionally destroyed for at least five (5) years after completion of the SPB Prevention Program-funded practice. The only exception to this requirement is for stands (or sections thereof) that must be harvested or salvaged due to a spreading bark beetle infestation, disease infection, wildfire, or other natural disaster. In such cases, the landowner must acquire an on-site authorization from a FFS forester prior to harvest. Failure to abide by this requirement will result in the recapture of cost-share payments.
10. Practices must be conducted in a manner that avoids or greatly minimizes injury to the residual stand. The Florida Forest Service reserves the right to deduct areas with excessive (≥25% of the stand) root injury, trunk injury, crown scorch (≥75% of canopy) or tree mortality from the final payment acreage.
11. Submitting an application to the Florida Forest Service **does not** guarantee project approval for payment, even if the landowner meets all the given criteria. Eligible applications received during the sign-up period will be evaluated, scored and ranked using established criteria to determine which applications can be approved with the available grant funds. Tie scores will be ranked by random order. The SPB Program Coordinator will make final approval recommendations.
12. Cost-shared expenditures must be supported by accurate and legible documentation such as invoices, billing statements, etc. For the First Pulpwood Thinning practice, landowners must only show documentation of volume harvested to the FFS forester, and indicate tons harvested and acres treated on the application.
13. Cost-share or incentive payments are available only for authorized/eligible treatments, verified and certified complete by a FFS forester. On a given application, a landowner may request cost-share funds for one (1) or two (2) of the available practice options described below. Landowners must provide a written justification when applying for certain practices; see the Technical Guidelines booklet for details.

Summary of Approved Practices and Practice Requirements

1. **First pulpwood thinning.** Must be applied to a pine stand of at least 5 contiguous acres with an average basal area of at least 110 ft^2/acre. The practice must be the first thinning the stand has received. After treatment, the average basal area of the stand must be at least 50 ft^2/acre but must not exceed 80 ft^2/acre. Clearcuts, patch-cuts, or any harvests other than first thinning do not qualify. A fixed, dollar-per-acre incentive will be paid to the landowner for implementation of this practice, regardless of profits gained from sale of the harvested timber. Documentation (e.g., scale tickets, volume reports) showing tons of pulpwood removed from the stand must be retained and presented to the local FFS forester. 50 acre maximum.
2. **Prescribed burning.** Must be applied in an existing pine stand and in accordance with State Chapter 590, F.S., and/or Florida Administrative Code 5I-2 and local laws, regulations and burning restrictions. A burning authorization must be obtained from FFS for the day of the burn. The practice must be conducted between Sept. 15 and May 15 with adequate equipment, personnel and fire breaks/lines for conducting and containing the burn safely. 200 acre maximum.
3. **Mechanical underbrush treatment.** Must be applied to an existing pine stand with an average basal area of at least 45 ft^2/acre. Competing underbrush and other woody vegetation may be reduced with a Gyro-Trac, Posi-trac or equivalent mulching-head equipment, or by a bush hog, Brown Tree Cutter, or other brush mowing equipment. Injury to roots and stems of residual pines must be avoided/minimized. 50 acre maximum. A written justification must be included when applying for this practice, explaining why it is needed (instead of prescribed fire or other methods).
4. **Pine seedling establishment.** Landowners establishing a pine plantation on appropriate sites may receive cost-share assistance for the cost of the seedlings, the planting operation (machine or hand planting) and herbicide control. Costs associated with site preparation other than herbicidal treatments are not eligible for cost-share. Planting density must be at least 550 trees/acre. Reimbursement shall be limited to a maximum of 726 trees/acre. A minimum of 400 seedlings/acre must be living at the time of a survival check conducted by the FFS forester following planting. 150 acre maximum. See additional practice requirements in the Technical Guidelines booklet.

Note: Only those expenses incurred for approved treatments listed on the application/agreement are eligible for cost-share reimbursement. If necessary, previously approved treatments may be altered on the application only if the total cost-share amount does not exceed the original amount approved, and the landowner receives prior written approval from the Florida Forest Service SPB Program Coordinator, with consultation from the county forester.

Summary of Landowner Application Procedure

1. The landowner obtains a copy of the SPB Assistance and Prevention Program Technical Guidelines and this application form.
2. The landowner contacts the forester or natural resource professional of his/her choice to receive practice recommendations and/or assistance with completing the application form and a tract map (see Appendix 3 of Technical Guidelines booklet for tract-map requirements).
3. The landowner requests a tract visit from a FFS forester, who verifies that the stand conditions meet the specific requirements for the proposed treatment and that the proposed practice is feasible. The landowner and FFS forester sign the application form under the section labeled "Initial Project Approval."
4. The landowner submits Substitute W-9 information online at https://flvendor.myfloridacfo.com. There is no guarantee that Substitute W-9 information submitted in previous years will remain on file in following years. The landowner prints the Substitute W-9 out and includes it in the application package.
5. The landowner or forester mails the signed application along with the attached tract map to: **SPB Assistance and Prevention Program, c/o Jeffrey Eickwort, Florida Forest Service, 1911 SW 34th Street, Gainesville, FL 32608.** E-mailing the packet is also acceptable (see section E in booklet).
6. Upon project approval, the SPB program coordinator will keep a copy of the application and send duplicate originals to both the landowner and the FFS county forester to hold on file until final project completion.
7. After the landowner receives written approval and a copy of the signed application from the program coordinator, implementation of the practice may begin. The landowner is responsible for seeing that the approved practice is carried out according to the Project Description on the application form and all practice requirements. Practices must be completed by completion date indicated on the form.
8. Upon completion of the practice, the landowner contacts the FFS forester to schedule a performance check. The FFS forester revisits the property, brings the original application form and verifies that the practice and target stocking level (if applicable) were achieved according to program requirements.
9. The landowner shows the FFS forester legible documentation (original receipts/invoices) of all practice costs incurred, with total costs clearly indicated. If the First Pulpwood Thinning practice was conducted, the landowner must show the FFS forester scale tickets or other volume documentation from the sale.
10. If the practice has been satisfactorily completed, the FFS forester verifies that the remaining items on the application form are filled out correctly (including total acres treated, tons of pulpwood harvested or total cost incurred and final payment requested). The landowner and the FFS forester sign the form under the section labeled "Final Payment Approval."
11. The landowner or forester mails the original application form, along with all receipts and invoices, to the program coordinator for processing (see address in item 5 above). E-mail is also acceptable. Volume documentation does not need to be forwarded, only shown to the FFS forester for verification of volume.
12. Upon submittal of proper documentation, cost-share payments will be reimbursed to the legal owner of the land in accordance with Subsection 215.422, Florida Statute. The state of Florida performance and obligation to pay under this contract is contingent upon an annual appropriation by the Legislature.

Covenants: By signing the reverse side of this application, I make the following certification and agreements in favor of the Florida Forest Service:

1. I certify that I am the legal owner of the land described on the reverse side of this application.
2. I agree to conduct the approved management practice on my property in accordance with the requirements above and in the Technical Guidelines, and by the completion date assigned.
3. I further certify that participation by me or on my behalf in the Florida SPB Assistance and Prevention Program is not fraudulent or otherwise illegal, and that all expenditures submitted on my behalf for payment under this program are legitimate claims under the requirements of the program.