

The North Bay Forest Improvement Program

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The North Bay Forest Improvement Program (NBFIP) is a cost-share incentives program established in 2020 and funded through CAL FIRE's Proposition 68 Wildfire Resilience and Forestry Assistance Grant. NBFIP received additional financial support in 2022 through a block grant from the CAL FIRE's Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force's Small Private Landowner Working Group to facilitate further expansion of the program. This program is intended to blend the best parts of CAL FIRE's California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) and NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) within the confines of NBFIP guidelines.

WHAT IS NBFIP?

About:

The North Bay Forest Improvement Program (NBFIP) is an innovative incentives program funded through CAL FIRE. Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) in Sonoma, Mendocino and Napa Counties the Clear Lake Environmental Research Center (CLERC) have partnered with Rebuild North Bay Foundation to form the North Bay Forest Improvement Program (NBFIP) to help private non-industrial small forestland owners/managers (between 5 and 500 acres) implement non-commercial forest improvement activities such as thinning, planting, pruning, and fuel hazard reduction.

The North Bay Forest Improvement Program is an incentives program, similar to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the California Forest Improvements Program (CFIP), providing public funds to support private investment in forest health and resilience projects; reducing vegetative fuel loads and risks of wildfire, insect infestation, and disease epidemics on private properties in the North Bay's diverse and valuable forestlands. This program is intended to blend the best parts of CAL FIRE's California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) and NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) within the confines of the NBFIP grant guidelines.

Action:

In total, the partnership will support forest stewardship activities across at least 100 projects in the four counties, treating over 1,500 acres of land. Possible treatments include:

- 1) Planting site preparation
- 2) Tree planting and protection
- 3) Forest thinning
- 4) Pruning
- 5) Woody fuels reduction.

Additionally, the program will support the creation of 40 Forest Management Plans (FMPs). If a forestland owner or manager is in need of an FMP, they may apply through our program (your RCD contact will have more information about that opportunity). Projects and plans funded by NBFIP must occur on forestland consisting of oak woodland, redwood forests, mixed evergreen and ponderosa pine.

History:

In 2020, the North Bay Forest Improvement Program was awarded \$1.5 million from a CAL FIRE Proposition 68 Wildfire Resilience and Forestry Assistance grant, which provided three years of funding to develop and manage an incentives program to mitigate wildfire risk and improve forest health in this highly fire-prone region. In 2022, NBFIP received additional financial support through a block grant from the CAL FIRE's Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force's Small Private Landowner Working Group to facilitate further expansion and impact of the program in the same four county geography.

AM I ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

Applicant Eligibility

At the most basic level, a participant is eligible to participate if they meet the following criteria:

- The applicant is the landowner or another agent (land manager, forester) with the approval of the landowner to apply. Properties held in a Trust and LLCs are also eligible applicants.
- The property is forestland containing any of the following vegetation types: oak woodland, redwood forests, mixed evergreen, ponderosa pine.
- The property is at least five (5) acres and less than 500 acres.
- The applicant has not already received funding through Proposition 68 for forest improvements on their property; this includes funding through the California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) since 2018.
- The applicant can afford the treatment after incentive payment. For more on program incentive payments and project costs, please see Payment Rates and Covered Activities.

Project Eligibility

Projects under NBFIP are only eligible if they include one or more of the following activities:

- Preparation of a Forest Management Plan by a Registered Professional Forester (RPF)
- The project area must be at least one acre in size
- Reforestation activities, such as
 - Site preparation
 - Tree purchase and planting
 - Tree shelters
- Forest stand improvement activities, such as
 - Shaded fuel breaks

- o Douglas fir encroachment removal
 - o Thinning “release” treatments
 - o Pruning
- Follow-up fuel hazard reduction activities, such as mastication/chipping or pile-burning.

A Good Fit

Though these qualities are not required, an applicant is a good fit for the program if they match the following description.

- Applicant is committed to the sustainable management of their forestland
- Applicant has developed a forest management plan or other guiding document with a forester and has identified management units and planned treatments. Environmental review has been completed to satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- Applicant would not be able to implement treatments without the financial support of the incentives program

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the purpose of the program?

The North Bay Forest Improvement Program was created to provide public funds to support private investment in forest health and resilience projects to reduce vegetative fuel loads and risks of wildfire, insect infestation, and disease epidemics on private properties in the North Bay’s diverse and valuable forestlands. The intent of the program is to increase the pace, scale and effectiveness of forest treatments in the North Bay Area by incentivizing and supporting private non-industrial forestland owners and managers to implement beneficial forest improvements where they would not otherwise be possible because of financial hardship.

How is this program funded?

The North Bay Forest Improvement Program (NBFIP) was originally funded through CAL FIRE’s Proposition 68 Wildfire Resilience and Forestry Assistance Grant in 2020. NBFIP received additional financial support in 2022 through a block grant from CAL FIRE’s Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force’s Small Private Landowner Working Group to facilitate further expansion of the program.

What kind of applicant is a good fit for this program?

Please see the “**Am I eligible to participate?**” page for more information.

What are incentive dollars?

In the North Bay Forest Improvement Program, incentive dollars are cash payments to forestland owners/managers for beneficial forest management activities performed on-the-ground, such as tree thinning or planting. Incentive payment rates are specific to treatment activities and are listed in the Prescriptions and Cap Rates document. Actual costs of treatments are based on market research and may not match your contractor's cost estimate. For a participant to receive incentive dollars, they must first have their on-the-ground activities verified. After payment has been disbursed to the forestland owner/manager, the owner/manager must retain proof of payment in the form of a paid vendor receipt. Owners/managers who choose to fulfill NBFIP contracts by conducting work themselves must keep track of the time they spent implementing treatments. Rebuild North Bay Foundation, as the official contract holder with CAL FIRE, retains the right to audit these records up to five years from the payment date. For more on program incentive payments and project costs, please see our Resources section.

What will participating in this program cost me?

NBFIP pays fixed rates for beneficial forest practices. The payment rates available in this program were developed by establishing "cap-rates" or the rate at which similar projects can generally be assumed to cost, through consultation with local foresters and contractors in the four county project area. If the applicant's property is located in a census-designated disadvantaged community, approximately 80% of treatment costs will be paid by incentive dollars, leaving an estimated 20% of project costs to be funded by the applicant. If the applicant's property is located outside of a disadvantaged community, approximately 60% of treatment costs will be paid by incentive dollars, leaving an estimated 40% of project costs to be funded by the applicant. The final cost will vary depending on how closely your contractor's costs match the program's determined cap rates. If you are working with a forester, the forester may charge for their time applying to the program on your behalf or assisting in other ways. For more on program incentive payments and project costs, please see our Prescriptions and Cap Rates document.

Can I get reimbursed if I do the work myself?

Yes, NBFIP supports forestland owners or managers doing the work themselves. The reimbursement program is based on completed practices.

How Do I apply?

Please visit the **How Do I Apply?** page for more information.

Does having an EQIP contract disqualify me?

If you have an EQIP contract, past or present, you will not be disqualified. Please provide your current verified EQIP agreements with NRCS in your application as an additional attachment. You must agree that you will not accept incentive dollars above the full cost of implementing your project.

Please note: Applicants that can treat *additional* acres by combining incentive dollars from multiple incentives programs will earn higher points in the application review process. Express that this is your plan in your application.

Does my project need environmental review permits?

Yes, projects are required to comply with CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act). The RCD in your county will act as the lead agency. Projects will be required to avoid impacts to cultural and biological resources. In order to comply with this requirement, an assessment of impacts to sensitive species (query of the California Natural Diversity Database) and archaeological/cultural resources (archaeological records request from the Northwest Information Center) will be required prior to project implementation. The responsibility of fulfilling the CNDDDB search is on your county's RCD. The responsibility of covering the costs of associated archaeological records requests and permits for implementation is on the applicant. Projects will also be required to follow general avoidance guidelines that are outlined in the prescriptions document.

The application asks if my project is located in a Disadvantaged Community or Severely Disadvantaged Community. How do I find the answer?

The following two resources can be utilized for locating disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities:

Community FactFinder from Parks for California (*Be sure to check the layer "Disadvantaged Community" on the map*)

DAC Mapping Tool from CA State Water Board (*Be sure to check the layer "Disadvantaged Communities -Block Groups (2018)"*)

When is the application deadline?

The North Bay Forest Improvement Program has two applications: the Project Implementation application and the Forest Management Plan (FMP) application. The NBFIP Project Implementation application will be open for two application cycles each year, with applications being reviewed in September/October and March/April. Applicants will be notified of their program status within a month of the application closing.

FMP applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

How long does it take to complete a project?

Projects must be completed 365 days after both 1) contracts between the forestland owner/manager, Rebuild NorthBay Foundation, and the RCD or CLERC have been signed and 2) CEQA's Notice of Exemption 30-day waiting period has lapsed without issue and the NOE has been filed.

When will I receive payment for my completed project?

Rebuild North Bay Foundation will pay forestland owners/managers soon after on-the-ground work has been verified. We estimate payments will be received within 60 days of notification of completion by owner/manager, as long as completed work meets the standard agreed upon prior to implementation. At this stage of the program, NBFIP cannot reimburse projects in stages.

Who is my local contact?

See **NBFIP Contacts**.

How are projects ranked?

Reference **NBFIP Project Ranking** to learn more about project ranking.

Is there a video I can follow along to to help me fill out this application?

Yes! Check out this YouTube video for further information and resources.

PAYMENT RATES AND COVERED ACTIVITIES

The intent of the program is to increase the pace, scale and effectiveness of forest treatments in the North Bay area by incentivising and supporting forestland owners and managers with a cost-share to implement planned treatments. This is achieved through incentive dollars.

What are incentive dollars?

In the North Bay Forest Improvement Program, incentive dollars are cash payments to forestland owners/managers for beneficial forest management activities performed on-the-ground, such as tree thinning or planting. Incentive payment rates are specific to treatment activities and are listed in the Prescriptions and Cap Rates document. Actual costs of treatments are based on market research and may not match your contractor's cost estimate. For a participant to receive incentive dollars, they must first have their on-the-ground activities verified. After payment has been disbursed to the owner/manager, the owner/manager must retain proof of payment in the form of a paid vendor receipt. Forestland owners/managers who choose to fulfill NBFIP contracts by conducting work themselves must keep track of the time they spent implementing treatments. Rebuild North Bay Foundation, as the official contract holder with CAL FIRE, retains the right to audit these records up to five years from the payment date.

Combining incentives

Applicants who wish to match NBFIP incentives dollars with dollars from another incentives program, such as EQIP, must provide their current verified agreements in their application.

Please note: Applicants that can treat additional acres by combining incentive dollars from multiple incentives programs will earn higher points in the application review process. IN your application, make clear that this is your plan. Incentive dollars can't be combined with other grant or incentives dollars to pay for more than 100% of the project cost in any case.

About payment rates

NBFIP will pay a percentage of the cap rate, which is variable and based on Disadvantaged Community (DAC) or Severely Disadvantaged Community (SDAC) status or no disadvantaged community status. Projects within DAC or SDAC will receive payments for beneficial practices at 80% of the established cap rate. Projects outside of DAC or SDAC will receive payments for beneficial practices at 60% of the established cap rate. Projects outside of DAC may have the option to accept a lesser payment rate to increase their prioritization ranking. Applicants can indicate that this is their intention in their application. These SDAC and DAC communities are identified by the state of California. For locating DAC and SDAC areas, you can use the following mapping tools:

Community FactFinder from Parks for California (Be sure to check the layer “Disadvantaged Community” on the map)

DAC Mapping Tool from CA State Water Board (Be sure to check the layer “Disadvantaged Communities -Block Groups (2018)”)

HOW DO I APPLY?

First and foremost, check out this helpful video where RPF Jason Wells of Sonoma RCD goes line by line to describe the application (Note: some parts of the application have since changed but the main elements remain intact). While there have been changes to the program since this video was made, applicants will still find it useful. Please make sure you are reading the updated information about NBFIP on our other webpages.

While it is not required to work with a forester when applying for the Project Implementation portion of this program, we suggest that applicants get the help of their forester or local RCD forestry specialist if they have technical questions about their proposed project. Visit our [Contacts](#) page to find your local RCD and forestry specialist.

When applying for a Forest Management Plan through this program, it IS required that you work with a Registered Professional Forester (RPF). For instructions on applying for an FMP or finding a Forester, please visit our [Forest Management Plan](#) page.

The NBFIP Project Implementation application will be open for two cycles each year, with applications being reviewed in September/October and March/April. Applicants will be notified of their program status within a month of the application closing.

FMP applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

Ready to apply? Visit our website to apply online or download a PDF version of the application.

Please note: A landowner cannot apply for both an FMP and project implementation within the same application cycle.

CONTACTS

Rebuild NorthBay Foundation

For basic questions regarding your application and/or your eligibility, please contact:

Molly Curley O'Brien
Director of Government Affairs
molly@afterthefireusa.org

or

Rosa Brandt, Program Associate
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Clear Lake Environmental Research Center (CLERC)

Will Evans
Executive Director

Clear Lake Environmental Research Center

A nonprofit working with the Lake County RCD to implement projects in Lake County.

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Resource Conservation District: Napa County

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Resource Conservation District: Sonoma County

Jason Wells
Registered Professional Forester #3014

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jwells@sonomarcd.org
(To reach Jason quickly, please use email).
Visit us at: SonomaRCD.org or GoldRidgeRCD.org

RESOURCES

Please see our website for PDFs of the following resources:

Prescriptions and Cap Rates - An explanation of the treatment practices offered through NBFIP and the costs covered by the program.

NBFIP Project Ranking - An explanation of how we rank project implementation applications received and decide which to fund.

Printable Project Implementation Application - A PDF version of the application for those who cannot use the online application option.

NBFIP Flyer - An informational flyer about the program that can be shared with others.

FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS

Can I apply for a Forest Management Plan through the North Bay Forest Improvement Program?

Yes. The North Bay Forest Improvement Program (NBFIP) is a cost-share incentives program established in 2020 and funded through CAL FIRE's Proposition 68 Wildfire Resilience and Forestry Assistance Grant. NBFIP received additional financial support in 2022 through a block grant from the [CAL FIRE's Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force's Small Private Landowner Working Group](#) to facilitate further expansion of the program. This program is intended to blend the best parts of CAL FIRE's California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) and NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) within the confines of the NBFIP program guidelines.

What does this mean? The expansion of the program in Fall 2022 provides cost-share incentive payments for the creation of Forest Management Plans by Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs).

Note: a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) is required to help you apply for this opportunity. If you wish to apply and need to find an RPF to execute the FMP if awarded, please see the list of RPFs in the region at the bottom of this page.

What is a Forest Management Plan?

A Forest Management Plan (FMP) is a site-specific plan developed for a client, which addresses one or more resource concerns on land where forestry-related conservation activities or practices will be planned and applied. An FMP is not required to be eligible for an NBFIP project implementation reimbursement, however we strongly encourage having one in place prior to applying.

Why would I want an FMP?

The forestland owner or manager has a road map for active forestland management on their property with their goals and objectives reflected through proposed management interventions. The owner/manager will meet the prerequisites for cost-share incentives programs and be prepared to apply for project implementation funding through any of these programs. If the owner/manager will conduct projects on their own, they will be informed on how to execute projects successfully.

What is the incentive rate to produce an FMP under NBFIP?

	Description	NBFIP Rate
Base	Set base incentives payment per Forest Management Plan	\$6,000
0 - 160 acres	Additional incentives payments on a per acre basis up to the first 160 acres	\$3.60/acre
160+ acres	Additional incentives payments on a per acre basis beyond the first 160 acres	\$3.00/acre
1000+ acres	Rates for acreages exceeding 1,000 acres will be negotiated with the forester	

Mini Management Plans, Existing Plan Revision, and additional Plan Addendums are also eligible under this funding opportunity at the following rate:

	Description	NBFIP Rate
Base	Mini Management Plan, Existing Plan Revision, additional Plan Addendums	\$2,000
		\$1.68/acre

Do I need a Registered Professional Forester to help me apply?

An RPF must apply for FMPs through NBFIP on behalf of their client. Forestland owners or managers are not eligible to receive cost-share incentive payments for the writing of an FMP without an RPF pre-designated who has agreed to write their plan if funded.

How can I find an RPF to help me if I am awarded funds to complete an FMP through NBFIP?

If you wish to apply and need to find an RPF to execute the FMP if awarded, please see the list of RPFs in the region at the bottom of the page.

How long do I have to complete the FMP if I am selected?

Contracts between forestland owners/managers and NBFIP will have a duration of 1 year, however RPFs should aim to complete FMPs within a 6-month window from contract execution to allow clients to apply for subsequent NBFIP funding cycles for project implementation.

Do FMPs under NBFIP cover archeological surveys and/or records?

FMPs funded under NBFIP are not required to include archeological surveys or archeological records search requests. These activities are not eligible for reimbursement through NBFIP. RPFs shall note that having these activities completed will increase application scores for project implementation funding through NBFIP. RPFs should consult with clients to determine if the completion of these activities during the FMP writing process is desirable.

I'm not ready to apply but how can I learn more about an FMP?

Even if you are ready to apply, check out University of California's Agriculture and Natural Resources' Forest Stewardship series [here](#) to learn more about this important work.

Are there eligibility criteria to consider?

Applications for FMP cost-share incentive funding will not be scored and ranked, as opposed to the ranking criteria employed by CFIP. The number of successful applicants each funding cycle will be dependent on program capacity. RPFs shall consider how many FMPs they can feasibly produce within a 6-month window so program funds can be disbursed as efficiently as possible.

Public agencies are not eligible for this funding opportunity. 501(c)3 organizations are eligible.

How can I apply for an FMP?

To be considered for funding, you must first find an RPF who agrees to write the FMP if you are selected for funding. Please see the list of RPFs below, as they have expressed interest in writing FMPs for forestland owners/managers in the North Bay. Once you have found an RPF, they will reach out to Rebuild or your county contact (RCD or CLERC) to access the application. The RPF will apply on your behalf.

Note: though the RPF listings include their base location, the forestland owner/manager isn't required to work with an RPF based in their county. Most of the RPFs on this list have expressed interest in working with forestland owners/managers throughout Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino, and Lake counties.

Harold Appleton, RPF #1977
PCI Ecological Design & Planning
Sebastopol, CA
Phone: (707) 481-1134 (cell)
Email: Harold@pcz.com

Estelle Clifton, RPF #2858
Clifton Environmental, LLC
Ukiah, CA
Phone: (707) 234-1978
Email: estelle@cliftonenvironmental.net

Anthony Evanson, RPF #2843
Shingletown, CA
Phone: (707) 758-8108
Email: aj.evanson@frontier.com

Robert Galliano, RPF #2879
Mason, Bruce, and Girard, Inc.
Auburn, CA
Phone: (530) 745-9996
Email: RGallian@masonbruce.com

Matt Greene, RPF #2747
Matt Greene Forestry & Biological Consulting
Cazadero, CA
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Email: Calforestry@gmail.com

Jacob Harrower, RPF #3070
Frontier Resource Management
Ukiah, CA
Phone: (707) 391-9883
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Sacramento, CA

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James Mehrwein, RPF # 1685
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