

US Department of Agriculture

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Forest Restoration and Conservation Initiative

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Forest Restoration and Conservation Initiative is a collection of regionally scalable projects that; 1) plan and prioritize restoration opportunities, 2) implement restoration projects on public and private lands, and 3) create a foundation for future restoration and conservation projects. Planning and prioritization will be accomplished through development of an ecosystem modeling application. Restoration projects will be implemented throughout the Mississippi coastal plain and will include longleaf pine, coastal savanna, pitcher plant bog, bottomland hardwood forest, and mesic slope forest restoration. These forested ecosystems provide habitat for numerous threatened and endangered plants and animals. Additionally, coastal stream restoration, non-native invasive species control and detection, and updates to existing watershed restoration plan projects are proposed. To complement the effort of agencies and organization's activities, a robust restoration outreach and education program targeting private forestland owners will be developed and implemented along with increases in funding for payments incentives to these landowners to accomplish their restoration conservation implementation goals. This approach involves all ownership classes across the landscape including military installations. The proposed restoration and conservation activities protect the nation's military readiness by facilitating the continuation of training at Camp Shelby. This proposal represents the first phase of a multi-phase landscape scale ecosystem restoration strategy for the Mississippi coastal plain. The Mississippi Gulf Coast Forest Restoration and Conservation Initiative is part of a broader, Gulf-wide effort by the USDA to engage partners and improve management of forested watersheds as a necessary step in restoring the waters and terrestrial habitats of the Gulf. Requested funding amount: \$21,000,000.