



Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

[Emergency Forest Restoration Program Signup Open for St. Joseph County Non-Industrial Private Forest Owners](#)

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The application deadline is May 13, 2022

EAST LANSING, Mich., April 8, 2022 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency in Michigan announces the eligibility of St. Joseph County owners of non-industrial private forests damaged by the series of storms that passed through there between Aug. 6 and Aug. 10, 2021 to apply for the [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) for cost-share assistance in restoring their disaster-damaged forest. The application deadline is May 13, 2022.

"For private forest owners in St. Joseph county dealing with severe damage from last summer's windstorm, the Emergency Forest Restoration Program offers assistance restoring these woodlots," said Tim Boring, Farm Service Agency Director in Michigan. "Well functioning forests provide innumerable environmental and ecological benefits, to say nothing of the potential for economic benefit to landowners from selective timber harvesting. Programs like EFRP are just one example of USDA's many efforts to support rural Michigan."

Severe wind events damage trees and rendering them useless for lumbering, which typically offsets the cost of clearing them. Leaving downed and damaged trees to decay can take up to a decade, meanwhile harboring pests and posing a potential fire-hazard threat. Restoring damaged forests is the preferred option but is often cost-prohibitive for private landowners following severe weather events.

EFRP, administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), provides payments to eligible owners of nonindustrial private forest land in order to carry out emergency measures to restore land damaged by a natural disaster.

Michigan forestland was last eligible for [EFRP in 2020](#) after a tornado and heavy winds severely damaged forestland near Sterling. With financial assistance through EFRP and technical assistance from their District Forester, 28 landowners in Arenac County were able to clear nearly 400 acres of

downed trees, helping to restore and protect the forest.

Is My Forest Eligible?

Only owners of nonindustrial private forests in St. Joseph County with tree cover existing before the natural disaster occurred are eligible to apply. The land must be owned by a private individual, group, association, corporation or other private legal entity that has decision making authority on the land and doesn't use the land for business purposes.

Once an eligible forest owner applies to the program, the FSA County Committee in Centreville inspects the damage to determine if forest land is eligible for EFRP. For land to qualify for EFRP funds, the damage from the natural disaster must create new conservation problems that if not dealt with would harm the natural resources on the land and significantly affect future land use. Also, the damage must be severe enough that a landowner needs Federal assistance to address adequately.

How Does the Funding Work?

Up to 75% of the cost to implement emergency conservation practices can be provided, however the final amount is determined by the committee reviewing the application. A limit on payments of \$500,000 per person or entity per disaster applies.

Cost-share eligible forest restoration practices include:

- Debris removal, such as down or damaged trees, in order to establish a new stand or provide for natural regeneration;
- Site preparation, planting materials, and labor to replant forest stand; • Restoration of forestland roads, fire lanes, fuel breaks, or erosion control structures;
- Fencing, tree shelters, and tree tubes to protect trees from wildlife damage; and
- Wildlife enhancement to provide cover openings and wildlife habitat.

How Do I Apply?

EFRP enrollment is administered by FSA state and county committees and county offices. Interested forest owners in St. Joseph County should contact the USDA Farm Service Agency Service Center in Centreville at 269-467-6336.

For more information about FSA disaster programs, visit <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov> or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Media Contact:
savannah.halleaux@usda.gov

Farm Service Agency:

1400 Independence Ave.
SW Washington, DC 20250

Contact:

FPAC Press Desk

FPAC.BC.Press@usda.gov