State, Private, and Tribal Forestry Programs

Puerto Rico and U. S. Virgin Islands

The State, Private, and Tribal Forestry (SPTF) Unit at the International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF) supports state forestry agencies, fire departments, and other stakeholders in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Guided by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, the unit promotes active forest management, wildfire prevention and suppression, strategic forest recovery and restoration, and forest health monitoring in both rural and urban landscapes.

Our Role and Services

SPTF regional team works closely with territorial agencies and grantees to ensure efficient use of federal funds and compliance with national priorities. The team provides technical assistance, educational resources, and serves as a liaison between federal and local forestry programs. Key services include on-the-ground support for partners and private landowners, coordination of public educational activities on forest management and wildfire prevention, youth engagement programs, and assistance to private landowners in improving land management and promoting recreational use.

Wildfire Risk Management and Safety

SPTF collaborates with wildfire agencies and private landowners to identify and mitigate fire risks. Cooperative Fire Programs in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands strengthen wildfire suppression, prevention, and community preparedness through training, equipment, and planning resources. Wildland firefighters trained by the program have responded to major events, including Hurricanes Irma and María (2017), earthquakes (2020), Hurricane Fiona (2022), and the Maricao Fire (2023).

- The Remote Automatic Weather Station (RAWS) network provides critical data for NOAA fire weather forecasts, fire danger statements, and Red Flag warnings.
- Community Wildfire Defense Plans under development in Maricao, Guanica, and the Northeastern Corridor as a collaborative, community-driven frameworks identifying local priorities, hazards, and wildfire incidence, and resulting in planned resources and landscape management actions to procure safer communities.

Forest Health and Protection

Forest Health Program provides technical and financial assistance to state government and NGOs to monitor and prevent forest damage. This work is vital for agriculture, as it protects watersheds and pollinator habitats, while also slowing the spread of harmful plant diseases and pests.

Active Forest Management

Forest Stewardship Program

Promotes active forest management to enhance productivity and economic opportunities through timber production, agroforestry, and ecotourism. The program offers technical assistance and the preparation of forest

management plans for landowners of non-industrial private forests.



Landscape Scale Restoration Program

Landscape Scale Restoration Program is a competitive grant program that promotes collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes and furthers priorities identified in State Forest Action plans or equivalent restoration strategy

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Scale Restoration Partnerships

These projects in Puerto Rico strengthen collaboration among the U. S. Forest Service, NRCS, NGOs, state agencies, academia, and Conservation Districts. They focus on forest management, wildfire restoration, and water resources. Activities include technical assistance for landowners, Forest Stewardship Plans, native tree propagation for reforestation and fire mitigation, wildfire prevention workshops, financial assistance for conservation practices, and community outreach.

Timber Production- Wood Innovation

The Wood Innovation Program supports the development of Puerto Rico's timber industry by providing equipment, technical knowledge, and market evaluation tools. It promotes. forest management and high-quality tropical hardwood production.

Urban and Community Forestry

The Urban and Community Forestry Program (UCF) provides financial and technical assistance to community groups to encourage efforts to plan and implement urban reforestation, tree management, and maintenance projects to strengthen local green infrastructure for urban and per-urban populations. This program is available through the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources

Disaster Mitigation and Recovery

SPTF plays a critical role in disaster preparedness and recovery, addressing hurricanes, droughts, floods, and landslides. Efforts include restoring tree nurseries, installing hoop houses and irrigation systems, and supporting stormwater management practices. Forest Legacy acquisitions also protect headwaters and stabilize slopes, reducing vulnerability to natural disasters.

Land Conservation

Forest Legacy Program

The Forest Legacy Program funds the permanent conservation of ecologically important forest areas in Puerto Rico that are threatened by development. It protects landscapes, wildlife habitats, riparian zones, and recreational resources.

Community Forests and Open Space Program

This program provides grants to municipalities and nonprofits to acquire and conserve community forests, offering economic, environmental, and recreational benefits. Selected projects receive funding for land purchase and management plans to ensure long-term conservation.