

Piloting Rewards for Ecosystem Services Program Guidelines

Agroforestry Round

May 2024

For more information contact Sarah Heller, sheller@farmland.org

1. Program Description

Piloting Rewards for Ecosystem Services (PRES) is a pilot program designed to improve our understanding of the impact conservation decisions have on natural resources and provide additional financial support to farmers. **This current round of the PRES program is focused on agroforestry projects.**

This program provides farmers with an estimate of the emissions reduction impact of conservation and agroforestry practices they are implementing. PRES then rewards participants with two kinds of payments, a participation payment and an ecosystem services performance payment based on the amount of emissions reduction impact of their practices. Using models such as COMET-planner, program staff will help applicants estimate the Carbon Dioxide Equivalents sequestered by the implementation of their proposed conservation practices. If applicants are selected for funding, baseline soil carbon measurements will be collected by program staff, and these measurements will be repeated after conservation practice implementation. These soil measurements are for verification and research purposes only at this time.

PRES is not a carbon offset or carbon credit program. PRES rewards farmers for environmental stewardship and reports information about the total emissions mitigation impact of new practices back to each farm. PRES is trialing innovative approaches to how farmers are compensated for conservation. The program seeks to share information, learn and evolve over time. This program is administered by American Farmland Trust in partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

2. Eligible Participants

For this program, we define “farmer” as an individual, group, or organization who are intentionally raising livestock. A project may involve one or more of the following: an individual farmer, a farm family, a group of farmers with a cooperative business, or a non-profit entity.

This program recognizes the following as “livestock”: beef or dairy cattle, bison, hogs, poultry, bees, goats, sheep, waterfowl.

Eligible participants must be implementing agroforestry practices for the first time on the land unit after their project has been selected for funding.

The proposed project must take place in one or more of the following counties:

Connecticut

- Fairfield County
- Hartford County
- Litchfield County
- Middlesex County
- New Haven County
- New London County
- Windham County

- Tolland County

Massachusetts

- Hampshire County
- Hampden County
- Berkshire County
- Franklin County
- Worcester County

New Hampshire

- Coos County
- Grafton County
- Sullivan County
- Cheshire County

Vermont

- Bennington County
- Caledonia County
- Essex County
- Orange County
- Windham County
- Windsor County

3. Eligible Practice List

Projects this round must include the establishment of agroforestry through tree and/or shrub planting.

Priority practices:

- Agroforestry or silvopasture establishment
- Silvopasture (CPS 381)
- Alley cropping (CPS 311)
- Hedgerow planting (CPS 422)
- Riparian forest buffer (CPS 391)
- Tree/shrub establishment (CPS 612)
- Windbreak/shelterbelt establishment (CPS 380)

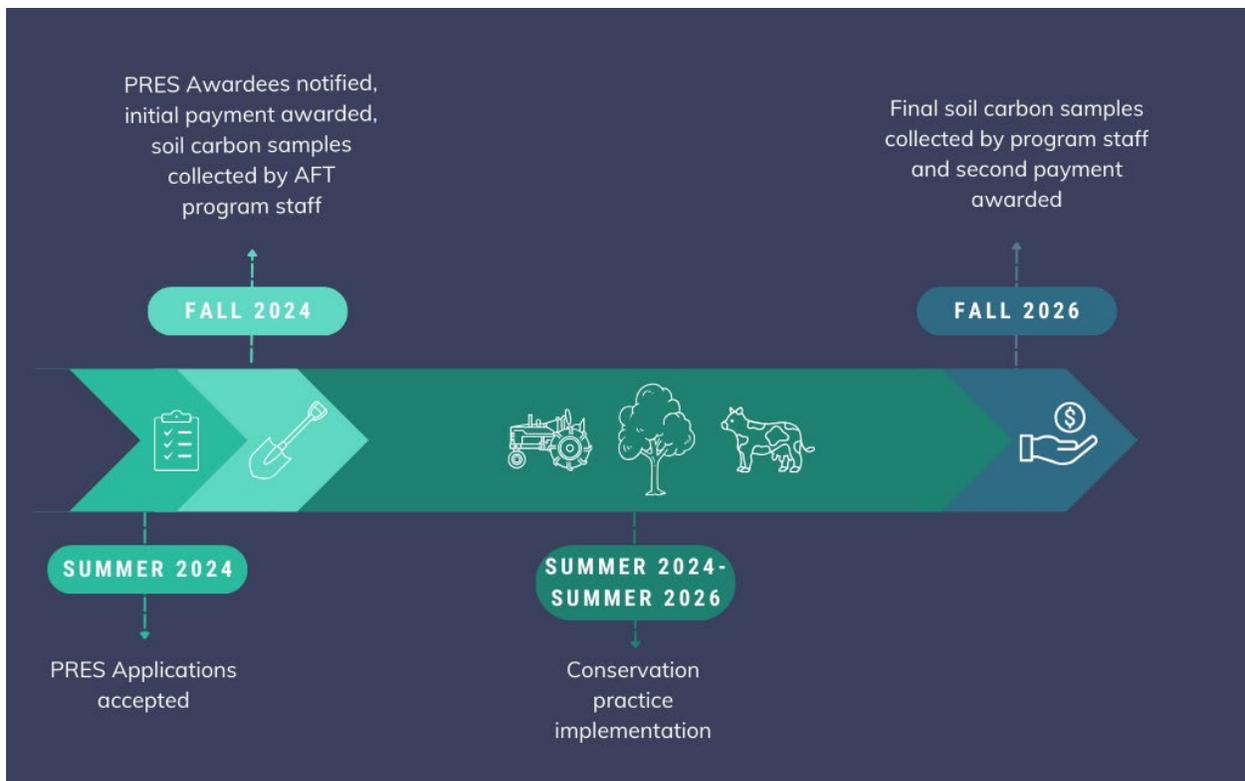
Additional land management changes can be included in your application. Eligible additional practices include:

- Conservation crop rotation (CPS 328)
- Cover crops (CPS 340)
- Mulching (CPS 484)
- Residue and tillage management - no-till (CPS 329)
- Residue and tillage management - reduced till (CPS 345)
- Stripcropping (CPS 585)

- Conservation cover (CPS 327)
- Contour buffer strips (CPS 332)
- Field border (CPS 386)
- Filter strip (CPS 393)
- Forage and biomass planting (CPS 512)
- Grassed waterways (CPS 412)
- Herbaceous wind barriers (CPS 603)
- Riparian herbaceous cover (CPS 390)
- Vegetative barriers (CPS 601)
- Nutrient management (CPS 590)
- Prescribed grazing (CPS 528)
- Range planting (CPS 550)
- Critical area planting (CPS 342)

For more information on the eligible practices, see [NRCs conservation practice standards](#).

4. Timeline



Applications will be accepted from May 13, 2024 – September 6, 2024. Applications will be reviewed monthly. If selected, applications will be notified. Upon signing an award agreement, applicants will be paid a one-time enrollment incentive of \$1,000, as well as a payment for half of the modeled carbon to be sequestered by the proposed project at \$40/ton/acre. Program

staff will take initial soil carbon measurements in 2024. Conservation practice implementation is expected to begin by spring of 2025. Final soil carbon measurements will be conducted between June and September of 2026, and the remaining payment for the modeled carbon sequestration will be paid in October of 2026, contingent on conservation practice implementation.

5. Participation Requirements

COMET Planner Estimation

If practices beyond agroforestry establishment are included in the application, applicants are expected to work with their service provider to create a [COMET Planner](#) report on the additional practices. COMET-Planner is an evaluation tool that provides generalized estimates of the greenhouse gas impacts of conservation practices. The applicant will need to provide information about the conservation practices they plan to implement to create the report. The report will be uploaded as part of the program application. Contact AFT program staff if you need assistance accessing COMET-Planner

Soil Sampling

This program measures changes in soil carbon through direct soil testing as a complement to the modeled changes. Soil testing results are for informational purposes only and will not impact payments. AFT Program staff will work with the applicant to determine a soil carbon sampling plan for their proposed project to measure the change in soil carbon over the project timeline. Sampling will occur in the first and last year of the contract/project. Depending on the complexity of the project a stratified subsample of field locations will be selected for sampling based on soil type and management history. We expect that 3 to 10 sampling locations will be selected for soil carbon monitoring at each farm. AFT field staff will arrange a date to collect soil samples that aligns with each farm's field management schedule. The soil carbon data that is collected will be shared with the farmer, and will only be used by AFT in an anonymized format unless express permission is granted by the farmer.

Survey

Applicants are expected to complete a survey as part of their participation in this program. The survey is part of a research project to help us better understand what kinds of resources support farmers in planning and implementing regenerative agriculture. Your participation in this survey-based research is important to help us understand the broader impacts of our programs and how to evolve them for farmers in the future. The survey is [linked here](#) and in the application. If an applicant believes they've already completed the survey, they should contact Alissa at awhite@farmland.org or 802-995-2292 to confirm.

Practice Verification

Sample Project

Practice	Field Name	Acres	Proposed Installation Date	Notes
Agroforestry establishment	North river field (Tract 4085, Field 2)	21	June 2024	Single tree rows with 8' between trees, 40' alley between rows. Mixed fruit & hardwood.
528 – Prescribed Grazing	Tract 2311, field 3	20 acres	April 2024, April 2025, April 2026	
512 – Pasture and Hay Planting	Tract 2311, field 3	4 acres	April 2024	
590 – Nutrient Management	Tract 2224, field 1	10 acres	April 2024, April 2025, April 2026	
391 – Riparian Forest Buffer	Tract 2224, field 4	0.5 acres	May 2024	
342 – Critical Area Planting	Tract 2224, field 4	0.5 acres	May 2024	

Fig 1. COMET Report. (Agroforestry installation calculated by AFT staff)

NRCS Conservation Practices	Acreage	Carbon Dioxide	Nitrous Oxide	Methane	Total CO2 Equivalent
Grazing Management to Improve Rangeland or Non-Irrigated Pasture Condition	20	1	1	0	2
Conversion of Annual Cropland to Non-Irrigated Grass/Legume Forage/Biomass Crops	4	5	1	0	6
Replace Synthetic N Fertilizer with Beef Feedlot Manure on Managed Non-Irrigated Pasture	10	2	0	0	2
Replace a Strip of Grassland Near Watercourses or Water Bodies with Woody Plants	0.5	2	N.E.**	N.E.**	2
Restore Highly Disturbed Areas by Planting Permanent Vegetative Cover	0.5	1	0	N.E.**	1
Totals	35	11	2	0	13

Payment Calculation

Practice	CO2 Equivalent from AFT estimates	Years of practice	Total Impact
Agroforestry establishment	29	3	87
Additional practices:	CO2 Equivalent from COMET report		Years of practice
528 – Prescribed Grazing	2	3	6
512 – Pasture and Hay Planting	6	1	6

590 – Nutrient Management	2	3	6
391 – Riparian Forest Buffer	2	1	1
342 – Critical Area Planting	1	1	1
Total			107

107 CO₂eq x \$40/ton = \$4,280

plus \$1,000 enrollment payment = \$5,280 in total payments

Initial payment (Fall 2024) \$1,000 enrollment payment + \$2,140 half of the modeled carbon sequestration impact = \$3,140

Final Payment (Fall 2026) \$2,140 second half of modeled carbon sequestration impact, dependent on practice implementation