

## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

*How many acres do I need to own to qualify?*

Ten (10) acres of qualified woodland, excluding one acre for houselot.

*How does this classification differ from Open Space, and can I switch over?*

The big difference is that Forest classification requires active forest management, which contributes to the local economy and increases forest productivity, while Open Space is more generic. Yes, landowners under Open Space can apply to the Forest classification with no use change penalties.

*Can forest management activities be conducted while in Open Space classification?*

Yes, there are no restrictions to management.

*My farm has a woodlot. How will that be assessed?*

The recommended value for forestland and/or wetlands appurtenant to a Farm classification parcel is \$115 per acre. This assessment does not require a forest management plan, only the Conservation Plan required of all Farm designations.

*Who can prepare the Forest plan?*

The plan must be prepared by a qualified forester in consultation with the landowner. The plan must meet criteria established by RI Dept. of Environmental Management (DEM) and be reviewed and approved by DEM's Division of Forest Environment, who issues the certificate.

**For a list of consulting foresters, who will charge a fee for plan preparation, please contact the RI Division of Forest Environment at 647-3367 or RIFCO at 568-3421.**

## ***Your Forest Management Plan***

The RI Division of Forest Environment (DFE) is responsible for certification of forest land under the FFOS Program. The DFE has regulations to guide landowners on the certification process, which requires development and adherence to a forest management plan.

A forest management plan must include:

- ◆ Property map with forest stands identified
- ◆ Description of the forest stands
- ◆ Management objectives
- ◆ Recommendations and Timetable for forestry activities

Forest stand descriptions must include information on stocking level, basal area, average tree diameter, trees per acre, site index, and silvicultural treatments.

Certification is good for five (5) years, at which time the DFE service forester will review the progress you have made in following your plan, to determine your re-certification for another five years. Management plans are good for ten years, and must be kept up-to-date.

A landowner unable to complete the activities outlined in their management plan may submit a written request to amend the plan to the Director of the RI DEM (via the Division of Forest Environment). If, through willful neglect, a landowner fails to complete the activities in the management plan, DEM will cancel designation of the land and the property will be assessed at fair market value. No change of use penalties are due until the parcel is developed.

Only those landowners who are serious about actively managing their woodlands should participate in the forestry component of the FFOS Program.

## ***Eligibility***

Any tract or contiguous tracts of land, exclusive of homesites and not part of any planned or existing development, at least ten acres or larger (not including the zoned house lot or one acre surrounding any dwelling, whichever is smaller). Must be actively managed according to a written forest management plan and meet the following conditions:

- It is capable of producing 20 cubic feet of wood fiber per year and is at least 30% stocked by forest trees of any size.
- Plantations must bear at least 500 trees per acre, and survive at least 1 growing season.
- The forest must be actively managed in accordance with the provisions of a written forest management plan for the purpose of growing, thinning and harvesting forest products.

### ***How to Enroll***

File completed application form (signed by the tax assessor) along with two copies of a forest management plan, an Assessor's plat map of the property, to the RI DEM. Application fee = \$10

### ***For More Information***

For a copy of the DEM's "Citizen's Guide to the FFOS Act", or for more information on the forestry provisions of the program, please call the RI Division of Forest Environment at **647-3367**, or the RI Forest Conservator's Organization ([www.RIFCO.org](http://www.RIFCO.org)) at **568-3421**.

The RI Farm, Forest and Open Space Act (FFOS) (Chapter 44-27 and sections 44-5-39 through 44-5-41 of Rhode Island General Laws) provides for land enrolled in the FFOS Program to be assessed at its current use, not its value for development. The purpose of the law is to conserve Rhode Island's productive agricultural and forest land, which contributes to the local economy while protecting natural resources and helps control property taxes for the entire community.

The law does not guarantee property taxes will be reduced but that the land's value will be assessed based on its value as farmland, forestland, or open space.

The FFOS Valuation Subcommittee of the RI State Conservation Committee, during the year 2000, developed *recommended maximum* current-use assessment values for use by town tax assessors for various categories of farmland, open space lands, and managed forests.

The purpose of this brochure is to provide forest landowners with the information they need to determine their eligibility for the forest assessment and the procedure required to enroll.

## RI FOREST CONSERVATOR'S ORGANIZATION, INC.

*Representing RI's forest landowners since 1990*

The fact that 55 per cent of Rhode Island is covered in forests is overshadowed by the urban and shoreline features of the state. There are over 15,000 landowners who own 80 per cent of the forested lands in Rhode Island. It is with those landowners and other conservationists that the future stake of the state's wooded lands lie.

*The Rhode Island Forest Conservators Organization is dedicated to the protection and the wise use of Rhode Island's woodland resources.*

### **MEMBER BENEFITS**

As a member, you will have the opportunity to join together with other landowners, natural resource professionals, and concerned citizens to exchange ideas, receive technical advice, and help promote action on vital conservation issues. You do not have to own land to join RIFCO!

RI Forest Conservator's Organization, Inc.  
PO BOX 53, No. Scituate, RI 02857  
401.568-3421 [www.rifco.org](http://www.rifco.org)

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# The Forest Certification And Assessment Process

Under the

## Rhode Island Farm, Forest, Open Space Act



Presented To You By:  
RI Forest Conservator's Organization, Inc.  
In Cooperation with the RI Rural Lands Coalition