

# State Partnerships Work:

Ohio forestland owners need technical and financial assistance.  
Together, state foresters and state conservationists deliver.

State forestry agencies are the primary deliverers of forestry technical assistance nationwide. When they team up with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)—the leading federal source of cost-share grant assistance for forestland owners—great things happen for America's forests.

Ohio has 7.8 million acres of forestland, most of which (5.8 million acres) is managed by family forestland owners.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Forestry provides technical and financial assistance to 145,000+ family forestland owners across the state through multiple agreements, including a formal agreement signed in 2006 to provide all of NRCS' forestry technical services. In 2020 alone, Ohio forestland owners utilized \$1.5 million in NRCS financial assistance to complete 177 forestry projects, bolstering air, water, and soil quality, carbon sequestration, abundant wildlife, and human wellness.

With most of Ohio's forests being privately owned—and because forest threats like pests, disease, and wildfire don't stop at boundary lines—the collaborative implementation of forestry practices **guided by private landowners, informed by ODNR, and supported by NRCS** is crucial to the health, resiliency, and productivity of all Ohio's forests.



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Nearly two-thirds of Ohio's forests are oak-dominated, but current trends indicate oaks are being replaced by shade-loving species, like red maple. To restore oak in the understories of Ohio forests, ODNR foresters are working with private landowners and NRCS to employ forest stand improvement (FSI) practices like targeted thinnings, prescribed fire, and harvesting systems to improve site conditions for oak species and encourage oak regeneration and establishment.

**In 2007, Ohio's state conservationist helped establish the Joint Forestry Team, a national-level initiative of four partners: NRCS, the National Association of State Foresters, the USDA Forest Service, and the National Association of Conservation Districts.**

The purpose of the Joint Forestry Team is to improve the coordinated, interagency delivery of forestry assistance to working forests, farms, and ranches. To learn more about the Joint Forestry Team (called "JFT" for short), go to [jointforestryteam.com](http://jointforestryteam.com).

Based on the Joint Forestry Team's example, the ODNR Division of Forestry, the Wayne National Forest, and NRCS established its own interagency team in 2008. The Ohio Joint Forestry Team's membership has since expanded to include all of the agencies in Ohio with forest management mission areas, namely the ODNR Division of Wildlife, Ohio State University (OSU) Cooperative Extension, and Central State University Extension.

To enhance the success of Ohio's forestry partnership agreements, the team has a business plan and employs a dedicated coordinator. The team's collaborative oak management efforts, catalyzed by a recent Joint Chiefs' Forest Restoration Project, are focused in 17 counties in southeast Ohio, and since 2015, have improved 23,000 acres of forest with NRCS support.

