

Private and Public Forest Assessment**FY2010 Request: \$250,000****Reference No: 46953****AP/AL:** Appropriation**Category:** Natural Resources**Location:** Statewide**House District:** Statewide (HD 1-40)**Estimated Project Dates:** 07/01/2009 - 06/30/2011**Project Type:** Economic Assistance**Contact:** Leta Simons**Contact Phone:** (907)465-3379**Brief Summary and Statement of Need:**

Technical forestry assistance programs help Alaskan communities, businesses, and landowners with reforestation, forest insect and disease, urban forestry, water quality protection, and wildfire hazard challenges. In FY08, AK received \$2.8 million in federal funding for these programs and assisted 182 organizations and agencies statewide. Federal funding is dropping, and after 2010, all states must have a Statewide Assessment to qualify for federal funds. This project meets requirements for federal funding and increases state control of priorities in Alaska by developing a Statewide Assessment and Response Plan for forestry technical assistance programs statewide.

Funding:	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	Total
Gen Fund	\$250,000						\$250,000
Total:	\$250,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$250,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input type="checkbox"/> On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill	

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	
Totals:	0	0

Additional Information / Prior Funding History:

This is a new project request.

Project Description/Justification:

The Division of Forestry's core services include forestry technical assistance to municipalities, businesses, landowners, civic organizations, fire departments, educational institutions, and individual citizens. These services contribute to the component's mission: "To provide a sustainable supply of forest resources to Alaskans." Assistance includes forest planning assistance and cost-share grants to Native corporations and private landowners; inventory, planting, and tree care training for municipal workers; insect and disease surveys, forest pest monitoring, early detection of invasive forest insects and diseases, forest health management advice on all forest land ownerships, and natural resources education training for schools, universities, and youth groups.

Demand for technical forestry assistance is increasing steadily. Growing demand reflects increases in the proportion of Alaskans living in cities, residential development in forested areas of the Fairbanks, Mat-Su, Kenai and other boroughs, climate change and invasive species impacts on forests statewide, burgeoning risks of damage from wildland fire, and demand for cheaper, cleaner alternatives to fossil fuels.

These programs are important to diverse entities – in FY08, these programs provided service to 182 different communities, utilities, businesses, agencies, fire departments, educational institutions, Alaska Native corporations, and non-profit organizations, and numerous individual citizens. Services improve forest health, reduce costs of meeting air and water quality standards, decrease carbon emissions, reduce municipal costs for tree maintenance, and increase public and private benefits from private forest lands, including local lumber and wood energy, recreation opportunities, and wildlife habitat.

In the dozen years since their inception in Alaska, these programs have made great strides with a small staff. For example, through technical assistance from a two-person staff in the Division of Forestry, communities and utilities covering the majority of the state population have developed forestry programs meeting national standards for urban and community forestry (Tree City USA and Tree Line USA standards). These efforts help communities meet air quality standards, reduce storm water runoff, increase property values, and decrease tree planting and maintenance costs. A number of other Alaskan communities have the potential to achieve similar results, but need state assistance and staff training on tree selection and care, planting standards, and tree inventory. Similarly, the small forest stewardship program has helped 32 Alaska Native corporations and 742 private forest landowners develop plans for over 3.7 million acres of forest land, and qualify for federal cost-share funding to help actively manage their forests.

However, technical assistance programs are funded almost wholly from federal funds. Sharp declines in federal funds and changes in national priorities jeopardize the existence of these technical assistance programs in Alaska, as reflected in an 18% decrease in the number of areas served since FY06. The U.S. Forest Service is redesigning these programs to favor more urban states, shifting funding from statewide programs and priorities to special projects targeting federal priorities, and emphasizing competitive grants rather than base funding. Due to these changes, existing successful programs in Alaska are at risk.

In addition, the 2008 federal Farm Bill requires each state to prepare a GIS-based Statewide Assessment of all the forestry and fire assistance programs, set geographic and issue-based priorities, and develop a response plan. The Assessment and Response Plan are required to qualify for federal funding in federal fiscal year 2010 and beyond. In state FY08 alone, technical forestry and fire assistance programs brought in \$2.8 million in federal funding to Alaska. The Assessment and Response Plan also provide an opportunity to tailor the technical assistance programs to Alaska's needs rather than federal priorities, and to compete more effectively for grant funds. State funds are needed to complete the Statewide Assessment and Response Plan for Alaska, and prepare competitive grant applications. Alaska lacks GIS databases common to other parts of the country and must develop effective substitutes to complete the Assessment and Response Plan. Although timely completion is a challenge, these products provide an opportunity for Alaska to improve its competitiveness for federal funds and establish greater control over program priorities.

Why is this Project Needed Now?

The Statewide Assessment and Response Plan must be completed in 2010 for Alaska to continue to qualify for federal forestry assistance funding. Database development must begin promptly to ensure timely completion of the plan, and uninterrupted service to Alaskans.

Specific Spending Detail:

<u>LINE ITEM</u>	<u>DOLLAR AMOUNT</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
Personal Services	\$ 124,700	GIS specialist, forest health, community forestry, forest stewardship, cooperative fire, and natural resource education specialists (partial funding for existing positions)
Travel	\$ 9,000	Travel for coordinator
Services	\$ 106,800	Contract for project coordinator, printing, GIS data/imagery
Commodities	\$ 9,500	Supplies, software, personal computer for coordinator

Project Support: Municipalities and unincorporated communities, Native corporations with forest land holdings, private forest landowners, fire departments, school districts, universities, U.S. Forest Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, arborists, landscaping businesses.