

A proposal to the Agricultural Flexibility Fund

Building Rural Community Capacity for Ecological Goods & Services Enhancement in Mixed Farm, Forest and Woodlot Landscapes of Canada

Lead Partners:

Canadian Federation of Agriculture • Canadian Model Forest Network • Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owners

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 'Building Rural Community Capacity for Ecological Goods and Services Enhancement in Mixed Farm, Forest and Woodlot Landscapes of Canada' proposal addresses the critical need for a nationwide effort to build rural capacity for delivering ecological goods and services. It is supported by a strong national partnership, which provides the linkage to an extensive network of stakeholders and diverse interestsⁱ.

There is a need for more effective and comprehensive mechanisms to enhance the production and protection of life-sustaining ecological goods and services (EG&S) – examples include: water quality and quantity; biodiversity; pollination services; carbon sequestration; and, landscape aesthetics. Mechanisms have been slow to develop in Canada that allow for a more equitable sharing of the costs of providing EG&S – to date, a cost borne wholly by landowners for the common public good. **The program will address this gap by engaging farmers, woodlot owners and forest managers in identifying needs, priorities and values related to EG&S and by developing appropriate incentives at the local level taking into consideration environmental sustainability principles and administrative realities.** This will offer benefits to a range of stakeholdersⁱⁱ.

Vision

The vision for the Comprehensive EG&S Capacity Building Program is:

- ▶ To protect and enhance the full range of EG&S through the development of incentive mechanisms that encourage and reward environmental protection while recognizing and incorporating landowner and societal values.

The program is comprehensive in the sense of covering geographies spanning the country, and in that it will explore a range of EG&S enhancement approaches recognizing diverse socio-cultural contexts and differing landscape characteristics. The program will capitalize on existing infrastructure and capacity for EG&S enhancement efforts and will make use of and/or expand Local Management Organizations (LMOs) – local partnership-based organizations capable of providing management services to aggregated, regional groups of landowners – thus offering a holistic, one-window approach to EG&S enhancement and delivery.

Aim

The aim of this program is:

- ▶ To undertake a number of landscape-based EG&S projects across Canada that build on existing EG&S programs in operation (both domestically and abroad), and adapt them to local conditions through the engagement of landowners and agricultural and forest-based communities.

This aim recognizes the critical need to ensure a more equitable return on the full range of EG&S that farmers, woodlot owners, and forest managers provide on behalf of society. Such will be examined in particular in the context of advancing the on-the-ground application of market-based approaches and meeting environmental sustainability objectives.

Objective

The overarching objective of the program is:

- ▶ To describe and design the components of an adaptive management framework for enhancement and marketing of a full range of EG&S that can be tailored for local application according to landscape conditions and management objectives

The program will support the provision of information to assist in anticipated policy changes and the transfer of the experience with others across Canada as a foundation for the ongoing evolution of EG&S approaches over time. The program is designed to help bridge agricultural and forest/woodlot sectors, not to compete with or duplicate early EG&S efforts already underway in Canada. By bringing sector interests together in a common cause, there is great opportunity for mutual learning and advancement of environmental stewardship and sustainability objectives across sectors.

Activity Areas

Six broad **activity areas** form the framework for achieving the objectives of the program:

- ▶ Selection and establishment of up to eight landscape-scale EG&S projects
- ▶ Capacity building and community engagement
- ▶ Examination and adaptation of existing tools
- ▶ Development of generic tools/procedures
- ▶ Communications and outreach
- ▶ Evaluation of the program

Key Outcomes

The program will result in a **more diverse and competitive economy**, in which EG&S serve as another **source of revenue** for landowners while playing a vital role in ensuring community (societal) well-being and **environmental sustainability**. The landscape-scale EG&S projects will serve as working examples of how EG&S incentive mechanisms can be used to shape future agri-environmental and forest/woodlot management program and policy development. The program will build capacity from the ground up and this will ensure the continued development, refinement, and evolution of the tools and approaches – and garner the broad-based buy-in needed to support and sustain EG&S enhancement objectives over the long-term.

i There is recognized strength and capacity to deliver within this national partnership:

1. The **Canadian Model Forest Network**, through its network of 14 Model Forest sites, brings its depth of partnerships, its highly respected collaborative approach to land management challenges, and its ability to engage local communities and effect grassroots change. It is an ideal platform for engaging local forest-based communities in the development of incentive mechanisms and approaches that foster the provision and protection of EG&S.
2. The **Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owners** brings much of the infrastructure needed to build EG&S programs in Canada through its local and provincial woodlot associations.
3. The **Canadian Federation of Agriculture** represents over 200,000 Canadian farmers and farm families. Through its provincial member organizations, the CFA brings a wealth of experience and capacity in the delivery of environmental farm plans, extension services, and on-the-ground communications within the agricultural community – all of which will serve to advance the objectives of this proposal.

ii Beneficiaries of this proposal include:

- ▶ Private landowners (farmers, woodlot owners) and agriculture- and forest-based communities
- ▶ Canadian society
- ▶ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the agriculture sector
- ▶ Other sectors involved in land management and environmental stewardship

Benefits to the agricultural sector resulting from the activities outlined in this proposal include:

- ▶ Improved environmental sustainability
- ▶ Reduced production costs for producers
- ▶ Opportunities for responding to and addressing society's priorities
- ▶ Innovation in responding to market challenges
- ▶ Improved credibility and public relations image for the Canadian agricultural sector
- ▶ Program and policy advancements