

Financial and Technical Assistance Programs for Conservation on Scout Camp Properties

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Properly managed private forest lands, wetlands, and open spaces (including Scout properties) provide public benefits such as clean water, clean air, and habitat for wildlife. Consequently, a variety of federal, state, and private technical and financial assistance programs have been established to provide support to private landowners who perform conservation work at these sites. Scout camp projects such as soil and water conservation, tree and shrub planting, invasive species control, and wildlife habitat and forest stand improvement can receive funding, technical help, and the planning required for these practices. In some states, funding is also available to assist with developing plans for camp conservation and invasive species management, as well as Forest Stewardship Plans.

Most financial assistance programs require the submission of written plans describing the conservation practices to be implemented, work to be accomplished, and maintenance needs. A detailed plan for camp conservation or a Forest Stewardship Plan can meet this requirement.

How to get started

The first step is to contact and build relationships with such individuals as state service foresters, Forestry Cooperative Extension agents, state wildlife agency representatives, and district conservationists from the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). These agencies have a mandate to provide technical assistance to private landowners. They can also tell you about financial assistance programs in your area and help you sign up for and implement the projects funded by the programs. In addition, all of these people are worth considering as potential members of your council conservation committee, particularly if they have a Scouting background.



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Where to get help

State Forestry Agencies

The forestry agency in each state receives federal funding to provide technical assistance to private forest landowners under the [Forest Stewardship Program](#). Each state utilizes this funding in different ways. Most state forestry agencies can send service foresters to perform a site visit on the Scout camp property, and often those agencies can prepare a Forest Stewardship Plan for the property that could serve as the camp's conservation plan. In other states, the forestry agencies offer financial assistance to cover some of the costs of hiring a consultant forester to prepare your plan.

The state service forester can also assist you with selecting appropriate government forestry-related conservation practices to help you meet your camp's natural resource management objectives. The forester can also direct you to the appropriate agency, where you can enroll in financial assistance programs. There may also be local programs funded by industry groups, boards, conservation organizations, and others to which the service forester has access. Some practices that the forester may be able to assist with include tree planting, wildlife habitat enhancement, forest stand improvement, forest road and trail maintenance, invasive species management, prescribed burning, forest pest management, property boundary management, and more. You should also ask the state forestry agency about conservation education funding to support your camp's ecology program.

As an example, the [Maryland DNR Forest Service](#) website has a forest stewardship link that provides considerable information about financial assistance and technical assistance opportunities in Maryland.

Cooperative Extension Agent

Every state has a land grant university with a cooperative extension program that has been established to provide education to the public and private landowners. Extension agents are highly skilled, with a wealth of knowledge in topics such as agriculture, gardening, environment and natural resources management, nutrition and community planning, and much more. Some universities have extension agents in each county and some have foresters or wildlife biologists who are extension agents. Cooperative extension websites like the one hosted by the [University of Georgia](#) provide state residents with information on a variety of topics and may offer fact sheets about conservation practices and financial assistance programs. The cooperative extension agent may also have publications to support your camp's ecology and conservation programs.

State Wildlife Agencies

Biologists on staff at some state wildlife or fish and game agencies may be available to visit Scout camps, perform assessments, and advise management on ways to enhance the wildlife habitat. States may offer financial assistance to implement certain wildlife habitat enhancement projects through opportunities like the [Landowner Incentive Program](#), in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Financial assistance may be available for practices ranging from invasive species removal to construction of nesting boxes, restoration of natural communities, and promotion and protection of rare species and their habitats. Some state wildlife agencies publish educational materials and resources that can support your camp's ecology and conservation program. They may also have information related to fishing, hunting, and regulations for keeping live animals and other specimens in your ecology program area.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

[NRCS](#) helps America's farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners conserve the nation's soil, water, air, and other natural resources by offering essential technical expertise and conservation planning. All programs are voluntary, with science-based solutions that benefit the landowner and the environment. NRCS service centers in each state have trained conservationists on staff to provide technical service. There are numerous [NRCS financial assistance programs](#) for such practices as tree planting, forest improvement, invasive species removal, soil and water conservation, and wildlife habitat enhancement. Three NRCS programs well-suited for Scout camp properties are the Conservation Stewardship Program ([CSP](#)), the Environment Quality Incentives Program ([EQIP](#)), and the Conservation Reserve Program ([CRP](#)), which is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency with the assistance of NRCS and the state's forestry agency. You should also look for other landscape-specific or state-specific NRCS programs in your camp's area.

Federal Land Management Agencies

The U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Department of Defense, the Army Corps of Engineers, and other federal agencies collectively manage millions of acres of our nation's federally-owned land. These agencies employ foresters, wildlife biologists, and other natural resource specialists who may be available through outreach programs to offer technical assistance and educational programs and materials for your Scout camp, particularly if the camp is located within or adjacent to federal land managed by these agencies.

Grants and Other Contributions

Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, corporations, and foundations offer grants to support conservation or educational activities that may take place on your Scout camp property. Be aware that competition for these grants can be substantial, so it is good to include additional partners, matching funds, in-kind services, diversity targets, and number of youth served in your grant proposal. Additionally, setting achievable goals for the grant projects that align with the grant application and the mission of the granting institution is an important consideration. Most of these sources target start-up or innovative projects that will become self-sufficient rather than projects that require annual contributions. Many of these opportunities can be found by conducting a simple Internet search.

Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities with forestry or natural resource management programs may have resources, faculty, or student interns to provide technical assistance for the natural resource management of Scout Camp properties.

Monitoring and Maintenance

Regardless of the conservation work you perform on your Scout camp property, there is always a need to monitor and maintain the practice to ensure that it continues to provide value. Many financial assistance programs require that the practice be maintained for the life of a contract or until the practice is self-sustainable. Maintenance can be an opportunity for Scouts to perform conservation work. Maintenance and monitoring of conservation practices should be a part of your annual work plan for the camp property or assigned to the camp conservation committee. Conservation practices should not be implemented unless there is a commitment to maintain the practices throughout their lifespan.

Additional Information

For more information about conservation practices on Scout camp properties, consider contacting your BSA area Conservation and Environment advocate, or your BSA regional task force for Conservation and Environment.