

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the Amador Calaveras Tuolumne Forest Health Assistance Program

If you have a dead tree(s) that poses imminent threat to you or your structures, this program is not a viable option. Please contact a tree faller now. Contact us for a contractor list.

1. How is the A-C-T Forest Health Assistance Program (ACT FHAP) associated with the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)?

The ACT FHAP draws from monies from a particular EQIP fund pool. The biggest difference is that ACT FHAP focuses specifically on bark beetle and drought impacts on conifer trees and forests in 10 hard hit Sierra counties, including Amador, Calaveras, and Tuolumne counties. The main advantage is that ACT FHAP allows small landowners to apply for treatment within their 100-foot defensible space zone around a landowner's house or permanent structures. Normal EQIP does not allow work to be accomplished within this 100-foot zone. Another advantage is ACT FHAP is only for 10 Sierra counties, while most EQIP pools are much larger, therefore potentially more competitive.

2a. Is there a minimal size property that can apply for an ACT FHAP contract?

No, there is no minimal acreage size. As long as a landowner has a single dead or dying conifer that is 10" in circumference at 4'6" height (diameter breast height), the landowner can qualify for this assistance program.

2b. Is there a maximum size property that can apply for an RCPP contract?

This program focuses on properties 40 acres and smaller. Landowners with larger properties can be eligible for other EQIP projects and should consider contacting NRCS.

3. How many dead or dying trees do I need to have in order to qualify as a small landowner?

As long as you have one standing dead or dying conifer tree (pine, fir, cedar) with a circumference of 10" at 4'6" height (DBH) on your property, you can apply for this assistance program.

4. What happens if I had dead trees standing when I applied, but now they have all fallen over?

As long as an RCD or NRCS employee/contractor certified that on the initial site visit that you had a dead/dying tree on that particular day, you can qualify.

5. What if I have downed trees that were killed by drought, bark beetle, or fire? The one standing dead conifer tree killed by bark beetle is the main requirement of this program. If you have additional dead trees standing or on the ground, you can sign up for additional practices to clean up this dead material.

The ACT Forest Health Assistance Program

Central Sierra RCDs, the California Association of RCDs, and the NRCS have partnered together to provide financial and technical assistance for landowners dealing with tree mortality and forest health issues. The tree mortality crisis has affected landowners and communities in the Central Sierra; the NRCS and RCDs in 10 counties were awarded \$10 million to provide assistance to landowners.

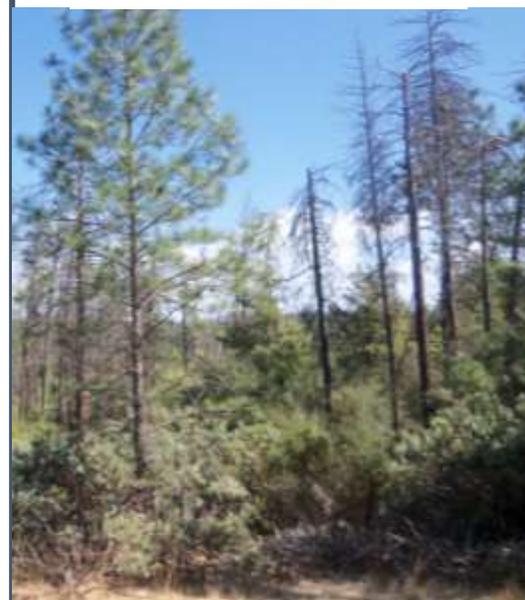
For more information or to apply for assistance

Contact Amador RCD, Natural Resource Specialist Gordon Long

Cell: (209) 791-0286

Email: Gordon@AmadorRCD.org

www.AmadorRCD.org/foresthealth



6. What kind of monetary assistance is “typical” for a landowner applying for an ACT FHAP contract?

The NRCS has established pay rates for particular practices. These practices were designed to pay between 40-60% of the actual cost of the work if the landowner was to hire a forestry contractor to accomplish the job. If a landowner has the skills necessary to accomplish the work themselves, they can realize a higher percentage of covered costs. That is because the ACT FHAP pays the landowner on a per acre fee structure. If you put all your own time in, you would still receive the same amount of payment if you hired a professional firm to get the work done. That said, a vast majority of landowners who receive a contract still hire professionals to accomplish the required work. Since this program is predicated on having dead conifers that need treatment, it is expected that each ACT FHAP contract will include, at a minimum, NRCS Practice 384, Woody Residue Treatment. Within the 100-foot defensible space, dead tree removal is **paid on a per tree basis**. As a guide, one of these contracts can pay approximately **\$800 per tree** to fall it, limb it, and deck it onsite. If dead conifers are outside the 100-foot defensible space zone, this same Practice 384 pays on a per acre basis. In this scenario, pay rates vary between **\$330 and \$840 per acre**. Actual removal of trees from the property is usually not available under this program.

7. Can I sign up for more forestry practices than just this 384 Practice to treat standing dead trees under this ACT FHAP program?

Yes, if you sign up to treat at least one dead, standing conifer tree, you can work with our forestry technician to accomplish many other forestry practices that could address resource concerns on your property. Such related practices could include activities such as forest stand improvement, conifer seeding, brush management, herbicide treatment to control brush and weeds, pruning of existing conifers, just to name a few additional options. Call to learn more about these complimentary practices.

8. Who would I actually get paid by?

All landowner payments are paid by NRCS. If a landowner is approved for an ACT FHAP contract, that landowner is required to fill out paperwork to set up an automatic payment program with the NRCS, which expedites the payment process.

9. Once I have a funded contract, how quickly can I get a payment?

These ACT FHAP, as with all EQIP programs, contracts are structured as reimbursable agreements. Once a landowner is given the go-ahead to implement work on their property (this approval step can actually take 4-12 months.), they would either do the work themselves or hire a contractor. After the landowner believes the forestry practice is done and final, they would call up the RCD resource specialist to schedule a certification site visit by one of their staff. Currently Gordon Long is our main contact for this program. His cell number is (209) 791-0286. Gordon can also be reached through the NRCS office in Jackson (209)714-8055 or (209) 223-3581. If the forestry professional determines that the work qualifies for completion, then you could expect to receive payment from the NRCS within 4 weeks (oftentimes much faster) of that approval. *(It is suggested to not pay a hired contractor until you receive payment from NRCS, but that is the landowner's choice)*

10. Are there tax consequences if I sign up for this program?

Yes, since you would be accepting federal money, our government considers these payments as taxable income. Please confer with your tax professional to learn how this agreement might impact your federal tax obligations.

11. How long do these contracts last?

On a typical basis, most contracts range between 3 and 5 years, depending on many factors, such as size of treatment, complexity of contract, number of practices, how fast you wish to proceed, and complying with environmental and cultural requirements.