

# ACCREDITATION RULE 27

Issue Date: 2022/07/21

Implementation Date: 2022/07/21

Supersedes: 2018/12/03

---

**SUBJECT:** Accreditation Program for American Tree Farm System (ATFS)

**APPLIES TO:** ATFS ANAB-Accredited and Applicant Certification Bodies

## PREFACE

This Accreditation Rule is to inform certification bodies (CBs) of ANAB requirements for accreditation to certify organizations for management systems conforming with the American Tree Farm System.

There are three types of ATFS certification:

- Regional Groups are group certifications made up of state programs (see [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org) for region delineations).
- Independent Managed Groups (IMGs) are sub-components within ATFS's certification program. Managed and maintained by private organizations and public agencies, these groups are independent of ATFS's certified Regional Groups.
- Individual Certified Properties are those properties whose landowners have decided that they wish to have their forested ownership independently certified by an ANAB-accredited CB.

All three types of properties are audited by ANAB-accredited CBs and have their own ATFS Standard Operating Procedures for certification (see [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org)).

In addition, the American Forest Foundation (AFF) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) collaboratively developed the SFI Small Lands Group Certification Module based on the foundation of the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard and incorporating the AFF Standards of Sustainability for forest management (see section 9 below). This module has been endorsed by the Programme for Forest Certification (PEFC).

## ACCREDITATION RULE

1. Requirement Documents (current versions unless specified)
  - 1.1. American Forest Foundation (AFF) 2021 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification
  - 1.2. 2021 ATFS Eligibility Requirements and Guidance for Certification
  - 1.3. American Tree Farm System Sampling Procedures for Assessments
  - 1.4. PEFC ST 2001:2008, PEFC Logo Usage Rules - Requirements
  - 1.5. PEFC Annex 6, Certification and Accreditation Procedures
  - 1.6. American Tree Farm System Tree Farm Inspection Record (ATFS Form 021 Revised 01/21)
  - 1.7. 2021 American Tree Farm System Independently Managed Group (IMG) Standards
  - 1.8. SFI Small Lands Group Certification Module (Can be obtained at [Small Lands Group Certification Module](#))
  - 1.9. ISO/IEC 17021-1, Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems
  - 1.10. MA 5000, ANAB Accreditation Manual, and applicable ANAB Accreditation Rules
  - 1.11. IAF Mandatory Documents as applicable
2. Prerequisites
  - 2.1. The CB shall acquire and maintain ANAB accreditation for SFI as a condition of applying for ANAB accreditation for ATFS.

### 3. Application Process

- 3.1. CBs can obtain applications for informational use at [www.anab.org](http://www.anab.org).
- 3.2. The application process outlined at [www.anab.org](http://www.anab.org) must be completed via ANAB's Enterprise Quality Manager (EQM) database when the CB is ready to apply for accreditation.
- 3.3. The application fee includes the cost of one assessor day for the off-site documentation review.

### 4. Initial Assessments for Accreditation

- 4.1. An ANAB accreditation assessor shall conduct a full documentation review.
- 4.2. After the documents are found acceptable, ANAB shall conduct an office assessment and required witnessed audits.
  - 4.2.1. The office assessment shall be conducted on site or remotely (at ANAB's discretion) and is conducted to ensure the CB's certification process for ATFS conforms with ISO/IEC 17021-1 and is effective.
  - 4.2.2. ANAB shall witness the CB conducting an ATFS two-stage audit process (stages 1 and 2) at an organization at which the CB fully evaluates all ATFS requirements.
    - 4.2.2.1. ANAB shall witness an initial audit for either a regional group or an independent managed group. Only one type of group needs to be witnessed for the CB to be accredited to offer certification to both types of groups.
    - 4.2.2.2. The ANAB assessment team shall have the same number of members as the CB audit team.
    - 4.2.2.3. Because of the level of expertise needed, ANAB may use technical experts for ATFS witnessed audits. ANAB will invoice the CB for the fees and expenses of the technical expert.

### 5. Surveillance Assessment

- 5.1. ANAB shall conduct an annual office assessment and witness a CB team conducting an ATFS audit for each type of group certified (that is, Regional Group and/or Independent Managed Group) at least once in each accreditation cycle.
  - 5.1.1. When possible, the office assessment shall be conducted concurrently with assessments for SFI and other ANAB accreditation programs for which the CB is accredited.
  - 5.1.2. The witnessed audits required during the accreditation cycle are for both regional groups and independent managed groups; however, if the CB has not certified any clients in one type of group, ANAB shall conduct one witnessed audit in the cycle for the type of group for which the CB has certification activity.

### 6. Reaccreditation Assessments

- 6.1. ANAB shall conduct a document review and on-site full system office assessment at approximately six months prior to the expiration of accreditation.

### 7. Criteria for Certification Process

- 7.1. Public Consultation: The audit evidence to determine the conformity with the forest management standard shall include relevant information from external parties (for example, governmental agencies, community groups, and conservation organizations) as appropriate.
- 7.2. Public Access of Certification Reports: A summary of the certification report, including a summary of findings on the auditee's conformity with the forest management standard, shall be made available to the public by the auditee or in accordance with any applicable requirements defined by the respective forest certification scheme.
- 7.3. Certification Body Information Sharing and Transfer to ATFS and PEFC: The CB shall inform AFF (the ATFS governing body) and SFI Inc. (the PEFC National Governing Body for the United States) about all issued certificates and the validity and scope of these certificates. The CB shall inform the client organization about information provided to AFF and SFI Inc.

- 7.4. Assessment of ATFS and PEFC Logo Usage Compliance: The CB will ensure appropriate control of the PEFC and/or ATFS logo if the certified entity is a PEFC and/or ATFS logo user.
8. Additional ATFS Requirements (not documented elsewhere)
  - 8.1. ATFS audit time
    - 8.1.1. The CB shall have a process to determine ATFS audit time.
    - 8.1.2. ANAB shall review the CB's audit-time process during the application process and refer to it throughout the oversight of the ATFS program.
  - 8.2. ATFS certification cycles may be up to five years.
9. SFI Small Lands Group Certification Module Accreditation
  - 9.1. The CB must be initially accredited and maintain its accreditation for the SFI program (see Accreditation Rule 26).
    - 9.1.1. Lands in the United States certified through this module will be certified under ATFS with resultant "certified forest content" under SFI's Chain of Custody Standard and the PEFC Chain of Custody Standard.
    - 9.1.2. Lands in Canada certified through this module will be "SFI certified" and the resultant fiber "certified forest content" under SFI's Chain of Custody Standard and the PEFC Chain of Custody Standard.
  - 9.2. Accredited certificates for this module shall specifically indicate the certification is to:  
"The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and American Forest Foundation (AFF) SFI Small Lands Group Certification Module".
  - 9.3. Use of symbols and marks for this module is limited based on where the certification is located.
    - 9.3.1. For certifications issued for locations in the United States, the SFI, ANAB, PEFC, and ATFS symbols and/or marks shall be included on certificates.
    - 9.3.2. For certifications issued for locations in Canada, the SFI, ANAB, and PEFC symbols and/or marks shall be included on certificates.