



American Forest Foundation

2023 AFF® Standards of Sustainability Public Summary Audit

Introduction

American Forest Foundation of Washington, D.C. has demonstrated conformance to AFF® 2021 Standards of Sustainability in accordance with the NSF certification process.

American Forest Foundation and the National Group of American Tree Farm System non-industrial and privately-owned lands in state Tree Farm programs includes the Programs in the following USA States: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, Virginia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, California, Idaho, Kentucky, Missouri, Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming. This program was formed to assist in the certification of Tree Farmers in State recognized programs by integrating with the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) and using the American Forest Foundation (AFF) Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification of Private Lands as the basis for certification.

The audit was performed by NSF on 26 Jan. through 11 Sept. 2023 by an audit team headed by Michelle Matteo, Lead Auditor. Audit team members fulfill the qualification criteria for conducting audits contained in AFF Procedures and Auditor Qualifications and Accreditation.

The scope of the audit included land management practices of all program members within the AFF requirements. Forest practices that were the focus of field inspections included those that have been under active management over the past year. In addition, practices conducted earlier were also reviewed as appropriate including regeneration and BMP issues, promotion of sustainable forestry practices, legal compliance, and incorporation of continual improvement systems.

The AFF Standards were used without modifying any requirements.

Audit Process

NSF initiated the audit process with a Teams meeting to confirm the scope of the audit, review the Indicators and evidence to be used to assess conformance, verify that AFF was prepared to proceed to the audit, and to prepare a detailed audit plan. NSF then conducted the audit of conformance. A report was prepared and approved by an independent certification board member assigned by NSF. The next audit is scheduled for January 2024.

The audit was governed by a detailed audit plan designed to enable the audit team to efficiently determine conformance with the applicable requirements. The plan provided for the assembly and review of audit evidence consisting of documents, interviews, and on-site inspections of ongoing or completed forest practices.

During the audit NSF reviewed a sample of the written documentation assembled to provide objective evidence of conformance. NSF also selected field sites for inspection based upon the risk of environmental impact, likelihood of occurrence, special features, and other criteria outlined in the NSF protocols. NSF selected and interviewed stakeholders such as contract loggers, landowners and other interested parties, and interviewed employees within the organization to confirm that the AFF Standards were understood and actively implemented.

The possible findings of the audit included conformance, major non-conformance, minor non-conformance, opportunities for improvement, and practices that exceeded the requirements of the standard.

Overview of Audit Findings

AFF was found to be in conformance with the standard. NSF determined that there were 5 non-conformances:

- AFF Clause 1.1.1: One MO TF did not have a formal management plan.
- AFF Clause 1.1.2: Multiple management plans were missing required elements at the start of the 2023 audit.
- AFF Clause 4.2.2: Two YTFs did not maintain records of pesticide use.
- AFF Clause 8.2.1: Harvest prescription was not followed.
- Eligibility requirement: Multiple (three) TFs violated the contiguity clause having rights-of-ways of greater than 84 feet yet are one TF.

AFF has developed plans to address these issues. Progress in implementing these corrective action plans will be reviewed in subsequent surveillance audits.



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One opportunity for improvement (OFI) was also identified:

- AFF Clause 1.1.2: There is an opportunity to improve landowners' familiarity with the ATFS requirements, timing of the management plan updates, change in plans post-harvest, and the timing and level of detail of management plan updates.

These findings do not indicate a current deficiency but served to alert AFF to areas that could be strengthened or which could merit future attention.