

Exclusion Guidance for Certification Pilot Projects

The American Forest Foundation (AFF) seeks a future where family-owned forests and the interconnected social, economic, and ecological benefits received from them are recognized and supported by landowners, policymakers, conservationists, philanthropists, and business leaders. In order to achieve this vision, AFF is committed to identifying opportunities to remove barriers to certification and access to forestry professionals through the use of pilot programs in identified landscapes across the country in conjunction with strategic partners.

AFF's pilot projects serve to address unique obstacles identified during AFF's long history of administering the ATFS program, which includes an internationally recognized third-party certification program. The pilots are timebound projects that will result in actions to extend, modify, or terminate pilots after an allotted amount of time. Any modification to internal AFF policies and guidance are explicitly for the purposes of the pilot projects.

AFF Policies and Guidance Exclusions

All current and future pilot projects will be revisited at the end of 2019 for evaluation and are explicitly labeled as a "pilot." Any learnings will be incorporated in the updated 2020 - 2025 AFF Standards.

The Landscape Management Plan (LMP) pilot projects currently under evaluation in Alabama and Florida are testing multi-owner landscape level plans and a streamlined administrative process. Under the existing Standards Language (noted below), the implementation of an LMP is allowable and does not require exclusion language for enactment.

- Standards Language: "Standard 1: Commitment to Practicing Sustainable Forestry
Landowner demonstrates commitment to forest health and sustainability by developing a forest management plan and implementing sustainable practices.
- Performance Measure 1.1: Landowner shall have and implement a written forest management plan consistent with the size of the forest and the scale and intensity of the forest activities.
- Guidance: The management plan may include several separate documents that, taken together, constitute the management plan. Management plans vary widely and may encompass a wide range of formats, language styles and document types, including emerging digital technologies and other tools that illustrate evidence of planning.

Umbrella management plans may be utilized in the management of multiple parcels and ownerships. Landowners or their designated representatives and qualified natural resource professionals are advised to select language that best reflects landowner's objectives and property circumstances. Consideration of specific conditions (size, scale and intensity of property and operations), landowner capacities, access to resource professional support and nonliteral interpretations are advised."

AFF is evaluating the diversity of potential practitioners to increase capacity to implement ATFS certification and landowner support. Pilot programs will define these roles specific to each project and will identify requirements that are adequate to address the credibility and sustainability on a case by case basis. AFF would be audited to the prescriptive context during third-party program assessments.

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Landowners participating in a pilot project will be evaluated as a separate population during third-party assessments to determine the degree of success of the program and ensure any cited credibility concerns are immediately addressed.

Some proposed pilot projects will also evaluate the certifiable land at the harvest stand level rather than the full ownership parcel. Pilot language will explicitly outline if the scope of consideration differs from the existing ATFS Standards and guidance.

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