

A Forester's Guide to Implementing the Florida Landscape Management Plan

This guide is designed as a resource for foresters using the Florida Landscape Management Plan (LMP). The LMP was developed to highlight the critical role of foresters and other natural resource professionals in supporting family landowners. Specifically, the approach emphasizes foresters' expertise and the ways in which they build strong, trusting relationships with the landowners they support.

Because the LMP is a new and innovative tool for engaging and supporting landowners, this step-by-step guide leads forest professionals through its use, saving time and resources and helping to reach many more landowners, including previously unengaged landowners.

While coordination with landowners will unfold and progress naturally, this field guide provides forest professionals a clear guide to using the LMP, ensuring it is fully leveraged and certification standards are achieved.

I. Initial Contact with the Landowner

Landowners may reach out to you by phone or email, respond to marketing materials or you may meet through the introduction of a neighbor, family member, or friend.

To best support the landowner and make best use of the LMP, it is important to capture any pertinent information about the property up front: its location, history, size, and any special characteristics of the land, as well as the landowner's general goals and objectives. Using the information you obtain during this initial conversation, you will be more prepared for your meeting on the landowner's property and the work you will do together.

II. . Preparing to Meet the Landowner

Before you meet with the landowner on their property, the following steps will help you to get ahead of the game, maximize the value of your visit and fully take advantage of the LMP.

- Access the most current spatial information in the LMP geodatabase to locate and characterize the landowner's property at www.treefarmssystem.org/LMP-northern-florida.
 - o Reference location, water and soils map(s) for use during the visit. (NOTE: this information may also be used to aid in the determination of applicable forest types.)
 - o Determine current forest type(s) and acreage, which will be verified during onsite consultation.
 - o Identify additional property characteristics, such as forests of recognized importance (FORI), special sites, potential listed species, and area invasive species concerns.
- Review the common landowner and landscape objectives outlined in the LMP for the existing forest types anticipated on the property.
 - o Review any internal or family records available to determine if the landowner has an existing, outdated forest management plan or is already enrolled in related programming, including American Tree Farm System (ATFS) certification or the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP).
 - o IF there is an existing plan, it will provide historical context and can be used during a review of the landowner's objectives, forest types and resources, and implementation activities. The LMP and geodatabase will then be used to replace the existing plan or, where appropriate, serve as a supplement. For the ATFS program, you can check the ATFS database to verify their current certification status or call the State Program Administrator. Based on this information, you will know if it is appropriate to conduct an initial inspection, if the landowner is interested in joining ATFS, or a re-inspection, for an existing Tree Farmer.
 - o For the Florida Stewardship Program, call the Florida Forest Service to verify if a landowner is enrolled. If the landowner wishes to join or stay in the program, they will need to complete a Florida Stewardship Program application.

III. Meeting the Landowner/Interview Process

Once on the property and walking the woods with the landowner, there are a few key steps to take and important items to touch on in your dialogue that will enable you and the landowner to fully leverage the value of the LMP.

- Identifying Objectives:
 - o Ask the landowner what they value most about their land, what they hope to achieve, or the goals they might have for their woodlands. This can happen during your initial interaction and/or during the visit onsite to their property.
 - o Probe each objective identified by the landowner to ensure you understand their underlying motivations and goals for the property. A clear understanding of the landowner's objectives will help you identify the silvicultural strategies that are the best fit for their objectives and their woods.
 - o In many cases, especially with new or previously unengaged landowners, their goals are general, like "I want my woods to be healthy" or "We love wildlife." These kinds of goals are OK and provide you, their forester, with the opportunity to use your expertise to help deepen their connection to their land and attend to the more technical details of forest management.
- Review and discuss potential landscape objectives to identify any commonalities or alignment that exist between the landowner's objectives and wider, landscape-scale conservation goals. Some landowners may be unaware of or gain interest in specific landscape objectives that shape their own goals more specifically. Others may not be interested at all. In either scenario, landowners are not required to commit to any landscape objectives. Even when a landowner's goals align with wider conservation goals, there are no specific requirements and responsibilities for direct collaboration with other landowners.
- Review the current site conditions and determine target forest type(s) and other forest resources and considerations relevant to the property (e.g. threatened and endangered species, FORI, special sites, invasive species, etc.). These target forest type(s) could be different or the same as the current forest type on the property.
- Based upon landowner objectives, potential landscape objectives, target forest type(s), other resource considerations and the geodatabase review, identify an actionable strategy using the silvicultural options identified in the LMP (by forest type).
- Discuss with the landowner the strategy to meet the identified objectives and provide them with advice for the first steps to take. You may also suggest contractors, provide contact information, or help coordinate these steps with the

landowner. Strongly encourage the landowner to reconnect with you after they have taken the first set of steps.

- Ask if the landowner is interested in joining ATFS, and if so, be sure to fully complete the ATFS 004 Form, taking care to specifically identify:
 - o The LMP is being used. Clearly note this in the NOTES/UPDATES section of the form, just above the APPROVALS section;
 - o Objectives being pursued;
 - o Current and desired conditions;
 - o Required elements:
 - any supplemental information not captured in the spatial geodatabase (e.g. presence and location of additional roads, water sources, special sites, T&E species, etc.);
 - confirmation of the presence or absence of elements noted in the spatial geodatabase based on field observations;
 - o Forestry activities, including those recommended to the landowner and any notes about past activities that may impact management;
 - o Any other specific details about the property; and finally,
 - o New Tree Farmers, will need to sign the 004 Form. (Note: An example of a completed LMP 004 Form is available at www.treefarmssystem.org/LMP-northern-florida as a reference document.)

IV. Post Visit

- Call the landowner following the visit to provide any additional support and encouragement for implementing the activities identified during the onsite visit. Provide answers to any questions you were unable to answer during the visit or additional questions or comments that arose following the meeting.
- Document when future follow-up visits should occur.

V. Monitoring and Regular Follow-Up

- On return visits, assess implemented activities and determine if any changes to the landowner's objectives and/or the property's condition have occurred. Provide additional advice and technical support to the landowner, as needed. Document all relevant information in a 004 Form.
- Depending on the forest type and the silvicultural options selected, a longer period between contacts with the landowner may occur. Optimistically, the landowner should be contacted every five years and their Tree Farm re-inspected to promote and foster their engagement in the active management of their property.