Internal Monitoring Procedures
American Tree Farm System

The American Tree Farm System ensures Tree Farmer conformance to the AFF Standards of Sustainability within the State Tree Farm Committee programs through a three part internal monitoring program. All inspection types utilize a common form – the 004 Inspection Form (including the Standards checklist).

Part 1: Initial Inspections

      All new Tree Farmers enrolled in a state program must receive an initial inspection by a trained ATFS inspector. Group programs may maintain their own entry procedures for new Tree Farmers as described under the Group Certification Requirements. State Committees act as the gatekeepers for initial inspections by reviewing all inspections completed in the state. A new Tree Farm is not be considered certified until the 004 form has been signed by the State Chair (or their representative) and entered into the ATFS database.

Part 2: National Required Sample

      ATFS administers a national sample each year to measure conformance to the AFF Standards of Sustainability. Achieving 100% completion on the required inspections is crucial to the reputation and credibility of the American Tree Farm System.   The random sample is developed by independent researchers at Virginia State College and Polytechnic University (Virginia Tech). Each state committee is required to inspect a certain population of Tree Farms each year as part of the National Required Sample, as determined by the random sample. Group programs and individual third-party certificate holders do not participate in the National Required Sample.

      In 2010, ATFS introduced a new sample design to assist state committees in re-establishing contact with Tree Farmers who had not received an inspection in a number of years. The base population from which the random sample is selected only includes Tree Farms last visited within a given time period. In 2010, properties selected as part of the National Required Sample included only properties last visited in 2000, 2001, or 2002. Table 1 below shows the schedule for groups to be sampled within the next four years.

Table 1. Details of the ATFS Tree Farm clusters

Cluster	Year of Last Inspection	Year to be Sampled
1	2000 - 2002	2010
2	2003 – 2005	2011
3	2006 – 2008	2012
4	2009 - TBD	2013

      For more information on the sample design, please see the summary report from Virginia Tech on the Leaders' Only site (www.treefarmsystem.org/leadersonly).

To complete the National Required Sample each year, state committees must complete all assigned inspections and appropriately process all inspection forms. Form processing includes:

- State review for completeness of forms (including required signatures, dates, contact information and other required elements of the 004 inspection form and Standards checklist)
- State entry of inspection information into ATFS database
- Submission of 004 inspection forms in hard copy to ATFS staff with completed Tree Farm Inspection Log Form

Part 3: Optional Reinspections

In addition to initial and National Required Sample inspections, state committees may elect to continue optional reinspections on a 5-6 year rotation. These inspections can be very helpful in maintaining contact with Tree Farmers. Optional inspections follow the same procedure as inspections conducted as a part of the National Required Sample.