



FALL 2009

sightline

A Newsletter for the Inspecting Foresters of the American Tree Farm System®

Spotlight: Updating Management Plans

We have been asked recently by several inspectors, “How should management plans be updated to ensure that they are still eligible under the Tree Farm program?” A forest management plan is only as useful as it is current, but what does it mean to have a management plan that is “active, adaptive, and embodies the owner’s current objectives?” (See AFF Standards of Sustainability; Standard 3, Indicator 3.1.2)

A plan update can be as informal as a dated handwritten note in the margin indicating you have completed a management activity or a short amendment describing why you have chosen to defer a harvest. More formal updates may be needed as landowner management objectives change or if all management activities prescribed in the plan are completed. Remember to always include a date in any updates and initial or sign the update.

As an inspector, encourage landowners to review their plans on a regular basis. A management plan should be used as a living guide for the landowner, so make sure it isn’t hidden away and forgot in a drawer somewhere.

Case Study: What would you do?

Tree Farmer, Mrs. Allen, recently took ownership of her family’s farm in Virginia. Her late father had planted several stands of loblolly pine which will be ready for a second thinning in three years. Tom, Jeff, and Dave, Mrs. Allen’s three sons are avid deer hunters and would like to establish food plots on the property. Mrs. Allen is a bird-watcher who volunteers for the American Bird Conservancy in tracking species of concern such as the migratory Cerulean Warbler. Mrs. Allen notices that although the management plan was updated five years ago, it does not include any wildlife management recommendations as her father did not identify wildlife as a primary management objective for the property. Does she need to update her plan?

The management objectives for this property have changed significantly from the time when the plan was written, and a full update is likely necessary to remain in the Tree Farm program. Joe, a Tree Farm inspector and consulting forester, works with Mrs. Allen to draft a new management plan that includes long-term objectives for the loblolly stands, deer

management recommendations to meet her sons’ objectives, and bottomland hardwood management recommendations to support her work with the Cerulean Warbler.

Case Study: What would you do?

Inspector Caroline has worked with landowners Bill and Kathy for many years as their county forester. Their management plan calls for a full harvest of one of their Douglas fir stands this year, but Bill and Kathy would like to hold off because of the state of the markets. The markets are so low that to harvest as planned, Bill and Kathy would not be able to cover the cost of the operation. Bill and Kathy are also interested in a small thinning on another stand to test out the logistics of joining a local firewood cooperative that is selling bundles to grocery stores in the nearby city. Caroline assists the landowners in setting up the thinning operation but recognizes that this action was not in the original management plan. Caroline advises Joe and Kathy to add a short addendum to the plan that states why they chose to delay the full harvest and provide details on the thinning operation.

If you have any questions about the AFF Standards and ATFS program requirements, please visit our website at www.treefarmssystem.org, or contact vlockhart@forestfoundation.org.



ATFS is a program of the American Forest Foundation

Stumped?

Answers to Inspectors' Most Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How can I get information from Tree Farm on a more regular basis?

A: Send us your email and we'll send you our monthly e-newsletter; Sightline Express. Sightline Express provides inspectors with updates on the Tree Farm program in a concise, convenient format. Archives of Sightline Express can be found at www.treefarmssystem.org/inspectorscorner/. Email Inspectors@forestfoundation today to sign up!

Q: When will the new Standards be released?

A: The Independent Standards Review Panel is busy working on the final revisions to the AFF Standards. Thank you to all those who commented during our two public comment periods! Your input was crucial to the development of the revised Standards.

We are planning to release the new Standards in early 2010.

Q: Will I have to be retrained when the new Standards are released?

A: All current inspectors will need to be retrained to the new Standards. Training will be offered through classroom workshops and online. Inspectors have a year after the release of the new Standard to be retrained.

Q: Who do I contact for information and notice of activities happening in my state?

A: The Tree Farm website is a great source to find out who to contact in your state! Visit www.treefarmssystem.org/stateleaders to find the contact information for your State Tree Farm program.

Need a 004 form?

Electronic copies of the 004 inspector form and the auditor verification form are always available on the ATFS website. Visit www.treefarmssystem.org/inspectorscorner for this and other resources for inspectors.

Announcing *Sightline Express!*

We are excited to announce the arrival of our new monthly electronic newsletter, *Sightline Express*. Started in August and distributed monthly, *Sightline Express* is sent to all inspectors who have provided us with their current email address. These inspectors receive an email update with important inspector information and the latest Tree Farm news. If you are not already receiving *Sightline Express*, please email Inspectors@forestfoundation.org and provide us with your email address.

We want to hear from you

ATFS staff is busy developing the new in-person and online inspector training course to coincide with the future release of the revised AFF Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification. Do you have any suggestion on how we can improve the training? We want to hear from you, please visit: www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=y72OGmFStIvDiQe6mucDA_3d_3d to provide us with your input on the program. Your feedback will help us make the Tree Farm program better!

Good Management Practice

Encourage landowners to make informal notes in the management plan each year with updates on operations undertaken and completed and notes on the health of their forest.