



SPRING/SUMMER  
2009

# sightline

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

## Spotlight! Forest Management Plans

As we move into the summer, and inspections pick up, we want to highlight the importance of forest management plans and clarify any confusion around the ATFS requirements. All landowners enrolled in the Tree Farm program must have a written management plan. Inspectors are asked to review this plan as part of an initial or reinspection visit and ensure the plan components meet ATFS management plan requirements as outlined in the AFF Standards (Standard 3: Commitment to Practicing Sustainable Forestry).

Per current Standard 3, management plans are required to have: title page; type of ownership (e.g. fee simple, limited partnership, etc.); owner's goals and objectives for management, tract map that notes stands and conditions, important features such as special sites; and management recommendations that address wood and fiber production, wildlife habitat and environmental quality. Optional: owner-designated fish, wildlife and plant species; and recreational opportunities.

### Case Study: What would you do?

Inspector Bob is visiting Mr. Johnson on his Tree Farm for a reinspection. Mr. Johnson's management plan was written seven years ago and recommended a thinning last year. Mr. Johnson did not do the thinning because the markets were bad. As an inspector, do you think Mr. Johnson has met the spirit and intent of Standard 3 which calls for landowners to develop and implementing a long term forest management plan? Looking closer, you see that Mr. Johnson has left a handwritten note in the margins of his plan by the thinning recommendation that describes why he chose to defer the thinning. You recognize that the management plan is an active and adaptive document and that Mr. Johnson is using his plan for the purpose for which it was intended, as a guide, and you recertify his Tree Farm.

### Case Study: What would you do?

Inspector Liz is visiting new landowners. The Richman's have met with a consulting forester about their new land and talked about what they want to do in the future. Their objectives are to manage the land for gopher tortoise habitat and possibly participate in a wetland banking pilot project. Liz is excited to hear that the Richman's plan to actively manage their land for an endangered species and the work they plan to do. Liz asks the Richman's if she could see a copy of the plan, but they inform her that consultant has not yet written the plan. As an inspector, would you recommend the Richman's be certified after Liz's initial visit? Liz decides that the Richman's are a great fit for the pioneer program and when they finalize their written management plan, they should be brought into the certified program and recognized for their great commitment to sustainable forestry.

If you have any questions about the AFF Standards and ATFS program requirements, please visit our website at [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org), or contact staff by email at [vlockhart@forestfoundation.org](mailto:vlockhart@forestfoundation.org).

## Good Management Practice

In Alabama and Georgia, inspectors have chosen to note on the 004 form where the management plan is kept. This helps show the state committee that the landowner is aware of the management plan requirement. Let us know if your state tracts this information too.



ATFS is a program of the American Forest Foundation

# Stumped?

## Answers to Inspectors' Most Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: What type of land is eligible to be certified as a Tree Farm?**

**A:** ATFS considers only 'forested acreage' as eligible. The inspector should evaluate how the body of water or open field is incorporated into the landowner's objectives as captured in their management plan. Open spaces for food plots, for example, are certifiable, while open spaces for crop production are not. Ponds, lakes, marshes, and other significant bodies of water are not considered eligible acreage. A general rule is if any of the items mentioned above are over an acre, then they should not be included. For a complete list of eligibility requirements, please visit the certification page of the Tree Farm website [www.treefarmssystem.org/certification](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/certification).

**Q: Can Certified Tree Farms be demoted to Pioneer status?**

**A:** Certified Tree Farms may not be demoted to Pioneer status. If there is a problem with the Tree Farm not meeting the Standards, for example if the landowner does not have a written management plan, the Tree Farm will be decertified with the option for the landowner to rejoin the program when the property again meets the Standards.

**Q: Does ATFS have a system through which mills can verify a load of logs from ATFS certified lands?**

**A:** Manufacturing companies, individual mills, wood dealer yards, and other groups are able to subscribe to the ATFS Online Verification Database. The database is a useful tool for groups to ensure they are counting Tree Farmer's wood appropriately through their procurement policies. Please visit [www.treefarmssystem.org/certification](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/certification) for more information about the Online Verification Database or call Victoria Lockhart at 202.463.2738.

**Q: If I talk to a landowner about their property but do not visit it, can our conversation count as a reinspection?**

**A:** If you have visited a property within 180 days of the phone interview and no management activity has occurred since, this is eligible as a reinspection or a required sample reinspection. If you have not visited the property within 180 days of the phone interview, please visit the property before submitting the 004 form to your state committee. Initial inspections may not be conducted through a phone interview.

## 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](http://www.treefarmssystem.org)> Tree Farm in Your State> Inspectors Corner for this and other resources for inspectors.

## ATFS Inspector Training Revision

To coincide with the revisions of AFF's Standards, staff has begun development of new in-person and online ATFS inspector training courses. We want to hear from you how we can improve the training. What did you find most valuable in the current training? What didn't work? Send us your input. Please email all comments and suggestions to Victoria Lockhart at [vlockhart@forestfoundation.org](mailto:vlockhart@forestfoundation.org), or give Victoria a call at 202.463.2738.

## Communications and Sightline by email

Are you interested in getting Sightline by email? Send your email address to Victoria Lockhart at [vlockhart@forestfoundation.org](mailto:vlockhart@forestfoundation.org). If you'd like to receive news and information from ATFS, sign up now at [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org)>News & Action.