

# tree farmer

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AMERICAN  
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TREE FARM SYSTEM

The guide to sustaining America's family forests

1337 National  
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## Tom & Sherry FOX



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# My View of a Diverse Landscape

By **STEPHANIE Brown**

Serving as field operations director for the American Tree Farm System, I have the unique privilege of living and working out of my home in the rural Midwest for a national program based in Washington, D.C.

Most days I work alone in my home office and yet I am far from alone. Armed with technology I am fully connected to our network and to the rest of our national office team. The rest of the year I am traveling around the country doing my job.

As to what I do as field operations director, the simple answer is that I work with people in the field to advance the mission of the ATFS program.

On any given day I can be found talking to a Tree Farmer on the phone, sitting at my desk responding to emails, delivering a workshop for a group of foresters, speaking at a meeting as a national office representative, planning our national Tree Farmer convention, facilitating our national leadership conference for state Tree Farm committee leaders or handling "other duties as assigned."

There is something about our mission and the nature of the Tree Farm program that attracts some of the finest people I have ever met. From my vantage point at the national level, I see the American Tree Farm System as a wonderfully complex network, a symphony of activity that plays out on the landscape in your state and mine.

We've got thousands of Tree Farmers who are committed to leaving their land better than they found it. Then there are the many dedicated foresters in the field who show them how and inspect Tree

Farms for new and renewed certification. Some of these foresters go on to be trained as workshop facilitators so they can teach other foresters about the ins and outs of inspecting Tree Farms. Others are involved in planning educational opportunities for landowners. Then we have our State Tree Farm Committees, each with their own unique way of carrying out the program.

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Every state committee is different — some are more active than others, some have more resources than others and some face more challenges than others. It is my job to help them be as effective as possible in reaching for the Tree Farm mission. It could be something as simple as answering a question on the phone or as complicated as building leadership capacity. I may lend a hand so they can get more inspectors trained, offer encouragement when they are faced with new obstacles or help them learn how another state has addressed the same problem.

During the past five years I've learned quite a lot about our vast network of Tree

Farm volunteers and program affiliates. I'd like to think I have my finger on the pulse of the program where it really matters — in the field.

In a way I am a bridge between the national management of our program and the people working to carry out the program. When our national operating committee meets, I share a "state of the states" report so committee members can get an idea of how well the program is running or how the states might react to changing policies under consideration. I help guide the formation of new policies so that they will work well in every state, large and small. When policies do change, I am there to help the states adjust — or to listen to their concerns.

Traveling around the country, seeing forestry in action, meeting the people who make our program work has enriched my life tremendously. My feet are firmly planted in the field, both figuratively and literally. In my work I'm at home in more ways than one.

Like many Tree Farmers, the view from my window looks out over a beautiful and diverse landscape, a mix of forests and fields. The perspective that I have of the Tree Farm program is also beautiful and diverse — a national community of landowners, foresters, leaders and administrators — wonderful down-to-earth people dedicated to getting more forestry on more acres and keeping it there for generations to come. 🌿



*Stephanie Brown is field operations director for the American Tree Farm System, and works from her office in Golconda, Illinois.*



# The 65th Year: We're Coming Into Our Own

By **BOB Simpson**

When people think of turning 65, many think retirement, slowing down, taking it easy, coasting through their Golden Years. This year the American Tree Farm System turns 65 — and coasting through our Golden Years is furthest from our mind.

In many respects ATFS is just maturing, we're really just coming into our own. Last year, at our National Leadership Conference, John Burke, chairman of the Virginia Tree Farm Committee, put it most eloquently when he compared ATFS to a growing child. As we adopted our new strategic vision, John pointed out that our organization was moving

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into adulthood and that the strategic vision (read March/April 2005) clearly demonstrates that.

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*Bob Simpson is Senior Vice President, Forestry Programs, American Forest Foundation.*

We are formally moving ahead with our plans to seek international endorsement of our certification program by the Luxembourg-based Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). PEFC endorsement will add even greater value to and demand for Tree Farm certified wood, allowing our Tree Farmers to stay globally competitive in a rapidly shrinking world.

We are already forming new coalitions in Washington as we prepare to join in the process of creating the 2007 Farm Bill. Like that child coming into adulthood, ATFS learned from past experiences with the 2002 Farm Bill — and so will be much

better prepared this time to face the challenges of the process. We are forming national strategies for combating state legislation that calls for certified green building programs that exclude Tree Farmer-grown timber.

And we are looking for more ways to engage you personally in Tree Farm. We are exploring how Tree Farmers can become mentors in their communities, helping us grow ATFS by spreading the "gospel" of sustainable forest management to other family forest owners and familiarizing them with the benefits and values of being a Tree Farmer.

For the American Tree Farm System, being 65 is great. Stealing from an old television commercial: "We're not getting older, we're getting better." 

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