



American Forest Foundation

**American Tree Farm System (ATFS) South, North Central and West Regions  
American Forest Foundation Standard [2004-2008 Edition] -  
July 30, 2009**

**Project Scope and Objectives**

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (“PwC”) completed a Certification Assessment of the registered American Tree Farm System nonindustrial and privately owned lands within the South, North Central and West Regions (the “ATFS Regions”) to the American Forest Foundation (AFF) Standard [2004-2008 Edition].

**SOUTH REGION**

The ATFS South Region consists of eleven state Tree Farm committees and as of January 1, 2009 had approximately 17,300 participating nonindustrial forest landowners. The South Region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. The three states chosen for the implementation assessment were North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia.

**NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

The ATFS North Central Region consists of ten state Tree Farm committees and as of January 1, 2009 had approximately 9,500 participating nonindustrial forest landowners. The North Central Region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin. The three states chosen for the implementation assessment were Kansas, Kentucky and Missouri.

**WEST REGION**

The ATFS West Region consists of eight state Tree Farm Committees and as of January 1, 2009 had approximately 3,300 participating nonindustrial forest landowners. The West Region includes California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota and Washington. The three states chosen for the implementation assessment were Colorado, New Mexico and South Dakota.

The Certification Assessment also included the ATFS Internal Monitoring Program and Public Consultation. The Lead Assessors for this assessment were Joann Cox EMS(LA) (North Central and West Regions) and Shawn Ellsworth EMS(LA) (West Region), assisted by several technical specialists.

The primary objective of the assessment was to assess the ATFS management system at the national and regional levels and to evaluate the implementation of the AFF Standard on the ground.

**Indicators**

All of the indicators in the AFF Standard were within the scope of the assessment. There were no substitute indicators.

**Assessment Process**

The assessment team conducted interviews and reviewed appropriate documentation to assess policies and procedures, and tested implementation of ATFS program requirements in the field. The report was dated July 30, 2009.

## **Summary of Findings**

There was one major non-conformance identified in each of the ATFS Regions during the assessment and one minor nonconformance at the National level. The major non-conformance was down graded to a minor non-conformance after a suitable action plan and evidence was provided to PwC.

Major Nonconformities included:

- Tree Farms without management plans, plans that did not address all the requirements of the AFF Standard or plans that were not detailed enough for the size and scale of the tree farm.

Minor Nonconformities included:

- Of the 9 states sampled in the Southern, North Central and West regions, eight were found to have data that was not consistent with the National registry of certified properties in the ATFS program.

Opportunities for Improvement included:

- Opportunities to develop a formal report summarizing the current year's internal monitoring results and findings.
- Providing more assistance to landowners in identifying information sources for special site databases that may aid forest owners as they write and/or update their forest management plans.
- Providing guidance to landowners regarding best practices for ensuring contractors have required insurance and have completed the recommended training and education program offered in their respective states before engaging them to help with management activities.
- Consider ways to select inspectors who have not been directly involved with the writing of management plans to avoid a self review threat/conflict of interest as ATFS continues to develop and improve their program.

Good management practices were identified in the following areas:

- There was a very clear commitment by land owners, state foresters and consulting foresters to see the American Tree Farm program succeed as evidenced by the volunteer nature of the program and level of commitment and dedication observed during the field visits for this certification assessment.
- Implemented a good inspector training manual and 004 handbook to guide ATFS inspectors to ensure consistent internal monitoring.
- Many states are inspecting more than the minimum annual sample of Tree Farms.
- Customized approaches to communicate with land owners to keep them informed of developments in the Tree Farm System.
- Overall, landowners are to be commended for efforts to maintain and enhance wildlife habitat.
- Several landowners were very active in hosting educational outreach programs to share their Tree Farm experiences about ecology, biodiversity, timber stand improvement, riparian zone restoration to mention just a few workshop topics.

## **Assessment Conclusion**

The registered American Tree Farm System nonindustrial and privately owned lands within the South, North Central and West Regions have been certified to the AFF Standard [2004-2008 Edition]. A copy of the Regional certificates can be obtained at <http://www.treefarmssystem.org> or by contacting Victoria Lockhart, Certification Manager, American Tree Farm System 202.463 2738.