



FALL 2010

sightline

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

What have we learned from the first two years of third-party certification assessment?

Twenty-four State Tree Farm Committees have participated in the first two years of third-party certification assessments. Through these assessments, we have learned a great deal about the good work undertaken by Tree Farmers and ATFS Inspectors. The assessments have also illustrated what improvements are needed to ensure ATFS remains a credible program that creates opportunities for family woodland owners.

The independent assessment teams cited a number of good management trends in the Tree Farm community:

- Landowners and foresters have a clear commitment to ATFS. Given the volunteer nature of the program, the level of commitment and dedication observed during field visits is unprecedented.
- Tree Farmers are doing a wonderful job of managing their forestland

for a multitude of objectives. In particular, the assessment teams observed that Tree Farmers make remarkable efforts to maintain and enhance wildlife habitat.

- Tree Farmers are active in hosting educational and outreach programs with a wide range of workshop topics to share their experiences with other landowners, school groups, and community members.

However, we need to improve the documentation of our good work. The assessments show a trend of Tree Farms lacking current and applicable management plans that address all required elements of AFF's Standards.

ATFS developed the management plan addendum and revised the inspector training to help with this issue. The assessments reveal that previous inspector trainings did not stress the importance of consistent completion the 004 form. The 004

inspection form is our internal record that documents how the landowner meets the AFF Standards. This form must be completed properly to ensure we have the necessary data to determine if the forestland meets ATFS certification.

004 Form Must

- dates are noted
- each checkbox is marked in the Standards checklist

Overall, the assessments are successful and we are able to maintain third-party certification for Tree Farmers across the country. Thank you to all participating inspectors, committees, and Tree Farmers.

The 2011 regional assessments will take place in the following states: Alabama, California, Connecticut, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, Oregon, and Wisconsin.

Inspector Training Update

Big thanks to all 1,700+ inspectors who have taken the training update to the 2010 Standards. Thank you for your commitment to the Tree Farm program. Landowners certainly appreciate your valuable expertise!



ATFS is a program of the American Forest Foundation

Spotlight! Special Sites

The updated Inspector Training highlights the need for all Tree Farmers to research whether or not they have special sites on their forestland. As an inspector, you can advise landowners of their options to meet this Standards' requirement.

Definition - Special sites are areas that have unique historical, archeological, cultural, geological, biological or ecological values. They can be designated by landowners or by state resource agencies.

Landowners have several options to research special sites depending on capability. A number of these options are listed in the ATFS Management Plan Addendum. Inspectors have the flexibility to evaluate what are reasonable expectations of individual landowners given the size of their Tree Farm and the location within or near to an area of special concern.

Case Study: What would you do?

A landowner contacts their consulting forester, Joe, because they want to make sure that their forest management activities and management plan meets the 2010 Standards. The landowner does not know if they have any special sites on the property and is not sure where to start their research.

Joe, while developing the landowners' management plan, checked state databases for threatened or endangered species. To research the possible historical and cultural sites on the property, Joe recommends the landowner contact their local historical society

and walk the property to see if there are any old home sites, wells, Indian burial grounds, or other historical and cultural sites of interest. After conducting research, it is determined there are no special sites on the property and the landowner notes this in their management plan.

Case Study: What would you do?

Landowner Mike contacts a county forester in his area, Connie, who is also a Tree Farm Inspector, with some questions about the Management Plan Addendum. After reviewing old property maps, Mike contacts his neighbors to learn more about some gravestones that he uncovered in one of his stands. Connie tells Mike that he has done a good job with the research portion and recommends that he protect the gravestones by roping off the area during his next harvest and notifying the loggers.

The AFF Standards are not designed to place unnecessary burdens on the landowner to protect sites that could be a hazard or commonplace in their area. For example, a landowner has an old home site on the property, but it is not a designated historical site nor does the landowner want to maintain it; it does not need to be designated as a special site in their management plan.

The goal of the AFF Standards is to encourage landowners to recognize what is potentially present on their properties to make informed management decisions.

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

Management Plan Addendum

All certified Tree Farmers received the ATFS Management Plan Addendum in the summer edition of Forests & Families newsletter. This document is designed to help landowners update their management plans to the new 2010 Standards. Below is some important information to assist you in working with landowners.

- The addendum is intended for the landowner's use. Once it is complete, it should be included with a copy of their management plan. It does not need to be sent to the state committee or ATFS staff for approval. If your state Tree Farm committee maintains copies of management plans at a central office, the landowner should provide a copy of the addendum for the state Tree Farm records.
- Several questions ask about landowner research on special sites and threatened and endangered species. Resources for landowner research on special sites and threatened and

endangered species are available on the Tree Farm website. Visit www.treefarmssystem.org/woodlandresources for the Woodland Owners Resource; a searchable map of resources by state

- The Standards Guidance Document, available at www.treefarmssystem.org/2010standards, contains important information on what is considered a reasonable effort for researching threatened and endangered species and special sites.
- All Tree Farmers must ensure their management plans meet the requirements of the 2010 Standards by December 31, 2010. This addendum can help with that, but not all landowners will need to complete one. Some plans may already address some or all of the required items.
- For more information on the Standards, please visit <www.treefarmssystem.org/2010standards>.

Need a 004 form?

Electronic copies of the 004 inspector form and the auditor verification form are available at <www.treefarmssystem.org> Tree Farm in Your State > Inspectors Corner for this and other resources for inspectors.