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A Newsletter for

the Inspecting Foresters of the American Tree Farm System®

ON THE GROUND

Taking Advantage of Online Natural Heritage Databases

As an ATFS Inspecting Forester, you work closely with landowners to help them learn about their woods and sustainable forestry, while achieving their stewardship goals. Tree Farmers are ambassadors for good forestry, which includes managing for some unique and less-understood resources, such as imperiled species, special sites or high- conservation-value forests.

Natural Heritage programs are excellent resources for landowners, and can be a great education tool for foresters, too. These programs work at the state, national, and global levels to gather information about plant, animal, and fish species, as well as entire ecosystems of importance for conservation. Natural Heritage programs conduct ongoing surveys and inventories to better understand the health of species and ecosystems. These inventories help public agencies and conservation organizations understand the status of plant and animal populations, identify priorities for protection, and inform conservation planning and management.

The Natural Heritage programs catalogue and classify the status of species of concern in Natural Heritage databases, which are available to the public and can also be used by woodland owners to inform the management of their woods. Using the web, woodland owners can conduct searches by location to learn about species of concern in their area. These landowners can also search for specific species, view maps of their range and learn about their habitats

The ATFS Woodland Owner Resource (www.treefarmssystem.org/woodland-resources) is a comprehensive listing of resources and serves as an excellent springboard for accessing state, national, and international natural heritage databases.

Statewide Forest Resource Assessments are also good information sources. The 2008 Farm Bill granted funding to states to develop these assessments, which serve as authoritative guides for forest health and issues in each state. Your state's forest resource assessment is a portal to not only statewide information, but may also provide landowner-level data to inform research. Many states have even developed advanced GIS tools that let users search by county and watershed.

If the landowners you work with decide to explore these databases, be sure to remind them to document their research and the ways that they are incorporating what they learned into their management. This is true even if there are no high-priority species or ecosystems in their area. Showing evidence of thorough research is a hallmark of sustainable forest management and demonstrates conformance with the 2010-2015 ATFS Standards.

With the range of online tools available, identifying the natural features and species that inhabit family forestlands has never been easier. Exploring natural heritage databases and other resources is fun and can enrich landowners' experiences and long-term engagement in the management of their woodlands.



The American Tree Farm System®: We grow stewardship from the roots.

www.treefarmssystem.org

Improve Your Communications Skills With Expand Your Base!

As foresters, we are taught many valuable skills: how to cruise a lot with only a compass and pacing; how to identify trees, how to use a chainsaw safely. But rarely are we ever taught how to talk with and listen to landowners.

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) has developed a four-hour workshop, designed to help foresters grow their businesses and expand their programs by learning innovative methods for reaching out to, and cultivating, a diverse population of landowners. The Expand Your Base! Workshop derives much of its information from the U.S. Forest Service's National Woodland Owner Survey and subsequent research conducted by the Sustaining Family Forests Initiative.

Communications skills are even more important today, given the changing patterns of land ownership and the impending intergenerational transfer. The workshops will

help you answer questions such as:

- What are the characteristics of these new generations of landowners?
- What services do they want, what do they need, and what can you offer?
- How do forestry services need to change or be repackaged to respond to these new landowners?
- How do you engage these new landowners?

Expand Your Base! workshops are hosted by ATFS trained facilitators throughout the country and at national conventions of groups such as the Society of American Foresters and Association of Consulting Foresters. For more information and some additional tools developed for foresters, including a new brochure and Powerpoint presentations for landowners, visit: www.treefarmssystem.org/inspectorscorner. Please contact Mike Burns at mburns@forestfoundation.org for additional information.

STUMPED?

Answers to Inspectors' Most Frequently Asked Questions

Question: We have voluntary forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) in my state. Are Certified Tree Farmers required to implement BMPs in this state? Which forest management activities involve implementation of BMPs?

Answer: For ATFS Certified Tree Farmers, compliance with State Forestry BMPs is required in all states, even where BMPs are voluntary. For states with Forest Practice Acts, the statutes, administrative rules and guidance for the acts are considered the equivalent of BMPs. Understanding which forest management activities require implementation of BMPs can be confusing for many forest landowners, but there is a good rule of thumb: Any time there is active forest management where soil is disturbed or chemicals are applied, BMP methods must be employed. This includes harvest design and implementation, road maintenance or construction, prescribed burning and reforestation. State forestry BMPs are freely available online for most states. An easy way to access the best resources available in your state is to consult the ATFS Woodland Owner Resource at www.treefarmssystem.org/woodland-resources.



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