

Stumped?

Answers to Inspectors' Most Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do landowners have to cut trees for commercial purposes to be certified by the American Tree Farm System?

A: Family forest owners have their woodlands for a wide variety of reasons. Reasons might include using the property for hunting, hiking or other types of recreation. Some Tree Farmers live on their land, some have the land as an investment, and the list goes on. The American Tree Farm System is based on four mainstays of responsible forest management: wood, water, wildlife, and recreation. The program addresses these categories in an integrated way through the Standards (visit www.treefarmssystem.org/certification for a copy of the updated 2010–2015 Standards). Sustainable forest management must take into account all facets of woodland, especially the landowner's goals. Many landowners will not list timber harvesting as a primary objective and this does not exclude them from participation in the American Tree Farm System.

As a forester, every inspector knows that forests need management to fight pests, generate income for more good management, and generally keep the woodland healthy. As the landscape of family forest owners changes with each generation, the reasons for owning forests change as well. Today woodland owners generally do not name timber management as a primary objective for owning their property. ATFS continues to educate landowners on the importance of

responsible harvesting, strong wood product markets, and maintaining healthy forests because although some landowners will not list timber management as a primary objective, they will eventually harvest in some fashion.

The AFF Standards require that management plans "address...wood and fiber production" (AFF 2010–2015 Standards, Indicator 1.1.2, 2nd paragraph). Management plans can address wood and fiber production in a variety of ways. For example, if the landowner is not interested in timber management as a primary objective, the plan could state that fact adding that if there is a harvest, the landowner will work with a qualified natural resource professional to ensure all laws and guidelines are followed and the harvest meets their objectives for the property.

Q: Who defines a high conservation value forest?

A: The term is similar to special sites under the AFF Standards. These areas can be defined by the landowners or credible outside organizations through an informal assessment.

Q: What are the requirements for determining the presence of high conservation value forests (HCVF)?

A: All Tree Farmers are required to address HCVFs in their management plan. This can be a statement of the research done to determine if there

are any or a description of the area if there is an HCVF on the property. In some states, foresters are required to check natural heritage databases or statewide assessments while writing a management plan. The results of this research should be documented in the management plan.

Q: What resources are available to research high conservation value forests?

A: The ATFS Certification Committee has determined that similar resources used to verify the existence of special sites can be used to verify high conservation value forests. These resources include the State Natural Heritage databases (or similar databases), state wildlife action plans, etc. The process to identify these areas is similar to the process used for identifying special sites as well. High conservation value forests are areas that need to be sustained for their unique values not a single attribute.

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/inspectorscorner/ for this and other resources for inspectors.



sightline

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

Follow the Chain!

Wood harvested from Tree Farm Certified lands is recognized as certified fiber by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification systems (PEFC). Mills across the country are interested in tracking certified fiber which includes Tree Farm wood. American Tree Farm System Certification can be a marketing point for your clients' wood. When you are working with landowners to prepare for a harvest, be sure to follow these best practices:

- Check if the parcel is currently certified by contacting your State Tree Farm Administrator (contact information available at www.treefarmssystem.org/stateleaders)
- Tell the logger that the wood is certified. Provide the Tree Farm number and regional certification number (to find the certification number for your region, please

visit www.treefarmssystem.org/certification).

- Consider developing a load ticket to go with the wood so that the scale house knows the wood is certified. Important information to include is the Tree Farm number (call your state administrator for the information), property county or town, property legal description and landowner's name.
- Tell the mill that wood from this landowner is Tree Farm Certified.

Certified mills work with ATFS to track wood from Certified Tree Farms. The two numbers that mills track are the Tree Farm number (e.g. MN – 1234) and the regional certificate number (e.g. North Central Regional Certificate number – PWC-AFF-342). The Tree Farm number is important for tracking the specific property. The regional certificate number covers all currently

Certified Tree Farms in a particular region that are administered through the State Tree Farm Program. Visit our color coded map to see which states are in the different regions: www.treefarmssystem.org/stateleaders

Many small mills have not participated in the certification process because of cost, their markets are not asking for this qualification, or other business factors. These businesses can still support family forest owners by buying wood from Certified Tree Farms and telling the local landowner story for their products. Without chain of custody certification, these mills cannot label their product. They can always tell the story in their promotional material that they are proudly sourcing local wood from Certified Tree Farms.

Contact Victoria Lockhart, Certification Manager, by email at vlockhart@forestfoundation.org if you have any questions about certification.



Good Management Practice

The Standards checklist on the new 004 form includes all of the 2010–2015 Standards. By following these Standards, Tree Farmers are the best ambassadors for well-managed private forests because they take their forest heritage seriously and are committed to keeping their forests healthy, productive, and enjoyable. Next to each Standard are check boxes labeled “yes,” “no” and “n/a” (not applicable).

- Check the box labeled “yes” if the Tree Farmer has done an action related to the Standard in question and the action was in conformance with the Standards. For example: the landowner has researched whether or not they have threatened and endangered species on their property by contacting their state’s natural heritage program. You can check the “yes” box because the landowner has fulfilled the requirements for Indicator 5.1.1.
- Check the box labeled “no” if the Standard in question is applicable to the landowner’s property

and management and was not completed in conformance with the Standards. For example: the landowner has not made a reasonable effort to locate special sites on their property. In this case, you would check the “no” box for indicator 7.1.1 and the Tree Farm would have to be decertified.

FYI: Landowners can address this standard through a variety of ways like walking their property with a knowledgeable forester or other natural resource professional, contacting their state natural heritage program, contacting local historical associations, or by accessing resources listed on the ATFS Woodland Owners Resource on the Tree Farm website

- Check the box labeled “n/a” if the Standard is not relevant to the property or the Tree Farmer’s objectives. For example, if the Tree Farmer is lucky enough not to have any invasive species in

their woodlot, indicator 5.3.1 is not applicable to their management and you can check “n/a.”

- If you check “n/a” or “no” be sure to include a brief note in the comments section explaining your choice.

Note: Some performance measures have only “yes” or “no” choices for one or several of their indicators. This is related to required elements of the standards that landowners must meet to be certified that cannot be not-applicable.

If you have specific questions about completing the 004 form (including the Standards Checklist), refer to our guide available on the Inspectors Corner of the Tree Farm website at www.treefarmssystem.org/inspectorscorner (look at the bottom of the webpage under Inspection/004 forms).



Carbon Planning Tool

A new carbon planning tool is now available on the American Tree Farm System website www.treefarmssystem.org/inspectorscorner. The Management Guidance Supplement for Carbon Sequestration will help foresters and landowners in the planning process for managing for increased carbon storage on their

land. Since this is hot off the press, ATFS staff are interested in feedback on the tool. Please let us know what you think.

Special thanks to the U.S. Forest Service for providing the support to develop this tool.

“Thanks for preparing the ‘Management Plan Guidance Supplement for Carbon Sequestration.’ As a consulting forester, I find it most helpful.”

Tom Carignan

Thank You
Tree Farm Inspectors and Volunteers!
Your hard work and dedication has helped more than 95,000 landowners across the country.

SAF Continuing Forester Education Credits

We are making it easier for ATFS Inspectors to claim SAF Continuing Forester Education (CFE) credits for our inspector trainings. ATFS met with SAF staff and clarified the process to claim Inspector Training credits:

- ATFS sends SAF a list of all inspectors trained at the end of each quarter. This includes online and classroom workshops.

- SAF uses this list to automatically update SAF CFE accounts for trained inspectors.

- In the past, some inspector trainings were listed online at the SAF website. This will be phased out in the future. Inspectors do not need to request credits for ATFS inspector trainings (either classroom or online training).

- These will be added to accounts automatically but because this is done quarterly, you will not see them in your account immediately after taking the course.

