



SUMMER 2011

# sightline

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

## ATFS Continues to Provide New Tools for You and Your Landowners

There are many different types of planning documents that a landowner could use to guide their forest management. The common goal of these plans is to help the landowner (and the operators they work with) achieve their objectives. There are 4.4 million landowners that own 10 or more acres of woods and they have a variety of reasons for owning their woodlands. But all landowners can benefit from having a plan for their property. Whatever type of planning document is used, the goal should be to make it useful and meaningful for the landowner.

How can the management plan documents needed for certification be helpful for the landowner? How can we use these documents to reinforce their relationship with you, the forester?

The new ATFS management plan template was developed by ATFS, the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Stewardship Program, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to encourage landowners to become more invested in the development of their management plan. Hopefully by engaging landowners in the plan development process, more landowners will actually use their plans.

A management plan should be completed by a forester or other natural resource professional. Landowners are encouraged to take an active role in the development of their plan using the template and consider themselves co-creators of the plan with their forester. ATFS recommends that the landowner begin with the following items before meeting with a forester:

- Owner's contact information
- Property description
- Property history

- Forest management goals
- Any special sites that the landowner would like to protect

The Landowners Guide to the Template at [www.treefarmssystem.org/nationaltemplate](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/nationaltemplate) is an additional tool for landowners.

Upon completion, the landowner is encouraged to review each item with their forester. This will likely save the forester time and engage the landowner in the planning process.

Third-party assessments of the ATFS program have shown that we can improve the management plans for landowners certified through our system. Our assessors have seen management plans with generic statements that do not provide specific details to a landowner about their property. Engaging the landowner in plan development and using the template will likely address some of the time constraints and ensure the management plan is useful and specific to the landowner's property.

In addition to having the landowner more engaged in the plan writing process, a best practice to ensure the plan is useful for the landowner is connecting management recommendations to a landowner's goals and objectives in a way they understand. Here are some examples:

### **Example 1: Rutting and erosion damages food supply and cover for quail.**

One of Landowner Gary's main objectives is to have quail on his property for hunting and viewing. Forester Dan knows that avoiding rutting on forest roads is a good strategy for assuring Gary will have the desired conditions for hunting



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quail. The management plan includes soil protection recommendations that focus on minimizing logging damage during wet conditions including rutting and compaction. Dan added a note with the technical recommendation explaining that avoiding rutting fosters better growing conditions for quail food and cover.

**Example 2: An unconventional way to convert loblolly pine to longleaf.**

Landowner Jane would like to convert her loblolly pine stand to longleaf pine, but does not like the look of a clearcut behind her cabin. Understanding that Jane likes to use her property as a retreat from the city, and that she has an interest in doing some of the management work herself, Forester Chris included in Jane's management plan a recommendation to conduct a heavy thinning of the overstory (using a professional logger), followed by Jane's hand-planting of containerized longleaf pine seedlings in the understory. Supplemental burning every few years will reduce competition from both hardwoods and loblolly pine seedlings, while allowing the longleaf to thrive. In a few years, Jane can have the remaining large loblolly pine removed to complete the transition, or leave them for wildlife habitat. The periodic burning will also help open the stand for wildlife.

- ~~With Paul's edits~~
- ~~Spoke with Forester Dan Wesley from Santa Rosa county of FL Div of Forestry 850-983-5310~~

**Example 3: Whitetail deer management.**

Forester Lynn included in his management plan a

recommendation to create or maintain edge habitat. Lynn included heavy thinning and partial clear-cuts as options for opening the canopy for desirable and nutritious foods for white tail deer such as grasses, forbs, and legumes. Lynn suggested Fitz plant old log landings with clover and millet to attract deer. Lynn explains the advantages of planting old log-landings as the soil is often compacted following logging activity, and therefore would not represent much productivity loss if left as an opening. Lynn also tied this management objective to the ATFS management plan requirement to address water resources by explaining in the plan that Fitz should pay special attention to the protection of riparian zones to protect wildlife corridors for habitat connectivity.

**Example 4: Maintaining for southern pine beetle.**

Landowner Terry is worried about a future southern pine beetle outbreak on her property. Forester Ben recommends in the management plan that Terry thin her stand to improve health and vigor. He also recommends Terry survey and monitor for the presence of the southern pine beetle. He included tips for spotting signs of the beetle in her woodlands by instructing Terry to look for the presence of discoloration of needles in the crown and excessive sap flowing from the bole of the tree, especially during times of drought or flooding, when trees are most stressed.

In each of these examples, the landowner can see the connection between the technical recommendation (the forester's expertise) and how it reinforces what they enjoy about their woodland. 🌿



# Tool for Tree Farmers

Help Tree Farmers get recognized for their good stewardship by marketing their wood as ATFS certified and including their Tree Farm number on all bids and contracts.



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