



# sightline

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A NEWSLETTER FOR THE INSPECTING FORESTERS OF THE AMERICAN TREE FARM SYSTEM®

TREEFARMSYSTEM.ORG

## The Making of a Plan: More than the Sum of its Parts

*Forest management plans are central to the concept of sustainable forestry. These documents encompass not only management goals and pathways for achieving them but also reflect the uniqueness of the property and the landowner, your professional expertise as a forester and the insights of the broader forestry community. The management plan has long been a core pillar of the American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) program and is a key element of the 2010–2015 ATFS Standards of Sustainability.*

The ATFS Standards identify a short list of elements for inclusion in every forest management plan, as well as elements to be incorporated where appropriate (see sidebar). First, there are elements that are observed about the property. Second, there are elements that other sources or authorities, such as state agencies, help to identify. Third, there are elements that the landowner and forester identify and create, based on those observations. Finally, there is the map.

Starting with the first category, the plan should provide the landowner's contact information, the location of the Tree Farm and a general overview of on-the-ground conditions, identifying significant features of the property. This information includes general accounts of the timber resources, water features on the property, general soil types and a synopsis of the forest's health, noting any current or anticipated insect and disease concerns.

Next, there are key elements that require external consultation, including threatened and endangered species, special sites and high conservation value forests. Information about threatened and endangered species can

be gleaned from state agencies or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service using their online databases. Similarly, you can contact state historic preservation offices and state cultural and natural heritage programs or consult their online databases for information about known *special sites* with cultural, historic, biological and other significant values. High conservation value forests (HCVF) are forests of outstanding or critical importance due to their environmental, social or biodiversity values. These unique forests systems are landscape-scale representations and are, thus, unlikely to occur on a Tree Farm. However, review of the resources used to verify special sites should also be used for consultation for HCVF. The information gathered about all of these resources can be used in tandem with insights that landowner has about the property to ensure each element is documented in the plan, even if these resources are not present on the Tree Farm.

Next, the forester and landowner work together to set out a management strategy. This starts with the landowner's objectives. These can be concise statements about what the

### PIECES OF A PLAN

#### Required Elements for Every Plan

- State Landowner Objectives
- Identify Management Activities
- Include Tract Map
- Address Forest Health
- Describe Soils
- Describe Water Features
- Outline Wood and Fiber Production
- Check for Threatened & Endangered Species
- Identify Special Sites
- Assess for Invasive Species
- Discuss Integrated Pest Management
- Assess for High Conservation Value Forests

#### Additional Elements to Consider

- Discuss Fire Related Activities
- Identify Desired Species
- Include Recreational Goals
- Identify Aesthetic Qualities
- Consider Biomass
- Manage for Carbon

landowner hopes to accomplish. For example, a landowner may wish to create high quality turkey habitat for hunting, generate some income and use the property for cross-country skiing in the winter. You can work with the landowner to identify the desired forest conditions that correspond to those goals and a strategy to achieve them.

Be sure to include the range of techniques that will be considered and used. For example, if there is an insect outbreak on the property, make note of the management practices for preventing or controlling the outbreak. You should also refer to any relevant laws in management activities. For example, where water features are present on the property or harvesting and road building activities are planned, citing that Best Management Practices are a part of the management implementation demonstrates strong understanding of the laws, as well as the ATFS Standards.

Finally, property maps should include boundaries and accurately depict significant forest resources, including water features, roads and any special sites identified. Maps should also reflect the size, scale and intensity of the property and management, adding stands and other details, as appropriate for the site.

## New Tools Make Certification Easier than Ever!

Inspecting Foresters are the key to a successful American Tree Farm System® (ATFS). Working with more than 82,000 Tree Farmers, you provide the on-the-ground validation of sustainability on the 24 million acres of certified forestland nationwide. ATFS is committed to providing you the tools you need to continue to effectively serve your landowners.

**Do you have a landowners interested in ATFS certification?** ATFS worked with the Forest Stewardship Program and National Resources Conservation Service to develop a national management plan template ([www.treefarm-system.org/tree-farm-management-plan-templates](http://www.treefarm-system.org/tree-farm-management-plan-templates)) that meets not only ATFS standards, but two other national assistance-program requirements. In addition to the template, there is a guide for foresters that includes all the necessary information you need to complete the template. There is also a guide for landowners that helps to get them involved in the planning process.

**Do you have Tree Farmers who need to update their management plan for the 2010–2015 Standards?** We've got you covered! Just give them a copy of our management plan addendum ([www.treefarm-system.org/certification-american-tree-farm-standards](http://www.treefarm-system.org/certification-american-tree-farm-standards)). This document covers only the new items required in the 2010 Standards. The addendum is easy to use and walks you through each of the new requirements.

**Do you have landowners that are new to forest management and just want to explore the opportunities for their property?** Send them to [Mylandplan.org](http://Mylandplan.org) where they can learn more about their woodlands, map their property, track their goals and activities and record a forest journal.

**Do you want to promote your services to woodland owners in your area?** Then join our My Land Plan Foresters Directory today! Sign up at [www.mylandplan.org/forester-signup](http://www.mylandplan.org/forester-signup) and connect with our 2,500 users, who collectively own more than 280,000 acres of woodlands.

# Stumped?

## CERTIFICATION

**Q:** I'm doing a re-inspection with a landowner who has been in the program for years. He is very proud of his stewardship and proudly displays the Tree Farm sign. However, his management plan is about 10 years old and is probably due for an update. It is also missing a couple of the required elements for certification, including threatened and endangered species, invasive species and special sites. The landowner has committed to updating his plan next year. Should the property be decertified?

**A:** A Tree Farmer whose plan is missing even one of the management plan elements required under the American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) standards cannot remain certified. However, there are alternatives to full decertification from the program. The primary avenue is to transfer the Tree Farm into the Pioneer Program. This allows the landowner time to update his or her plan and ensures that the quality of the state's program is maintained. You can transfer a Tree Farmer to Pioneer status using the 004 Form—simply check the “Pioneer” box at the top of the form, next to the “Reinspection Only” field.

Management plans are designed to be adaptive and embody the landowner's goals, as well as the on-the-ground conditions. ATFS standards are also updated every five years to reflect new technologies and developments in the field of forestry. In this case, it sounds as though a complete revision of the plan is appropriate. However, for cases where the plan still matches forest conditions and landowner's objectives, the ATFS Management Plan Addendum allows landowners to update their plans with new information. For example, a landowner or forester can review the State Natural Heritage Database to see if any species have been transferred to a threatened or endangered status since the plan was developed. This quick web check can then be noted in the addendum as an update. In addition, we also encourage landowners to think of their plan as a living document that can continually be enriched with monitoring and observations over time. This also helps the forester understand the landowner's goals, practices and interests, which can inform the plan revision and other services.