



## **2011 Public Summary Report American Tree Farm System (ATFS) South, North Central and West Regions American Forest Foundation Standards of Sustainability For Forest Certification (2010 – 2015 AFF Standard)**

### **Project Scope and Objectives**

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (“PwC”) completed a Surveillance Assessment of the American Tree Farm System nonindustrial and privately owned lands within the South, North Central and West Regions (the “ATFS Regions”) to the American Forest Foundation (AFF) 2010 -2015 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification (2010 – 2015 AFF Standard).

#### **SOUTH REGION**

The ATFS South Region consists of eleven state Tree Farm committees and as of May 2, 2011 had 18,996 participating non-industrial forest landowners. The South Region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

#### **NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

The ATFS North Central Region consists of ten state Tree Farm committees and as of May 2, 2011 had 9,506 participating non-industrial forest landowners. The North Central Region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin.

#### **WEST REGION**

The ATFS West Region consists of eight state Tree Farm Committees and as of May 2, 2011 had 3,368 participating non-industrial forest landowners. The West Region includes California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming. Wyoming and Oklahoma State Tree Farm Committees joined the Program in May 2011.

The Surveillance Assessment also included the ATFS Internal Monitoring Program and Public Consultation. The Lead Assessors for this assessment were Joann Cox EMS(LA) (Southern and North Central Regions) and Shawn Ellsworth EMS(LA) (West Region), assisted by several technical specialists.

The primary objective of the assessment was to assess the ATFS management system at the national and regional levels and to evaluate the implementation of the AFF Standard on the ground.

### **Indicators**

All of the indicators in the AFF Standard were within the scope of the assessment. There were no substitute indicators.

### **Assessment Process**

The assessment team conducted interviews and reviewed appropriate documentation to assess policies and procedures, and tested implementation of ATFS program requirements in the field. The report was dated November 25, 2011.

## **Summary of Findings**

There were three minor nonconformities and one major nonconformity. These findings have either been already addressed by AFF, or have agreed to an action plan with PwC.

Major non-conformity:

- One state did not fully complete its required internal monitoring sample, which contained a significant population of ineligible ATFS IMG Group members.

Minor non-conformities:

- In a few of the sampled states the population of Tree Farms included some ineligible properties and information being reported from the ATFS database was not completely accurate (e.g. acres and dates).
- In one state the required annual inspection sample was conducted but the inspections were not fully completed within the 2010 year with one last inspection not being signed off. In addition, not all of the required inspections were received by the National Office.
- A previous nonconformity from the initial Certification Assessment remains open, which relates to Tree Farms without management plans, plans that did not address all the requirements of the AFF Standard or plans that were not detailed enough for the size and scale of the tree farm.

Opportunities for improvement were identified in the following areas:

- Enhancing Tree Farmer knowledge and understanding of EPA-approved labels for the use, storage and disposal of pesticides, especially insecticides which have the potential to be toxic to humans.
- Encouraging land owners' to reference state level Best Management Practices in their management plans.
- Encouraging land owners' to note in their management plans if rare species exist or not and what sources of information they used to arrive at this conclusion.
- Encouraging land owners' to further document actions identified to address management of special sites or High Conservation Value Forests on their property.

Good management practices were identified in the following areas:

- Continued commitment to Land Owner education was demonstrated across the three regions through landowners' sharing their experiences and application of different forestry practices by participating in seminars, field days and workshops. In addition, instances of landowners sponsoring educational events were noted.
- Several examples of good and innovative management activities were observed, including:
  - One very engaged Tree Farmer has a wide diversity of management activities that include two cost-share wetland restoration projects with a third to be installed this Fall at the landowner's expense; a NRCS conservation easement; and a managed view shed.
  - Several Tree Farmers maintain very detailed records of their management activities.
  - Hiring university students to conduct inventory activities to enhance property inventories.
  - Tree Farmers who milled Hurricane Katrina damaged trees and used the lumber to build a barn and construct a wheelchair accessible deer stand.
  - Landowner efforts to maintain and enhance Oregon White Oak, a declining species of concern in the Pacific Northwest.
  - Biomass harvesting with multiple objectives of stand density management, fire hazard reduction, forest health improvement and income generation.

- One Tree Farm Committee is encouraging all landowners to take ownership of writing and implementing their plans as much as feasible. The Committee matches up landowners with foresters to help create the plans, based on landowner goals and objectives. The Committee also provides each landowner with a binder that is aligned with the standard to help keep the plans organized.
- The “on-the-ground” application and execution of sound forestry practices was consistently observed. In addition, many forestry operations were conducted with an acute awareness of the other forest values such as water quality, wildlife habitat, ecosystems, biodiversity, etc. There were some Tree Farms actively engaged in restoring natural ecosystems and native wildlife habitat.

## **Conclusion**

The American Tree Farm System nonindustrial and privately owned lands within the South, North Central and West Regions are certified to the Forest Foundation Standards of Sustainability For Forest Certification (2010 – 2015 AFF Standard). A copy of the Regional certificates can be obtained at <http://www.treefarmssystem.org> or by contacting Sarah Crow, Certification Manager, American Tree Farm System (202 463 2738).

