

Anrrich, Sara

From: Justin Lindenberg [jlindenberg@forestfoundation.org]
Sent: Tuesday, December 18, 2012 10:18 AM
To: Anrrich, Sara
Subject: December Sightline Express - The E-Newsletter for ATFS Inspectors



Happy Holidays from the American Tree Farm System!
American Tree Farm System staff would like to send a very special thank you to all of our Inspectors and volunteers for your continued dedication to Tree Farm throughout 2012. We appreciate all of your hard work on the ground and look forward to continuing to build and strengthen our partnerships in the New Year. Happy holidays to all and here's to another great year!
-Bettina, Caroline, Justin, Mike, Sara, and Sarah

Tools

New Function in the ATFS Database: Pre-populated Writable 004 Forms

After hearing the positive feedback from our Inspectors using the pre-populated, printed 004 inspection forms, we developed a new function in the ATFS database to allow Inspectors to create their own forms! Inspectors can log-in to the database, search for any Tree Farm in their state, and create a 004 form with pre-populated landowner information. This writable 004 form can be completed electronically (or printed) and emailed along the chain of approval, eliminating the need for postage and paper cuts. We accept electronic signatures for all re-inspections, thus making the re-inspection process entirely electronic. We encourage you to use this new function for any type of re-inspection, including required inspections. To try it yourself, log into the ATFS database and use the following path: Inspections→

We provide you the on-the-ground tools you need to help validate the work that family woodland owners are doing to keep their forest healthy and productive.

Working together, we help provide outreach to landowners and promote better forest stewardship.

Contact Us

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The **American Tree Farm System**[®] is a program of the American Forest Foundation.

We grow stewardship from the roots.

Print/Create Inspection Forms→ Search→ Select→ Create PDF→ Save. For help or to request your log-in, please contact [Justin Lindenberg](#).

It's a Happening Place: Tell Others About MyLandPlan

Something great is happening on www.MyLandPlan.org, the American Forest Foundation's new website for woodland owners! More than 1,600 woodland owners have already signed up for MyLandPlan, and mapped more than 180,000 acres. MyLandPlan is an online tool designed as a fun resource to make on-the-ground conservation more accessible to private woodland owners.

Help us get more woodland owners exploring the possibilities for their land by promoting MyLandPlan.org and set up a forester profile within our Forester Directory:

<http://mylandplan.org/forester-signup>.

The website is geared toward woodland owners of all types: from wildlife lovers and legacy owners who inherited land, to families planning for a timber harvest and landowners enrolled in cost-share programs like those in the Farm Bill. Signature features of MyLandPlan include the mapping tool, Forest Journal, Forester Directory and Goals and Actions planner. This holiday season, give the gift of stewardship and tell a woodland owner about our new tool designed to help them enjoy their woods to the fullest.

On the Ground

Required Sample Methodology Revised

The 2013 required sample will reflect feedback from state committees regarding the periodicity and volume of required sample inspections. The 2013 sample will reflect a broader range of years and will be more reflective of the volume of Tree Farms in your state. Instead of using a range of three years for the sample population, we extended the population to cover a ten-year period. A weighting approach was also used, giving more emphasis on Tree Farms that haven't been inspected in a longer period of time. This revision will create more consistency over time in the amount of inspections seen and will also cover more years since last inspected, making it a natural process to visit those whom haven't seen an inspector in some time. For questions on the revision to the required sample methodology, please contact [Sarah Crow](#).

Inspection and Approval Process

How long does it take to become Certified? In researching the elapsed time between a field inspection and final approval as reported on 004 Forms, we discovered that in 2011, it took an average of 2 months (60 days) to process a new inspection, and 6 weeks (43 days) to process a re-inspection. In 2011, individual state programs averaged anywhere from 3 weeks (20 days) to 4 months (120 + days) for new certifications and 2 weeks (15 days) to nearly 3 months (86 days) for re-certifications. The national averages were an improvement of 5 days compared to all inspections with a field date in 2010.

We understand that some of the process is out of our hands (for instance, waiting for a landowner to sign and return the

004 form); however, there are actions that can be taken to help streamline the process:

- Accurately record the Field Inspection Date – not more than 6 months can elapse between the field inspection date and the forester approval date, and no work can have been done on the property between those dates.
- Forward forms in a timely manner to area chairs and for state approval.
- Use electronic forms & e-mail if applicable.

If you would like state-specific information on the average time it takes to become Certified, or have additional suggestions on how to ensure a quicker delivery of services, please e-mail [Mike Burns](mailto:Mike.Burns@aff.org) or call (202) 459-1702.

AFF Public Affairs Team Updates

AFF's public affairs team continues to work advocating for Tree Farmers across the country. Here are some activities going on this month:

Wood as Green Building Material

Earlier this month, [Senator Wicker \(R-MS\)](#) and [Senator Pryor \(D-AR\)](#) made statements expressing concern with the federal government's (particularly the Department of Defense) use of the LEED green building system and its discrimination against wood products. Senator Wicker also highlighted the fact that the new LEED draft standard (LEEDv4) takes another step backward when it comes to its treatment of wood. ([See AFF's comments on the latest draft of LEEDv4, formerly LEED 2012](#)). AFF continues to work with our partners to build support for this effort and to put pressure on federal agencies to change their policies that discriminate against wood products, especially products grown on American Tree Farm System certified lands.

Estate Tax: Keep the Forest in the Family

This month, AFF released a preliminary report "[The Impact of the Estate Tax on Forest Stewardship](#)", detailing the impact of estate taxes on family forest owners, including new data on the potential blow to Minnesota's family forest owners who own 5.3 million acres of forestland in the state. The current estate tax levels are set to expire at the end of 2012 and will revert back to 2001 levels, a \$1 million exemption and 55% tax rate. Preliminary findings from the estate tax research that Brett Butler's team at the Family Forest Research Center shows that about 30 percent of the family forest acreage in Minnesota could be impacted by the estate tax if Congress doesn't act this year.

While the estate tax issue is front and center in the year-end discussions in Congress, AFF is continuing to work to build support for the "[Keep the Forest and the Farm in the Family Act, HR 6439](#)" and to maintain the current estate tax levels, a \$5 million exemption and 35% tax rate. Our goals continues to be to provide family forest owners with relief and to highlight the negative forest conservation impacts of

the estate tax if it reverts back to 2001 levels. Check out one [Wisconsin forest owner's story](#).

Federal Regulations on Forest Roads?

On November 30, 2012, Administrator Lisa Jackson signed a final rule from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) clarifying that logging roads are not “industrial activities,” and therefore do not require storm water permits under the Clean Water Act. Initially, EPA’s final rule seems to be good news for family forest owners—who could face significant burden and cost if required to seek storm water permits for their forest roads. However, the rule doesn’t offer the legal certainty that a Supreme Court ruling or Congressional legislation would offer. The Supreme Court began hearing oral arguments on December 3 on the Ninth Circuit Court’s decision that forest roads are point source “industrial activities” and require stormwater permits. Also, legislation is pending in Congress to provide forest owners with some certainty on this issue. Visit <http://www.treefarmssystem.org/clean-water> for more background on this issue.

Outlook for Congress’ Lame Duck Session—Possible Tax Action, Funding Cuts, and Farm Bill Passage

In the lame duck session, we expect some action on major issues facing Congress—the budget deficit (a.k.a. “the fiscal cliff”) and the expiring tax provisions, including the estate tax. Currently, there seems to be consensus that Congress will not fully fix these issues in the lame duck, but they will make a “down payment” on the fiscal cliff and will likely do an extension of expiring tax provisions, although there may be changes to some of the tax provisions.

We expect that even if Congress acts to prevent across-the-board cuts to all spending—which would mean an 8% cut to the various Farm Bill and forest stewardship programs—there will likely still be cuts to federal programs, and we don’t know the magnitude of these cuts. Our message continues to be: don’t cut us disproportionately. There is also a possibility of Farm Bill passage as part of a deficit reduction package, but it is still unclear whether that is realistic.

70 Forest Owner, Industry, Wildlife, and Conservation Organizations, led by AFF, Urge Passage of Five-Year Farm Bill

Last month, the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition, led by AFF, [sent a letter](#) to House leadership urging them to pass comprehensive, Five-Year Farm Bill legislation. The letter, signed by more than 70 conservation, industry, and state forestry organizations, highlights the need for a five -year bill to give forest owners the tools they need to do right by their land and the market opportunities necessary to increase reinvestment back into their forest. The letter also states that passing Farm Bill reform is fiscally responsible and provides our country with

billions of dollars in savings.

Moving Toward the Future

Support our Programs into 2013 - Make your Year-In Contribution Today!

By now, you should have received our special letter and gift of personalized ATFS address labels. We hope you enjoyed reading Tom Martin's letter, as well as the note from the 2012 National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year sponsored by STIHL, Walt McPhail. In this time of giving, please think of AFF and send in your gift today via the reply slip, or donate online at www.forestfoundation.org/donate. We have already received over 800 gifts - be sure to make your tax-deductible gift by the end of the year! And remember - 50% of net proceeds from your donations are split with your state committee. Please contact [Jenna Swirsky-Sacchetti](#), Individual Donor Coordinator, at (202) 463-2745 if you have any questions.

We'd also like to give you a quick update on another successful eBay auction - our online auction in September raised over \$4,700 for the American Forest Foundation. Thanks to all of you who helped make this fundraiser a success!

Stumped!

Question: If a landowner inadvertently violates a law, regulation, or ordinance, do they need to be decertified?

Answer: Full legal compliance to relevant laws, regulations and ordinances is the intent of the Standard. Mistakes may and do occur in carrying out forest management activities. Forest owners must be committed to correcting inadvertent violations. A pattern of willful violations of relevant laws, regulations or ordinances is not acceptable. If there is evidence of past non-conformance, then the landowner must show proof of a good-faith effort to remedy the non-conformance. If the matter is tied up in court, then the landowner is only disqualified when a final adverse judgment is rendered AND the landowner refuses to comply with the ruling. With cooperation and active will to remedy the violation, the landowner may remain certified.

