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*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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### Follow Us



### *We grow stewardship from the roots*

**Dear Brigitte,**

We hope you enjoy the February edition of Sightline Express, the e-newsletter exclusively for American Tree Farm System Inspectors.

### **Special Announcements**

#### **Welcome Justin Lindenberg, ATFS Certification Coordinator**

On March 1, we will welcome Justin Lindenberg, our newest member to the Tree Farm team, as the Certification Coordinator. Justin received his Bachelor of Science in Bioproducts from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities in 2010 and has experience in data management, tracking, and analysis. Beginning in March, you will be able to reach him at [jlindenberg@forestfoundation.org](mailto:jlindenberg@forestfoundation.org) or 202-463-2451.

### **Tools**

#### **Webinars**

ATFS values our Tree Farmers and their commitment to good stewardship. We strive to provide the tools they need to keep their forests healthy, productive, and enjoyable. The [ATFS webinar series](#) provides important management information to our Tree Farmers and covers a range of topics from invasive species to legacy planning. Here is what's coming up:

- **[Timber Tax Update for 2011 Tax Filing Season](#)**

Please join us on February 29, 2012 at 2 pm (eastern) for the Timber Tax Update for 2011 Tax Filing Season webinar. The tax rules for timber differ significantly from the general tax rules for other activities. Learn the federal income tax laws on timber transactions that affect your

2011 tax return filing. We will explain the tax laws on timber income and deductions, provide practical tips, and answer your questions.

- **[Timber Tax Basis](#)**

Please join us on March 6, 2012 at 2 pm (eastern) for the Timber Tax Basis webinar. This webinar is designed to give you a detailed and clear understanding of timber tax basis, a deduction that many landowners struggle with after timber sale or loss of timber from fire, theft or storm. Properly and timely setting up your timber basis is an important step in saving taxes, time, and hassle.

- **[Managing for Black Walnut](#)**

- Please join us on March 15, 2012 at 2 pm (eastern) for the Managing for Black Walnut webinar. When you plant and nurture black walnut, you are making an investment in the future. This tree is valuable not only for its use in wood products, but it provides important food for wildlife, while also being a beautiful tree that protects soil and water resources.

If you cannot participate in a webinar, live recordings will be posted [online](#) after the completion of each webinar.

### **ATFS and the Farm Bill-We Are Here to Help**

Do you have questions about the Farm Bill and what is in it for woodland owners? During the month of April, ATFS will be offering a Forests in the Farm Bill Helpline to answer all of your Farm Bill related questions, no matter how complicated. The helpline will be open from April 1 to April 30, and you can call directly (202-463-2734) between 9:00am and 5:00pm Eastern time. Additionally, you can e-mail our experts at [farmbill@forestfoundation.org](mailto:farmbill@forestfoundation.org) to get all of the answers you need.

### **2012 National Tree Farmer Convention**

Registration is now open! Please encourage Tree Farmers in your state to make plans to attend the 2012 National Tree Farmer Convention in Jacksonville, Florida. The convention will be held June 14-16, 2012 and is a great opportunity for education, networking, and fun. We will continue to update the Convention [website](#) as program information is finalized. Additionally, we have a limited supply of hard-copy brochures if you would like to hand these out to landowners in your state. Please contact [Sara Anrrich](#) for availability. Registration closes on May 18, 2012.

### **ATFS Addendum**

The [ATFS Management Plan Addendum](#) is an excellent tool that ATFS Inspectors can use to help Tree Farmers keep their forest management plans updated and consistent with the requirements of the ATFS [Certification Standards](#). The addendum allows Tree Farmers to make quick and easy

additions to their existing management plan to ensure that the plan is active and adaptive, appropriate for the land certified, and reflects the current state of knowledge about natural resource management. The Addendum is particularly useful for documenting consultation with state historic and natural heritage agencies about the presence of threatened and endangered species, special sites and high conservation value forests on Tree Farms. In addition to the Addendum, inspecting foresters should also encourage Tree Farmers to keep their own notes, documenting any management occurring of their property or adjustments to their plan, as needed. For questions about using the ATFS Management Plan Addendum, please contact [Sarah Crow](#).

### **State Forestry Agencies Need Our Help**

The USFS Forest Stewardship Program, which provides resources to state forestry agencies to support a network of trusted and reliable service foresters, might not be there in the future. The President's budget proposes to reduce the program by almost 14 percent. ATFS, in partnership with the National Association of State Foresters, is working to keep these foresters around by supporting the program that keeps them in business, but we need your help. Please share [this letter](#) with the landowners in your network so they can show their thanks for foresters and the Forest Stewardship Program. We have bumped up our goal to 1,000 signatures by March 14, when 50 Tree Farmers from across the country will deliver this letter to decision-makers at our 2012 Fly-In. We hope you will join with us and [share this effort](#) with other forest owners who also see the incredible value that foresters provide.

### **USFS 2011 Tax Guide for Forest Land Owners**

How do I claim a loss on my return for timber damaged by fire or storms? Answers to this and other important questions can be easily answered by the USFS 2011 online edition of [Federal Income Tax on Timber: A Key to Your Most Frequently Asked Questions](#), a quick-reference guide to timber tax laws impacting woodland owners.

## **On the Ground**

### **Third Party Assessment Update: 2012 and 2013**

#### **Assessment States**

Each year, a group of State Tree Farms Programs represents their region in the ATFS third-party certification assessments.

We are in the heart of planning for the upcoming 2012 field assessments. This year, the Western and North Central Regions, traditionally independent Regions, were combined for the purposes of third-party assessment implementation. This approach is not only cost efficient, it also streamlines the assessment process and reduces the number of State Programs that must undergo assessments each year. In 2012, the Tree Farm Programs in Montana, Wyoming, Illinois (North Central/Western Region), Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas

(Southern Region), New Jersey, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania (Northeastern Region) will represent their fellow programs in the Assessment.

Looking ahead to 2013, the State Tree Farm Programs that will participate in the 2013 Assessment include South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia (Southern Region), Kentucky, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas and South Dakota (North Central/Western Region), West Virginia, Maine and Vermont (Northeastern Region). If you have questions about the third-party assessments, please contact [Sarah Crow](#).

### **Partnership for Better Forests**

In September 2011, the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) in conjunction with the Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF) and the Society of American Foresters (SAF) launched the Partnership for Better Forests Initiative. Through the Partnership, foresters volunteer to assist landowners by certifying or recertifying forests that meet or exceed the ATFS 2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability. In return, ATFS provided a \$100 dues credit for members of either ACF or SAF. During the 4th quarter of 2011, more than 800 eligible Tree Farm inspections were completed and 60 of the 180 foresters registered had qualified for the dues credit.

The Partnership was initially planned for the 4th quarter of 2011; however, due to the positive response and the requests of many who participated, the program has been extended into 2012. Credits will be applied to the 2013 ACF or SAF dues for the next 140 qualifiers.

The ATFS corps of inspecting foresters provide on-the-ground validation that is essential to the integrity of the program, and the Partnership for Better Forests is one way we can recognize and thank foresters for all their hard work and dedication to working with Tree Farmers across the country.

### **AFF Public Affairs Team Updates**

AFF's public affairs team continues to work aggressively in Congress to represent Tree Farmers. Here are some activities going on this month:

#### ***Senators Call Attention to ATFS Concerns with Forest Products Disadvantage***

We know that strong demand for forest products is essential for Tree Farmers to keep forests as forests, but unfortunately, the USDA BioPreferred program disadvantages most forest products in federal purchasing and the public market place. We are actively pursuing a fix to this program, a Farm Bill program, by working with many of our [partners in D.C.](#) After hearing about ATFS' concerns, Senators Klobuchar (D-MN) and Boozman (R-AR) raised this issue with USDA Secretary Vilsack, at a recent Senate

Agriculture hearing. This is real progress in getting attention to this issue and paving the way for a legislative fix. [Click here](#) for the joint partner statement that Senator Boozman submitted for the hearing record.

### ***ATFS and the Farm Bill***

Chairwoman Stabenow has announced a hearing regarding Farm Bill issues which will take place February 29. For the Strengthening Conservation through the 2012 Farm Bill hearing, ATFS will work hard to ensure that our forest issues are addressed. We will also continue working with staff to propose a forestry-related witness for the hearing.

### ***Conservation Easement Tax Incentive Bill Reaches Milestone in Congressional Support***

Conservation easements are a valuable tool for some family forest owners who want to permanently protect their forest from development. Federal tax incentives help make this economically possible for owners. That's why [ATFS is working](#) alongside our partners such as the Land Trust Alliance and Ducks Unlimited, to ask Congress to extend the current conservation easement tax incentives that expired at the end of 2011. Thanks in part to [ATFS and outreach from many of our Grasstops Leaders](#), we recently reached a milestone of over 300 Members of Congress who have cosponsored this important legislation.

### ***President's Budget Proposal Not Great for Tree Farmers-Tools at Risk***

The President released his annual budget proposal last week and many important programs that provide Tree Farmers with tools to sustain their forests could take hits.

We are especially concerned with cuts to the Forest Stewardship Program, which supports foresters across the country. [Show your support for the Forest Stewardship Program today!](#) In addition, forest health programs which help combat forest pests and invasive species are on the decline. The good news is that extension and forestry research at the land grants would see a slight increase! Over the next few months, ATFS and partners including the Nature Conservancy and the National Association of State Foresters will be working to help Congress understand the impacts of these cuts. [Click here for more details on the President's budget.](#)

## **Moving Towards the Future**

### ***Estate Tax - The future of America's family forests.***

The federal estate tax can have a significant impact on America's family forests when a loved-one dies and leaves children and grandchildren with an estate tax bill. The two-year fix that Congress passed in 2010 is set to expire on December 31, 2012, and if Congress does not act, the estate tax rate will

increase from 35% to 55% and the exemption level will decrease from \$5 million to \$1 million, affecting many more family forest owners.

ATFS is working to make sure Congress understands that the estate tax is a grave threat to America's family forests and to all of the public benefits that family forests provide - clean air and water, forest products, and places to hunt and fish. In order to get Congress to *fix the estate tax - and fix it for good* - we need your help. Our best weapon in the fight against the Estate Tax is a strong narrative of [personal Tree Farmer stories that demonstrate why the estate tax is a problem](#). Please encourage Tree Farmers in your state to visit our website and make their [stories heard!](#)

Want to run an article in your state newsletter to help your members understand the pressing estate tax problem? We can help. [Click here for a sample article](#). Contact us at [advocacy@forestfoundation.org](mailto:advocacy@forestfoundation.org) if you would like our help in rewriting the article with information specific to your state.

### **Sign up for GoodShop.com to help raise money for AFF!**

When you sign up for GoodShop.com, AFF will receive a donation every time you shop online. [GoodShop.com](#) works with more than 2,500 stores (including Target, Apple, Petsmart, etc.) and every time you purchase something, a percentage will be donated to us! [GoodShop](#) also offers over 100,000 coupons and free shipping offers so you can save money at the same time. Join the rest of our community in using this site to help us easily raise money for our mission. Get started by clicking the "Support Us" button on our [profile page](#). Please feel free to contact [Laura Tuel](#) with any questions at 202-463-2585.

### **Stumped?**

Email [inspectors@forestfoundation.org](mailto:inspectors@forestfoundation.org) to get your *Stumped?* questions answered!

### **Acreage Eligibility**

**Question:** I work with many private landowners that have both very large and very small parcels. What size ownerships are eligible for ATFS Certification through the State Tree Farm Program?

### **Answer:**

Parcels between 10 and 10,000 contiguous forested acres may be certified through the State Tree Farm Programs. Contiguous parcels are discreet parcels that share a boundary line and are held in the same legal ownership name. The forested acres may include nonforested acres, such as food plots, lakes and ponds, as long as they small enough that they are integrated into the forest system. Tree Farms must also be privately held or owned by public entity, such as a county, school district or municipality. The properties must also be non-industrial.

However, they may be associated with a small local business.

There are Tree Farms that are smaller than 10 acres and larger than 10,000 acres that were certified before 2010. These properties are "grandfathered" into the State Tree Farm Programs. However, any new ownership entering the State Tree Farm programs must adhere to the [eligibility requirements](#) described above.

Thank you for your participation as an inspector with the American Tree Farm System! Your interaction with family woodland owners is helping to improve the sustainability of our forest resources across the U.S.

As always, check out the latest news of what's happening at the American Tree Farm System on our website - [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org).

Please feel free to contact us at any time with any questions or concerns.

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