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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.

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Follow Us



We grow stewardship from the roots

Dear Brigitte,

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

Special Announcements

Best Wishes to Quincey Blanchard

For the past year, Quincey Blanchard has worked hard to support the on-the-ground work of our landowners and volunteers as the Certification Coordinator for ATFS. In February, Quincey will depart from ATFS for her next great adventure - to hike the Appalachian Trail! This journey of approximately six months will take her through some of our nation's most beautiful and precious natural landscapes. Please join us in wishing Quincey a fond farewell and the best of luck. We are [beginning the search](#) for our next Certification Coordinator. In the interim, any certification-related questions can be directed to [Sarah Crow](#), Certification Manager.

Calling all Tree Farm Inspectors!

ATFS is seeking four inspectors to judge the eight finalists for the Regional Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year award. A pair of judges will visit four finalists for a site visit and interview; judges will be selected based on their availability throughout March and first two weeks of April, as well as compatibility of other judges' schedules. ATFS will cover most travel expenses. Please contact [Amy Yambor](#) for more info.

Tools

Forest Stewardship Program, NRCS Incentives Program and ATFS

In addition to ATFS Certification, there are a number of landowner incentive programs available to Tree Farmers. To help support Tree Farmer access to those programs, ATFS worked with NRCS and the U.S. Forest Service, with input from state foresters and other partners, to create a [Joint Management Plan Template](#) that allows landowners to develop a single management plan to participate in the American Tree Farm System, the Forest Stewardship Program, and the NRCS incentive programs. The template is not compulsory for any of the three programs; rather, it is a tool for landowners and foresters to help identify and organize overlapping management requirements from each program.

High Conservation Value Forests

The ATFS Standards are internationally recognized and as such should maintain or enhance High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF). To determine if HCVF are present on a Tree Farm, landowners and foresters should consult with state natural heritage agencies. Please remember to document all consultation in the landowner's management plan. The [Management Plan Addendum](#) provides an easy to use tool for keeping up with the documentation!

Webinars

ATFS values our Tree Farmers and their commitment to good stewardship and 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**](#)
 - **February 29, 2012 at 2 pm (eastern)**
 - 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**](#)
 - **March 6, 2012 at 2 pm (eastern)**
 - This webinar is designed to give you a detailed and clear understanding of timber tax basis, a deduction that many landowners struggles 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.

ATFS is using e-mail to inform Tree Farmers about the webinars and we encourage you to help spread the word throughout your state network.

If you cannot participate in a webinar, live recordings will be

posted [online](#) after the completion of each webinar. We are currently offering recorded webinars on the following topics: [Ruffed Grouse Ecology and Habitat Management](#), [Leaving a Legacy for the Next Generation](#), [Timber Management for White Tail Deer](#), [Quality Habitat for White Tail Deer](#), [Asian Long-Horned Beetle](#), and [Southern Pine Beetle](#).

CFE Credits for ATFS Webinar Participation

Educating volunteers and woodland owners about issues affecting their region is one of the ways we can spread the tools of sustainable woodland management. We want to make sure that you are recognized for your continued pursuit of this knowledge. Participants in ATFS webinars are eligible to receive one SAF CFE credit (Category 2) per webinar for those approved by SAF. For more information, email webinars@forestfoundation.org.

2012 National Tree Farmer Convention

Please 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 information is finalized and becomes available.

On the Ground

Shifting Tree Farms to the Pioneer Program: Initial inspection versus Reinspection

As you administer on the ground inspections in your area, you may find that a Tree Farmer does not quite meet the [2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability](#). In some of these cases, transitioning the Tree Farm to the Pioneer Program is one approach that can help the Tree Farmer build their stewardship, access the ATFS toolbox and work toward full conformance with the Standard. For a Tree Farm that is already involved with ATFS and should be reassigned to Pioneer, check the "*Pioneer*" box in the *Reinspections Only* section of the 004 form. If the parcel is new to ATFS, check the "*Pioneer*" box in the *Initial Inspections Only* section of the [004 Form](#). For both instances, at the bottom of the form, check the "*No*" box for *Certification Recommended*.

Partnership for Better Forests

Congratulations to the 55 foresters from 21 states that have qualified to receive \$100 credit towards their ACF or SAF dues by completing any combination of two new Tree Farm Certifications or optional reinspections between September 1 and December 31, 2011. If you have any questions please contact [Mike Burns](#).

AFF Public Affairs Team Updates

AFF's public affairs and advocacy team continues to work aggressively on Capitol Hill representing Tree Farmers. Here

are some of the things going on this month:

2012 Grasstops Leaders Kick-off Webinar - As advocates for Tree Farm, our Grasstops Leaders accomplished a lot in 2011. Once again, we have our work cut out for us in 2012 - especially with a December 31 deadline for Congress to act on the Estate Tax. Please join us for a webinar on Thursday, January 26 at 3:30 p.m. EST where we will discuss some of the political and public perception challenges we face as we work for a permanent fix to the Estate Tax for family forest owners, steps you can take early in 2012 to help ATFS build a successful Estate Tax campaign, as well as other quick tips on how you can be an effective advocate. Please sign up for the webinar [online](#), and send any questions you may have to [Melissa Moeller](#).

2012 American Tree Farm System Fly-in - Join us Tuesday, March 13 and Wednesday, March 14th for our 2012 American Tree Farm System Capitol Hill Fly-in. Our upcoming fly-in will bring Tree Farmers and foresters from across the country together for advocacy training and scheduled meetings with your Members of Congress. This year's fly-in is especially timely given the two-year estate tax fix will expire at the end of December. Concerned about your forest legacy? The time to affect change is now. Please [click here](#) for more information on registration and hotels.

Permanent Fix to the Estate Tax - In 2012, ATFS will fight hard for a permanent fix to the estate tax for family forest owners. The two-year fix that Congress passed in 2010 is set to expire on December 31, 2012. 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 needs a strong voice to send the message that the estate tax is a grave threat to America's family forests. Sign up for our [Family Forest Action Alerts](#) to be a part of our campaign for a permanent fix to the estate tax.

Forest Conservation Programs in Farm Bill - As 2011 winded down, AFF's Policy and Communications teams worked to promote the importance of forest conservation programs in the Farm Bill through regional earned media, op-eds like this one in [Kentucky](#) and paid advertising in [Congress Daily](#). Our message focused on these programs as job creators.

On January 3, 2012, the ad theme was picked up in an [article](#) in *The New York Times*. The article, which focused on the jobs' impacts on legislation, noted that "Even tree farmers and their advocate, the American

Forest Foundation, buttress their case by arguing that trees mean jobs. Fearing that Congress will cut forest conservation programs in the 2012 [farm bill](#), the foundation tells lawmakers, "Every square mile of private forest land supports five American jobs."

Creating Stronger Markets for ATFS Wood - Even with a gridlocked Congress still impeding action in the waning weeks of Congress, we saw progress on our Green Building policy priorities. Grasstops Leaders and the National Public Affairs Committee (NPAC) worked hard in 2011 to create stronger markets for ATFS wood by opening green building policies to wood products, and it paid off with these policy improvements:

- In December, Congress passed the Defense Authorization Bill and included a requirement that the Department of Defense take a close look at the cost-effectiveness of its LEED-only green building policy. This language was included after ATFS, other partners, and many Members of Congress, like [Senator Wicker \(MS\)](#) and [House members](#) called for a look at DOD's policies and their lack of support for wood products in buildings. While this is a step in the right direction, Congress can still do more to level the playing field for wood.
- In the Omnibus appropriations bill that Congress just passed, ATFS and other partners were successful in getting direction from Congress encouraging the Department of Defense to level the playing field for wood in their building policies and directing the US Forest Service to conduct additional research on wood products.

Short-term Stay on Regulation of Forest Roads -In December, Congress also passed language preventing the Ninth Circuit ruling from taking effect in Fiscal Year 2012. This ruling calls forest roads "point sources" of pollution and would require additional permitting for forest road operations in the Ninth Circuit. AFF has called on Congress to maintain the current treatment of forest roads as "non point sources" under the Clean Water Act, because we support voluntary-based approaches to maintaining water quality protection on family forests.

2012 Photo Contest, Sponsored by STIHL, Inc.

The American Tree Farm System has once again partnered with [STIHL, Inc.](#) to host the [2012 Photo Contest](#). Entries are now being accepted, and we will continue to collect photos for the contest through June 1, 2012. Aside from the generous prizes offered by STIHL, the annual photo contest is a great way to show off your hard work on the ground and to share your family's Tree Farm legacy with the entire ATFS network and

beyond - get your entries in today!

Moving Towards the Future

Congratulations! American Forest Foundation Awarded 4-Star Rating

Last year, AFF went through a rigorous screening process by Charity Navigator, the largest charity evaluator in America, and was awarded a 4-Star rating - the highest rating a charity can receive. This rating affirms that the American Forest Foundation exceeds industry standards and outperforms most other environmental-based charities, while maintaining best financial practices for sustaining programs, giving donors confidence in their choice to support us.

You can help show your continued confidence in AFF with a monthly gift. We recently re-launched our automatic monthly giving program, which gives you the opportunity to make a gift every month, without lifting a finger. You designate the amount (as little as \$10!) and your donation will automatically be charged to your credit card each month. This is a great, cost-effective way for you to make a meaningful gift to AFF that will help us continue to grow our nation's stewardship well into the future.

Please visit <http://www.forestfoundation.org/donate> to start your monthly gift today! Contact [Laura Tuel](#), Vice President of Development at 202-463-2585 if you have any questions.

Recruitment Announcement for Visiting Foresters for Philmont Scout Ranch

The Visiting Forester program at Philmont Scout Ranch brings together volunteer foresters to spend a week sharing their professional knowledge with Scouts - many of which may grow up to be future foresters themselves. In 2002, Philmont, along with several partners, developed a demonstration forest located in a central backcountry setting with foot traffic of 5,000 hikers and approximately 1,000 other visitors each year. Philmont continues to support this forestry outreach program by hosting Visiting Foresters throughout the 2012 camping season. The Visiting Forester Program will run from June 9 through August 18, 2012. Approximately 20 foresters volunteer for one-week assignments during the 10 week field season. If you are interested in being considered as a Visiting Forester, please complete and return the application form found at www.philmontscoutranch.org. Additionally, you may contact [Mark Anderson](#), Director of Programs or [Mary Stuever](#), Volunteer Forester Coordinator.

Stumped?

Email inspectors@forestfoundation.org to get your *Stumped?* questions answered!

Q: What does forested acreage mean?

A: Many landowners own both forested and non-forested acreage. The [ATFS Eligibility Guidance](#) document specifies that acreage of the entire parcel is used for evaluation and non-forested acres are to be deducted from the total acreage of the parcel. However, the forested acres may include features such as food plots, water resources (lakes, ponds, streams) and other non-forested acres as long as these are small enough that they are an integrated part of the forest system.

As an ATFS Inspecting Forester, we ask you to use your best judgment. If you find a landowner has several acres of fields they plan to use for a log landing, this acreage should be included in the ATFS certified acreage.

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.

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

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