

**Agreement Between the American Forest Foundation and the  
Standards Council of Canada -Accepting SCC's Accreditation of  
Sustainable Forest Management Certification Bodies delivering  
certification to the American Tree Farm System's (ATFS)  
technical requirements.**

**Effective as of 2022-09-15**

**In the form of a letter between the Standards Council of Canada and the American Forest Foundation agreement.**

Representatives from the American Forest Foundation's (AFF) American Tree Farm System (ATFS) and the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) reached an agreement in Washington D.C., United States on the date of the revision.

As a result of this agreement, SCC, as an IAF endorsed organization, is officially recognized by AFF as the Canadian accreditation body to accredit certification bodies that deliver sustainable forest management certification of smallholder woodlands to the American Tree Farm System's technical requirements. The attached SCC and ATFS requirements outline the specific expectations. These requirements are reviewed and updated from time to time between the parties.

We, the undersigned, confirm in accordance with our respective domestic procedures, that this agreement is valid on an on-going basis from the date of this agreement and will be reviewed on an annual basis by SCC and ATFS.

**On behalf of the  
Standards Council of Canada**

**On behalf of the  
American Forest Foundation**

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Name:  
Chantal Guay  
Title: Chief Executive Officer  
Standards Council of Canada  
Date:  
Ottawa, Canada

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Name: Rita Hite  
Title: President and CEO  
American Forest Foundation  
Date:  
Washington D.C., United States

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Name: Gregory Fyfe  
Title: Chief Financial Officer  
Standards Council of Canada  
Date:  
Ottawa, Canada

**SUBJECT:** Accreditation Program for American Tree Farm System (ATFS)

**APPLIES TO:** ATFS SCC-Accredited and Applicant Certification Bodies

## **PREFACE**

This Accreditation Rule is to inform certification bodies (CBs) of SCC requirements for accreditation to certify organizations for management systems conforming with the American Tree Farm System.

There are three types of ATFS certification:

- Individual landowners may be certified as a group under a certificate or certificates held by the American Forest Foundation (AFF) and administered on the ground by ATFS-affiliated Tree Farm programs at the state or regional level (see [www.treefarmssystem.org/atfsgroups](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/atfsgroups) for a map of Tree Farm programs). Through December 31, 2022, Tree Farm programs are organized under AFF's 3 regional certificates (West-Central, Northeast, and Southeast). Beginning in 2023, state programs will be organized and assessed as a group covered by one national certificate.
- Independently Managed Groups (IMGs) are managed and maintained by private organizations and public agencies and are independent of AFF's group certificate(s) covering individual landowners enrolled in state or regional Tree Farm programs.
- Individual certified properties are those properties whose landowners have decided that they wish to have their forested lands independently certified by an ANAB-accredited CB, independent of affiliation with AFF's Tree Farm program certificate or an IMG.

All three types of properties are audited by SCC-accredited CBs and have their own ATFS Standard Operating Procedures for certification (see <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/documents-for-foresters>).

## **ACCREDITATION RULE**

### **1. Requirement Documents (current versions unless specified)**

- 1.1. American Forest Foundation (AFF) Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification (v2.0)
- 1.2. American Tree Farm System Eligibility Requirements and Guidance for Certification (v2.0)
- 1.3. American Tree Farm System Sampling Procedures for Assessments
- 1.4. PEFC Logo Usage Rules - Requirements
- 1.5. PEFC Certification and Accreditation Procedures
- 1.6. American Tree Farm System Tree Farm Inspection Record
- 1.7. American Tree Farm System Independently Managed Group (IMG) Standards
- 1.8. ISO/IEC 17021 or ISO/IEC 17021-1, Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems (depending on where the CB is in the transition process)

- 1.9. SCC Accreditation Program Overview and SCC Applicable Bulletins
- 1.10. IAF Mandatory Documents as applicable

## **2. Prerequisites**

- 2.1. A CB seeking to become accredited for ATFS activities must conform to ISO/IEC 17021 and be accredited by the SCC or ANAB to perform SFI forest management certification audits.
- 2.2. The CB for ATFS certification shall meet requirements of ISO 19011 and the SFI forest management auditor qualification and competency criteria and apply these requirements and criteria to its ATFS certification process.
- 2.3. To conform to confidentiality requirements of ISO/IEC 17021, the CB shall have formal enforceable arrangements with its ATFS clients to share information as required by Section 3 of this document.

## **3. Criteria for Certification Process**

- 3.1. Public Consultation: The audit evidence to determine the conformity with the forest management standard shall include relevant information from external parties (for example, governmental agencies, community groups, and conservation organizations) as appropriate.
- 3.2. Public Access of Certification Reports: A summary of the certification report, including a summary of findings on the auditee's conformity with the forest management standard, shall be made available to the public by the auditee or in accordance with any applicable requirements defined by the respective forest certification scheme.
- 3.3. Certification Body Information Sharing and Transfer to ATFS and PEFC: The CB shall inform AFF (the ATFS governing body) and SFI Inc. (the PEFC National Governing Body for the United States) about all issued certificates and the validity and scope of these certificates. The CB shall inform the client organization about information provided to AFF and SFI Inc.
- 3.4. Assessment of ATFS and PEFC Logo Usage Compliance: The CB will ensure appropriate control of the PEFC and/or ATFS logo if the certified entity is a PEFC and/or ATFS logo user.
- 3.5. If a CB's audit team identifies a nonconformance during an on-site audit, the CB is required to notify the State Tree Farm Committee upon completion of the audit.

## **4. Additional Requirements (not documented elsewhere)**

- 4.1. ATFS Auditor Time
  - 4.1.1. The CB shall have a process to determine ATFS auditor time.
  - 4.1.2. SCC shall review the CB's auditor time calculation process and justification during the application process as well as throughout the accreditation activities and refer

to it throughout the oversight of the ATFS program.

## **5. Application Process**

- 5.1. CBs can obtain applications for informational use at <https://www.scc.ca>.
- 5.2. The application steps are outlined in Steps to accreditation | Standards Council of Canada – Conseil canadien des normes ([scc.ca](https://www.scc.ca)).

## **6. Initial Assessments for Accreditation**

- 6.1. An SCC accreditation assessor shall conduct a full documentation review.
- 6.2. After the documents are found acceptable, SCC shall conduct a site assessment and required witness audits.
  - 6.2.1. The initial assessment shall be conducted on site or remotely (at SCC's discretion) and is conducted to ensure the CB's certification process for ATFS conforms with ISO/IEC 17021 or ISO/IEC 17021-1 and is effective.
  - 6.2.2. SCC shall witness the CB conducting a full ATFS two-stage audit at an organization at which the CB fully evaluates all ATFS requirements.
    - 6.2.2.1. The SCC assessment team shall have the same number of members as the CB audit team.
    - 6.2.2.2. Because of the level of expertise needed, SCC may use technical experts for ATFS witnessed audits. SCC will invoice the CB for the fees and expenses of the technical expert.

## **7. Surveillance Assessment**

- 7.1. During the four-year accreditation cycle, SCC shall conduct an annual office assessment and witness a CB team conducting an ATFS audit for each type of group certified (that is, AFF Regional/National Group and/or Independent Managed Group) at least once in each accreditation cycle.
  - 7.1.1. The office assessment shall be conducted concurrently with assessments for SFI and other SCC accreditation programs for which the CB is accredited.

## **8. Reaccreditation Assessments**

- 8.1. SCC shall conduct a document review and a full system assessment at approximately six months prior to the expiration of accreditation.

## **9. Complaints**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, other than an appeal, by any person or organization, against SCC, an SCC Service Delivery Partner or an accredited or applicant organization, where a response is expected or a difference of opinion or interpretation on a program requirement justifies a formal documentation of the proceedings. There is no fee for

complaint investigation. Complaints should be submitted through the SCC process, outlined at <https://www.scc.ca/complaints>.

## **10. Appeals and Hearings**

An appeal relates to an SCC accreditation decision. The complaint process should be used prior to an appeal. The appeal process, as outlined in the SCC Accreditation Program Overview, shall be followed. When the appeal evaluation method is selected, the appellant must provide a deposit of 35% of the expected costs. If the appeal is upheld, there will be no cost the appellant for the process and the deposit will be refunded. If the appeal is overruled, the appellant will forfeit the deposit and be required to pay any amount over and above the initial deposit within thirty (30) calendar days following the appeal decision.