



2010 Public Summary Report American Tree Farm System (ATFS) South, North Central and West Regions American Forest Foundation Standards of Sustainability For Forest Certification (2004 – 2008 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) Standards of Sustainability For Forest Certification (2004 – 2008 AFF Standard).

SOUTH REGION

The ATFS South Region consists of eleven state Tree Farm committees and as of January 1, 2010 had approximately 18,570 participating nonindustrial forest landowners. The South Region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. The three states chosen for the surveillance assessment were Alabama, Florida and Georgia.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

The ATFS North Central Region consists of ten state Tree Farm committees and as of January 1, 2010 had approximately 9,489 participating nonindustrial forest landowners. The North Central Region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin. The three states chosen for the surveillance assessment were Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.

WEST REGION

The ATFS West Region consists of eight state Tree Farm Committees and as of January 1, 2010 had approximately 3,343 participating nonindustrial forest landowners. The West Region includes California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota and Washington. The three states chosen for the surveillance assessment were Idaho, Montana and Washington.

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 September 7, 2010.

Summary of Findings

- There were no new non-conformities identified during the assessment. A previous nonconformity from the 2009 Certification Assessment remain open, which included 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:

- ATFS has developed an internal monitoring program to test land owner conformance with the requirements of the AFF Standard. Some inconsistencies were observed as to how inspections were completed across the ATFS Regions. ATFS may wish to consider ways to improve inspectors understanding of how to complete the inspections in accordance with the requirements of the AFF Standard requirements.
- All plans sampled in the Western Region contained good management objectives and goals. However, in some instances, management plans identified a certain goal or objective with either little or no management action(s) identified in the plan as to how the goal or objective would be achieved.
- There is an opportunity for the ATFS program to analyze documented internal monitoring findings across the ATFS Regions, so the program can be monitored for trends and areas for improvement.

Good management practices were identified in the following areas:

- Strong collaboration between State Committees and their respective state forestry associations and other stakeholders has resulted in publications, recruitment brochures, videos and meetings/workshops that provide customized approaches to communications, as well as information for continuing education sessions with landowners.
- Many State Committees are leveraging technology (e.g. tracking spreadsheets, GPS and GIS) to improve the management of state programs.
- Consistently well executed forest management activities (e.g. thinning, prescribed burns, wildlife habitat enhancement, maintenance of forest health and use of conservation easements) were observed on all properties sampled in the ATFS Regions indicating a high degree of commitment of landowners to meet the requirements of the ATFS Standard.
- All ATFS Regions demonstrated a high degree of cooperation with and use of state forestry agencies and industry landowner assistance programs for technical support to improve forest management.
- All of the ATFS Regions demonstrated a strong commitment to public outreach and education. Land owners regularly host educational opportunities for students and teachers, other landowners and the public in some cases.
- The interviews with landowners and stakeholders in the states sampled indicate that there is a high degree of commitment to the State level Tree Farm Programs and the implementation of forestry practices on the ground.

Conclusion

The American Tree Farm System nonindustrial and privately owned lands within the South, North Central and West Regions are certified to the AFF Standard [2004-2008 Edition]. A copy of the Regional certificates can be obtained at <http://www.treefarmssystem.org> or by contacting Victoria Lockhart, Certification Manager, American Tree Farm System (202 463 2738).