

**American Tree Farm System®**  
**Internal Monitoring Process and Procedures for ATFS State Affiliates and Individual**  
**Third-Party Certificate Holders**

**June 1, 2023**

Internal monitoring at planned intervals is required for ATFS affiliates (a.k.a. state programs) and third-party certificate holders to verify that they conform to requirements under the ATFS system, and that the ATFS Standards are effectively implemented and maintained.

**Sampling Process (for ATFS Affiliates only)**

***Required Inspection Sample (Certification State Program)***

The sample population will be stratified, excluding all Tree Farms that have been inspected within the prior 3 years. VPI will continue to provide sample calculations and random track selection across five acreage strata.

*Guidance for Required Inspections for States participating third-party assessments*

- *In the year that a state participates in the third-party assessment, the required inspection sample for that state will be considered a Monitoring Sample, and therefore optional to complete.*
- *Internal monitoring should accompany a third-party assessment, and an inspection should be completed for each Tree Farm selected.*

***Required Inspection Sample (Recognition State Program)***

The sample population will include all states operating a Recognition Program. VPI will continue to provide sample calculations and random track selection across five acreage strata.

***Monitoring Inspection Sample (formerly Optional)***

The sample population will include all Tree Farms in the ATFS database for state programs. VPI will continue to provide sample calculations and random track selection across five acreage strata.

*Guidance for Required Inspections for States participating third-party assessments*

**Inspection Procedures (for ATFS Affiliates only)**

***Initial Inspection***

Requires field visit, and full review of the management plan documents, including maps, schedule of activity, and other supporting documents.

***Required Inspection***

Requires field visit if management activity has occurred on the ground since the last inspection OR if the previous inspection occurred >3 years.

If a field visit is not required, the remote 'desk' audit would include:

- Full review of the management plan documents, including maps, management activity schedule, and other supporting documents.
- Current aerial/satellite imagery, remote sensing, or other emerging technologies support of records.

***Monitoring Inspection (formerly Optional)***

Requires a field visit if management activity has occurred on the ground since the last inspection.

If a field visit is not required, the remote 'desk' audit would include:

- Full review of the management plan documents, including maps, management activity schedule, and other supporting documents.
- Current aerial/satellite imagery, remote sensing, or other emerging technologies support of records.

***Guidance for Multiple Tree Farms/Single Owner/Single Management Plan***

*Tree Farms selected for a Monitoring Inspection may complete inspections for additional Tree Farms if:*

- *the Tree Farmer owns ten or more Tree Farms*
- *all Tree Farms are held under the same management plan*

*These Monitoring Inspections may be recorded in tabular form using an ATFS designed template for single owner/multiple Tree Farms.*

**Non-conformities**

Where annual internal monitoring identifies non-conformities with the ATFS Standards and their requirements, affiliates and individual third-party certificate holders shall:

a) react to the nonconformity and, as applicable:

- i. take action to control and correct it;
- ii. deal with the consequences;

b) evaluate the need for action to eliminate the causes of the nonconformity, in order that it does not recur or occur elsewhere, by:

- i. reviewing the nonconformity;
- ii. determining the causes of the nonconformity;

- iii. determining if similar nonconformities exist, or could potentially occur;
- c) implement any action needed;
- d) review the effectiveness of any corrective action taken;
- e) make changes to the management system, if necessary

Where internal monitoring identifies persistent non-conformities at the individual program level, affiliates and third-party certificate holders shall contact ATFS staff so that they may assist in programmatically addressing non-conformities.