



2013 Public Summary Report

American Tree Farm System (ATFS) South and West-Central Regions American Forest Foundation 2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification (AFF Standard)

Project Scope and Objectives

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) completed an ATFS Surveillance Assessment of the registered American Tree Farm System nonindustrial and privately owned lands within the South and West-Central Regions (the "ATFS Regions") to the American Forest Foundation 2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification.

SOUTH REGION

The ATFS South Region consists of twelve state Tree Farm committees and as of July 18, 2013 had 22,328 participating non-industrial forest landowners. The South Region includes the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

WEST-CENTRAL REGION

The West-Central Region consists of nineteen state Tree Farm committees and as of July 18, 2013 had 13,312 participating non-industrial forest landowners. The West-Central Region includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming.

The Surveillance Assessment also included a review of the ATFS Internal Monitoring Program and stakeholder consultation. The Lead Assessors for this assessment were Joann Cox EMS (LA) (South Region) and Shawn Ellsworth EMS(LA) (West-Central 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 teams 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 August 16, 2013.

Summary of Conformance and Good Management Practices

The review of AFF's Internal Monitoring procedures concluded that the states chosen for the surveillance assessment conform to the AFF Internal Monitoring Procedures and requirements.

Interviews with landowners and/or their representative and field observations revealed an overall consistent implementation of good forest management. While improvements were noted, continued weakness was found in the preparation of written forest management plans to meet all appropriate requirements of the AFF Standard.

Several examples of good and innovative management activities were observed, including:

- Several examples of commitment to sustainable forestry by Tree Farmers in the Southern Region included: agroforestry practices for control of invasive plants and timber stand improvement (TSI); protection of an area identified as an old growth stand of oak; establishing comprehensive conservation easements; modifying TSI treatments to buffer water bodies; hosting local groups for educational outreach and training opportunities; publishing a book that chronicles the family's work on the Tree Farm; demonstrating Naval Stores operation and protecting Tar Kilns dating back to the mid1800's; site specific regeneration of Bald Cypress and Atlantic White Cedar; and working with a local botanist to grow Venus Fly-traps for establishment in a Tree Farm's swamp.
- Several examples of commitment to sustainable forestry by Tree Farmers in the West-Central Region included: establishing a permanent conservation easement to promote the recovery of the federally listed Indiana Bat; establishing a variety of wildlife habitat enhancements and being selected as the 2011 Wildlife Conservation Award recipient in the Hopkins County; re-establishing native prairie conditions; installing "nature friendly" fencing techniques; donating firewood and Christmas trees for disadvantaged families; and achieving Master Tree Farmer status that requires coursework, field and outreach activities.
- The Kentucky State Tree Farm Committee maintains a 5 year cycle to contact Tree Farmers, which included 240 optional phone interviews resulting in 44 new inspections or re-inspections to update the AFF database.
- The North Carolina Tree Farm Committee received grants from AFF and the NC SIC to conduct a telephone survey of all NC Tree Farmers thereby updating the AFF database as well as providing how best to support NC Tree Farmers.
- The New Mexico State Tree Farm Committee streamlined their inspection process by using the pdf inspection form and online database updating feature to effectively update the database with a significant inspection percentage of 40% of the state Tree Farms.
- The Colorado State Tree Farm Committee used phone survey, local county meetings, post card mail outs and their website as communication and outreach venues to share the value of the ATFS program.
- The South Carolina State Tree Farm Committee was instrumental in the successful passage of Bill 3631: requirement for conducting prescribed fire that included funding for the SC Forestry Commission upgrade equipment.
- The Virginia State Tree Farm Committee provided seed money to develop a "new Virginia landowner" packet that included information about Tree Farm, forest certification and forest management. Over 400 packets have been distributed to realtors and brokers that evolved into an 8 hour training program for realtors.

Summary of Findings

No new nonconformities were identified. There was one new opportunity for improvement.

While implementation of the action plans on previous nonconformity and opportunity for improvement findings continue to show positive improvements, three previous nonconformities and two opportunities for improvement remain open. In addition, the implementation of

corrective actions and documentation provided or field observations made, resulted in the closure of three nonconformities and two opportunities for improvement.

While no new non-conformities were identified during the assessment, nonconformities were identified related to previously identified non-conformities:

- Two previous nonconformities from the initial Certification Assessment remain open. The nonconformities relate to 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.
- The nonconformity from the 2012 Surveillance Assessment remains open, which relates to ATFS database. The replacement rate of the selected 2013 Tree Farms improved with the exception of one state. While the database fluctuates with Tree Farmers entering/exiting the program, the accuracy of the central database of certified forest properties was not been fully demonstrated.

Opportunities for improvement were identified in the following areas:

- A new opportunity was issued to encourage a review of the inspector training program to ensure inspectors who conduct initial inspections and internal monitoring understand and conform to the requirements of the AFF Standard.
- A previous opportunity for improvement from the Re-Registration Assessment remains open, which encourages Tree Farmers that incorporate maps and photos in management plans to ensure they are of a reasonable quality and scale to be effective.
- A previous opportunity for improvement from the Initial Assessment remains open, which encourages land owners to consistently have contracts and language in their contracts stipulating the need for insurance.

Conclusion

The American Tree Farm System nonindustrial and privately owned lands within the South and West- Central Regions have maintained conformance with the requirements of the Forest Foundation Standards of Sustainability For Forest Certification (2010 – 2015 AFF Standard). A copy of the Regional certificates can be obtained at <http://www.treefarmssystem.org> or by contacting Sarah Crow, Certification Manager, American Tree Farm System (202 463 2738).