

# American Forest Foundation (AFF) 2010- 2015 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification

## Standards Prologue

The American Forest Foundation's (AFF) 2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification promote the vitality of renewable forest resources while protecting environmental, economic and social benefits and work to increase public understanding of all benefits of sustainable forestry. They are based on North American and Pan-European guidelines for **sustainable forest management**, encourage **adaptive management**, and serve as the basis for the American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) certification program. **Forest owners** and managers who follow the AFF Standards of Sustainability are encouraged to promote the American Tree Farm System® program by displaying appropriate signs and participating in relevant program activities.

The AFF 2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability address aspects of **sustainable forest management** and incorporate eight standards with various performance measures and indicators. ATFS **qualified Tree Farm inspectors, group managers, and accredited third-party assessors** will conduct field verification of **landowner** conformance to the AFF Standards as prescribed by ATFS policies and procedures. All AFF **sustainability** elements (standards, performance measures and indicators) are important and will be considered in reviews. Responsibilities, task, or obligations that are phrased with the word "must," are core elements that are required to be certified by the American Tree Farm System. *Note: **Bold type** throughout this document denotes words or phrases defined in the attached glossary. An asterisk symbol (\*) indicates guidance provided in the appendix document.*

This document was prepared at the direction of the AFF Board of Trustees. It was developed by the 2008-2009 Independent Standards Review Panel under the process described by the AFF Standards Setting Procedures. Guidance documents (third-party auditing, internal monitoring, and **landowner** guidance) for implementation and interpretations will be used to clarify requirements of the Standards.

Guidance: Please note that all of the indicators for a Performance Measure apply to each property being certified to the 2010 Standard.

The guidance statements are intended to inform the landowner, the inspector and the third-party auditor as to the intent of the Standard. Guidance statements are not the Standard.

Inspectors and auditors are cautioned to apply the Standard as written, avoiding personal preference. Inspectors and auditors are urged to respect the forest owner's opportunity for creative solutions embodied in the Standard.

## Standard 1: Commitment to Practicing Sustainable Forestry

**Forest owner** demonstrates commitment to **forest vitality** by developing and implementing a sustainable forest **management plan**.

### Performance Measure 1.1

**Forest owner** must have and implement a written forest **management plan** consistent with the size of the forest and the **scale** and intensity of the forest activities.

Guidance: Landowner objectives for managing the subject property must be stated in the plan document. The management plan may be comprised of several separate documents that, taken together, comprise the management plan.

#### *Indicator 1.1.1*

**Management plan** must be active, adaptive, and embody the **landowner's** current objectives, remain appropriate for the land certified, and reflect the current state of knowledge about forestry and natural resource management.

Guidance: The management plan must conform to the intent of the landowner's objectives. For example: if the landowner's objective is to increase the occurrence of wild turkey on the property, the management plan is expected to prescribe management activities that will enhance, or at least maintain, suitable wild turkey habitat. Landowner objectives are concise, high-level, statements of what the landowner hopes to accomplish through their management. The detail for achieving the objectives will be reflected in the body of the plan.

Plan detail should reflect the forest and habitat complexity of the property as well as the management intensity planned for the property. The Standard does not require a prescribed management plan information structure or hierarchy. The plan preparer has considerable latitude in developing the plan at a level of complexity that meets the landowner's objectives and provides for an accurate method of prescribing any planned treatments or activities to the forest property or its component parts.

The nature of adaptive management requires that the landowner not be bound to follow the management plan prescriptions when circumstances influencing the property and its management have changed or when the landowner's objectives change. Examples of such changes would include regeneration-harvest of significant portions of the timber, the sale or acquisition of lands included in the certificate and major damage from: storms, fire, pest or disease outbreaks.

Handwritten notes to the plan are acceptable as indications of updates to the plan for individual properties. A more formal or structured system for recording plan changes is to be expected with larger collections of properties whether under one ownership or part of a Group Management structure. A Group Manager is expected to have a system in place that will allow timely retrieval and editing of management plans under its authority and responsibility.

While the plan is not expected to address all possible facets of state-of-the-art forestry or habitat management, the plan is expected to avoid commonly accepted poor forestry or wildlife management practices. For Example: A plan that prescribes practices to maximize short term income should not compromise long term forest health or productivity.

Interpretation (approved by Certification Committee 6.21.2010):

It is widely accepted that management plans can present a suite of options to landowners for their consideration. ATFS does not view management plans as a strict blueprint for landowner action, rather that management plans are adaptive and responsive to a number of factors. Inspectors and third-party auditors should contemplate the following question when assessing the conformance of a management plan to the AFF Standards; does the failure to perform the plan-action constitute a breach of sustainability for this property? If the answer is no - then the landowner is not out of conformance. If the answer is yes - then this is an issue that needs to be addressed.

*Indicator 1.1.2*

**Management plans must:** clearly state **landowner's** objectives, describe desired forest condition, include management activities aimed at reaching the desired forest condition and **landowner's** objectives, document a feasible strategy for activity implementation, and include a tract map accurately depicting significant forest related resources.

Where present, and relevant to the property, the plan must address the following resource elements: forest health, soil, water, wood and fiber production, threatened and endangered species, **special sites, invasive species, integrated pest management, and high conservation value forests.**

Where present, relevant to the property, and consistent with **landowner's** objectives, the plan preparer may consider, describe and evaluate the following resource elements: fire, wetlands, **desired species** (fish, wildlife and plant), recreation, aesthetic quality, biomass and carbon.

Guidance: The plan must clearly state what type of forest conditions (i.e. fast growing conifer plantations, mixed hardwood bottomland forests, older forests of longleaf pine, etc...) the landowner is attempting to achieve, as well as the practices that will be used to achieve the conditions.

The plan must specifically mention the required topics (landowner objectives, forest health, soil, water, wood and fiber production, threatened and endangered species, special sites, invasive species, integrated pest management, and high conservation value forests). If there is no occurrence of an attribute on the required topic list (threatened and endangered species, special sites, invasive species, high conservation value forests) the plan may simply say that the attribute is not present on the subject property. (see Standards 4, 5 and 7)

Integrated Pest Management (see glossary) needs only to be addressed if there is a pest or disease outbreak on the property that warrants management action.

The plan may mention attributes from the optional list (fire, wetlands, desired species, recreation, aesthetic quality, biomass and carbon) if they are present or desired by the forest owner. If the topic is mentioned, the plan must address that property attribute in some way.

There is no requirement for level of detail in the plan. Addressing the attribute may be as simple as saying that "the attribute will be protected during all forest operations in compliance with applicable regulations". Alternately, the plan preparer may provide a detailed description of the management actions or protections specific to the attribute.

It is understood that property recently covered by a written management plan will not necessarily have evidence of plan performance.

*Indicator 1.1.3\**

**Forest owner** should monitor for changes that could interfere with the management objectives as stated in **management plan** (e.g., presence of **invasive species**, pest outbreaks, and indications of trespass). When problems are found, reasonable actions are taken.

Guidance: Monitoring for individual landowners can be achieved by visiting the property at least once per year, riding through it or walking the trails. Landowners are encouraged to walk their property boundary lines.

Landowners are encouraged to keep a written record of monitoring observations to defend themselves from adverse possession claims, substantiate any casualty losses and enable them to make timely response to trespass, illegal dumping, timber theft and insect or disease outbreaks. Records of monitoring may be informal and can be included in the management plan documentation.

Landowners may commission someone else to do their monitoring for them.

Landowners who cannot readily visit their property(s) on a regular basis, as well as Independently Managed Groups, are expected to have a documented record of property visits and monitoring observations.

Landowner records of management activities, over time, should give evidence that the landowner is responding to information inputs from monitoring.

## Standard 2: Compliance with Laws

Forest management activities comply with all relevant federal, state and local laws, regulations and ordinances.

### Performance Measure 2.1

**Forest owner must** comply with all relevant federal, state, county, and municipal laws, regulations, and ordinances.

Guidance: It is recommended that landowners employ the maxim “When in doubt, ask”.

Common forest management activities that are regulated in many states include: state and federally protected species and their habitat, prescribed burning, herbicide and insecticide application, harvesting, road building, pond construction and stream crossings.

Excellent professional resources are available to the forest owner at local natural resource agency offices. Please consult the resource pages for forest owners, on the ATFS website, for additional help on relevant federal and state laws and regulations.

Compliance with all relevant (applicable) laws can be verified in a three-tiered process:

- Step 1 – Observation of conditions on the subject property
- Step 2 – The landowner’s own verbal or written claim of legal compliance
- Step 3 – Research with the state Department of Natural Resources, local Natural Resource Conservation Service office or State Forestry Commission offices

If Step 1 and Step 2 do not raise any issues, then the inspector or auditor is not required to employ Step 3.

### *Indicator 2.1.1*

**Forest owner must** comply with all relevant laws, regulations and ordinances and will correct conditions that led to **adverse regulatory actions**, if any.

Guidance: Full legal compliance to relevant laws, regulations and ordinances is the intent of the Standard. Mistakes may occur in carrying out forest management activities. Forest owners must be committed to correcting inadvertent violations. A pattern of willful violation of relevant laws, regulations or ordinances is not acceptable.

If there is evidence of past non-conformance (see Guidance for 2.1), then the landowner must show proof of a good-faith effort to remedy the non-conformance. If the matter is tied up in court, then the landowner is only disqualified when a final adverse judgment is rendered AND the landowner refuses to comply with the ruling.

*Indicator 2.1.2*

**Forest owner** should obtain advice from appropriate professionals, or contractors who are trained in, and familiar with, relevant laws, regulations and ordinances.

Guidance: Regulatory compliance advice from untrained, non-professionals is discouraged and can lead to costly mistakes.

### **Standard 3: Reforestation and Afforestation**

**Forest owner** completes timely restocking of **desired species** of trees on harvested sites and non-stocked areas where tree growing is consistent with land use practices and the **forest owner's** management objectives.

Performance Measure 3.1

Reforestation or afforestation must be achieved by a suitable process that ensures adequate stocking levels.

*Indicator 3.1.1*

Harvested forest land must achieve adequate stocking of **desired species** reflecting the **forest owner's** management objectives, within five years after harvest, or within a time interval as specified by applicable regulation.

Guidance: The landowner should ask their natural resource professional or check with the state agency responsible for forestry assistance to find out if there is a reforestation law in place, and if so, to ensure compliance with it.

Adequate stocking levels for planted tree stocks are prescribed by federal and state reforestation cost-share programs and can be used as a guide even where cost-share funds were not used. However, certain wildlife habitat management regimes may favor lower stocking rates than the cost-share program guidelines do. Therefore, it is important to make sure the chosen guidelines fit the forest conditions and are consistent with landowner objectives.

Natural regeneration stocking assessments should account for both softwood and hardwood regeneration.

Please refer to the ATFS website for further stocking guide resources.

## Standard 4: Air, Water, and Soil Protection

Forest management practices maintain or enhance the environment and ecosystems, including air, water, soil and site quality.

### Performance Measure 4.1

**Forest owner must** meet or exceed practices prescribed by **State Forestry Best Management Practices** (BMPs) that are applicable to the property.

Guidance: State Forestry BMP compliance is required by the Standard in all states. Forest owners are urged to secure a copy of the state forestry BMP guide from their state forestry agency and to familiarize themselves with the guidelines in it for harvesting, road building, reforestation, habitat management and other forest activities. For many states this information is available free on-line and in printed format.

For states with Forest Practice Acts the statutes, administrative rules, and guidance for the Acts is considered the equivalent of BMP's. Where the AFF standard reads BMP, the inspector or auditor should reference the Forest Practice Act in states where present.

### *Indicator 4.1.1*

**Forest owner must** implement specific BMPs that are applicable to the property.

Guidance: When planning management activities that will cause any soil disturbance or require chemical application, the BMP manual for the state that the property is located in should be consulted and applicable BMP methods employed. Examples of activities requiring BMP application:

- Harvest planning – including block design, haul roads, skidder trails, stream crossings and truck-loading areas
- Reforestation design – mechanical or chemical site preparation, machine or hand planting
- Road maintenance or construction – all facets
- Prescribed burning plans – fire lane construction, smoke management, agency notification

No field evidence of BMP implementation is to be expected where no management activity has occurred. However, if the property shows evidence of water quality impairment originating on the property, that is not caused by the forest owner's actions, the forest owner is strongly encouraged to have plans for remediation.

Examples:

- Forest owner purchases a tract with a forest road that is eroding soil into a water body.
- ATV riders are trespassing on the property and are crossing a stream causing the banks to erode
- Garbage is being dumped on the property near a stream crossing and some of it is getting into the stream during high-water conditions
- Storm damage has impaired the performance of road culverts

*Indicator 4.1.2*

**Forest owner** must minimize road construction and other disturbances within riparian zones and wetlands.

Guidance: State BMP manuals are generally quite detailed on recommended practices for road construction and other disturbances of riparian zones. If there is a point of confusion, the forest owner is advised to consult with a natural resource professional who is experienced in forest road design and installation. In some states, permits may be required for forest roads or other disturbances that intersect a riparian zone.

Forest owners should specify with contractors that state forestry BMPs must be adhered to.

In all cases, the primary concern is to avoid contaminating watercourses that are adjacent to the forest activity.

Performance Measure 4.2

**Forest owner** must consider **integrated pest management** to control pests, pathogens and unwanted vegetation.

*Indicator 4.2.1*

**Forest owner** should evaluate alternatives to manage pest, pathogens and unwanted vegetation to achieve specific management objectives.

Guidance: Integrated pest management (IPM) can take many forms, some of the most effective measures are preventative. Measures that improve forest health or in some other way protect the property from injurious organisms are very cost-effective. Forest Chemical applications are often used only when other control measures are ineffective.

Forest owners should consult with their state forestry agency or natural resource professional to learn about recommended IPM techniques for any particular disease or pest outbreak on their property.

**Examples:**

Southern Pine Beetle outbreaks are most economically controlled by cutting down all of the affected trees, as well as a buffer of green trees around the zone showing evidence of infestation. Merchantable trees should be hauled to market immediately and the rest laid flat on the ground. SPB outbreaks are discouraged by maintaining healthy stands that are free to grow. Prompt thinning is a good preventative measure.

Annosus root rot outbreaks can be controlled by applying Borax to the freshly cut stumps of harvested trees when thinning softwoods in the affected area. Annosus root rot can be discouraged by avoiding partial cutting in infection areas, favoring less susceptible species in regeneration and use of prescribed fire in certain situations.

*Indicator 4.2.2*

**Pesticides** used must be EPA-approved.

Guidance: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approves the use of pesticides for specific situations and on specific plants or animals, at specified application rates. The forest owner is responsible for ensuring that the planned use of a pesticide is in compliance with the EPA label limitations. Please consult the resource pages for forest owners, on the ATFS website, for additional information on EPA-approved pesticides

*Indicator 4.2.3*

**Pesticides** must be applied, stored and disposed of in accordance with EPA-approved labels and by persons appropriately trained, licensed and supervised.

Guidance: In most states, forestry chemicals must be applied by a licensed applicator. The forest owner is responsible for ensuring that anyone applying forestry-use chemicals is in compliance with state and federal regulations. In some states landowners can apply certain pesticides on their land without any special permits or licenses. In others they can apply for and receive, a license or permit to apply forestry chemicals on their own lands according to the EPA label limitations. In any event, the requirements for safe use, storage and disposal must be met by forest owners and /or their agents.

Performance Measure 4.3

When used, **prescribed fire** must conform with **forest owner's** objectives, the **forest management plan** and pre-fire planning.

Guidance: In many states the state forestry agency employs a permit system for prescribed burning. Many of these agencies provide training for prescribed burning that is available to forest owners. Successful completion of a prescribed burning course is often required before the state forestry agency will issue a burning permit. Many states regulate the amount of open burning that can be conducted on a given day in a county or multi-county zone.

Prescribed burning includes controlled burning of piles, windrows and broadcast fire applications.

A prescribed burning plan is recommended, which will include: reconnaissance of the burning block, estimates of fuel condition, required weather conditions and adequate means of controlling the fire after it is set. Oral discussion of a burning plan with all of the parties involved, before the burn is started on the property, is acceptable – a written burning plan record is not required by the Standard but may be required by the state agency that regulates open burning in the state.

Inspectors and auditors may test for compliance with PM 4.3 by interviewing the forest owner and observing the property. The forest owner may have written records to support conformance claims, but is not required to do so.

*Indicator 4.3.1*

**Prescribed fire** must conform with the **management plan** and state and local laws and regulations.

Guidance: The intent is that the forest owner's plans and good-faith actions in using prescribed fire conform to the management plan and the relevant laws and regulations.

It is recognized that the best laid plans may go awry on any given day. The inspector or auditor is to look for a pattern of wise use of prescribed fire where it is used

## Standard 5: Fish, Wildlife and Biodiversity

Forest management activities contribute to the conservation of **biodiversity**.

### Performance Measure 5.1

Forest management activities must maintain or enhance habitat for threatened or endangered communities and species.

Guidance: State or Federally listed threatened or endangered species and their habitats are protected in the relevant laws and regulations. If landowners become aware of the presence of a threatened or endangered species on their property, it is their duty to become aware of the requirements for protecting the habitat for that species and to take appropriate actions in the management of their property.

### Indicator 5.1.1

**Forest owner** must confer with natural resource agencies, state natural resource heritage programs or review other sources of information to determine occurrences of threatened and endangered species on the property and their habitat requirements.

#### Guidance – Threatened or Endangered Species:

Forest owners are not required to do an exhaustive search for threatened or endangered species on their property. Forest owners are expected to make a good-faith effort to find out if there are known occurrences of a threatened or endangered species on their property.

If there are known occurrences of threatened or endangered species on the property, then the forest owner may be required to make provisions for their protection if specified by regulation.

Contacting the state Natural Resource or Fish & Game service representative is usually an effective way to find out if a forest property is known to contain a threatened or endangered species.

Threatened or endangered species lists are maintained by the US Fish & Wildlife Service in accordance with the Endangered Species Act [ [http://ecos.fws.gov/tess\\_public/](http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/) ].

Nationally listed threatened or endangered freshwater fish that migrate to sea are listed by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) [ <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/> ].

Some threatened or endangered species are also listed separately by the State Agencies. Please consult the ATFS website for additional resources on threatened or endangered species.

*Indicator 5.1.2*

Forest management activities must incorporate measures to protect identified threatened or endangered species.

Guidance: Forest owners are encouraged to consult with a natural resource professional for assistance in planning to protect threatened and endangered species.

Measures for habitat protections may include:

- no mechanical entry in the habitat area
- restricted pesticide use in the habitat area
- residual tree maintenance in the habitat area
- buffer zone establishment and maintenance around the habitat area
- hunting or fishing restrictions
- signage or marking of the habitat area

Performance Measure 5.2

**Forest owner** should address the **desired species** (fish, aquatic, wildlife, and plant) and/or desired forest communities in the **management plan** and forest management activities.

Guidance: Forest owners may wish to increase the presence, on their property, of one or more desirable species such as deer, persimmon trees or large-mouth bass. While these goals may have been mentioned in the Landowner Objectives, the body of the plan should give some detail on management activities planned to achieve the stated objective(s)

*Indicator 5.2.1*

**Forest owner** should consult available and accessible information on management of the forest for **desired species** (fish, aquatic, wildlife, and plant) and/or forest communities and integrate it into forest management.

Guidance: Several good sources for desired species management are readily available to the forest owner:

- Non profit organizations that focus on the desired species
- State and Federal agencies that focus on fish and game species
- Extension Service publications

Please consult the resource pages for forest owners, on the ATFS website, for additional information on desired species management.

Performance Measure 5.3

**Forest owner** should make practical efforts to prevent, eradicate or otherwise control **invasive species**.

*Indicator 5.3.1*

**Forest owner** should make practical efforts to prevent, eradicate or otherwise control **invasive species** using a range of **integrated pest management** methods.

Guidance: On monitoring visits to the property, forest owners should be alert to the presence of forest-invasive species.

Natural resource professionals can supply the forest landowner with up-to-date information on forest invasive species. When reasonably available, the forest owner should take advantage of learning opportunities about forest-invasive species. Integrated pest management techniques may provide a cost-effective method of control that will avoid forest chemical use.

If control measures for forest-invasive species require the use of forest herbicides, all herbicide applications should be conducted by trained applicators, in accordance with state and federal regulations.

Invasive species are most commonly associated with plants, but in reality can include a wide range of plants, animals and fungi.

Examples: Kudzu, Japanese Privet, Chinese Tallow Tree, Multi-flora Rose, Norway Maple, Scotch Broom, Himalaya Blackberry, Tree of Heaven, feral hogs, Gypsy Moth, Nutria

Performance Measure 5.4

Forest management activities should maintain or enhance **rare species** and **high conservation value forests**.

Guidance - Rare species:

Forest owners are not required to do an exhaustive search for rare species on their property. Forest owners are encouraged to make a good-faith effort to find out if there are known occurrences of a rare species on their property.

Rare species may not be listed on state or federal Threatened & Endangered species lists but may be considered by the landowner to be a rare occurrence on their own property even if regionally abundant. This often happens because the landowner's property is out of the main range for a given species or past management practices have extirpated the species from the local area.

If there are known occurrences of rare species on the property, then the forest owner may be required to make provisions for their protection if specified by regulation.

NatureServe has an on-line database that can be searched at the county level for rare plants and animals

[ <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/servlet/NatureServe> ]

Examples of rare species occurrence;

- A bear's den
- A patch of natural ginseng
- A morel mushroom patch
- A champion tree

Guidance - High conservation value forests

Most high conservation value forests in the United States that are globally, nationally or regionally significant have been identified and protected by Federal or State government, or have been put under conservation easement by an environmental non-profit organization.

There is no single central clearinghouse of information on high conservation value forests. There is, at this time, no state or federal agency that regulates high conservation value forests on private forest lands.

High conservation value forests are evaluated at the landscape level rather than the forest stand level.

Several organizations have listed areas that they believe merit high conservation value forests status.

Please consult the resource pages for forest owners on the ATFS website for additional help on high conservation value forests.

## Indicator 5.4.1

Appropriate to the **scale** and intensity of the situation, forest management activities should incorporate measures to protect or mitigate impacts on **rare species** and identified **high conservation value forests**.

Guidance: Forest owners who have identified some or all of their forest property as containing rare species should delineate the area on maps associated with the management plan. Management activities on or adjacent to the designated rare-species-area should not harm or diminish the habitat for the rare species. For rare species identified on the property, the forest owner is urged to confer with relevant state wildlife agencies to gain a better understanding of the legal requirements for habitat protection, as well as protection of the organism(s).

Forest owners who have identified some or all of their forest property as high conservation value forest should delineate the area on the maps associated with the management plan. Management activities on or adjacent to the high conservation value forest should not harm or diminish the high conservation values that lead to the designation of the area.

A more likely scenario, for family forest owners, is that the forest owner's property is adjacent to a state or federally protected area that is identified as a high conservation value forest. Forest owners should consider the impact, to a neighboring high conservation value forest, of planned activities on their forest property.

## Standard 6: Forest Aesthetics

Forest **management plans** and management activities recognize the value of forest aesthetics.

### Performance Measure 6.1

**Forest owner** should manage the visual impacts of forest management activities consistent with the size of the forest, the **scale** and intensity of forest management activities and the location of the property.

#### *Indicator 6.1.1*

Forest management activities should apply **visual quality measures** compatible with appropriate silvicultural practices.

Guidance: Forest aesthetics considerations can be incorporated into management planning with little cost to the forest owner. Employing forest aesthetics considerations into the management plan can produce a much more visually appealing experience on property visits for owners, their guests and passers-by using nearby public roads.

Forest owners can access a very good Forest Aesthetics Guide at <http://www.aces.edu/forestry/aesthetics/>

Print copies can be ordered from Forest Resources Association at [http://www.forestresources.org/PUBLICATIONS/print\\_pubs.html](http://www.forestresources.org/PUBLICATIONS/print_pubs.html)

The guide was produced jointly by American Forest and Paper Association and Forest Resources Association

#### Examples:

- Place log truck-loading zones out of public view
- Leave islands of mast or roost trees within harvest areas
- Put a bend in the entrance road to block view of tract interior
- Follow contour lines and timber type margins with roads and harvest boundaries
- Close and re-vegetate idle roads with wildlife-friendly plants

## Standard 7: Protect Special Sites

**Special sites** are managed in ways that recognize their unique historical, archeological, cultural, geological, biological or ecological characteristics.

### Performance Measure 7.1

Forest management activities must maintain **special sites**.

#### *Indicator 7.1.1*

**Forest owner** must make a reasonable effort to locate and protect **special sites** appropriate for the size of the forest and the **scale** and intensity of forest management activities.

Guidance: Special sites are generally smaller in size than high conservation value forests. Special sites are evaluated at the forest stand or sub-stand level. Most special sites will be a small portion of the property. Special sites may be designated for purely sentimental reasons, or may be sites with significant cultural or archeological significance. Special sites may not be found on every property. The probability of a special site occurrence increases in proportion to the size of the forest ownership.

It is recommended that the forest owner identify special sites on management planning maps and, where appropriate, on the ground. However, the forest owner may choose not to identify some special sites on the ground in an effort to protect them from vandalism or overuse.

Special sites can be identified during property reconnaissance prior to preparing the management plan, from old property maps, from local lore and during monitoring reconnaissance. The forest owner may wish to contact the State cultural heritage program for additional information on local sites that have special historical significance.

Please consult the resource pages for forest owners, on the ATFS website, for additional resources on special sites.

Any special site identified in the management plan must include provisions for its protection, especially during forest management activities.

#### Examples:

American Indian burial sites, historical building ruins, old cemeteries, cave entrances, spring heads, rare mineral outcroppings, Civil War battle ground, a champion tree, a bear's den, a pitcher plant bog, a covered bridge

Inspectors and auditors may test for conformance with PM 7.1 by interviewing the forest owner for awareness, reviewing plan documents and associated operating records, and by observing the property.

## Standard 8: Forest Product Harvests and Other Activities

**Forest product** harvests and other management activities are conducted in accordance with the **management plan** and consider other forest values.

### Performance Measure 8.1

**Forest owner** should use **qualified natural resource professionals** and **qualified contractors** when contracting for services.

#### *Indicator 8.1.1*

**Forest owner** should seek **qualified natural resource professionals** and **qualified contractors**.

Guidance: The services of a qualified natural resource professional can prove very cost-effective for the forest owner. Costly mistakes that involve wasted time, resources or regulatory violations may be avoided.

Many states have registration, or licensing systems for foresters and wildlife managers. The people listed by these systems have passed rigorous entrance exams and are required to regularly obtain continuing education.

State forestry and wildlife agencies often can provide referral-lists of natural resource professionals who are working in the state or county.

The Society of American Foresters has a Certified Forester program  
<http://www.safnet.org/certifiedforester/index.cfm>

The Wildlife Society has a Certified Wildlife Biologist program  
[www.wildlife.org/certification/index.cfm](http://www.wildlife.org/certification/index.cfm)

The Association of Consulting Foresters is a national association of forestry consultants:  
<http://www.acf-foresters.org>

A qualified natural resource professional often will be familiar with the contractors who are doing forestry-related work in the area and can make recommendations.

Please consult the resource pages for forest owners, on the ATFS website, for help in finding contractors who are well trained in BMP and regulatory compliance, as well as, assistance in finding natural resource professionals.

*Indicator 8.1.2\**

**Forest owner** should engage contractors that carry appropriate insurance and comply with appropriate federal, state and local safety and **fair labor rules**, regulations and standard practices<sup>1</sup>.

Guidance: Forest owners are encouraged to stipulate that contractors are required to be in compliance with all relevant laws and regulations. A natural resource professional can help with this process.  
Forest Owners are encouraged to discuss liability issues with their insurance agent and their attorney to gain a perspective on appropriate insurance minimums that they might require of contractors.

*Indicator 8.1.3*

**Forest owner** should retain appropriate contracts for **forest product** harvests and other management activities to demonstrate conformance to the AFF Standards.

Guidance:  
Forest owners should review the Standard before planning management activities. Forest owners should specify in contracts for forestry activities that appropriate BMPs must be adhered to.  
Other contract specifications might include:

- Protection of special sites
- Adherence to labor laws
- Requirements for adequate insurance
- Protection of soil and water integrity
- Residual tree damage
- Forest road maintenance and restoration
- Fence and gate protection and/or restoration
- Litter control
- Hazardous material spill prevention and clean-up

Examples of forestry activities requiring review for AFF Standards compliance:

- Harvest operations including timber and non-timber products
- Site preparation and reforestation
- Forest road construction and maintenance
- Mineral extraction
- Hunting and fishing
- Invasive species control
- Pest management

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<sup>1</sup> Auditors shall consider any **complaints** alleging violation of **fair labor rules** filed by workers or organized labor since the previous third-party certification audit. The auditor shall not take action on any labor issues pending in a formal grievance process or before Federal, State or local agencies or the courts, however, until those processes are completed. Absent a record of documented **complaints** or non-compliances, contractors and managers are assumed to be in compliance with this indicator.

Performance Measure 8.2

**Forest owner** must monitor **forest product** harvests and other management activities to ensure they conform to the **management plan** objectives.

*Indicator 8.2.1*

Harvest, utilization, removal and other management activities must be conducted in compliance with the **management plan** and maintain the potential of the property to produce **forest products** and other benefits sustainably.

Guidance: The forest owner may monitor harvesting and other activities personally or they may employ someone else to do it for them. Many forest owners engage a natural resource professional for this function.

The intent of Performance measure 8.2 is to ensure the maintenance of “the potential of the property to produce **forest products** and other benefits sustainably” Good planning, utilizing natural resource professionals, engaging competent contractors and using an effective contract go a long way toward this end.

## Glossary of Terms

**accredited third party assessors** – A natural resource professional who has completed ATFS required training for third party assessors and is contracted or employed by an International Accreditation Forum (IAF) accredited certification body.

**adaptive management** – A dynamic approach to forest management in which the effects of treatments and decisions are continually monitored and used to modify management on a continuing basis to ensure that objectives are being met (Helms et al, The Dictionary of Forestry, Society of American Foresters, 1998)

**adverse regulatory actions** – Written warning, citations or fines issued by law enforcement or regulatory bodies.

**biodiversity** – The variety and abundance of life forms, processes, functions and structures of plants, animals and other living organisms, including the relative complexity of species, communities, gene pools and ecosystems at spatial scales that range from local through regional to global (Helms et al, The Dictionary of Forestry, Society of American Foresters, 1998).

**complaint** – Labor complaints are those with formal documentation filed through the state's fair labor practices board or similar body.

**desired species** – Those species of flora and fauna designated in the landowner's management plan and not known to cause negative impacts on the local environment.

**fair labor rules** – Include federal, state and local labor legislation and international labor standards cited in Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC) Annex 3, Chapter 3.3.

**forest owner** – Landowner or designated representative such as, but not limited to, professional resource manager, family member, trustee, etc.

**forest product** – [Forest Produce] Any raw material yielded by a forest. Generally defined in Forest Acts or Ordinances, and subdivided conventionally into major forest products, i.e. timber and fuelwood, and minor forest products, i.e. all other products including leaves, fruit, grass, fungi, resins, gums, animal parts, water, soil, gravel, stone and other minerals on forest land (F. C. Ford –Robertson, Terminology of Forest Science Technology, Practice, and Products, Society of American Foresters, 1971.

**forest vitality** – The health and sustainability of a forest.

**group manager** – The individual(s) designated by the Independently Managed Group organization to manage the administrative affairs of implementing and achieving the AFF Standards and Standard Operating Procedures for group programs (SOP-01) for an ATFS certified independently managed group program. Please refer to the ATFS Group Certification Process documentation.

**high conservation value forests** – Forests of outstanding and critical importance due to their environmental, social, biodiversity or landscape values. Due to the small scale and low-intensity of family forest operations, informal assessment of HCVF occurrence through consultation with experts or review of available and accessible information is appropriate.

**integrated pest management** – The maintenance of destructive agents, including insects, at tolerable levels by planned use of a variety of preventative, suppressive, or regulatory tactics and strategies that are ecologically and economically efficient and socially acceptable (Helms et al, The Dictionary of Forestry, Society of American Foresters, 1998). A pest control strategy that uses a variety of complementary strategies including: mechanical devices, physical devices, genetic, biological or cultural management and chemical management (US EPA).

**invasive species** – Non-native species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health (Executive Order 13112 (Feb. 3,

1999).
<b>landowner</b> – Entity that holds title to the property to be certified.
<b>management plan</b> – Documents that guide actions and that change in response to feedback and changed conditions, goals, objectives and policies. Management plans may incorporate several documents including, but not limited to, harvest plans, activity implementation schedules, permits, research, etc. For the purposes of the American Tree Farm System® eligible management plans, plan amendments may include letters, notes, and other forms of informal updates in addition to formal plan revisions.
<b>pesticide</b> – Pesticides include chemicals commonly known as herbicides and insecticides.
<b>prescribed fire</b> – A fire ignited by management to meet specific objectives (Helms et al, <u>The Dictionary of Forestry</u> , Society of American Foresters, 1998).
<b>qualified contractor</b> – Forest contractors who have completed certification, licensing, recommended training and education programs offered in their respective states.
<b>qualified natural resource professional</b> – A person who by training and experience can make forest management recommendations. Examples include foresters, soil scientists, hydrologists, forest engineers, forest ecologists, fishery and wildlife biologists or technically trained specialists in such fields.
<b>qualified Tree Farm inspector</b> – A natural resource professional who has completed ATFS required training for certifying forested properties and is eligible to inspect properties on behalf of ATFS. ATFS requires all trained inspectors meet approved eligibility requirements.
<b>rare species</b> – A plant or animal or community that is vulnerable to extinction or elimination.
<b>scale</b> – The extent of forest operations on the landscape/certified property.
<b>special sites</b> – Those areas offering unique historical, archeological, cultural, geological, biological or ecological value. Special Sites include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Historical, archaeological, cultural and ceremonial sites or features of importance to the forest owner;</li> <li>B. Sites of importance to wildlife such as rookeries, refuges, fish spawning grounds, vernal ponds and shelters of hibernating animals;</li> <li>C. Unique ecological communities like relic old-growth, springs, glades, savannas, fens and bogs; and</li> <li>D. Geological features such as terminal moraines, cliffs and caves.</li> </ul>
<b>state forestry best management practice(s) (BMPs)</b> – Forestry BMPs are generally accepted forest management guidelines that have been developed by state forestry agencies with broad public stakeholder input.
<b>sustainability</b> – The capacity of forests, ranging from stands to ecoregions, to maintain their health, productivity, diversity and overall integrity, in the long run, in the context of human activity (Helms et al, <u>The Dictionary of Forestry</u> , Society of American Foresters, 1998).
<b>sustainable forest management</b> – The practice of meeting the forest resource needs and values of the present without compromising the similar capability of future generations (Helms et al, <u>The Dictionary of Forestry</u> , Society of American Foresters, 1998). <i>Note</i> – AFF’s Standards of Sustainability reflect criteria of sustainability based on the Montreal Process, 1993, and the Pan-European Operational-Level Guidelines (PEOLGs).
<b>visual quality measures</b> – Modifications of forestry practices in consideration of public view, including timber sale layout, road and log landing locations, intersections with public roadways, distributing logging residue, tree retention, timing of operations and other factors relevant to the scale and location of the project.