

# Woodland Certification

What is it?

Where is it?

What's in it for private landowners?

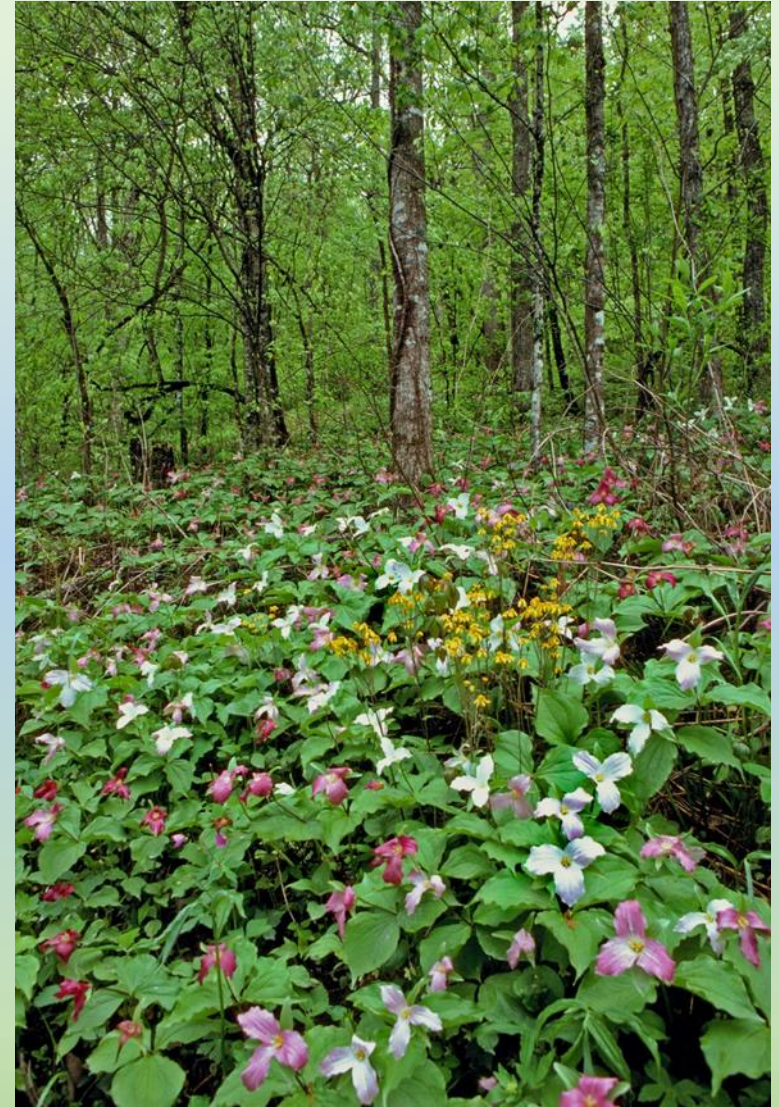
What does it cost?

How can landowners get certified?

Jennifer Gagnon

Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program

Virginia Tech



What is it?





# What is it?



# What is it?

- The implementation of sustainable woodland management.
- Sustainable woodland management:

Forestry practices that meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

## Virginia Cooperative Extension

PUBLICATION 420-139

### A Guide for Virginia Forest Landowners

Jennifer L. Gagnon, Coordinator, Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program,  
Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation, Virginia Tech

#### Introduction

As a private woodland owner, you are a vital link in the sustainability of Virginia's forest resources. Your land provides many benefits to all Virginians, including wood products, wildlife habitat, clean air and water, and recreational opportunities. Because woodland owners like you own and manage two-thirds of the state's forestland, the decisions you make regarding your woods today will impact the quality of Virginia's forests for many years. The purpose of this publication is to provide you with a set of suggestions for starting or continuing to actively manage your land. In addition, this guide will help you understand the importance of timber harvest planning and how to work with professional foresters and natural resource management agencies.

The information contained in this publication regarding taxation and environmental regulations is accurate but should not be construed as official government interpretation. Regulations and laws are constantly evolving, so you are encouraged to obtain professional forestry assistance before making your final management decisions. Resources for learning more about any of the topics covered are available at [www.virginiaazfl.org](http://www.virginiaazfl.org), or contact the agencies listed at the end of this brochure for further assistance.

#### What Is Sustainable Forestry?

Virginia's forests make a vital contribution to our state and beyond by providing economic, consumer,



environmental, recreational and aesthetic benefits essential to our quality of life. While sustainability is a dynamic concept, some basic principles are clear: sustainable forestry consists of those management practices that meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Specifically, sustainable forestry integrates reforestation, and the managing, growing, nurturing and harvesting of trees for useful products and ecosystem benefits such as conserving soil, air and water quality, sequestering carbon, perpetuating biological diversity, conserving wildlife and aquatic habitats, improving recreational opportunities and protecting aesthetics.

Examples of sustainable forestry practices include:

- Regenerating forests as soon as possible following a timber harvest
- Minimizing the impact of forest management activities on water quality
- Maintaining important habitat elements for wildlife and plant species
- Managing for populations of imperiled and critically imperiled species
- Protecting forests with exceptional conservation value
- Managing biological diversity
- Limiting the spread of exotic (non-native) plant species and pests



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# What is it?



While conserving:

- Soil
- Air
- Water quality
- Wildlife
- Plants
- Aquatic habitat
- Beauty

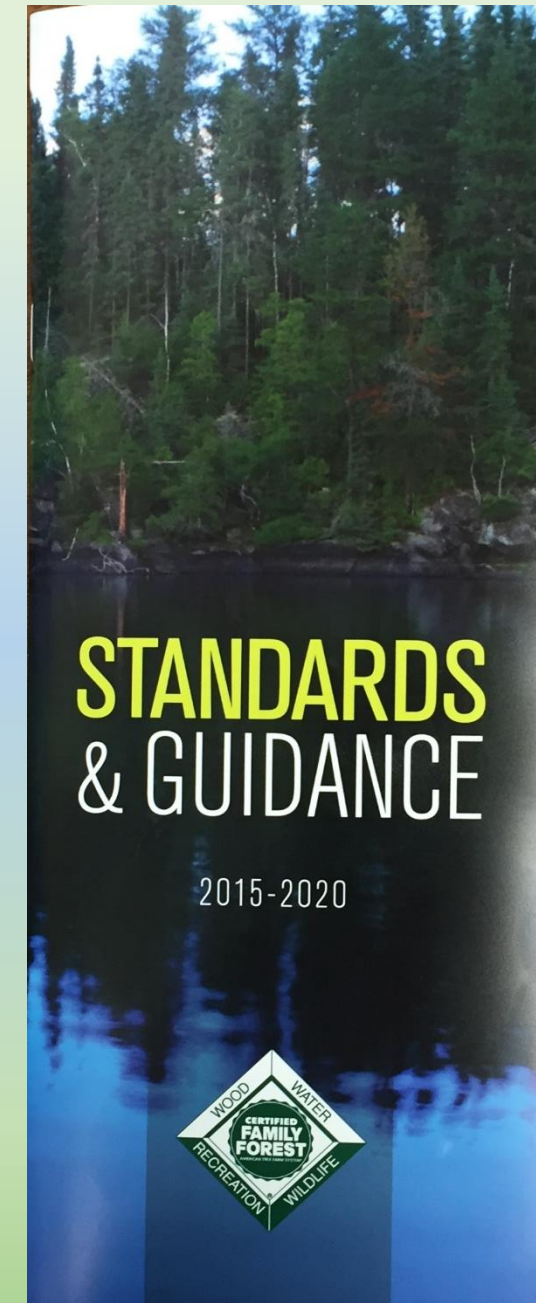
My woodland management  
activities will be restricted.

True or False?

MAYBE

# What is it?

- Agreement to manage the land according to a set of Standards or guidelines
- Standards vary by Program
  - Must have a written management plan
  - Must implement Best Management Practices to protect water and soil
  - Must protect/enhance forest health and productivity
  - Must protect/enhance aesthetics, wildlife, biodiversity
  - Must protect special sites



Woodland certification is a  
government program.

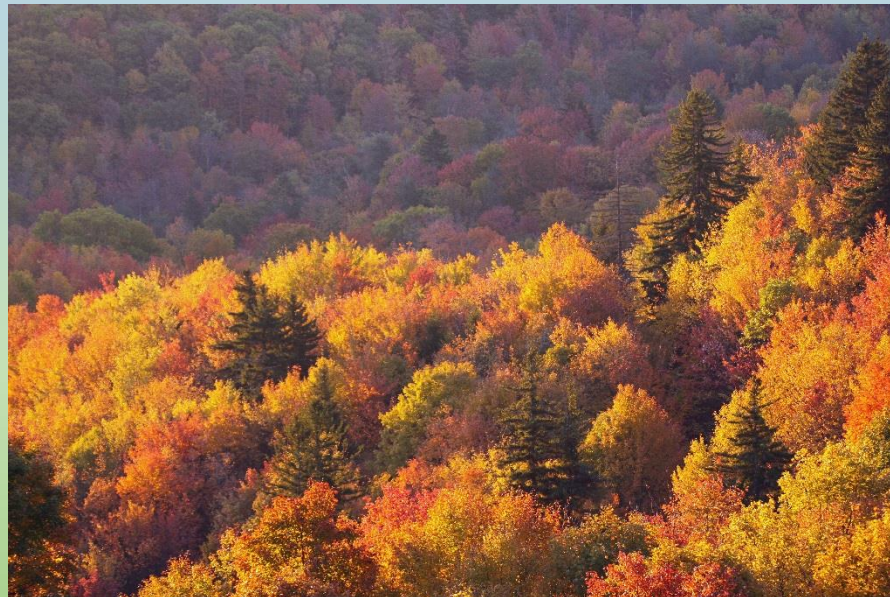
True or False?

FALSE



# FAQ

- Voluntary
- Agreement between a landowner and a certification program
- Does not give government any control over your property
- Does not give the public access to your land



# What is it?

- American Tree Farm System (ATFS)

[www.treefarmsystem.org](http://www.treefarmsystem.org)



- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

[www.fscus.org](http://www.fscus.org)



- Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)

[www.sfiprogram.org](http://www.sfiprogram.org)

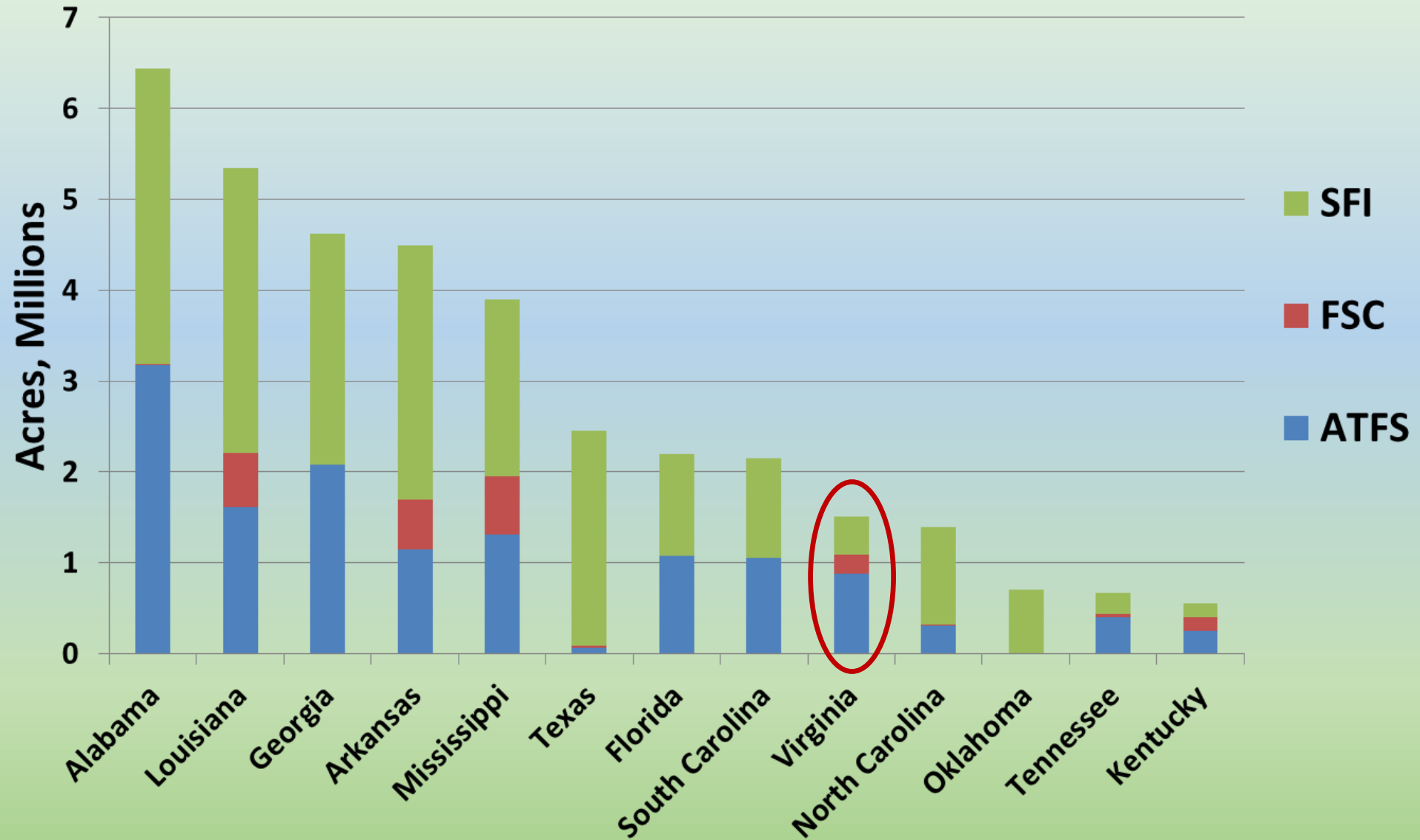


# Where is it?





# Where is it?



If I certify my land, I lose some/all  
of my property rights

True or False?

FALSE

# FAQ

- Retain all property rights
- Can sell all or part of land
- Can pass land on to heirs
- Can decertify all or part of land at any time with no penalty
- Must allow an inspector to visit periodically





# What are the Benefits?

## Benefits

- Increased market access
- Acknowledgement of good woodland management
- Improved woodland management
- Improved business practices



# What are the Costs?

**Managing Your Woodland**  
A Template for Your Plans for the Future

**American Tree Farm System® 2010 Standards**  
Management Plan Addendum

**FSC-US Forest Management System**  
(w/o FF Indicators and Labels)  
Recommended by FSC-US Board  
Approved by FSC-IC, Inc.

**For more information, please contact:**  
FSC-US  
[info@fscus.org](mailto:info@fscus.org)  
612.353.451

**Introduction**  
The American Tree Farm System has developed this management plan addendum for Tree Farmers whose management plans already meet the current requirements and are looking to update their plans to be in conformance with the newly released 2010 – 2015 American Forest Foundation Standards of Sustainability. All lands certified by the American Tree Farm System must meet the requirements of the 2010 AFF Standards by December 31, 2010.  
The Management Plan Addendum covers only the new items required in the 2010 Standards that were not previously addressed under the 2004 Standards (which you would have been certified under if you were certified before 2010).  
For more information on the AFF Standards, please visit [www.treefarmssystem.org/certification](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/certification) or call Victoria Lockhart at 202.463.2738.

**Instructions**  
Management plans for properties certified by the American Tree Farm System are required to be active, adaptive, 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. An active management plan is updated on a frequent basis with handwritten notes, plan revisions and informal plan amendments such as this document. Please consider contacting a professional forester (consulting forester, landowner assistance forester, state agency forester) to assist you with your addendum or if your plans needs a more complete update.  
1) Read through your current management plan. If you see any items that you would like to update, please consider including handwritten notes. Please consider reviewing your management plan annually and update informally with any pertinent information.  
2) Please review each new required plan element (new under the 2010 Standards) and evaluate whether or not your current management plan meets the new requirements. If your current plan meets these new requirements, please make note of where in your plan this information can be found.  
3) Where there are updates needed, please follow the guidance under each required resource elements.  
a. For any check box sections, please add comments if appropriate.  
4) Once you have completed the addendum, please attach to your current management plan. Please be sure to initial and date the addendum.

**Standards Prologue**  
The American Forest Foundation's (AFF) 2015-2020 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Landowners (AFF 2015-2020 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Landowners) promote the health and sustainability of America's family forests. They are designed as a tool to help woodland owners be effective stewards of the actively managed renewable resources; promote environmental, economic and social work to increase public understanding of sustainable forestry. The Standards are based on international sustainability metrics and North American guidelines for forest management and serve as the basis for the American Tree Farm System certification program. The AFF certification program is internationally endorsed by the International Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

**How to Use the Standards**  
The Standards are designed to accommodate the range and diversity of family and small woodlands. As such, the AFF Standards should be utilized adaptively and as appropriate to the size, scale and intensity of the woodlands and operations.  
**Demonstrating Conformance**  
The AFF Standards of Sustainability addresses aspects of sustainable forest management. Moving from general to specific, each Standard incorporates performance indicators to illustrate conformance. All components of each Standard are required for properties certified under the AFF Standards. Because the indicator is the most explicit element for demonstrating or evaluating conformance, it is the most explicit element for demonstrating or evaluating conformance.  
**Measuring Conformance**  
The AFF Standards of Sustainability is an overarching principle of sustainability. The AFF Standards of Sustainability measure refines the standard's intent and describes considerations and conformance. The AFF Standards of Sustainability identifies specific actions or activities that demonstrate conformance.  
**Core Measures**  
The AFF Standards of Sustainability measures and indicators that include the word "shall" are considered core measures required for certification under the American Tree Farm System®.

**Where present and relevant to the property, your management plan must address the following resource elements:**

## Costs

- Preparation
  - Time
  - Management plan
  - Changes to current practices
- Maintenance
  - Auditing/monitoring fees
  - Keeping up with the Standard
  - Corrective Action Requests



I will be required to practice  
plantation forestry on my land.

True/False

FALSE



I will not be allowed to practice  
plantation forestry on my land.

True/False

FALSE\*

# FAQ



## **American Tree Farm System**

- Plantations are an accepted silvicultural practice
- Not a required practice
- Not directly addressed within the Standard

## **Forest Stewardship Council**

- Not a required practice
- A planted forest does not automatically qualify as a plantation
- If it does qualify as a plantation, subject to additional criteria

# How to Certify

- Individual

- Applies to individual forest properties and management practices
- Property owners hold the certification certificate
- Owners are audited annually, and must pay the cost of audits

- Group





- Certifies a group of properties under one certification certificate
- Certificate is held by a group manager
- The group shares the expense of the audit
- Only a sample of properties in the group are audited each year



# How to Certify

## American Tree Farm System

- Certification Options
  - Group Certification
    - Southern Region Certificate
      - Virginia Tree Farm Committee
      - 1540 Certified Tree Farms
      - 551,441 acres
      - Sample of properties audited
      - Free

<b>Certificate of Registration</b>	
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP has assessed whether the management system at	
<b>Southern Region</b>	
<b>American Tree Farm System</b> 1111 Nineteenth Street, NW Suite 780, Washington, D.C. 20036	
is suitably designed to provide reasonable assurance that the requirements of the standard noted below (the Requirements) have been met, as of January 19, 2012.	
American Forest Foundation (AFF) 2010- 2015 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification	
Management is responsible for ensuring the management system meets the Requirements. Our responsibility is limited to expressing an opinion as to whether the Requirements were met, based on our assessment. The American Forest Foundation standard can be found at <a href="http://www.treefarmssystem.org">www.treefarmssystem.org</a> .	
Our assessment was conducted in accordance with the ISO 19011:2002 management system auditing standard and, accordingly, included examining, on a sample basis, evidence supporting management's assertion that the Requirements were met and performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. We planned and performed our work in order to obtain reasonable, rather than absolute, assurance with respect to the information examined. We believe our work provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.	
In our opinion, the management system was suitably designed to provide reasonable assurance that the Requirements were met, in all material respects, as of January 19, 2012.	
<i>PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP</i>	
<b>PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP</b> Vancouver, Canada	
Certificate No.	PwC-AFF-341
Date of Original Certification	August 21, 2009
Date of Current Certification	July 29, 2012
Date Certification Expires	July 28, 2015
  	
	
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# How to Certify

## American Tree Farm System

- Certification Options
  - Independently Managed Groups (IMGs)
    - Individuals/families/LLC's
    - Investment funds
    - Government
  - Individual Certification
- The future...
  - Charge membership fee
  - More value for Tree Farmers



# How to certify

- American Tree Farm System – Southeastern Group Certificate
  - Obtain a written management plan
    - Forest Stewardship, Tree Farm or Conservation Activity Plan 106
  - Contact the Virginia Tree Farm Program
    - An inspector will be assigned to your property
  - Meet with the inspector
    - Walk property
    - Discuss management plan
    - Fill out Form 004
  - Virginia Tree Farm Program Approves
    - Sign/Certificate distributed





# How to Certify

- American Tree Farm System – Independently Managed Groups
  - MeadWestvaco Group
    - Contact Mona Griswold, Virginia Group Manager
    - [Mona.Griswold@mwv.com](mailto:Mona.Griswold@mwv.com)
  - F&W Forestry Group
    - Contact Glen Worrell, Regional Manager
    - [gworrell@fwforestry.com](mailto:gworrell@fwforestry.com)
  - Enviva?
  - Form a new group
    - Contact the American Tree Farm System
    - Mike Burns, Certification Manager
    - [mburns@forestfoundation.org](mailto:mburns@forestfoundation.org)



# How to Certify

## Forest Stewardship Council

- **Individual Certification**

- Family Forest Certification
  - Small, Low-Intensity Managed Forests (SLIMFs)
  - Less than 2,500 acres OR
  - Low-intensity management OR
  - Managed exclusively for non-timber forest products

- **Group Certification**

- SLIMF Groups
- Columbia Forest Products
- Center for Forest & Wood Certification
- The Nature Conservancy



# How to certify

- Forest Stewardship Council
  - Contact and FSC accreditation body:
    - <https://us.fsc.org/certifying-bodies-in-the-us.221.htm>
    - Or call 612/353-4511 for a list
    - Obtain bids for audit
  - Auditor will make a site visit (Pre-audit)
    - Walk property
    - Discuss management plan
  - Property certified
    - Certificate issue
    - Good for 5 years
  - Annual audits (in-person at least once every 5 years)





My land is under a conservation  
easement. Can it be certified?

Yes/No

YES

# What is it?

## **Certification**

- Non-permanent
  - Can be terminated at any time
  - If land is sold, no longer certified
- Concerned with management
- Property rights are maintained
  - May need to decertify all or part of land

## **Conservation Easement**

- Permanent – stays with the land
- Concerned with keeping land open
- Landowner gives up property rights
  - Limits on development
  - Limits on subdivisions

# Food for Thought



- American chestnut
  - ESF American Chestnut Research and Restoration Center
  - Blight resistant genes



# For More Information

- To Certify or Not? An Important Question for Virginia's Family Forest Owners. VCE Publication ANR-50P
- Guidebook: Forest Management Certification on Private Forestlands in the U.S. [www.Pichot.org](http://www.Pichot.org)
- Dovetail Partners Inc. <http://www.dovetailinc.org/>
- <https://www.treefarmssystem.org>
- <https://us.fsc.org/>
- [www.sfiprogram.org](http://www.sfiprogram.org)

# Contact

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<http://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu>

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