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This serves as an official notice that the Virginia Tree Farm Foundation?? will *fully* transition to a fee-based program starting **November 1, 2019**.

***Why is the VTFF implementing a fee?*** In 2012, State Tree Farm Programs were notified by the American Forest Foundation (AFF) of a requirement that each program must elect to participate in either a certification or recognition program. If the certification pathway was chosen, each state had to declare their intention by 2015 and be financially self-supporting by 2018. After speaking with landowners and foresters in Virginia, our Committee determined that the certification program was the only true option for our state. An annual membership fee would aid in providing administrative support to maintain the Tree Farm System in Virginia and, in turn, provide members with the benefits of being a certified Tree Farm and participating in an all-inclusive program. With this fee, we have plans to additionally strengthen Virginia Tree Farmer's networking web with ATFS, local, and state updates, provide landowner education program opportunities, e-newsletters, VFA newsletter, and more.

***What is the Fee for the Virginia Tree Farm Program?*** New Tree Farmers in Virginia will be assessed an initial fee of \$100. All Tree Farmer's in Virginia will be assessed an annual fee of \$50 for their Tree Farm membership (*Note: Fees will not be refunded if the property is sold or if the Tree Farm is decertified due to non-compliance with program standards*).

***When will Tree Farmers be expected to make their first payment?*** Starting November 1, 2019, there will be a new Tree Farm certification fee of \$100 for each new Tree Farm. For all **NEW** Tree Farms the \$100 fee **MUST** be paid before the Tree Farm will be certified.

Landowners paying the \$100 NEW Tree Farm fee in November or December 2019 will NOT be billed for the 2020 annual fee.

All Certified Tree Farm owners prior to November 1, 2019 will be invoiced in November for the \$50 per Tree Farm fee. The \$50 fee will be due by December 31, 2019. If the \$50 fee has not been received by January 31, 2020, the property will be decertified.

***Are all certified members required to pay the fee?*** Yes, to maintain certification, each Virginia Tree Farmer will be required to meet the certification standards set forth by the American Tree Farm System, as well as pay the VTFF Program membership fee outlined above. There is a cost associated with the standards and an audit to monitor the standards which the membership fee helps cover.

***If a Tree Farm is decertified, what must a Landowner do to re-certify the farm?*** First, the property must comply with the Tree Farm standards and the management plan must be current. To reinstate the property there will be a \$100 fee (same as a new Tree Farm) and an inspection form (004 Form) must be completed.

***Is there a maximum fee?*** Yes, the maximum fee will be \$250 per landowner, which is 5 Tree Farms per landowner entity. If a landowner has 8 Certified Tree Farms, their annual fee will be \$250, not \$400 (8 TFs X \$50).

***How soon after paying the New Tree Farm fee of \$100 will that farm be invoiced the \$50 annual fee?***

If a landowner pays the \$100 new Tree Farm fee before November, they will be billed for the annual fee (\$50) for the following year. If a new Tree Farm is certified in November or December, the \$100 is due and the landowner will not be billed for the following year's fee.

For example, a landowner certifies a Tree Farm in September 2020. The \$100 fee is due for certification. Because it is paid before November, the Tree Farm will be billed \$50 for the 2021 certification fee.

However, if a Tree Farm is certified in November or December of 2020, the \$100 new Tree Farm fee will be paid and the Tree Farm will not be billed the 2021 annual fee (\$50). In November of 2021, this Tree Farm will be billed the \$50 fee for 2022 certification.

***How can I pay the annual Virginia Tree Farm Foundation membership fee?*** Annual membership fee statements will be mailed. Membership fees may be paid online or by check. Details will be included on the invoice.

As this transition to a fee-based program progresses, please bear with us as we are still working out the kinks. Please know that we were initially hesitant about implementing a fee for dedicated Virginia Tree Farmers, but after much discussion among the Foundation as well as AFF, we ultimately decided that this option is the best way to proceed in strengthening the Virginia Tree Farm Foundation. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to [vatreefarm@vaforestry.org](mailto:vatreefarm@vaforestry.org).