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
What is it?

Specifically, integrates forest:
- Regeneration
- Growing
- Nurturing
- Harvesting

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

- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
  www.fscus.org

- Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)
  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?

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
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
  • F&W Forestry Group
    • Contact Glen Worrell, Regional Manager
    • gworrell@fwforestry.com
  • Enviva?
  • Form a new group
    • Contact the American Tree Farm System
    • Mike Burns, Certification Manager
    • 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](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
Genetically Modified Organisms

- Genes are inserted into DNA to improve performance
- ArborGen
- Loblolly pine
- Greater wood density
- Eucalyptus
- Freeze-resistant
- 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

• Dovetail Partners Inc. http://www.dovetailinc.org/

• https://www.treefarmsystem.org

• https://us.fsc.org/

• www.sfiprogram.org
Contact
Jennifer Gagnon
VFLEP Coordinator
228 Cheatham Hall 0324
Blacksburg VA 24060
540/231-6391
jgagnon@vt.edu
http://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu
www.facebook.com/VFLEP
@VFLEP