



## American Tree Farm Program: Certification, Audits, Forest Management Plans

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) works to sustain forests, watersheds and healthy wildlife habitats through the power of private stewardship by offering affordable forest certification for family forest landowners in the United States.

ATFS has undergone many changes since its beginnings in 1941 and is now recognized internationally as a credible forest certification system. So what does this certification mean to you? ATFS certifies landowners to the American Forest Foundation's (AFF) Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification to help ensure all markets are available for each Tree Farmer's wood. A third party is used to audit Tree Farm programs in each state. The American Tree Farm System uses an ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) accredited certification body. Audit teams from these certification bodies examine Tree Farms for on the ground conformance to the AFF Standards of Sustainability.

The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization, founded in 1999 which promotes sustainably managed forests through independent third party certification. The PEFC provides an assurance mechanism to purchasers of wood and paper products that they are promoting the sustainable management of forests. ATFS has been endorsed by PEFC which means your Tree Farm is part of the world's largest forest certification system. A tremendous amount of work has been put forth to gain this endorsement. And more work will be required by Tree Farmers to maintain that prestige.

Remember those Standards of Sustainability mentioned earlier? The AFF Standards focus on the issues critical to maintaining sustainable forest practices on private forestlands in the United States, such as reforestation, air, water and soil protection, fish, wildlife and biodiversity, and wood fiber harvest. The AFF Standards are developed independently of the ATFS certification program by an outside panel of stakeholders. The Standards have to be reviewed periodically and, if necessary, up-graded.

**The 2010-2015 Standards** were developed by an independent panel of experts, representing academia, conservation organizations, Federal and State governments, landowners, and foresters.

There are six things to know about the new Standards

- The Standards were developed **specifically for small woodland owners**.
- The management plan requirements streamline the process for landowners to participate in USDA conservation incentive programs.
- The 2010-2015 Standards require maintenance of special cultural and environmental sites [historical, archeological, geological, biological and ecological sites].
- Periodic monitoring has been added to encourage landowners to monitor their woodlands for changes that could interfere with their management objectives.
- Landowners are encouraged to make practical efforts to prevent, eradicate or otherwise control invasive species using a range of integrated pest management methods.
- The new Standards were officially released January 1, 2010, and Tree Farmers will have one year to ensure their management plans and management activities meet the Standards.

Three state programs in the Southern Region of the National Tree Farm system were audited in 2009. Three more are being audited this year. Next year, the Tennessee program will be audited. Several Tennessee Tree Farms will be randomly selected and visited by the audit team. The presence of a good forest management plan is the most integral part of the Tree Farm certification process. Inspecting foresters who conduct initial certifications and five-year re-inspections are responsible for making sure an up-to-date plan is in place that adequately describes the land and the recommended management activities. The quality and completeness of the plan go a long way in providing useful documentation that the landowner does, indeed, meet the requirements necessary for Tree Farm certification. Toward that end, The Tennessee Division of Forestry (TDF) and the American Tree Farm System have developed templates that can be used in the development of new forest management plans. These templates are intended as a helpful guide and are not a requirement in itself. The TDF template is modeled to meet the needs of both the AFF Standards as well as the Tennessee Stewardship Program. It contains all of the major sections required in Tree Farm management plans according to the AFF Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification.



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM TENNESSEE FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

By: Candace Dinwiddie, TFA Executive Director

The Tennessee Forestry Association (TFA) is glad to provide a legislative update for our Tree Farmers in the Volunteer State. At TFA, we hope you will consider joining our organization if you are not already a member, and ensure that Tree Farmers' voices are heard in the halls of Legislative Plaza and on Capitol Hill in Tennessee. A membership application to join the Tennessee Forestry Association is available on-line at [http://www.tnforestry.com/About\\_TFA/Join\\_TFA/](http://www.tnforestry.com/About_TFA/Join_TFA/)

### TFA Announces Position Statement on Possible TN Division of Forestry Staff Reduction

The Tennessee Forestry Association is very concerned about the possibility of losing Tennessee Division of Forestry area forester positions as well as several TDF Nashville staff foresters. Funding for these positions is not included in the budget presented to the General Assembly by Governor Bredesen earlier this year. The Governor has recommended passing "technical corrections" legislation that provides for the continuance of these TDF positions, but also includes additional taxes on cable TV and other new revenue sources. TFA has written a position statement on the need to keep these TDF positions as well as the important need to have a strong state forestry agency. The TFA statement was hand delivered by members of the association's board of directors to every member of the Tennessee General Assembly during Tree Day at the Legislature on March 17. The statement indicates TFA's strong support for the leadership and staff at the Tennessee Division of Forestry and has been made available to media and other organizations and communications sources. TFA's position statement is available on-line on the association website at [http://www.tnforestry.com/custpage.cfm/frm/39226/sec\\_id/39226/news\\_id/13432](http://www.tnforestry.com/custpage.cfm/frm/39226/sec_id/39226/news_id/13432).

Tree Farmers may want to contact your local House and Senate members to let these folks know your feelings on the possibility of losing these important Tennessee Division of Forestry positions.

The Tennessee General Assembly website is [www.legislature.state.tn.us](http://www.legislature.state.tn.us).

### Other Issues of Interest:

#### Forest Product Fairness Act

HB2910 by John Tidwell (D) New Johnsonville SB2803 by Doug Jackson (D) Dickson

This legislation states that any incentives to support the purchase of forest products that should be provided in new forestry products industry looking to move to Tennessee would also be available to existing industry. Incentives as defined in this legislation includes any tax exemption, tax credit, tax exclusion, tax deduction, rebate, investment, contract or grant made available by the state to directly support the purchase of forest products. "Incentives" shall not mean any such benefit available under statutorily provided programs.

TFA supported this legislation. HB2910/SB2803 has passed the House & Senate unanimously. Governor Bredesen has signed this legislation which becomes law July 1, 2010.

To read the entire legislation access the General Assembly website at <http://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/Default.aspx?BillNumber=HB2910>.

### 2010 Important Election Cycle for Tree Farmers

TFA reminds Tree Farmers that the 2010 election cycle will certainly set the course for future land management, taxation and landowner rights issues in the State of Tennessee. TFA encourages Tree Farmers to get to know your local candidates and let them know how issues affect your ability to grow trees for production as well as recreation, wildlife, clean water, and visual quality. The 2010 election

(Continued on page 3)

## Wildlife Updates to Management Plans

Contact: Bob Simpson, American Tree Farm System

Under the 2010-2015 AFF Standards, Tree Farmers are required to address the habitat of threatened or endangered wildlife species. This means you have to know if you have any threatened or endangered species on your Tree Farm and, if you do, how to maintain or enhance their habitat.

Forest owners are not required to do an exhaustive search for threatened or endangered species on their property. You are expected to make a good-faith effort to find out if there are known occurrences of a threatened or endangered species on your 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/)). The **Tennessee Natural Heritage Inventory Program**

(<http://www.state.tn.us/environment/na/nhp.shtml>) and the **Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency**

(<http://www.state.tn.us/twra/>) are both loaded with a wealth of information about rare plants and animals in

Tennessee. Please consult the ATFS website for additional resources on threatened or endangered species ([www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org)).

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



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM TENNESSEE FORESTRY ASSOCIATION CONTINUED

By: Candace Dinwiddie, TFA Executive Director

cycle includes each seat in the House of Representatives, one half of the State Senate and the Governor's office. TFA urges Tree Farmers to contribute to our organization's Forestry PAC (Political Action Committee). TFA's PAC provides funding help to candidates on the state level who have supported our members and Tree Farmers in the past and/or have voiced their desire to be educated and knowledgeable about our issues and willing to support our interests in the future. To contribute to TFA's Forestry PAC, Tree Farmers should send their personal check to TFA PAC, P.O. Box 290693, Nashville, TN 37229. Due to state law, PACS can only accept personal checks or checks from LLCs. TFA expresses thanks in advance for contributions to the PAC for any amount. Each dollar will be put to good use to help fund campaigns for candidates who are friendly to Tree Farmers and all of our Tennessee forestlandowners, industry and loggers.

## TENNESSEE'S 2009 OUTSTANDING TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR

By: Sammy Woodfin, International Paper

The Tennessee Tree Farm Committee is pleased to introduce you to Ms. Sharon Keen, Tennessee's 2009 Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year. This annual award recognizes Tree Farmers who are doing an outstanding job of forest and resource management as well as promoting the Tree Farm Program through action and example. The Keen Tree Farm is a working example of one person's dedication and love of nature, both trees and wildlife.

Sharon is a native Texan whose passion for the outdoors started at an early age. She spent several years building a love for horses before coming to the Volunteer State. A brutal vehicle accident nearly claimed her life. But, perhaps, it helped Sharon find and build on her inner strength. The recovery from the serious injuries would require a strong determination and that, coupled with her long-time passion for nature, resulted in a very diverse Tree Farm that has many stories to tell. And armed with her career as a journalist, Sharon is quite capable, and willing, to tell those stories to anyone who will listen.

The 204-acre farm is in West Tennessee, located in Ramer, just a few miles from the Mississippi state line in McNairy County. Sharon purchased the land in February of 2000 and sought immediate forestry assistance. By April of the following year, a written forest management plan was in place and being put to use. According to University of Tennessee Extension Forester David Mercker, "Sharon is a one-of-a-kind forest landowner – the type that is committed to very active forest management. She desires for every acre to be managed, and with great diversity." And, to that extent, she's been very successful. As you walk through the Tree Farm you will find even-aged and uneven-aged stands of both pine and hardwood. Twenty-eight (28) acres of bottomland fields have been afforested to hardwoods as part of the CRP program and ninety-four (94) acres on the upslope are in pine plantation. Some small group selection clearcuts have been strategically placed within an older sawtimber stand. And a new technique called "hardwood corridor thinning" has been completed on a mid-rotational hardwood stand. Hardwood corridor thinning offers a means of providing a modest income while actively managing the forest. The farm was enrolled in the Tree Farm program in 2003 and was runner up in this contest last year. Sharon's mom and horse riding partner manages a

500-acre Tree Farm nearby.

But trees and forestry are not Sharon's only interest. Wildlife and recreation carry equal weight. She has established two new wildlife food plots and a portion of the CRP program acreage went into wildlife habitat. A major creek bisects the farm and adds to the general diversity. Well-installed culverts and streamside management zones protect water quality. There are several roads and trails throughout the farm which are maintained as fire breaks, in addition, to providing access – an access that is utilized as running trails, hiking trails, management access and horseback trails. And, of course, hunters are drawn to the farm every fall. But, game animals are not the only benefactors from Sharon's efforts. She is also an avid bird-watcher and special plantings around the house accompanied with numerous bird feeders make for an entertaining show while resting on the front porch.

Sharon uses professional consulting foresters, as well as, the Tennessee Division of Forestry and the University of Tennessee Extension Service to assist her with forest management decisions. But, then she gives back to anyone interested in forestry. She is very active in the McNairy County Forestry Association and the Alcorn County Forestry Association (in Mississippi) by hosting forestry field days. In addition, she tours the UT forestry students and has been featured in the "Alabama Treasured Forest Magazine" in the fall of 2007 and the "tree farmer" magazine in the winter of 2008. It's that commitment to sound forestry and the many "sizes and shapes" it can be practiced, as well as, her desire to share it with others that make the Tennessee Forestry Association pleased to recognize Ms. Sharon Keen as the 2009 Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year.



Sharon Keen with her Mom Janice Keen





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## Changes to the American Tree Farm: inspector training is required

By: Dr. David Mercker, University of Tennessee

The American Tree Farm System undergoes a review process every five years to re-evaluate their standards. The new standards went into effect January 2010. Some of the highlights/changes include:

- More emphasis is being placed on protecting special sites and high conservation forests
- Landowners are asked to monitor invasive species and pests that could interfere with the management objectives
- Threatened and endangered species are becoming more important; the management plan must document that an effort was made to inquire about species of concern, and if found, management should accommodate
- Landowners should manage the visual impacts of forest management activities to the extent they can

All active Tree Farm inspectors will have until the end of this year to update their training and remain qualified to inspect and nominate new landowners. An on-line training, developed by TF national staff, will become available in April. Otherwise, three on-site training workshops will be offered by the University of Tennessee Extension. New inspectors must attend the on-site training; current inspectors may choose either on-line or on-site training. The on-site trainings will occur in conjunction with the Division of Forestry "Plan Writer" workshops. Tree Farm training will meet on day one; TDF workshops meet on day two. The dates and locations for the on-site trainings include:

**August 10 – Jackson** – West Tennessee Research and Education Center, 605 Airways Blvd.,

**August 12 – Nashville** – Ed Jones Auditorium, Ellington Ag Center, Hogan Rd. (next to the TDF state office)

**August 17 – Knoxville** – East Tennessee Research and Education Center - UT Plant Sciences Unit, 3215 Alcoa Hwy, (across from Sevier Heights Baptist Church)

**Sites are restricted to 30 participants. Pre-registration is required.** Please contact Susie Nicholson (David Mercker's secretary) to register by August 4<sup>th</sup> (731-425-4717). Continuing Ed. credits will be allowed (number of hours not yet determined).

## Calendar of Events (please call TFA at 615-883-3832 for more information on any of these events)

### May 1st, 2010

TN Healthy Hardwoods Field Day  
Ellington Ag Center, Nashville, TN

### June 13th - 18th, 2010

East TN Teacher's Conservation Workshop  
University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

### June 5th, 2010

TN Healthy Hardwoods Field Day  
Highland Rim Experimental Forest, South of Tullahoma, TN

### July 11th - 16th, 2010

West TN Teacher's Conservation Workshop  
Pickwick Dam State Park, Pickwick Dam, TN

