

# American Forest Foundation

## Standards of Sustainability For Forest Certification

Including Performance Measures and Field Indicators

**(2004 – 2008 AFF Standard)**

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## Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification

### Preface

#### Background

In August 2001, national staff developed a process to begin a regular systematic review of AFF's Standards of Sustainability. The self-imposed timeline set a completion date of December 2002, with implementation of any modifications to begin January 2004. The process would follow internationally accepted criteria for standards development including review from an independent third party and allowing for public comment. Following completion of the panel's work and report to the Trustees, a new review would be instituted every four years, with implementation of any modifications to follow one year later.

#### Independent Standards Review Panel

An independent third-party would be seated for the duration of the standards review and adjourned following their final report to the Trustees. The panel would represent a cross-section of forestry community leaders with a stake in AFF's Tree Farm Program, or a sincere interest in forest sustainability on small private forest ownerships in the US. These stakeholders and other interested parties were to include academia, environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS), forest industry, forest owners, professional logging community, and public forestry agencies serving family forest owners. Panel members are as follows:

Robert Bonnie	Environmental Defense
Shorna Broussard, Ph.D.	Purdue University, Forestry and Natural Resources
Norman Brunswig	Audubon Society
Paul Frey	State Forester, Louisiana
George Freeman	Tree Farmer
Lars Laestadius, Ph.D.	World Resources Institute
Richard Lewis	Forest Resources Association
Larry Payne	USDA Forest Service, State & Private
Clifford Schneider	MeadWestvaco Corporation
Larry Tombaugh, Ph.D.	North Carolina State University

#### **Working Parameters**

The panel was convened in August 2001 and familiarized with AFF and its accredited certifier, American Tree Farm System. The Panel operated under the following parameters:

1. Panel members were representing their respective organizations.
2. Panelists were to review the current standard and determine if it adequately reflected six of the seven criteria set forth in the Montreal Process. (Criteria Five, regarding carbon sequestration standards and indicators, was deemed inappropriate at this time.)
3. Panelists were encouraged to share the document with their colleagues, but not to allow it outside their organization.
4. Any modifications to the standard must be reached by panel consensus.
5. Panelists were to keep in mind at all times that any proposed modifications to the standard were both adequate and appropriate for small private forest owners in the US. (Small ownerships were defined as not exceeding 10,000 contiguous acres with the panel working under the premise that the large majority of forest properties certified by ATFS were under 1000 contiguous acres.)

### Review Process

Following consensus of modification to the standard, the document was made available for a sixty-day public comment period. This was accomplished by mailing over 650 “Invitations to Comment” to a large and diverse array of members of the forestry community. Individuals invited to comment included, forest industry, ENGOs, ATFS state committee leadership, public forestry agencies (with significant landowner representation), ATFS co-sponsoring organizations, and forest products buyers and distributors and forestry organizations. Invitees were directed to AFF’s website where they would find the document and all pertinent information for making comments.

Following the public comment period, staff assembled all comments and presented them to the ISRP. The panel reviewed the comments, adopting many in-part or in-whole. The document was reviewed and final modifications made on November 14, 2002. The ISRP reached consensus on the new document and approved it for presentation to AFF’s Board of Trustees for ratification and adoption, in-whole or in-part.

### Implementation

In December 2002, AFF’s Board of Trustees approved The Standard as presented. The modified standard will be implemented beginning 2004. During 2003, certifiers will be familiarized with the Standard and informed on how to administer it in the field. In addition, ATFS will use this time to introduce the modernizations to current Tree Farmers and the international forestry community.

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## Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification On Private Lands

### **Standard 1: Ensuring Sustainable Forests**

The American Forest Foundation's (AFF) Standards of Sustainability promote the growing of renewable forest resources on private lands while protecting environmental benefits and increasing public understanding of all benefits of productive forestry.

#### Performance Measure 1.1

**Qualified forest owners** must comply with AFF's Standards of Sustainability. American Tree Farm System (ATFS)'s volunteer network of **accredited, qualified natural resource managers** will conduct field verification of landowner conformance.

#### Indicators 1.1.1

An accredited Tree Farm Inspector<sup>a</sup> must inspect **qualified properties** to assure conformance with AFF's standards of sustainability.

#### Indicator 1.1.2<sup>b</sup>

Tree Farm inspectors will audit certified properties every five years. Properties that fail to meet AFF's standards and guidelines will be decertified. [Landowners may seek review of decertification decisions through ATFS's formal dispute resolution process.]

### **Standard 2: Compliance With Laws**

Forest management complies with all relevant federal, state and local regulations and ordinances.

#### Performance Measure 2.1

Forest owners must comply with all relevant federal, state, county, and municipal laws and regulations.

#### Indicator 2.1.1

Landowner affirms that he/she complies with all relevant laws and regulations, and that he/she will correct conditions that led to **adverse regulatory actions**, if any.

#### Indicator 2.1.2

Landowner obtains advice from forestry consultants, public agency natural resource managers, or contractors who are trained in, and familiar with, applicable laws, regulations and published Best Management Practices for forestry.

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<sup>a</sup> National Interpretation Committee (NIC) Clarification: In all instances within the Standard referring to [volunteer] *accredited Tree Farm inspectors*, it is now implied that this includes ATFS accredited group certification third-party lead auditors and third-party audit team members.

<sup>b</sup> NIC Clarification: Members of Group Organizations seeking dispute resolution shall refer to SOP-01. Section 3, Subsection 3.5: Internal Dispute Resolution Process.

### **Standard 3: Commitment to Practicing Sustainable Forestry**

Forest owners demonstrate their commitment to sustainability by developing and implementing a long-term forest management plan.

#### Performance Measure 3.1

Forest owners must have a written forest management plan consistent with the scale of forestry operations of the property.

##### Indicator 3.1.1<sup>c</sup>

Management plans include: title page; type of ownership (e.g., fee simple, limited partnership, etc.); owners goals appropriate to the management objectives; tract map noting stands and conditions, important features including special sites, and management recommendations that address wood and fiber production, wildlife habitat, owner-designated fish, wildlife and plant species if desired, environmental quality, and, if present and desired by the landowner, recreational opportunities.

##### Indicator 3.1.2

Management plan is active, adaptive, and embodies the owners' current objectives, remains appropriate for the land certified, and reflects the current state of knowledge about forestry and natural resource management.

#### Performance Measure 3.2<sup>d</sup>

Forest owners assure management activities are conducted in accordance with the management plan.

##### Indicator 3.2.1

On-site visit, interviews, and records confirm management activities are being conducted in accordance with the plan.

### **Standard 4: Reforestation**

Forest owners provide timely restocking of **desirable species** of trees, compatible with regional ecosystems on harvested areas and idle areas where tree-growing is the land use objective.

#### Performance Measure 4.1

Land must be reforested with natural seeding, sprouting, direct seeding, or reforestation with tree seedlings.

##### Indicator 4.1.1

Harvested forest land must achieve satisfactory stocking levels reflecting the forest owner's management objectives, within five years after harvest, or within a time interval as specified by applicable regulation, whichever is shorter.

### **Standard 5: Air, Water and Soil Protection**

Forestry practices maintain or enhance the environment, including air, water, soil, and site quality.

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<sup>c</sup> NIC Decision: Indicator 3.1.1 is interpreted as a Primary Indicator. Reading "Management plans must include:..."

<sup>d</sup> NIC Decision: Performance Measure 3.2 is interpreted as a core Performance Measure. Where there is duplication between Performance Measures(PM), defer to the PM with the strongest language.

### Performance Measure 5.1

Forest owners must adhere to State Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) and comply with all relevant forest practices act(s) and ordinances.

#### Indicator 5.1.1

Landowner affirms that he/she complies with all relevant laws and regulations, and that he/she will remedy or has remedied any conditions that led to adverse regulatory actions, if any.

#### Indicator 5.1.2

Landowner must minimize disturbances within riparian zones.

#### Indicator 5.1.3

On-site visit confirms that landowner is conducting management activities in accordance with BMPs and all relevant forest practices act[s] and ordinances.

### Performance Measure 5.2

Application of forest chemicals must not exceed the levels necessary to achieve specific management objectives.

#### Indicator 5.2.1

Chemicals are applied only when necessary to meet specific management objectives.

#### Indicator 5.2.2

Management plans consider integrated pest management as a preferred means of controlling insect pests, pathogens, and vegetative competition.

#### Indicator 5.2.3

Chemicals are applied in accordance with EPA-approved labels and meet or exceed all human health and environmental safety requirements on the label, and in local, state, and federal law.

### Performance Measure 5.3

Where prescribed fire is used, the forest owner must plan appropriately for its application.

#### Indicator 5.3.1

Landowner affirms that if and when prescribed fire is used, it is conducted in accordance with the owner's management plan and with state and local laws and regulations.

#### Indicator 5.3.2

On-site visit confirms prescribed fires, if used, were conducted in accordance with the management plan and applicable laws and regulations.

## **Standard 6: Fish, Wildlife and Biodiversity**

Forest management activities contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and maintain or enhance habitat for native fish, wildlife, and plant species, with emphasis on natural plant and animal communities and rare plants and animals.

### Performance Measure 6.1

Landowners are encouraged to confer with their local natural resource agencies, state natural resource heritage programs, or other knowledgeable sources about rare species or species of concern that occur on their property.

#### Indicator 6.1.1

Where practical<sup>e</sup>, management plans consider and address opportunities to protect rare species and special habitat features.

#### Indicator 6.1.2<sup>f</sup>

The forest owner or forester responsible for developing the owner's management plan has made a reasonable effort to locate and secure information that denotes the location of rare species or species of concern. Appropriate sources of information include, but are not limited to county, state and federal agencies, university and extension programs and local knowledge.

### Performance Measure 6.2

Forest management activities must maintain or enhance habitat for owner's designated fish, wildlife, and plant species as identified in the management plan

#### Indicator 6.2.1

Forest management activities must maintain or improve habitat for owner's target game and non-game fish and wildlife species.

## **Standard 7: Forest Aesthetics**

Forest management practices minimize negative visual impacts of forest activities.

### Performance Measure 7.1

Landowners must manage their forest with concern for visual impacts, in a manner consistent with size and scale of their forestry operations.

#### Indicator 7.1.1

On tracts of significant visual exposure, management plans and forest operations may include: roadside buffers, access entry "dog-legs," limited harvests in certain areas, and adaptation of other visual management techniques.

## **Standard 8: Protect Special Sites**

Special sites are managed in a way that recognizes their unique characteristics.

### Performance Measure 8.1

Forest management practices must recognize historical, biological, archaeological, cultural, and geological sites of special interest.

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<sup>e</sup> NIC Clarification: The term "when practical" is to be interpreted as when the burden of conformance is not appropriate for the size and scale of the forest operation. It is not to be defined as "convenient." This indicator is to be considered subordinate to Performance Measure (PM) 9.2.

<sup>f</sup> AFF Trustees Decision: This Indicator was added to Performance Measure 6.1 in May 2005.

Indicator 8.1.1<sup>g</sup>

Management plan and forest operations identify and manage for special sites in a manner consistent with forest owner's objectives, the unique features of the site, and the size and scale of the property.

Indicator 8.1.2<sup>h</sup>

The forest owner or forester responsible for developing the owner's management plan must make a reasonable effort to locate and secure information that denotes the location of special faunal and floral communities. Appropriate sources of information include, but are not limited to county, state and federal agencies, university and extension programs and local knowledge.

**Standard 9: Wood Fiber Harvest and Other Operations**

Wood fiber harvests and other forest operations are conducted in accordance with the management plan and with sensitivity to other forest values (e.g., water quality, regeneration, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, special sites, etc.).

Performance Measure 9.1<sup>i</sup>

Landowners must comply with the management plan described in Standard Three (3).

Performance Measure 9.2

Landowners must adhere to all national, state, and local laws and regulations applicable to forest management when conducting forest operations.

Indicator 9.2.1

In selecting contractors, landowners seek loggers, foresters, and other forest management contractors who have completed recommended training and education programs offered in their respective states.

Indicator 9.2.2

Loggers and contractors conducting wood fiber harvests and other forest management operations carry required Workers Compensation and general liability insurance.

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<sup>g</sup> NIC Decision: Until such time as the Committee is confident that state agency special site databases are compiled in a manner that is science and consensus based, and readily accessible to forest owners and natural resources professionals, consultation with such databases will not be required.

<sup>h</sup> AFF Trustees Decision: This Primary Indicator was added to the Standard in May 2005.

<sup>i</sup> NIC Decision: Due to the inferred duplication between PM 3.2 and PM 9.1, PM 3.2 is subordinate to PM 9.1, thereby requiring conformance with the forest management plan.

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## Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification

### Glossary of Terms

**accreditation** A procedure by which an authoritative body gives formal recognition that a body or person is competent to carry out specific tasks (EN45020)

**accreditation body** A body that conducts and administers an accreditation system and grants accreditation (EN45020)

**accredited natural resource manager** A natural resource professional who has completed ATFS's required training for certifying forested properties and is eligible to inspect properties on behalf of ATFS.

**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 (SAF)

**adverse regulatory actions** Warnings or citations issued by law enforcement or regulatory bodies.

**best management practice(s) (BMP)** A practice or usually a combination of practices that are determined by a state or a designated planning agency to be the most effective and practicable means (including technological, economic, and institutional considerations) of controlling point and nonpoint source pollutants at levels compatible with environmental quality goals (SAF)

**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 (SAF)

**desirable species** Those species of trees designated in the landowners' management plan and not known to cause negative impacts on the local environment

**indicator<sup>j</sup>** A qualitative or quantitative parameter which can be assessed in relation to a performance measure

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<sup>j</sup> **NIC Decision:** The following definitions were added or clarified in July 2004:

**Indicators:** Accredited ATFS Certifiers are to use indicators as a means of determining if the forest owner is in conformance with the PM.

**Primary Indicators:** *Indicators* with the term "must" are considered *Primary Indicators*. In most cases, landowners meeting these requirements are considered in conformance with the Performance Measure. Other evidence can be cited by conformance to additional indicators observed by the auditor/inspector. If the Primary Indicator is not applicable then the auditor/inspector must find other evidence that shows conformance with the Performance Measure and document that evidence on the Auditor Verification Form or CB-07- AFF Standards Audit Finding Checklist.

**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 (SAF)

**management plan** A working instrument that guides actions and that changes in response to feedback and changed conditions, goals, objectives, and policies (SAF)

**performance measure**<sup>k</sup> Requirement against which conformity assessment is made

**qualified forest owner** An individual, business, or other legal entity owning ten contiguous acres or more of forest land not associated in any manner with a forest products manufacturing facility

**qualified property** A forested property of 10 or more contiguous acres and not associated in any manner with a forest products manufacturing facility

**qualified natural resource manager** A natural resource professional with at least a Bachelor of Science degree in forestry or a related resource management curriculum from a program accredited by the Society of American Foresters (SAF), or a 2-year forestry technician degree from an SAF-recognized program, or anyone professionally practicing forestry and meeting minimum educational requirements set by ATFS.

**rare species** A plant or animal or community that is very vulnerable to extinction or elimination

**special sites** Those areas offering unique archaeological, cultural, ecological, or historical value

**standard** A document established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines, or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context (EN45020)

**sustainability** 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 (SAF)

**sustainable forest management** The practice of meeting the forest resource needs and values of the present without compromising the similar capability of future generations (SAF) *note* – AFF’s Standards of Sustainability reflect criteria of sustainability based on the Montreal Process, 1993

**target species** Designated species of plants and animals specially managed for by the landowner

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<sup>k</sup> NIC Decision: The following definitions were added or clarified in July 2004:

**Performance Measures:** Accredited ATFS certifiers (e.g., accredited Group Certification Lead Auditors, Group Certification Audit Team members and individual property inspectors) are to judge forest owner conformance to the AFF Standard through the *Performance Measures (PM)*.

**Core Performance Measures:** Performance Measures accompanied by the term “*must*” are considered *Core Performance Measures* and are required for certification. Those Performance Measures without the term “*must*” are strongly encouraged, unless specifically interpreted otherwise in decisions by the National Interpretations Committee (NIC).