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## Grossman Forestry Tree Farm Group INVITATION TO JOIN

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The American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) has established a relatively new program called The American Tree Farm System, Group Certification Process. **Grossman Forestry Company has started the Grossman Forestry Tree Farm Group in order to offer this service to our current and future clients. If you are interested in long-term sustainable forest management for your property, this is the program for you.**

ATFS Group Certification has a number of benefits that accrue to the individual Group Members, Group Organizations of family forest owners, and the customers of wood and paper products. These benefits generally include facilitating the flow of information to landowners, maintaining market access, improving forest management practices, reducing the overall costs of forest certification for landowners, and assuring customers and the public that landowners are practicing sustainable forestry. In addition, Group Members enjoy all of the rights and benefits of individual Tree Farmers.

Benefits include:

- Certified Sustainable Forest.
- Right to display Tree Farm Sign.
- Participate in National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Contest.
- Opportunity to purchase and use Tree Farm promotional items.
- Subscription to Tree Farmer Magazine.
- Local information from State Tree Farm Committee and Co-Sponsoring Organizations.
- Information on local, state, and national legislation.
- Invitation to attend the annual National Tree Farmer convention.

Please review the enclosed information:

- Membership application.
- Mutual Understanding Form.
- AFF Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification of Private lands (Grossman Forestry Company programs meet or exceed this standard).

Additional information is available at [www.grossmanforestry.com](http://www.grossmanforestry.com) and/or [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org).

Sincerely,

Gerald Grossman, ACF & CF  
Grossman Forestry Tree Farm Group Manager  
MI Registered Forester #567



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## History of Tree Farm Certification

The American Tree Farm System<sup>®</sup> (ATFS) was founded in 1941 as a way for private forest owners to learn how to sustainably manage their forests. By 1944, the ATFS was certifying the nation's private forests as a way to assure both the United States Congress and the public that the forests were being renewed and managed in a sustainable manner.

Over the past sixty years, the ATFS has grown and continued to improve and now includes over 60,000 certified properties that currently represent approximately 26 million acres. All of the certifications of conformance with the American Forest Foundation Standard have been individual certifications conducted by a volunteer force of professional inspecting foresters.

Over the past ten years, the concept of certification of "Good Forestry" by a professional forester that is embodied in the American Tree Farm System has gained a substantial following, both within the U.S. and internationally. With the increased interest in forest certification by the global forest products industry, customers, and other non-governmental organizations, the ATFS has experienced renewed interest.

## The Challenge of Forest Certification

For the past sixty years, the American Tree Farm System has conducted individual audits of family forest owners using a large cadre of volunteer foresters from forest products companies, consulting firms, service foresters from state agencies, and others. The number of landowners that can enter into the program has been constrained by the limited auditor pool and the steadily increasing number of small family forest owners. The number of family forest owners is now well over ten million and the potential for more to seek certification to the AFF Standards is growing.

Individual family forest owners and other qualified participants are also confronted with the challenge that they do not have ready access to information on certification programs, the number of volunteer professional foresters is decreasing due to public agency budget cuts and consolidation within the forest and paper industry. At the same time, environmental organizations and buyers of wood and paper products are promoting the broader certification of private lands.

A Group Certification approach for family forest owners in the U.S. is an attractive and efficient way to address the broader demand for forest certification. The challenge, as always, is to demonstrate to family forest owners that there is value in Group Certification and that the benefits will exceed the costs and the perceived threats to their independence and private property rights.



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## **The Benefits of the American Tree Farm System Group Certification**

ATFS Group Certification has a number of benefits that accrue to the individual Group Members, Group Organizations of family forest owners, and the customers of wood and paper products. These benefits generally include facilitating the flow of information to landowners, maintaining market access, improving forest management practices, reducing the overall costs of forest certification for landowners, and assuring customers and the public that landowners are practicing sustainable forestry. In addition, Group Members enjoy all of the rights and benefits of individual Tree Farmers. These benefits of Group Certification will be described in more detail below.

### **Technical Assistance to Family Forest Owners**

Family forest owners are often in need of technical assistance and advice from a professional forester. Forest owners are generally not professionally trained in the forest sciences and may not live directly on or near the property. They need the assistance of a professional in inventorying the forest, determining market value, contracting for forestry services, developing a management plan, and marketing their timber.

Family forest owners also want to do business with reputable and trained professional loggers to ensure that their forestry operations are appropriately conducted. They may also want their lands managed according to a Standard of Forest Sustainability to ensure that water quality, wildlife, recreation, and other benefits of the forest are taken into consideration, along with the production of timber.

Joining a Group Organization is one way for family forest owners to come together to share information, benefit from professional technical assistance provided by a Group Organization, and gain mutual support for managing to an internationally accepted Standard of Forest Sustainability, like the AFF Standards.

### **Improving Forest Management**

Access to professional forestry advice, contracting with competent loggers, and implementing state-of-the-art forest management practices has the added benefit of improving forest management and maintaining the long-term productivity of the land. Family forest owners universally want to leave the land in a better condition than when they purchased it. Working within a larger Group Organization facilitates the adoption of best practices and reinforces the Tree Farm "Land Ethic."



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Broad implementation of sustainable forestry practices also increases the credibility and professionalism of the entire forestry community. Improved credibility with the public and policy makers will tend to reduce pressure for overly burdensome government laws and regulation. Thus, improving the practice of sustainable forestry makes good business sense as well as improves environmental quality.

## **Economies of Scale**

ATFS Group Organizations offer individual family forest owners and qualified participants the advantage of economies of scale. Efficiencies can be gained by acquiring the services of a forestry-consulting firm that provides land management planning, timber sale administration, and other forestry services and advice.

Qualified participants may be part of a forest products company's landowner assistance or family forestry program where services are provided at low or no cost. They may also participate in a cooperative of private lands managed according to one management plan with services provided by a Group Manager(s).

In the above examples, Group Organizations made up of many qualified participants may find it in their best interests to certify their forest management and services under the ATFS Group Certification Program in order to demonstrate and document sustainable forestry. The economies of scale of a large group can help keep the costs of forest certification within reach of family forest owners and other qualified participants.

## **Assuring Customers of Sustainable Forest Management**

Group Members of a certified organization would be in a position to provide certified wood products into the domestic and international market place. ATFS Group Certification can also help address the goals of landowners, as well as wood and paper product users and customers, in broadening the practice of sustainable forestry. A number of customers of wood and paper products and buyer's groups want their purchases of wood to be from sustainably managed forests, but recognize the difficulty and cost associated with individual forest certification. Thus, ATFS Group Certification of a large number of family forest owners helps address the logistical and cost constraints of certification, while satisfying the demand for wood certified to an internationally accepted Standard of Forest Sustainability.

ATFS Group Certification offers advantages to individual landowners, land management organizations and assistance programs, and the buyers and consumers of wood and paper products. Ultimately, ATFS Group Certification will benefit the environment as water quality, fish and wildlife, forest health, aesthetics, etc. are increasingly taken into consideration and protected.