

**From:** [Sarah Crow](#)  
**To:** [Chavez, Nephtali](#)  
**Subject:** Preview of 2015-2020 ATFS Standards and Transition Process Overview  
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November 21, 2014

## Update on the 2015-2020 ATFS Standards

Greetings Nephtali,

We are very pleased to share that, last week, the AFF Board of Trustees approved the [2015-2020 ATFS Standards of Sustainability](#). These revised ATFS Standards represent an important milestone for the American Tree Farms System and an exciting step in our work to support America's woodland owners in their stewardship.

The 2015-2020 ATFS Standards reflect feedback from across the ATFS community, including very thoughtful insights and expertise of ATFS State Leaders. Thank you for your engagement in this process and your ongoing commitment to ATFS.

Below is an overview of the 2015-2020 Standards, key revisions and the transition process, including training and inspections. Additional details are also available at the additional details are available at the [ATFS website](#) and will also be discussed during the Fourth Quarter Leadership Webinar on **December 11, 2014** ([Register for 10am](#) or [register for 2pm](#)).

Many thanks, again, for your partnership and all of your efforts to support America's family landowners!

Sincerely,

**Sarah Crow**

Senior Director of Certification, American Tree Farm System

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### Preview the Standards

The [2015-2020 Standards of Sustainability and Guidance](#) and [Eligibility Requirements](#) replace the current version (2010-2015) and are available for "preview" at the ATFS website through the end of 2014. Hardcopy and electronic versions of the 2015-2020 Standards for technical and landowner audiences, respectively, are currently under development to be made available early in 2015. A complete summary of the transition process is outlined below; additional details are available at the [ATFS website](#).

### Overview of Revisions

The 2015-2020 Standards reflect a limited number of revisions from the previous version. The small number of revisions to the Standards and accompanying Guidance are designed

to advance forest conservation while providing clarity, flexibility and resources for landowners. Operational transition to the 2015-2020 Standards is anticipated to be relatively simple for entities which currently conform to the 2010-2015 Standards.

Notable themes of the revisions in the ATFS Standards include:

- Clarity regarding threatened and endangered species.
- Emphasis on landowner's objectives and on-the-ground stewardship.
- Enhanced approach to Forests of Recognized Importance (FORI), formerly high conservation value forests or HCVF.
- Holistic, integrated approaches to forest health.
- Continuity with the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) and other global sustainability frameworks.

Details about the revision process itself, including the multi-stakeholder Independent Standards Review Panel (ISRP) are available at the [ATFS Standards Review website](#).

### **Guidelines for Transition**

The process of transition to the 2015-2020 ATFS Standards will commence in earnest at the start of 2015.

***Tree Farm Inspection Record (004 Form):*** Update of the inspection record to encompass the revised 2015-2020 Standards is currently underway. This process is supported by a small task group of Tree Farmers, inspecting foresters, State Program Administrators and Database Managers, AFF Woodlands Operating Committee members and ATFS staff. Considerations in the revision of the form include ease of use by foresters in the field, efficiency in transmission of inspection information to the ATFS Database, better characterizing conservation contributions on-the-ground, ensuring clarity and consistency in documentation for certification purposes, and brevity. The revised form is slated for availability in early January. All 2015 Required Samples will be pre-populated in the revised form. Pre-printed paper forms will not be available.

***New Inspections:*** After March 15, all new landowners and properties entering the ATFS program must be inspected to the 2015-2020 Standards utilizing the revised Tree Farm Inspection Record (004 form) form or [mobile app for smartphones, iphones and tablets](#).

***Required Sample Inspections:*** All 2015 Required Sample inspections must be inspected to the 2015-2020 Standards utilizing the revised Tree Farm Inspection Record (004) form or [mobile app for smartphones, iphones and tablets](#).

***Reinspections:*** After March 15, 2015, all re-inspections of landowners and properties currently certified in the ATFS program must be inspected to the 2015-2020 Standards utilizing the revised Tree Farm Inspection Record (004) form or [mobile app for smartphones, iphones and tablets](#). ATFS is developing tools, such as an updated ATFS Management Plan Addendum, to help in the transition. These tools are anticipated to be available in the first quarter of 2015.

***Inspecting to the 2015-2020 Standards:*** To be qualified to inspect to the 2015-2020 ATFS Standards, all ATFS Inspecting Foresters must update their credentials to the 2015-2020 Standards via the online refresher or classroom training. Descriptions of training opportunities, including eligibility are described below.

*Online Refresher:* The online refresher is designed to provide a high level review of

the ATFS program and processes, new features of the program and the ATFS 2015-2020 Standards, including key revisions and how address them in the field. Current and active ATFS Inspectors, those that are trained in the 2010-2015 Standards and have completed an inspection within the last 2 years (2013 and 2014) are eligible to update their credentials via an online refresher. The refresher is currently in production and is anticipated for availability in mid-January. The refresher is designed to be completed within one hour and is eligible for Society of American Forester CFE credit.

*Training Workshops:* The ATFS training workshop is a “classroom” model that is a staple of the ATFS community. It offers a complete overview of the ATFS program and procedures, the ATFS Standards, eligibility, recognition programs and more. The classroom training is designed for foresters new to the ATFS program, ATFS Inspectors that are considered inactive (having not completed an inspection in 2013 or 2014) or any Inspector interested in learning with a group. The workshop usually comprises four hours and is eligible for Society of American Forester CFE credit.

*Facilitator Training:* Facilitators are the individuals within each state program that host and instruct the Inspector Training Workshops. Their training is designed to ensure they are familiar with all aspects of the ATFS program, understand the fundamentals of adult learning and know the keys and timelines involved with presenting an Inspector Training Workshop. Sessions will be available in-person at the National Leadership Conference and online via virtual classroom training starting in early February, 2015.

**State Program Assessments:** State Programs undergoing third-party assessment in 2015 (Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, Idaho, Washington and Oregon) will be assessed to the 2010-2015 Standards per prearrangement with PricewaterhouseCoopers. However, any corrective actions planned in response to findings in 2015 must address the 2015-2020 Standards. State Programs that undergo assessment in 2016 (these state programs will be identified in 2015) will be assessed to the 2015-2020 Standards.

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## **Key Dates**

*January 1, 2015*

- 2015-2020 ATFS Standards enacted

*January 22, 2015*

- Revised State Program Tree Farm Inspection Record (004 Forms) available electronically
- Inspector online refresher training available for current/active inspectors

*February 3 and 5, 2015*

- Facilitator’s training at NLC in St. Louis

*March 15, 2015*

- All State Program inspections (Required, new, re-inspections, decertification) to 2015-2020 Standards
- All Inspectors must be trained in the 2015-2020 ATFS Standards to conduct

## inspections

*January 1, 2016*

- 2015-2020 Standards fully implemented
- All surveillance assessments to 2015-2020 ATFS Standards



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