



# ACCREDITATION RULE 27

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Supersedes: 2014/01/01

**SUBJECT:** Accreditation Program for American Tree Farm System (ATFS)

**APPLIES TO:** ATFS ANAB-Accredited and Applicant Certification Bodies

## PREFACE

This Accreditation Rule is to inform certification bodies (CBs) of ANAB requirements for accreditation to certify organizations for management systems conforming with the American Tree Farm System.

There are three types of ATFS certification:

- Regional Groups are group certifications made up of state programs (see [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org) for region delineations).
- Independent Managed Groups (IMGs) are sub-components within ATFS's certification program. Managed and maintained by private organizations and public agencies, these groups are independent of ATFS's certified Regional Groups.
- Individual Certified Properties are those properties whose landowners have decided that they wish to have their forested ownership independently certified by an ANAB-accredited CB.

All three types of properties are audited by ANAB-accredited CBs and have their own ATFS Standard Operating Procedures for certification (see [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org)).

## ACCREDITATION RULE

### 1. Requirement Documents (current versions unless specified)

- 1.1. American Forest Foundation 2015-2020 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification
- 1.2. 2015-2020 ATFS Eligibility Requirements and Guidance for Certification
- 1.3. PEFC ST 2001:2008, PEFC Logo Usage Rules - Requirements
- 1.4. PEFC Annex 6, Certification and Accreditation Procedures
- 1.5. American Tree Farm System (ATFS) Tree Farm Inspection Record (ATFS Form 004 Revised 01/15)
- 1.6. 2015-2020 American Tree Farm System Independently Managed Group (IMG) Standards
- 1.7. ISO/IEC 17021, Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems
- 1.8. MA 5000, ANAB Accreditation Manual, and applicable ANAB Accreditation Rules
- 1.9. IAF Mandatory Documents as applicable

### 2. Prerequisites

- 2.1. The CB shall acquire and maintain ANAB accreditation for SFI as a condition of applying for ANAB accreditation for ATFS.

### 3. Criteria for Certification Process

- 3.1. Public Consultation: The audit evidence to determine the conformity with the forest management standard shall include relevant information from external parties (for example, governmental agencies, community groups, and conservation organizations) as appropriate.

- 3.2. Public Access of Certification Reports: A summary of the certification report, including a summary of findings on the auditee's conformity with the forest management standard, shall be made available to the public by the auditee or in accordance with any applicable requirements defined by the respective forest certification scheme.
- 3.3. Certification Body Information Sharing and Transfer to ATFS and PEFC: The CB shall inform AFF (the ATFS governing body) and SFI Inc. (the PEFC National Governing Body for the United States) about all issued certificates and the validity and scope of these certificates. The CB shall inform the client organization about information provided to AFF and SFI Inc.
- 3.4. Assessment of ATFS and PEFC Logo Usage Compliance: The CB will ensure appropriate control of the PEFC and/or ATFS logo if the certified entity is a PEFC and/or ATFS logo user.
- 3.5. If a CB's audit team identifies a nonconformance during an on-site audit, the CB is required to notify the State Tree Farm Committee upon completion of the audit.
4. Additional Requirements (not documented elsewhere)
  - 4.1. ATFS Auditor Time
    - 4.1.1. The CB shall have a process to determine ATFS auditor time.
    - 4.1.2. ANAB shall review the CB's auditor time process during the application process and refer to it throughout the oversight of the ATFS program.
  - 4.2. Sampling Plan
    - 4.2.1. Sampling requirements for Regional Groups are in Annex 1 of this Accreditation Rule.
    - 4.2.2. Sampling requirements for IMGs are in Annexes 2 and 3 of this Accreditation Rule.
      - 4.2.2.1. CBs shall base their decisions to use Annex 2 or 3 to determine the sampling process for an IMG using the following criteria:
        - Annex 2 is applicable for sites consisting primarily of category 2 landowners [as defined by the American Tree Farm System Independently Managed Group (IMG) Certification Requirements (2015-2020)], and may be appropriate for IMGs with a small number of large landowners
        - Annex 3 is applicable for IMGs consisting primarily of several category 1 landowners [as defined by the American Tree Farm System Independently Managed Group (IMG) Certification Requirements (2015-2020)].
        - Either annex is applicable for state agency group managers, whereby the agency operates a number of offices and exercises some degree of regulatory oversight of landowners' management activities as a condition for continued membership in the group.
      - 4.2.2.2. The CB shall document its rationale for use of either annex.
    - 4.2.3. Sampling requirements for Individual Certification Holders are in Annex 4 of this Accreditation Rule.
5. Application Process
  - 5.1. CBs can obtain applications for informational use at [www.anab.org](http://www.anab.org).
  - 5.2. The application process outlined at [www.anab.org](http://www.anab.org) must be completed via ANAB's Enterprise Quality Manager (EQM) database when the CB is ready to apply for accreditation.
  - 5.3. The application fee includes the cost of one assessor day for the off-site documentation review.

## 6. Initial Assessments for Accreditation

- 6.1. An ANAB accreditation assessor shall conduct a full documentation review.
- 6.2. After the documents are found acceptable, ANAB shall conduct an office assessment and required witnessed audits.
  - 6.2.1. The office assessment shall be conducted on site or remotely (at ANAB's discretion) and is conducted to ensure the CB's certification process for ATFS conforms with ISO/IEC 17021 and is effective.
  - 6.2.2. ANAB shall witness the CB conducting an ATFS two-stage audit process (stages 1 and 2) at an organization at which the CB fully evaluates all ATFS requirements.
    - 6.2.2.1. The ANAB assessment team shall have the same number of members as the CB audit team.
    - 6.2.2.3. Because of the level of expertise needed, ANAB may use technical experts for ATFS witnessed audits. ANAB will invoice the CB for the fees and expenses of the technical expert.

## 7. Surveillance Assessment

- 7.1. During the four-year accreditation cycle, ANAB shall conduct an annual office assessment and witness a CB team conducting an ATFS audit for each type of group certified (that is, Regional Group and/or Independent Managed Group) at least once in each accreditation cycle.
  - 7.1.1. When possible, the office assessment shall be conducted concurrently with assessments for SFI and other ANAB accreditation programs for which the CB is accredited.

## 8. Reaccreditation Assessments

- 8.1. ANAB shall conduct a document review and on-site full system office assessment at approximately six months prior to the expiration of accreditation.

## 9. Complaints

- 9.1. Complaints about a CB accredited by ANAB for ATFS or about an organization with an ANAB-accredited ATFS certification shall be investigated in accordance with ANAB Accreditation Rule 13, with the exception that to deter unfounded complaints, ANAB shall require the complainant to agree to pay for the cost of the investigation in the event that the allegations cannot be substantiated.

# Annex 1. Sampling Procedure for ATFS Regional Groups

1. CBs shall have a process for sampling landowners/acreage that are/is part of an ATFS Regional Group.
2. This process shall include at a minimum the following sampling plan:
  - 2.1. A minimum of three states per region shall be selected and audited unless all other states in the region have been visited within the current certification cycle.
    - 2.1.2. At least half of the CB's sample shall include certified properties not selected to be audited by their regional group for the given year.
  - 2.2. By selected state, calculate the square root of the total ATFS-certified properties per state.
    - 2.2.1. The square root is the total individual certified properties in the selected state to be sampled the given year.
    - 2.2.2. Determine the percentage of landowner's acreage per selected state that falls within each tract as outlined in table 1 below.
    - 2.2.3. The properties to be sampled per selected state shall be divided (by percentage) within the state from table 1.

**Table 1**

Tract	Acreage Categories
1	10-100
2	101-500
3	501-1,000
4	1,001+

For example, three states = Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota  
 Total certified individual properties in Wisconsin is 1,177  
 Square root for Wisconsin is 34 properties for minimum sample  
 Individual certified Wisconsin properties have the following percentages:

10-100 acres	42% of total properties	14 sample properties
101-500 acres	32% of total properties	11 sample properties
501-1,000 acres	16% of total properties	5 sample properties
1,001+ acres	10% of total properties	3 sample properties

3. The process shall also include guidance on determining the number of certified properties to be audited; the sampling plan above is focused on acreage.
4. When selecting the three states per year and the properties to audit, the CB is expected to consider various risk factors.
  - 4.1. Risk factors may include time since last internal monitoring inspection, recent harvest activities if known, cultural sites if known, threatened or endangered species if known, etc.
  - 4.2. Information on risk factors may vary according to the state sampled. CB shall take into account level of information available in each state when assessing various risk factors.
  - 4.3. When selecting field sample properties, the CB shall sample a mixture of properties currently engaged in harvest activities or where a harvest has been completed within the past three years (if known) as well as properties that have not been harvested within the past three years (if known).
5. For annual surveillance audits, take 0.6 (as a coefficient) of the square root of the total ATFS certified properties per state. Then follow the process as outlined above.
6. For re-certification audits, take 0.8 of the square root of the total ATFS certified properties per state. Then follow the process as outlined above.
7. All states within a regional certification shall be included in a certification or surveillance audit at least once within a five-year cycle independent from the certification cycle as prescribed by ISO/IEC 17021. The sampling intensity of audits will follow the ISO guidelines (currently a three-year cycle).
8. A CB shall conduct an audit at the state office to review the AFF Form 004 documentation maintained by the state program for the Regional Group. (The Form 004 documentation outlines the sampling approach, as currently developed by Virginia Tech, for the ATFS National Required Sample.)
  - 8.1. CBs shall focus on the Form 004 documentation maintained for the ATFS National Required Sample.

## Annex 2. Sampling Procedure for ATFS Independent Management Groups (IMGs)

IMGs follow a separate sampling procedure from that of Regional Groups (as outlined in Annex 1). In particular, a sampling system for participating IMG properties is recommended as follows. (CBs may follow an alternative compliance path, included in Annex 3 of this document.)

1. CBs shall have a process for sampling the properties that are part of an ATFS IMG. The sampling process follows IAF guidance for the certification of multiple sites based on sampling, which includes the following considerations:
  - Commonality and review of management plan(s) within the IMG
  - Internal monitoring program
  - Number of managing sites
2. CBs shall identify the duration for initial, surveillance, and recertification audits.
3. CBs shall design a sampling process to be conducted within the population of managing sites for the IMG. This sampling shall include at a minimum the following:
  - 3.1. Calculation of the number of **IMG sites** to be included in the audit. A site is defined as a permanent location where management of the Group program procedures is carried out, at least in part.
    - 3.1.1. For example, a Group Manager has one management system (group administration) for all properties covered under the Group Program, but this system is implemented through a **Central Office** and three field offices; therefore, the IMG has four sites.
    - 3.1.2. A population of all **IMG sites** of the group organization will form the population to be sampled using the methodology in table 1.
    - 3.1.3. The **Central Office** site will always be included as one of the audited sites for each audit cycle.

**Table 1. Number of Sites to Be Visited**

Certification Stage	Sample Site Calculation
Certification	= square root (# sites)
Surveillance	= square root (# sites) x 60%
Re-certification	= square root (# sites) x 80%

- 3.2. Calculation of the number of audit days for each IMG site in the audit.
  - 3.2.1. Audit duration at each site shall be based upon the effective number of personnel at that site. The effective number of personnel shall consist of all **full-time equivalent (FTE)** personnel involved with the implementation of the IMG program.
  - 3.2.2. The total number of **IMG employees** and/or **contract management**, expressed in FTEs, will be used in conjunction with accepted IAF guidance to determine the audit duration for each site. See table 2 for IAF guidance.
  - 3.2.3. This is a baseline calculation. The CB shall have a process for adjusting the auditor-day calculation based upon risk factors present in the Group Program to be audited (see 3.2.4 and 3.2.5).
  - 3.2.4. An auditor-day calculation is to be made for each site selected for audit.
  - 3.2.5. For Group Programs with one to five sites, the auditor-day calculation will be adjusted for sampling intensity according to table 1.

**Table 2. Guidance for Assignment of Total Auditor Days Required Per Site According to Risk Assessment**

Effective # FTEs	Total Auditor Days Required		
	High	Average	Low
1-5	3	2.5	2.5
6-10	3.5	3	3
11-15	4.5	3.5	3
16-25	5.5	4.5	3.5
16-45	7	5.5	4

46-65	8	6	4.5
66-85	9	7	5
86-125	11	8	5.5
126-175	12	9	6
176-275	13	10	7
276-425	15	11	8
426-625	16	12	9
626-875	17	13	10
876-1,175	19	15	11
IAF MD 5:2009 – Annex B			

3.2.6. The CB shall conduct its own risk assessment for systematic nonconformance with the ATF Standard and ATFS-IMG-01. The CB shall assign a risk rating to the IMG as a whole or its individual sites.

Factors for increase in nonconformance risk include but are not limited to:

- Very large number of Group Members for the number of IMG personnel involved.
- System covers highly complex processes or relatively high number of unique activities.
- Higher sensitivity of the forest environment.
- Conflicting views of interested stakeholders.
- Geographic area covered by the IMG program.

Factors for decrease in nonconformance risk include but are not limited to:

- Maturity of the management system (for example, Group Manager control of forest management activities, regulatory enforcement, etc.).
- Consistency of forest management plans.
- Extensive tracking of forest management activities.
- Frequency of contact with Group Members and their properties (intensity of monitoring).

3.2.7. The CB shall document its reasons for assigning auditor days per site and disclose the rationale to client IMG management upon request.

3.2.8. The audit duration for all types of audits includes on-site time at the IMG site(s) and time spent off site carrying out planning, document review, interacting with client personnel, interacting with stakeholders and report writing. Off-site audit time involved in planning and report writing shall not comprise more than 20% of the total audit duration.

3.3. Sample weighting of IMG audit properties.

3.3.1. The total number of Group Member properties visited during the audit will be determined by the audit duration established for each site. Reasonable time will be allotted for travel to each property, interviews of owners and/or managers, and property inspection.

3.3.2. The total acres of the population of properties covered by the IMG Program will be tabulated.

3.3.3. Each property will be assigned a size class in accordance with table 3.

**Table 3. Field Sample Acreage Classes**

Tract Class	Acreage Categories
1	10-100
2	101-500
3	501-1,000
4	1,001+

3.3.4. The sample of Group Member forest properties by size class drawn for audit by the CB shall reflect the percentage distribution of property size classes in the total population of IMG Group Members at the time of the audit. This should be based upon the distribution of properties in each size class.

3.3.5. The sample property list is to be constrained by the time required to reasonably conduct field reviews within the time (auditor days) calculated in 3.2.

3.3.6. When selecting the properties to audit as part of the field sample for each IMG site, the CB is expected to favor those having evidence of higher risk activities during the audit cycle. The CB should consider higher risk activities such as but not limited to road building and timber harvesting.

- 3.3.7. The CB should also weight sample selection toward properties containing species at risk, cultural sites, fish and riparian values, etc.
- 3.3.8. For a particular IMG audit cycle, the CB shall choose a representative sample of Group Member categories in addition to a representative sample of acreage classes.
- 3.3.9. Notwithstanding the above sample weighting guidance, at least 25% of the sample must be drawn at random by the CB.

## Annex 3. Alternative Sampling Procedures for ATFS Independent Management Groups (IMGs)

1. IMGs follow a separate sampling procedure from that of Regional Groups (as outlined in Annex 1). In particular, a sampling system for participating IMG properties is recommended as follows.
2. CBs shall have a process for sampling landowners/acreage part of an ATFS IMG.
3. This process shall include at a minimum the following sampling plan:
  - 3.1. Calculate the square root of the total IMG certified properties.
    - 3.1.1. The square root is the total individual certified properties in the IMG to be sampled in the given year.
    - 3.1.2. Determine the percentage of landowner's acreage per IMG that falls within each tract as outlined in table 1 below.
    - 3.1.3. The properties to be sampled per selected IMG shall be divided (by representative percentages) within the IMG from table 1.
    - 3.1.4. These numbers will serve as the basis for property sampling within the selected IMG.

**Table 1**

Tract Categories	Acreage Categories
1	10-100
2	101-500
3	501-1,000
4	1,000+

4. When selecting the properties to audit, the CB is expected to factor in harvesting schedules and shall sample a mixture of landowners who are in harvest or have harvested with the past year as well as landowners who have not harvested within the past year.
5. For annual surveillance audits, take 0.6 (as a coefficient) of the square root of the total individual certified properties in the IMG and then follow the process as outlined above.
6. For re-certification audits, take 0.8 of the square root of the total individual certified properties in the IMG and then follow the process as outlined above.

## Annex 4. Sampling Procedures for ATFS Individual Certification Holders

1. CBs shall develop a process for sampling properties for Individual Certification Holders that seek certification for multiple properties owned by the same entity.
2. This process shall use the following sampling plan as a guide.
  - 2.1. Calculate the square root of the total individual properties owned by the Individual Certification Holder.
    - 2.1.1. The square root is the total individual properties owned by the Individual Certification Holder to be sampled in the given year.
  - 2.2. When selecting properties to audit, the CB is expected to favor those having evidence of higher risk activities during the audit cycle.
    - 2.2.1. Higher risk activities include recent harvesting, wildlife, storm damage, etc.
  - 2.3. The CB may also weight sample selection toward properties containing threatened or endangered species, cultural sites, fish and riparian values, etc.
  - 2.4. The CB shall document how it will account for higher risk activities in the sample.
3. For annual surveillance audits, take 0.6 (as a coefficient) of the square root of the total individual properties owned by the Individual Certification Holder and then follow the process outlined above as a guide
4. For re-certification audits, take 0.8 (as a coefficient) of the square root of the total individual properties owned by the Individual Certification Holder and then follow the process outlined above as a guide.
5. The CB shall document its reasons for assigning auditor days-per-site that are above or below the average and disclose the rationale to client IMG management.