



TEXAS TREE FARM PROGRAM

**ADMINISTRATION, PROCEDURES
AND INSPECTOR GUIDELINES**

(Rev. 2024)

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Welcome!

Texas Forestry Association (TFA) would like to welcome you to Tree Farm Certification, one of the many programs offered through this organization.

As a committee member, a Tree Farm inspector, or both, this guide will hopefully answer many of your questions about the program. This document will be housed online on the TFA website. It is a fluid document which means it can be revised at any time deemed appropriate with approval by the state committee.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome, and we look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your participation in Tree Farm.

What is Tree Farm?

The American Tree Farm System® (ATFS), whose parent company is the American Forest Foundation®, is a certification scheme that is internationally recognized and meets strict third-party verification and auditing standards. 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-certified family forests meet eight standards of sustainability and are managed for multiple purposes: water, wildlife, wood, and recreation.

ATFS Certification is shown exclusively through the listing of a forest in the ATFS Verification Database, which allows mills, wood dealers, and other industry representatives the ability to quickly confirm that a forest has met the sustainability standards established by the ATFS.

Landowners who enroll in the American Tree Farm System are following a management plan that meets certain *standards and guidelines* that demonstrate a commitment to stewardship of the land and are part of the solution to meet the global demand for sustainable fiber by growing certified wood.

Texas Tree Farm Program

Sponsor

The Texas Tree Farm Program is sponsored and administered by the Texas Forestry Association (TFA) through the American Forest Foundation, with the cooperation of organizations and individuals interested in the fullest development and management of the state's working forest resources.

The Texas Tree Farm Committee is a standing committee of and will be governed by the bylaws of the Texas Forestry Association Educational Fund, Inc., a 501(c)(3) corporation.

Mission

- a. To recognize private forest landowners who maintain and manage the forest lands they own for increased production of wood products, improved wildlife habitat, watershed protection, aesthetics, ecosystem restoration, and outdoor recreation in accordance with the American Forest Foundation Tree Farm Standards.
- b. To foster adequate public acceptance of productive forestry on all ownerships so that:
 - i. Tree Farmers are certified under the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) and recognized accordingly.
 - ii. Forest landowners can practice forestry successfully, profitably, and without undue regulation.
- c. To foster publicity and education programs aimed at achieving the above objectives.
- d. To promote membership in the Texas Forestry Association.
- e. To ensure the quality and integrity of the national sustainable forest management standards is implemented and the mission of keeping forests in forests is achieved.

Code of Conduct

All Committee members and inspectors must comply with the American Tree Farm System "No Harassment Policy" as published on the ATFS Website and included in inspector training. All inspectors must also comply with the American Tree Farm System Inspecting Forester Compliance Policy as published on the ATFS Website and included in inspector training.

Program Structure

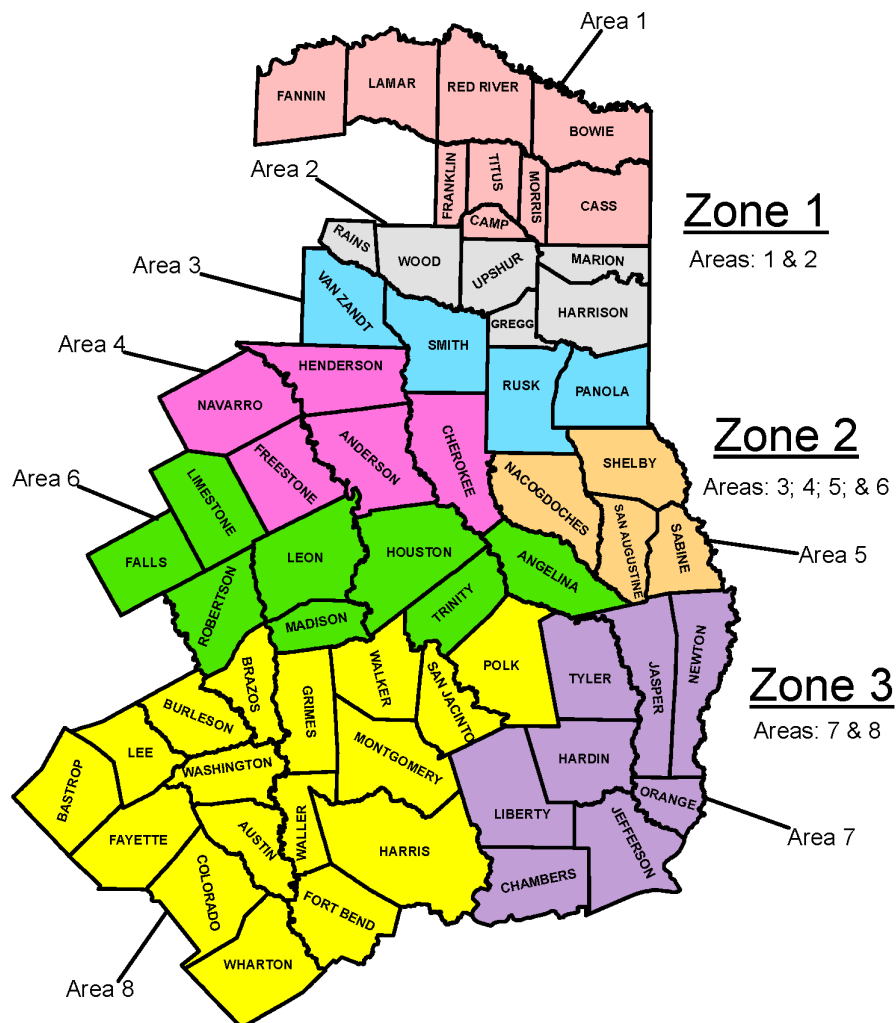
The Texas Tree Farm counties will be structured as follows:

- a. Texas will be divided into eight (8) areas, each with a chairperson appointed by the State Tree Farm Committee chair. The eight area chairs will serve on the state committee.
- b. The area chairs may be or have been employed by industry, private, or state or federal government and are selected at the discretion of the state chair.
- c. Area Designation - The eight areas are defined as:

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- i. Area I - Bowie, Camp, Cass, Fannin, Franklin, Lamar, Morris, Red River and Titus Counties.
- ii. Area II - Gregg, Harrison, Marion, Rains, Upshur, and Wood counties.
- iii. Area III - Panola, Rusk, Smith, and Van Zandt counties.
- iv. Area IV - Anderson, Cherokee, Freestone, Henderson, and Navarro counties.
- v. Area V - Nacogdoches, Sabine, San Augustine, and Shelby counties.
- vi. Area VI - Angelina, Falls, Houston, Leon, Limestone, Madison, Robertson, and Trinity counties.
- vii. Area VII – Chambers, Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Liberty, Newton, Orange, and Tyler counties.
- viii. Area VIII - Austin, Bastrop, Brazos, Burleson, Colorado, Fayette, Fort Bend, Grimes, Harris, Lee, Montgomery, Polk, San Jacinto, Walker, Waller, and Washington counties.

Texas Tree Farm System



Committee

a. Membership

It is recommended that graduate professional foresters comprise the majority of members of the Texas Tree Farm Committee. However, membership will be open to any interested individual who can contribute to the advancement of forest management through the Tree Farm concept. It is important that the chair of the committee, if possible, be actively involved in the practice of forestry.

There is no specific number of members recommended to serve on the committee. It is recommended that membership consist of individuals actively involved in forestry from a variety of backgrounds including:

- i. State and federal agency foresters
- ii. Tree Farmers
- iii. University/Academia
- iv. State Forestry Association Representative
- v. Forestry Consultants
- vi. Industry Foresters

b. Meetings

The full committee will meet at least three times each year. Committee meetings will be utilized to discuss Tree Farm policy, implementation of the current year's plan of work, reinspections, use of funds, general administrative matters, developing incentives for inspecting foresters, discussing and outlining action to be taken on private forest management problems or for any other purpose which will utilize the full capabilities of the committee members in prompting private forest management.

c. Officers

The following officers are recommended for the committee:

- i. Chair
- ii. Vice Chair
- iii. Immediate Past Chair

The term of office should be two years for all officers. The election of officers will be held at the first regular meeting of the committee every other year. As soon as this succession takes place, nominations should be solicited to elect a new vice chair. The committee will approve or disapprove the nominations. It is to be understood that the vice chair succeeds the present chair at the first meeting of the committee every other year.

d. Committee Responsibilities

- i. Chair - Overall responsibilities include coordinating efforts with TFA:
 - 1. Calling regular meetings of the State Committee
 - 2. Ensuring the recertification of the required sample and Optional (6-year)

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for the State's Tree Farms each year

3. Managing and guiding the State Tree Farm Committee and Area Chairs
 4. Providing Area Chairs with the tools, supplies, and training to conduct the mission of the Tree Farm Program
 5. Recruiting and encouraging the effectiveness of Area Chairs
 6. Ensuring appropriate recognition is given to key State Tree Farmers, Tree Farm supporters, and Tree Farm Program volunteers
 7. Attending the National Leadership Conference each year
 8. Participate on the project team in years where the state program is assessed under the direction of the American Forest Foundation
- ii. Vice Chair
1. Assist the chair as necessary to perform Tree Farm duties
 2. Function as chair at meetings when the chair is absent
 3. Attend the National Leadership Conference
 4. Lead Committee project teams as necessary
 5. Participate on the project team in years where the state program is assessed under the direction of the American Forest Foundation
- iii. Area Chairs
1. Assist inspectors as needed with the ATFS Database, including inspector assignments to recertifications
 2. Encourage timely reinspections
 3. Ensure national required recertifications are completed early in the year, but no later than October 1
 4. Ensure state-required (optional or monitoring) recertifications are completed each year
 5. Notify inspecting foresters frequently on recertification status
 6. Keep Tree Farm Committee informed of Area Tree Farm program changes and progress
 7. Participate in the Outstanding Tree Farm Tours if located in or near the assigned Area
 8. Participate on the project team in years where the state program is assessed under the direction of the American Forest Foundation
- iv. Texas Forestry Association
1. Will serve in the capacity of Secretary and Treasurer, therefore assuming all responsibilities for record keeping, funding, and financial accountability

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2. Ensure the continuity of the program
 3. Attend the National Leadership Conference each year
- e. Publicity

The American Forest Foundation assumes responsibility for national publicity for the Tree Farm Program. Local publicity and educational events will be the responsibility of the state committee and its authorized working groups and TFA; TFA will also assume the responsibility for the Texas Tree Farm Newsletter, if any, and all other media relations.

Inspecting Foresters

- a. Graduate professional foresters who meet the requirements on Addendum I, ATFS Inspector Eligibility Requirements, attached hereto, are invited to become Tree Farm inspecting foresters and must be instructed in Tree Farm procedures and take the official Tree Farm Training (to the current AFF Standards) before participation as an inspector.
- b. Previously grandfathered inspectors are eligible and must be instructed in Tree Farm procedures and take the official Tree Farm Training (to current AFF Standards) before participation as an inspector.
- c. Official certification forms, instructions, and a copy of the current Texas Tree Farm Administration, Procedures, and Inspector Guidelines will be supplied by the Tree Farm Committee and/or on the TFA website. All inspecting foresters will attend the required inspector training as AFF Standards are updated (usually every five years).
- d. Within his/her particular working area, every inspecting forester is encouraged to initiate and recommend properties that may qualify as Tree Farms. Requests from landowners for certification shall be referred to the appropriate area chair who, in turn, shall assign them to an inspecting forester for action.
- e. CEUs – CEUs are provided by the Society of American Foresters and the Texas Accredited Foresters Council (TAFC) for attending Tree Farm Inspector Training. In addition, TAFC will issue CEUs (up to 2.5 per year) as follows:

Decertifications - .5

Recertifications – 1.0

New Certifications – 1.5

TAFC members are required to submit the CEUs to TFA.

Certification Procedures

- a. Following a field examination of the property, the inspecting forester shall supply all information required on the certification record online in the ATFS Database located at atfsdatabase.org. If you've never logged into the database, then contact the state database coordinator (TFA) for a username and temporary password to log on to the ATFS Database. Completion of the Auditor Verification Form is required for all Tree Farm

certifications.

- b. Completing a certification online in the ATFS Database:
 - i. For new Tree Farm certifications, click “Search/Create Records” > “Individual” > and search for the landowner to determine if they already have a Member ID within the ATFS Database. If so, skip to step ii. If not, enter the landowner’s information in the fields below the search function and click “Create” to enter the landowner into the ATFS Database.
 - ii. Contact the state database coordinator (TFA) with the following information to request that a new Tree Farm number be created for the property and that you be assigned as the inspector:
 4. Member ID
 5. Landowner Name
 6. Total acreage and forested acreage of the property being certified (for example: the parcel or contiguous ownership is 15 acres, but the forested acres is 12.5)
 7. The county in which the property is located
 8. GPS coordinates for the property in decimal degrees format (Lat. XX.XXXX° / Long. YY.YYYY°)
 - iii. For recertifications of current Tree Farm properties, contact your Area Chair with the Tree Farm number and request that you be assigned as the inspector within the ATFS Database for that property. The State Chair, the state database coordinator, or the State Tree Farm Coordinator can also assign inspectors within the ATFS Database; however, the Area Chair is the preferred primary contact.
 - iv. From this point forward, the process to complete a new certification as well as a recertification is the same.
 1. Log on to the ATFS Database.
 2. Click “Inspections” > “View/Edit/Submit Inspections” > and enter the Tree Farm number and click “Search.”
 3. Scroll down and click the circle next to the Tree Farm number for that property that has you listed as the Inspector. Click “Next.”
 4. On the “Tree Farm & Owner Info” page, you may click “Edit Tree Farm” or “Edit Owner” to make changes to the Tree Farm and/or owner information (i.e. – Owner(s)/Contact(s); acreage; location; Lat./Long.; update contact information; etc.). Click “Next” to go to the “Inspection Details” page.
 5. For new Tree Farm certifications, check the “Certified/Recognition” circle next to “Initial inspection.” For reinspections, check the circle next to either “Recertification/Renewal” to recertify a Tree Farm or “Decertification” and choose a decertification reason from the drop-down menu to decertify a Tree Farm. DO NOT check “Pioneer” for any

inspection without discussing the reasoning for doing so with the State Chair and/or the State Tree Farm Coordinator. Enter either a “Field Inspection Date” or a “Remote/Interview Date” and check the type. Enter any pertinent notes or updates pertaining to the overall property. Click “Next” to go to the “Standards Checklist” page.

6. Carefully read each Standards’ Performance Measure and Indicators and check the appropriate answer for each. Notice some questions require additional details. Comments in the “Notes/Observations” boxes are not required; however, they are highly encouraged to better depict the conditions present on the property. Click “Next” to go to the “Authorization” page.
 7. For new Tree Farm certifications, entering the landowner’s name, the date the landowner was interviewed, and checking the “Landowner legal signature confirmation” box indicates that you have spoken with the landowner, and the landowner agrees to join the Tree Farm Program and uphold the Tree Farm Standards. This is required for ALL NEW certifications. Landowner signatures are not required for recertifications. Enter your name in the “Qualified ATFS Inspector” box, enter the date that you are completing the inspection form, and check either “Certification/Recognition” or “Decertification” appropriately. Again, DO NOT check “Pioneer” without first discussing the reasoning with either the State Chair or the State Tree Farm Coordinator. Click “Next” to go to the “Review” page.
 8. Review your entries on the inspection form. Click “Submit for Approval” then “Yes” then “Confirm” to route the inspection to the State Chair for state approval.
- c. Following Certification – Once everything is approved, the TFA office will forward a certificate with the landowner’s name and Tree Farm number to the landowner.
 - d. Tree Farm Signs – All new certifications are given one green and white Tree Farm sign. Signs are available at the TFA office and with the Area Chairs. It is the responsibility of the inspector to give a sign to the Tree Farmer.

Tree Farm signs are available for purchase should a landowner need a new one or want multiple signs. Contact the TFA office.

Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Selection Process

- a. Texas Outstanding Tree Farm Contest Rules
 - i. All certified Tree Farmers (including those in Group Certification) may be nominated
 - ii. All nominees must be TFA members
 - iii. Tree Farmers with multiple Tree Farms will compete with one Tree Farm of their choice, which should be noted on the nomination form

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- iv. Tree Farmers and the forester(s) must be willing to assist with a tour of their property in the following spring or fall
- b. Schedule of Events
 - i. TFA will send all inspectors a contest reminder and fillable nomination form by March 15. NOTE: Fillable nomination forms will also be available on the TFA website.
 - ii. TFA will publish a call for nominations in outreach materials to the TFA members after March 15.
 - iii. Applications must be completed and submitted to the state chair and TFA by May 15.
 - iv. The state chair and vice chair will (1) select judges for site visits, or (2) select a person to conduct video interviews to be completed by July 1.
 - v. The Tree Farm Committee will select the winner based on the judges' selection or video interviews, whichever is utilized.
 - vi. TFA and the state chair will notify the winner, the other applicants, and their foresters.
 - vii. The winner and the other applicants will be recognized at the TFA Annual Conference in October.
 - viii. TFA will apply for the ATFS regional contest, if applicable.
- c. Points to Consider for Nominees
 - i. Do they/their Tree Farm meet all the ATFS Standards of Sustainability?
 - ii. Do they have longevity in the Tree Farm Certification program?
 - iii. How long have they been a member of TFA?
 - iv. Do they belong to any other forestry organizations? National or State?
 - v. Do they promote Tree Farm?
 - vi. Do they follow Best Management Practices?
 - vii. Do they do anything on their Tree Farm beyond standard forest management? i.e., foster bees, offer tours, pond management, etc.

Outstanding Tree Farm Tour

- a. A Tree Farm Project Team will be formed in early January to plan and execute the tour.
- b. The Project Team will consist of the state chair, vice chair, TFA staff, the outstanding Tree Farmer, the nominating forester, a Texas A&M Forest Service representative in the respective area, and anyone else deemed necessary to complete the task.
- c. The Project Team will
 - i. Choose a tour date

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- ii. Meet onsite to discuss logistics
- iii. Secure all the necessary items (i.e., transportation, tents, tables, chairs, caterer, etc.)
- iv. Secure sponsors for the event
- v. Meet to finalize all details
- vi. Conduct the tour

Inspector Incentive Awards

- a. Rules
 - i. TFA staff will compile inspector incentives based on the ATFS database activity records and Tree Farmer nominations' submissions.
 - ii. The cutoff date for compiling points is August 31.
 - iii. Awards will be presented at the TFA Annual Conference in October.
- b. Awards
 - i. Top Inspectors
 - 1. Consulting Foresters - \$150
 - 2. State or Federal Government - \$150
 - 3. Industry - \$150
 - ii. Overall top inspector (from the top 3 above) - \$300 + plaque
 - iii. Top Newcomer (if any) - \$50 or comparable gift
 - iv. Hardhats
 - 1. Bronze – 25 new certifications
 - 2. Silver – 50 new certifications
 - 3. Gold – 100 new certifications
 - 4. Gold Plus – Over 150 new certifications
 - v. Tree Farm Chair Make a Difference Award
 - 1. Determined by the state chair (plaque)
 - 2. Does not have to be awarded each year
- c. Additional Incentives (based on funding availability)
 - i. Reinspections: For each reinspection: \$50 (consultants) or comparable logo gift item (government & industry)
 - ii. Drawing for each reinspection – to be determined.
 - iii. Accumulation of at least 20 points by August 31: \$75 discount to the TFA Annual Conference

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- d. Accumulation of Points
 - i. New Certifications5
 - ii. Reinspections3
 - iii. Decertifications1
 - iv. Attend Inspector Training Workshop5
 - v. Submit Outstanding Tree Farm Nomination10

The Tree Farm Committee of the Texas Forestry Association finalized and approved Texas Tree Farm Program Administration, Procedures, and Inspector Guidelines on the 27th day of August, 2024.

Note: This is a fluid document. Changes may be made frequently as needed.

End