CERTIFICATION

Generally, only privately owned and managed land is eligible for certification as a Tree Farm. Certain public lands may be eligible for certification provided they meet all conditions of certification. These are limited to school forests, and town and county forests.

A Tree Farm may be certified when it has met minimum standards set by the American Forest Foundation (AFF) and the NH Tree Farm Committee, as outlined in the AFF National Standards and the NH Tree Farm Rating Sheet. Certification requires that the landowner perform periodic harvesting of forest products if prescribed in the management plan. Harvesting will be conducted according to the current standards of sustainable multiple use forestry.

Tree Farms in N.H. can only be certified/inspected by N.H. Licensed Foresters. All registered or graduate foresters and forest technicians are encouraged and allowed to participate as Tree Farm Inspectors. They must attend an in-house Inspectors Training Workshop and take an online refresher course (available on www.treefarmsystem.org) every 5 years to continue to be a certified Tree Farm Inspector. Non-licensed Inspectors can participate in the program but need a licensed forester to approve and sign 004 inspection forms. Properties may only be certified by foresters who have no ownership or interest in the property; a forester cannot certify his or her own property, or the property of his or her employer. Initial certification and subsequent re-inspections of properties exceeding 2,000 acres in size require a group inspection of three or more professional foresters, to be identified by the area chairman of the county in which the proposed Tree Farm is located. Tree Farms over 10,000 contiguous acres must be third party certified (more information can be obtained through the National Tree Farm office). All properties exceeding 20,000 contiguous acres may be divided into separate Tree Farms of 20,000 acres or less, each with its own Tree Farm number.

Certification allows for the use of the Tree Farm sign. The Tree Farm sign is to be displayed in a prominent location, ideally, according to AFF recommendations. The sign is free. One sign per Tree Farm. All requests for additional signs are considered on an individual basis by the Executive Committee.

RECERTIFICATION

Recertification takes place every six years, beginning with the 6th anniversary of certification (Unless chosen sooner as part of the National sample). A Tree Farm is recertified if, upon review of Tree Farm records (Management plan, NH Tree Farm Rating Sheet, prior 004 forms, etc.) the inspecting forester determines that the landowner has made sufficient progress in attaining forest management goals established at the time of certification, and that the landowner's land management is not contrary to AFF's national standards. (For re-certifications under 2,000 acres, the NH Rating Sheet is voluntary and for inspectors' use only and does not need to be attached to the 004 form.). The revised 8/05 004 Inspector Record Form has an attached Auditor Verification Form (AVF). This form is required by National and must be completed and sent in with all completed 004.

After a Tree Farm inspection is one year past due, a notification will be sent out to Tree Farmers, Inspectors and County Chairs indicating that they have one year to complete the overdue reinspection; otherwise the Tree Farm will be decertified.
DECERTIFICATION
REASONS FOR DECERTIFICATION

1) The owner is deceased:
If a Tree Farmer dies and his heirs have no interest in continuing with the program, the Tree Farm will be decertified. If the immediate family wishes the property to remain as a Tree Farm, it will keep its original Tree Farm number but the owner's name will be changed. Any questions as to the status of immediate family members will be resolved by the Tree Farm Executive Committee. If the Tree Farm is divided into separate family ownerships, only one can remain certified under its original Tree Farm number. The others must become separately certified. Tree Farmers can temporarily use the original management plan but are required to quickly create a new separate plan for their property.

2) The Tree Farm is sold: If a Tree Farm is sold to non-family members it will be decertified. If the new owners wish to continue in the program, and have a management plan that addresses their objectives, the Tree Farm can be inspected to see if it meets the standards of the program, and if approved, assigned a new Tree Farm number.

3) Substandard management:
A. Poor forest management
A Tree Farm can be decertified if the landowner substantially violates accepted silvicultural practices in the process of harvesting timber, or does not adhere to the Standards for sustainability in other management activities. An example would be a commercial liquidation or high-grade harvest of a mature stand. In this case, the inspecting forester can either decertify the property, or set conditions that must be met in order that the Tree Farm remain in the program, i.e. planting, TSI, etc. The Tree Farmer will then be given a grace period of one to five years in which to carry out these recommendations. The grace period is determined by the inspecting forester. Failure to meet the conditions would result in decertification.

B. No interest / no work performed
If a Tree Farmers shows no interest in harvesting or managing for forest products when the Woodlot is in need of forest management, and/or market limitations do not place undue constraints on timber harvesting, then the Tree Farm will be decertified, but only after the following procedure: Based on discussions between the Tree Farmer and the Inspecting Forester, the Tree Farm may be placed into the Pioneer category. Recommendations to bring the Tree Farm up to proper standards will be provided to the Tree Farmer, as well as noted on the 004 form. If after the probationary grace period no work has been accomplished, then the Tree Farm will be decertified.

4) Missing Owners
Occasionally, Tree Farmers become "lost". If the NH Tree Farm Committee has repeated difficulty over a period of years in contacting a Tree Farmer for recertification, the property will be decertified and a letter will be mailed to the last known address indicating same.
Decertification Procedure

- The inspecting forester writes the reasons for the decertification on the "Tree Farm Performance" section of the 004 form, which is sent to the county chair and then to the state chair.

- The landowner is sent a decertification letter by the state Tree Farm chair and asked to remove the Tree Farm sign(s).

- If the Tree Farmer disputes the decertification, an appeal can be made for a "Group Inspection" by at least three inspectors identified by (and including) the county chair.

DISPUTE

Notice of dispute of initial certifications, re-certifications, and de-certifications from the complainant must be submitted to the N.H. Tree Farm Committee Chairman no later than thirty (30) days following the submittal or denial of issuing the certificate. For additional information concerning the NH Tree Farm Individual Certificate Dispute Resolution Process, please contact the NH Tree Farm Executive Committee.

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