



WINTER 2007

# sightline

A Newsletter for the Inspecting Foresters of the American Tree Farm System®

Welcome to the first electronic version of Sightline, the newsletter for the Inspecting Foresters of the American Tree Farm System.

We look forward to communicating with you more often and with more timely information. If you know a fellow inspector who would like to receive this publication, please send an email to [inspectors@treefarmssystem.org](mailto:inspectors@treefarmssystem.org). Don't forget about Inspector's Corner on the Tree Farm website for all of your Tree Farm needs. Visit [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org) and click on Tree Farm in Your State> Inspector's Corner.



## 004 Inspection Forms

We are currently working to get the 2007 sample 004 forms distributed from the national office to your state committee. They should be in your hands shortly! This year we are asking states to distribute and inspect the selected sample properties first before moving on to the five-year reinspections.

Additionally, we are asking that you please check and double check your 004 forms before submitting them to your state committee. In 2006, we saw many forms come in without necessary signatures and dates, incomplete AVF forms, missing Tree Farm numbers, etc. It is imperative that these forms are 100% complete in terms of dates, signatures, Tree Farm numbers, and AVF forms. A state approval signature and date is **REQUIRED**, as is the signature and date of the inspecting forester and, on initial certifications, the signature of the landowner. Failure to complete 004 forms will result in their return to your state committee. Thanks for your help to get every last one of those samples completed!



ATFS is a program of the American Forest Foundation

# ATFS Assessment Letters

**Y**ou may have received phone calls in recent months from landowners inquiring about an assessment, or membership fee. For the first time in Tree Farm's 65 year history, we sent a mailing to landowners requesting a voluntary assessment. As many of you already know, financial support from the forest industry has been steadily declining over the past several years. With acquisitions, mergers, and moves off shore, we have witnessed our top ten industry contributors decline to five.

Our board of directors determined that if Tree Farm is to stay healthy and continue to support family forest owners in the United States, we needed to finally ask the Tree Farmers themselves for support. As one member of our board put it, "...the program is only as valuable as what you put into it."

In an effort to mitigate the decline in funding from our traditional sources, ATFS recently sent out a voluntary assessment letter to landowners as a way to raise

funds for Tree Farm operations. The assessment is voluntary. Tree Farmers choosing not to pay their assessment will not be removed from the system. More importantly, the letter included a response card, requesting landowner information. Regardless of whether the landowners choose to contribute funds, we are asking them to return the response card to us. This response card is very important in helping us keep our records updated.

Based on the initial response from the assessment letters, Tree Farmers are now the greatest supporters of the American Tree Farm System. We will continue working to demonstrate to Tree Farmers the very real and direct value the American Tree Farm System provides to them.

Please do not hesitate to contact ATFS staff if you have any questions or suggestions regarding the campaign.

## Statistical Sampling – Important Update

Thanks to all of our Inspecting Foresters who made the 2006 sampling implementation year possible! As you know, ATFS is moving to a system of statistical sampling to ease the burden on State Tree Farm Committees and make Tree Farm a more credible and efficient certification system. Don't forget, your state still has the option to complete all of the 5 year reinspections after completing the required sample inspections.

In 2006, we heard from many inspectors and State Committee volunteers about the unusual number of large properties that were selected as part of the sample. Because of these observations, we went back to Virginia Tech to inquire about the discrepancy. We learned that the sample was run on a Probability Proportionate to Size sample formula which made our larger properties more likely to be selected in the sample. While this is an efficient way to sample the most acres overall, it will not be sustainable year after year.

In 2007, ATFS will use a Stratified Random Sample, grouped by acre classes across the nation to choose the sample. This will eliminate the bias toward large properties. All certified properties will be eligible, and remember, there is no longer a Member category! Virginia Tech has made the last changes to the formulas and they are currently running the numbers for the 2007 sample.

It's important to note that under a sampling strategy, properties visited this year or last year are still eligible for next year's sample. While there is only a slight chance that these properties will be selected two years in a row, it is a possibility. It is still important to complete these inspections to maintain the credibility and integrity of our national sample. Thanks again for your help in making sampling happen.

*Sightline* is a publication of the American Tree Farm System® (ATFS), a program of the American Forest Foundation. ATFS promotes the sustainable management of forests through education and outreach to private forest landowners. Founded in 1941, ATFS has 29 million acres of privately owned forestland and 73,000 family forest owners who are committed to excellence in forest stewardship. Tree Farmers manage their forestlands for wood, water, wildlife, and recreation with assistance from 4,400 volunteer foresters. ATFS is a program of the American Forest Foundation, a nonprofit organization that works for healthy forests, quality environmental education, and informed decision-making about our communities and our world.

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