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.treefarmsystem.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.treefarmsystem.org).

ACCREDITATION RULE

1. Requirement Documents (current versions unless specified)
   1.1. American Forest Foundation (AFF) 2015-2020 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification
   1.2. 2015-2020 ATFS Eligibility Requirements and Guidance for Certification
   1.3. American Tree Farm System Sampling Procedures for Assessments
   1.5. PEFC Annex 6, Certification and Accreditation Procedures
   1.6. American Tree Farm System Tree Farm Inspection Record (ATFS Form 004 Revised 01/15)
   1.7. 2015-2020 American Tree Farm System Independently Managed Group (IMG) Standards
   1.8. ISO/IEC 17021-1, Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems
   1.9. MA 5000, ANAB Accreditation Manual, and applicable ANAB Accreditation Rules
   1.10. 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. Application Process
   3.1. CBs can obtain applications for informational use at www.anab.org.
3.2. The application process outlined at www.anab.org must be completed via ANAB’s Enterprise Quality Manager (EQM) database when the CB is ready to apply for accreditation.

3.3. The application fee includes the cost of one assessor day for the off-site documentation review.

4. Initial Assessments for Accreditation

4.1. An ANAB accreditation assessor shall conduct a full documentation review.

4.2. After the documents are found acceptable, ANAB shall conduct an office assessment and required witnessed audits.

   4.2.1. 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 17021-1 and is effective.

   4.2.2. 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.

      4.2.2.1. The ANAB assessment team shall have the same number of members as the CB audit team.

      4.2.2.2. 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.

5. Surveillance Assessment

5.1. 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.

   5.1.1. When possible, the office assessment shall be conducted concurrently with assessments for SFI and other ANAB accreditation programs for which the CB is accredited.

   5.1.2. During the accreditation cycle, ANAB shall evaluate the CB’s full system audit process during at least one annual witnessed audit (stages 1 and 2 certification audit or recertification). The additional witnessed audits required in the accreditation cycle are based on the CB’s audit activity and management system findings, and include audit types such as surveillance, special, multi-site, scope expansion, transfer, integrated, ASRP, and/or CAAT. ANAB Accreditation Rule 18 outlines the witnessed audit scheduling process and the process for potentially altering the types of audits witnessed.

6. Reaccreditation Assessments

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

7. Criteria for Certification Process

7.1. 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.

7.2. 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.

7.3. 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.

7.4. 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.

7.5. 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.

8. Additional ATFS Requirements (not documented elsewhere)

8.1. ATFS audit time

8.1.1. The CB shall have a process to determine ATFS audit time.

8.1.2. ANAB shall review the CB’s audit-time process during the application process and refer to it throughout the oversight of the ATFS program.

8.2. ATFS certification cycles may be up to five years.